East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Information Statement

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Document summary

This document lays out how East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will document its archive holdings and how the collections we hold are processed, as well as establishing priorities for cataloguing.

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East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Information Statement

Key points

- This statement should be read in conjunction with the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office Collections Development Policy.
- Maintaining accurate documentation of our archival holdings is a fundamental element of the work of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office. This information forms two parts: information regarding acquisitions, and the information contained in the catalogue. Both are collected and stored using specialist archive software.
- East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office recognises that good documentation of its holdings, through accessioning and cataloguing, is fundamental to collections management, and to relationships with our donors, depositors and users.
- East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office works towards meeting international standards and principles governing the creation of catalogues of archives. It is committed to working with partners to adopt and employ agreed standards of documentation which ensure maximum interoperability and sharing of metadata.
- An internal staff working group regularly reviews all operational work with regards to maintaining collections information. Procedural documentation for accessioning and cataloguing is maintained by archive staff.

1. Categories of Acquisitions

1.1 All documents at East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office can be allocated to one of six categories, based on the basis on which they are received. Caterogies 1-5 are statutory. The power granted by the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, on which the power to accept documents in category 6 depends, is discretionary.

1 **Public Records – Public Records Act 1958** (includes records of HM Coroners, the County Court, health authorities and hospitals, magistrates' courts and Quarter sessions).

2 **Parish Records – Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978**

3 **Local government and statutory bodies – Local Government Act 1972** (Borough and District Councils, Brighton and Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council – including records which are council property, schools, Parish and Town Councils, river, waste and sewerage authorities, Sussex Polic Authority, and other public authorities).

4 **Manorial Records – Manorial Documents Rules 1926**

5 **Tithe Records – Tithe Rules 1963**

6 **Estate, family, community – Local Government (Records) Act 1962** (includes charities, clubs/societies/associations, estate and family archives, business records, non-Church of England religions (non-conformist), private schools (non-East Sussex County Council/Brighton & Hove City Council), solicitors records and property title deeds).

There is a degree of overlap between categories 4 and 6.

1.2 Documents acquired by gift or purchase, and which consequently become the property of ESCC rather than of a third-party depositor, will then be deemed to form part of Category 3.

2. Accessioning

2.1 Recording the provenance of material donated to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office is a crucial part of our activities. Using the Accession component of the CALM cataloguing software, we record details of every accession, distinguishing gifts, purchases, bequests and deposits on loan. We include a preliminary indication of the scope, content and creation dates of the material, its legal status and any restrictions on custody or access. Deposits received under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, Public Records Act 1958 and Manorial Document Rules 1926 are distinguished in this system.

2.2 The CALM accessions database holds details of all accessions since ACC 8001, received on 2 November 1999. Between 1991 and 1999 similar data is held in annual MS Word files; before 1991 it is contained in the office's paper accession registers. In addition, the CALM database includes all deposits which remain listed under their ACC number, a further 1170 accessions.

2.3 Hard copy accession registers began to be maintained in 1950, continued in parallel to the CALM database from 1999, and since 2013 have remained in use to house forms of agreement to our Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives (Depositor form).

2.4 Signed copies of the Terms form are now scanned and saved to the network, and physical copies are filed in the Archivists' office.

2.5 All new accessions are allocated an Accession Reference Number: ACC. This number is determined as the next available number on the Current Accessions spreadsheet, where basic information about the accession is recorded.

2.6 Prior to 2012, transfers of records of East Sussex County Council from East Sussex County Council Record Centre were not assigned accession numbers, but since that time such records have been allocated ACC numbers for the purposes of maintaining accurate accession records, statistics and physical control.

2.7 On receipt of deposits/donations from private depositors (principally Category 6 material), a copy of the Depositor's form, outlining the Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives, will be signed by the depositor/donor and the receiving archivist. A copy will be held internally, as above and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, and a copy will be given to the depositor/donor. The 'ACC' number will be shared with depositors/donors.

