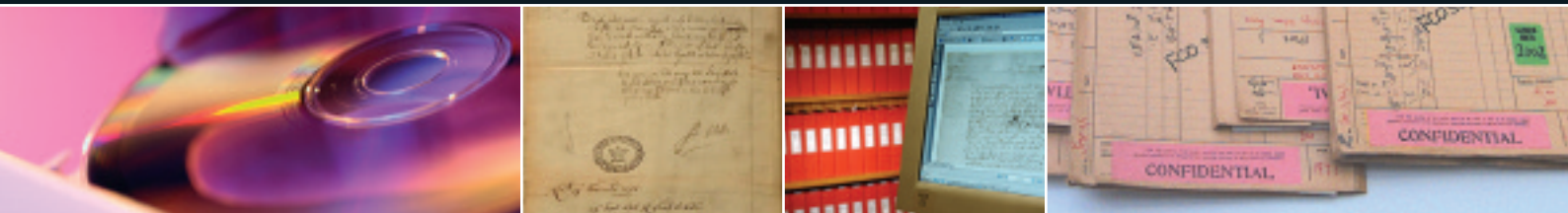




the national archives

Acquisition and Disposition Strategy

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Acquisition and Disposition Strategy

1 Authority

This policy is published in pursuance of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967 which provide inter alia that:

- Selection of public records for permanent preservation at The National Archives (TNA) is to be carried out under the guidance of 'the Keeper of the Public Records' who is responsible for co-ordinating and supervising selection, s. 3(2);
- All public records which are 30 years old and have been selected for permanent preservation shall be transferred to The National Archives or to another place of deposit outside of The Archives. 3(4);
- The Lord Chancellor may appoint places of deposit outside The National Archives, s. 4(1);
- Public records which have not been selected for permanent preservation may nevertheless be presented by the Keeper to places of deposit and other bona fide institutions. Such records become the property of the recipient and lose their public record status, s 3(6);
- 'The Keeper of the Public Records' may acquire records and accept gifts and loans, s.2(4)(h).

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all public records created by the UK government.

- Public records are defined by statute in the First Schedule to the Public Records Act 1958 as amended. In the main, public records are the official records of the United Kingdom Government, records of offices, commissions and other bodies under the Government, records of the courts and records of other bodies specifically named in the Schedule. These include the National Health Service, the national museums and galleries and the Post Office. The Lord Chancellor has the power to determine whether particular records fall within the definitions in the Schedule.

2.2 There are separate statutory provisions for official records in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Records of the UK central government that relate to Scotland and Northern Ireland fall under the Public Records Act 1958 and may be preserved at The National Archives. Arrangements have also been made for Welsh public records following the Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006.¹

2.3 This policy does not apply to records created by local or regional authorities nor by the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, nor by the government of Northern Ireland;

2.4 The records of Parliament, local government and the higher education sector are not defined as public records and are outside the scope of this strategy;

¹ The Government of Wales Act 1998 set up a new category of public records which are known as Welsh public records. The Government of Wales Act 2006 carried forward these provisions, but removed the records of the National Assembly for Wales from the category of Welsh public records. There is provision in the Government of Wales Act to enable the Assembly to set up a Public Record Office for Wales. Until this has been established, The National Archives will continue to carry out its statutory functions in regard to Welsh public records in accordance with the Public Records Act 1958. A memorandum of understanding has been produced to formalise this arrangement.

2.5 This policy applies to public records in all media including paper, digital formats, sound recordings, film and 3-D models;

2.6 This policy encompasses public records aspects of national collection strategies and partnerships.

3 Aims for the selection of public records for permanent preservation

3.1 To support The National Archives' unique and pivotal role in preserving the 'national memory' in order to document government decision-making, activities and processes and so to promote historical interest and research; and to extend educational opportunity for all ages and people of all backgrounds;

3.2 To ensure records documenting the principal deliberations, decisions and actions of UK government are permanently preserved as a research resource for our and future generations;

3.3 To ensure such selected records are preserved in the most appropriate locations;

3.4 To allow for bodies other than The National Archives or places of deposit to have the opportunity to collect public records not deemed worthy of permanent preservation at either TNA or a place of deposit.

