

The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

Archives Collections Development Policy 2023-28

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Mission Statement: We aim to collect and preserve the written, printed, recorded and digital heritage of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland and encourage as many people as possible to access, use and contribute to this rich and diverse archive in many different ways.

1.2 The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) is provided by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council. This service is the means by which all three local authorities meet their legal responsibilities to collect, care for and provide access to records.

1.3 We are an area with a rich history that values its heritage, engages its communities, welcomes those who visit here, and works together with other agencies and organisations to ensure a future for the past. We will do everything that we can to achieve this, whilst recognising the limitations of our building/s and resources, by collecting, preserving and making accessible records from Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

1.4 Our Access Policy (2023-28) states our intention to engage openly, positively and equally with those communities and our commitment to achieve equality of opportunity by working to remove or minimise barriers that prevent people engaging with our archive service, building/s, collections, website, social media channels, learning programmes, events, volunteer opportunities, and engaging with our staff.

1.5 This Collections Policy sets out what we collect and states how we will ensure all our communities can be represented within the collections which we preserve for the future on their behalf.

1.6 The Record Office wants to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experiences feel appreciated and valued and where we represent the heritage and experiences of, and provide access to, everyone - regardless of their ability, age, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, language, or wealth.

1.7 The Record Office is recognised by The National Archives as an Accredited Archive Service.

2.0 Scope

2.1 The policy covers provision at The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, which is a partnership between Leicestershire County, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council.

2.2 The collections include the Public Record (NHS, Coroners, Magistrates and Prison records), diocesan, regimental, estate, family, business and local authority records and personal archives. The Local Studies Collections, including newspapers and periodicals, printed maps, a local authors collection, printed ephemera and a library of local printed books.

2.3 The collections exist in a variety of formats including parchment, paper and other similar materials, digital records and photographic, film and sound recordings.

3.0 Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to state the parameters of our collecting remit, covering loans, transfers, donations, purchases and bequests.

4.0 Definition of terms

4.1 We collect by loan, donation, purchase or bequest, by transfer from other archives and records collections and through commissioned collecting initiatives.

4.2.1 Loans: These are accepted where a depositor does not have the legal right to give away their records. Loans where the depositor is not inclined to transfer the title of ownership will be considered but we will advocate for donation as a preferred route.

4.2.2 Historically, the Record Office has also received documents on 'permanent loan'. This term is no longer used, although the principal of material not donated, yet held permanently without a right of withdrawal, is still recognised in the case of material which has been deposited historically. Permanent loan is no longer an acceptable method of deposit.

4.3.1 Donations: These are gifts to the collection where the depositor or their agents transfer the title of ownership to the Record Office.

4.3.2 Donations or loans may be accepted with certain limitations required by the depositor regarding its public accessibility. Most owners deposit their records free of charge to be used by researchers, however some owners may request certain controls on access as a condition of deposit; however, unduly restrictive conditions are discouraged. The Record Office will not accept collections which have excessively onerous access conditions attached or those which would conflict with the

principle of equal access for all. All access conditions imposed by owners will be clearly communicated to users.

4.4 Purchase: The Record Office may occasionally purchase material and will seek financial support for these acquisitions from local and national funding bodies, including the Friends of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (FROLLR), The National Archives, the British Library and the partner authorities. Purchase of material is an important option to enable gaps in otherwise complete collections are to be filled, or to create or 'prime' a new area of collecting which will help ensure the collections are representative of our communities.

4.5 Bequest: Archive material may also be received in the form of a bequest. This may be by prior arrangement with the testator and will be subject to the same restrictions as any other means of deposit. Where appropriate (and in agreement with either testator or executors) material may be taken and if not relevant to our collections, passed on to another appropriate archives, or sold for the benefit of the collection.

4.6 Transfer: Archive and records may be collected as transfers from other archive collections where the material is considered to have a greater relevance to this area. Links through relevant professional bodies and the National Archives are maintained to ensure that negotiation and collaboration over appropriate places of deposit exists with other archives. Archive material is customarily 'taken in' to be passed to other archives; just as material is received as part of an informal, widespread, reciprocal arrangement. Material is also received from archives re-evaluating their holdings, or institutions (such as the former British Record Association) processing large deposits taken in purely for distribution.

4.7 Targeted and Commissioned Collecting: Targeted collecting is where we use our own resources, both staff and volunteers to collect material relating to events such as local elections or national celebrations etc. Commissioned or project-led collecting is where we work with communities and other agencies to co-create collections which document, reflect and represent communities.

5.0 Responsibilities

5.1 The Record Office reviews performance, policies, and procedures through the County Council's governance and reporting structure and through the Partnership Board which includes representatives from the three Partner authorities. Cabinet is responsible for the executive functions and decisions of the Council. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the executive functions and decisions of the County Council in respect of the Adults and Communities Department. Together they help ensure the Record Office, the Department and the Council meet their obligations.

5.2 The Head of Service is responsible for ensuring service managers work with their teams and colleagues to ensure that the Record Office develops, manages, preserves and makes accessible the collections for which it has responsibility.

5.3 It is the responsibility of the Senior Archivist, working with all of the Record Office team and other colleagues, including the collections and conservation, museum collections and audience development and participation teams to ensure that the collections remain relevant, reflective of our communities, accessible and in good order.

5.4 We are committed to improving our understanding of our communities and ensuring that their records and archives are preserved for the future.

6.0 Policy statement

6.1 The Record Office collects (on loan or by donation, purchase or bequest), maintains and makes available to all any significant recorded material relating to the life and history of the diverse communities of the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland and the City of Leicester.