4 Objectives of this policy

4.1 To describe the public records partnership role of The National Archives within national collection strategies;

4.2 To provide guidelines for the selection of public records for permanent preservation;

4.3 To describe the categories of such selected records which will be transferred to The National Archives;

4.4 To describe the categories of selected records which will be offered to places of deposit;

4.5 To describe the types of public records which, though not falling within the scope of 4.2 to 4.4 above, may nevertheless be suitable for presentation under section 3(6) of the Act.

5 Constraints

In considering these issues The National Archives will take account of the costs of storage, preservation and retrieval.

5.1 While the quantities of public records created are vast, storage capacity even of the small proportion worthy of permanent preservation, is limited. The National Archives has allowed for 1.5km per year of paper records to be added to its store on average;

5.2 The capacity of local and specialist archives to store paper records is still more limited: indeed many are in crisis;

5.3 The costs of storage of digital records may be less, but the costs of ensuring their continuing readability and authenticity is unknown;

5.4 Other repositories, especially local and specialist archives, currently have no mechanisms to accession and preserve digital records.

6 Acquisition criteria

6.1 The National Archives will select for permanent preservation public records which document:

- The principal policies and actions of the UK central government;
- The decision-making process in government;²
- The state's interaction with its citizens and the physical environment;
- The Crown's rights and obligations.

6.2 The effect of selection will be to allow the study of decisions government departments took, why those decisions were made and how those decisions were carried out. It will allow the study not only of policy but also of data collected in the course of implementing such policies.

See Appendix 1 for a full statement of The National Archives' acquisition criteria.

7 Disposition criteria

7.1 The National Archives will offer certain categories of selected records to places of deposit where they are in paper form.

See Appendix 2 for a list of categories of records which are considered to be better preserved in a place of deposit.

7.2 While places of deposit, such as local record offices, lack access to facilities for digital preservation in accordance with The National Archives' requirements, arrangements will be made for the transfer of selected public records in digital form to The National Archives but only as an interim measure.

7.3 The National Archives will not be the repository for certain categories of records but has systems in place to ensure their preservation as appropriate.

These systems are outlined in Appendix 3 for each of the following categories of records:

- Publications produced by government departments;
- Records containing (or consisting entirely of) data of potential long-term value to scientific research;
- Records worthy of permanent preservation but closely related and necessary to the continuing business remit of the creating organisation;
- Records in specialist media such as sound recordings and film;

7.4 If a place of deposit is unable to take in records offered under s 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, The National Archives will endeavour to locate an alternative place of deposit or repository with a relevant collecting policy and appropriate preservation and access standards. If no other suitable repository is identified, TNA may preserve the records, having regard to questions of selection.

7.5 If a place of deposit is unable to meet the standards required, its public records will be transferred to a neighbouring or relevant place of deposit or, in the last resort, The National Archives.

7.6 The National Archives may present historic records to a bona fide institution with relevant expertise where they do not meet TNA's acquisition criteria and are therefore not selected for preservation at TNA itself, but where they do meet the collection policy of the said institution.

² This statement is intended to include capturing documentation of the role of non-structured and semi-structured bodies, cross-departmental groupings, and the work of special advisers, policy 'tsars' and similar roles.

8 Implementation

See Appendix 4 for a guide to the types of records which may be offered under this section.

The National Archives will take this policy forward through:

- Appraisal Reports for government departments to make selection decisions on the basis of the criteria in this policy and especially those in Appendix 1;
- Operational Selection Policies (and collection strategies) for categories of records which require specific detailed criteria for acquisition and deposit;
- Revised guidance for places of deposit so that their collection policies and The National Archives disposition criteria are aligned and to regularise the transfer, cataloguing and care of records at places of deposit, and the distribution of records under this strategy;
- Guidelines for the presentation of records under s 3(6) of the Public Records Act, 1958;
- Partnership arrangements created through the national collection strategies.

Appendix 1:

ACQUISITION CRITERIA

1 Aims of the Acquisition and Disposition Strategy

The National Archives' acquisition criteria are devised to fulfill the central aims of this Acquisition and Disposition Strategy namely:

- To support The National Archives' unique and pivotal role in preserving the 'national memory' in order to document government decision-making, activities and processes and so to promote historical interest and research; and to extend educational opportunity for all ages and people of all backgrounds (3.1);
- To ensure records documenting the principal deliberations, decisions and actions of UK government are permanently preserved as a research resource for our and future generations (3.2).