6.2 The aim of the Record Office is to provide a central point for the accumulation and safe keeping of archival material, under professional supervision. To that end, the Record Office will accept material which meets its criteria for collecting (see 6.5). The Record Office will also actively seek out material, or appeal for material in order to complete or supplement a collection; or to strengthen holdings where they are weak or unrepresentative. Special events, commemorations, new local communities, groups, or activities may also give rise to a special collecting or campaign to ensure that the collections remain representative.

6.3 The Record Office undertakes to keep all deposited material safely and securely, subject to its policies on conservation and access. Archive material will not be accepted unless it can be safely stored and cared for, if its condition presents a risk to staff, volunteers or service users (e.g. has active mould growth etc).

6.4 The Record Office is subject to national legislation, which will affect the availability of certain classes of record. Similarly, the provision of copies is subject to legal controls. Archive material will be made available in accordance with the Record Office Access Policy (2023-28).

6.5 Criteria for Collecting

6.5.1 The collecting parameters of the Record Office are consciously broad, potentially including any archival or printed material that reveals, affects or reflects life in the area covered by the three partner local authorities. This also includes the activities elsewhere of those born in the area or those who have made it their home at some point.

6.5.2 The Collecting Policy also reflects contemporary as well as historical life, so that the archive collections remain responsive, relevant and reflective of our changing communities and of modern life in general.

6.5.3 The acceptance of any deposit is subject to the professional judgement of a qualified Archivist, supported by collections managers and conservators. In addition to the other basic requirement (that the material relates in some way to Leicestershire, Leicester or Rutland) it is important that any item offered to the Record Office also meets a series of further requirements including:

- Relevance to current and future research and use.
- Whether it was produced in circumstances which impart a historical value it did not possess when new.
- If it relates to a sequence of local events or casts an unexpected light on typical or commonplace local experiences.
- The document/s must serve the purpose of the archive in revealing the life and history of the diverse communities of Leicestershire, Rutland and the City of Leicester.
- Age, but not to the exclusion of contemporary material.
- Duplicate material is unlikely to be accepted into the collections unless it can be identified for use in learning or audience development activities.
- Condition.
- The Record Office must have the resources to be able to store, care for and make accessible the material under consideration.

6.5.6 These criteria (particularly relevance, condition and the ability to store, care for and make accessible the material) will remain even when the archive is formed through a commissioned collecting initiative, although the criteria would be widely shared at project inception.

6.5.7 These criteria are applied for the benefit of future users of the Record Office and to ensure that the existing collections, and those which are added to its development can be preserved and made accessible to the standards required of Accredited archive collections.

6.6 Media

6.6.1 The Record Office collects and houses a wide and developing variety of means of recording information; from the traditional written, typed and printed word, to sound and video recordings, photographic media and digitally stored data.

6.6.2 This Policy allows for a flexibility of approach, to adapt to and embrace future developments in technology use. We recognise the increasingly swift obsolescence of some modern media and are seeking robust and sustainable methods to preserve and make accessible born-digital records.

6.6.3 Exceptionally, small items will be accepted as part of an archival deposit, where there is a clear link in provenance between the artefact and archive material. However, the presumption would be that the majority of artefacts would be transferred to the museum collections of the relevant authority or locality.

6.7 Geographical Area

6.7.1 The geographical areas served by and represented in the collections held by the Record Office are the County of Leicestershire, the City of Leicester and the County of Rutland.

6.7.2 These have and may alter with changes in local government.

6.7.3 From 1974 until 1997, the historic county of Rutland remained in existence, yet was administered as part of Leicestershire, but throughout the boundaries of Rutland have remained the same. The boundaries of both Leicester and Leicestershire have, however, been subject to frequent amendments, both in relation to each other and, in the case of the county, with bordering counties - in particular Derbyshire.

6.7.4 For clarity and consistency, the area covered by the Record Office's collections remains constant, as any area which is, or has ever been in Leicestershire or Rutland. This is, however, subject to local agreements with bordering authorities' archives where a more practical solution is in the best interests of potential users.

6.7.5 This is particularly relevant where a 'regional' approach has been adopted by the creators of archival material (such as both the established and some nonconformist churches, where the hierarchy has transcended county boundaries) or where records have been created by a business, which has branches, or even its headquarters, elsewhere. In such cases the Record Office will be prepared to accept ('take in') such material whilst also remaining prepared to negotiate an appropriate alternative agreement for deposit elsewhere, with other interested archival bodies.

6.7.6 The Record Office also regularly receives Public Records - national archive material of local relevance, with the approval of the National Archives.

6.7.7 Other general material from other sources will be collected where there is a clear local significance. This is particularly so in the case of local studies material.

7.0 Related Policies, legislation and guidance

7.1 Legislation

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The 1962 Local Government (Records) Act and the 1972 Local Government Act cover provision of an archive service and proper arrangements for records generated by the constituent organisations.
- The 1958 and 1967 Public Records Act
- The 1978 Parochial Registers and Records Measure
- The 1924 Law of Property (amendment) Act stipulate which records need to be retained.

7.2 Local policies

- The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Access Policy 2023-2028
- Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections Management Framework
- Leicestershire County Council Museum Collections Development Policy

7.3 Guidance is given by The National Archives, the Archives and Records Association and other professional bodies

8.0 Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. This may be undertaken regularly, or in response to a specific event such as new legislation. Final date of review and renewal is 2028.

8.2 Previous Review Dates

8.2.1 Established: February 2009

8.2.2 Reviewed: January 2014, October 2016, October 2017, January 2021, Reviewed May 2023