2 Records at The National Archives will document:

- The principal policies and actions of the UK central government;
- The decision-making process in government;³
- The state's interaction with its citizens and the physical environment;
- The Crown's rights and obligations.

3 Acquisition Criteria

The National Archives will acquire records around the following themes:

3.1 Policy and administrative processes of the state: the formulation of policy and its execution;

3.1.1 Management of government revenues and expenditure;

3.1.2 External relations and defence;

3.1.3 Administration of justice and the maintenance of internal security including immigration and citizenship;

3.1.4 Regulation and support of economic activity by government, including industry, services, agriculture, transport, energy, trade, and employment and productivity;

3.1.5 Formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies, including the benefit system, health, sport, education and the arts;

3.1.6 Reform of the state's organisational structure, including constitutional arrangements and changes in the machinery of central and local government;

3.2 Interaction of the state with its citizens and its impact on and documentation of the physical environment;

3.2.1 The economic, social and demographic condition of the UK, as documented by the state's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations outside its own formal boundaries;

³ This statement is intended to include capturing documentation of the role of non-structured and semi-structured bodies, cross-departmental groupings, and the work of special advisers, policy 'tsars' and similar roles.

3.2.2 The impact of the state on the physical environment and the documentation of the physical environment by government.

NB Appendices 2 – 4 explain how some data will in fact be placed in repositories better equipped to store and interpret the data.

4 Interpretation

4.1 The broad themes (and the interaction of these themes with the disposition criteria elsewhere in this strategy) remain the same whatever the format, for example paper, digital, datasets, websites, Geographic Information Systems, 3-D models, audio-visual recordings and photographs.

4.2 The interpretation of these themes may vary according to the format:

4.2.1 Digital datasets and Geographical Information Systems will not be subject to sampling;

4.2.2 Statistical sampling should be avoided for paper case files but other types of samples to aid research use may be useful to illustrate development of the application of policy, or to demonstrate how datasets were compiled;

4.2.3 Exemplars of case files will not be taken simply to preserve an example of departmental work;

4.2.4 Selection of case files, whether in digital or paper form, will use procedures which ensure as far as possible that decisions are fully informed as to the uniqueness of the information in the set of records, are rigorous and consensual. Such procedures will include the establishment of temporary advisory panels of researchers, Operational Selection Policies and the use of selection criteria for specific areas of research interest.

4.2.5 Macro-appraisal techniques for digital records may lead to a different balance in the material selected by The National Archives, even though guided by the above criteria. The main elements of macro-appraisal as applied in TNA are outlined in the Appraisal Policy and supporting documentation. See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/appraisal.htm>

For digital records The National Archives will use Appraisal Reports to identify at an early date the areas of activity and records created by each department or agency which are of long-term historical significance. These selections are based on the acquisition themes.

4.3 Specific interpretation of The National Archives' acquisition criteria is through:

4.3.1 Operational Selection Policies, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/ospintro.htm>

These cover the records of specific agencies (for example the Royal Mint, the Crown Estate, the Central Office of Information), subjects and themes (for example company regulation, nature conservation) and most recently types of records common across government (for example publications, internal administration policy). Operational Selection Policies will continue to be developed and subject to an external consultation exercise.

4.3.2 Appraisal reports, see

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/appraisal_policy.pdf

These are organisation-based assessments of records considered of long-term historical value.

4.4 These themes and notes leave much room for interpretation.

Departmental Record Officers, reviewers and staff at the The National Archives should refer to TNA's *Guidelines for the selection of records* (2006) for further advice.

4.5 The National Archives is developing National Collection Strategies which will affect the implementation of these acquisition criteria.

Appendix 2:

PUBLIC RECORDS WHICH MAY BE OFFERED TO OTHER REPOSITORIES

Paragraph 7.1 of the Acquisition and Disposition Strategy states that “The National Archives will offer certain categories of selected records to other repositories where they are in paper form”. The categories of records concerned are outlined below.

1 Local records

Records identified under this criterion would be offered to a place of deposit in the locality to which they relate.

1.1 Collections of records produced by central government bodies, supporting the themes identified in the acquisition criteria but with a specific focus on places or counties which can be divided on a geographical basis without diminishing their research value.

- Example: Customs and Excise shipping outport registers

1.2 Records relating to the themes identified in the acquisition criteria but which are created by locally-based bodies.

- Examples: magistrates court records, hospital records and prison records.

2 English and Welsh regional records

Records identified under this criterion would be offered to a place of deposit within the region to which the records relate.

2.1 Collections of records supporting the themes identified in the acquisition criteria but with a specific focus on regions or geographically cohesive administration areas larger than historical counties or cities and capable of being divided on a geographical basis, without diminishing their research value.

2.2 Collections of records which meet the themes identified in the acquisition criteria but which are produced by specifically regional bodies whose remit extends beyond individual local government boundaries.

- Examples: the records of the Regional Rail Users' Consultative Committees and the British Coal area and divisional records

3 National specialist records

3.1 Nationally significant collections of records which require specialist skills and knowledge in their management and interpretation and which relate to the UK as a whole or to separate regions of the UK but which cannot be divided without diminishing the overall research value of the whole. The National Archives will seek to develop partnerships with other institutions possessing the relevant expertise for the preservation of such material.

- Examples: scientific and technical records, including specialist maps and plans. See also Appendix 3

Appendix 3:

SYSTEMS TO ENSURE THE PRESERVATION OF CATEGORIES OF RECORDS FOR WHICH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IS NOT THE APPROPRIATE REPOSITORY

1 Publications produced by government departments

In March 2006 The National Archives published Operational Selection Policy 36 stipulating which publications created within government departments should be preserved at the British Library and which at TNA, followed up with guidance for departments on sending material to the British Library as appropriate. See

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/pdf/osp36.pdf>

2 Records containing data of potential long-term value to scientific research

A sub-group of the Acquisition Advisory Forum will consider this question with The National Archives.

3 Datasets

3.1 Currently, by an agreement between UK Data Archive, National Digital Archive of Datasets and The National Archives, the disposition of datasets created within government departments is as follows:

- The National Archives will be the repository for non-standard data collections, such as case-files, desk Manuals, etc.
- UK Data Archive (UKDA) will be the repository for datasets concerning the individual in society, which will generally be those selected under OSP 30.
- National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD) will be the repository for all other datasets, including those selected by The National Archives but falling outside UKDA's collection policy

3.2 Datasets will be selected for permanent preservation according to the collection themes in Appendix 1, forthcoming national collection strategies and where they record trends and developments in social and economic fields or have value for scientific, technical and medical research at a national and regional level.

3.3 Datasets relating to the interaction of Government and people are addressed in OSP 30 see:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/pdf/osp30.pdf>

4 Records of continuing administrative value after 30 years

Records of continuing administrative or operational need which may also have wider research or evidential value may be held by the relevant public record body subject to the guidance and supervision of The National Archives and the approval of the Lord Chancellor. The process by which this arrangement is managed by TNA may be the subject of review as part of the implementation programme.

5 Records in specialist media such as sound recordings and film

If a place of deposit does not possess the facilities to preserve and make available records in specialist media, (such as three dimensional models, sound and moving image media), these will be deposited with a specialist institution which does. Also see 7.2 of this strategy.

At present electronic records would also fall under this criterion as very few existing places of deposit have the facilities to preserve them.

Example: The National Sound Archive is an approved place of deposit for sound recordings.

Appendix 4:

GUIDELINES FOR THE TYPES OF RECORDS WHICH MAY BE PRESENTED TO A BONA FIDE INSTITUTION

Records which do not meet the acquisition criteria and are not selected for permanent preservation at The National Archives or a place of deposit may be presented to a bona fide institution with an appropriate collecting strategy and relevant expertise in accordance with s. 3(6) of the Public Records Act 1958.

Records which do not meet the acquisition criteria, which do not meet the criteria for transfer to a place of deposit, and are not required by the creating body may be presented for administrative purposes from a public record body to a successor non-public record body.

A review of The National Archives' procedures for managing the presentation of records forms part of the implementation programme and will include reference to the transparency of the process, consultation and the proportionate application of relevant national archival standards.

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