2.8 Integral to the accessioning process is the management of information relating to the source of the material. This is held in the same formats as set out at 2.2-3 above. Contact names and addresses of pre-1999 depositors are held in the paper accession registers, in an index to those registers, and in the office's filing system.

2.9 Details of the sources of accessions are not available to the public, and we will not share the personal details of depositors with third parties without consent. Old paper lists may contain personal data, but these documents are not publicly accessible.

3. Digital accessions

3.1 In 2023 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office acquired Preservica to manage its collections of digitised material and born digital deposits.

3.2 Digital accessions are processed in the same way as physical accessions, are given an ACC reference number and are recorded in the accessions database in CALM.

3.3 Digital deposits are usually transferred via Preservica's Submissions Tool (this is preferable for East Sussex County Council), or file sharing sites such as WeTransfer. East Sussex County Council does not permit the use of external hard drives or USB sticks on East Sussex County Council networked terminals.

3.4 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office will keep two copies of digital files, maintaining the East Sussex County Council drive 'Team Data'>'Scanned Docs' as back-up for files that are ingested into Preservica.

3.5 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office's Digital Collections Policy and other working documents can be found on the network, and where relevant are published online.

4. Terms and Conditions for the acceptance of archives

4.1 Standard terms of deposit have been used by East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office since 1997. They can be adjusted in certain aspects by negotiation.

4.2 Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives (otherwise known as the 'Depositors form') are signed by anyone depositing or donating archives to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office. As of late 2024, this form includes provisions for digital deposits and donations, and covers public access provision for the material. These signed forms are retained as part of the official record of accession (see 2.3-2.4 above). Forms can be accepted via email.

5. Donors, depositors and purchases

5.1 Material from private individuals, societies, groups, clubs, businesses, families and others that generally constitute a 'Category 6' accession, with either be Deposited (Loaned) or Donated (Gifted) to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office. Deposited collections will remain the property of the Depositor, whilst a Donated collection (a 'Gift') will become the property of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office on accession.

5.2 'Depositor' is an interchangeable term used by East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office to refer to any individual, group or organisation from whom we

acquire material. The term 'Donor' however, will only apply to those who have Donated/Gifted their material to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office.

5.3 Every encouragement is given to private owners to donate, rather than deposit, their material.

5.4 We seek to acquire all relevant information regarding a collection that owners can supply. In the case of deposits, we stress that transfer to East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office is a two-way process, and that changes in ownership, whether brought about by inheritance or sale, need to be communicated to us if we are to maintain an accurate record of our holdings.

5.5 In the context of East Sussex County Council's statutory responsibilities, deposited or donated material may be accepted but may also inclur charges for processing and storage (see Collections Development Policy).

5.6 Documents received from other former record-keeping institutions, chiefly the Sussex Archaeological Society and Hastings Museum, are accessioned as from their original depositors with the immediate transferor regarded as an intermediary, other than in cases where it can be demonstrated that ownership has passed to the transferor.

5.7 In order to retain archives in the public domain, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has a purchase policy made possible by the generosity of the Friends of East Sussex Record Office, now (since 2014) the Friends of The Keep Archive (FoTKA). FoTKA will be asked to contribute to any necessary conservation costs arising from such purchases.

6. Cataloguing

6.1 Cataloguing the material within East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office's custody is essential to enable staff to manage the material effectively and to facilitate public access.

6.2 All new cataloguing conforms to current professional standards, namely the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard of Archival Description (ISAD(G)), and the requirements of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office's CALM database and online catalogue. East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office maintains current Cataloguing Guidelines and a Style Guide, both of which are made available to staff and volunteers cataloguing collections.

6.3 Born digital material is also catalogued into CALM following the same standards as physical records.

6.4 Older catalogues may not meet current standards. Work will continue, largely with volunteer support, to enhance these descriptions.

6.5 Cataloguing is carried out either directly in the CALM database or by means of imports from Excel spreadsheets. Once the documents have been 'homed' in the repository, the catalogue(s) are uploaded via Orangeleaf's CollectionsBase to The Keep's online catalogue on the website, which is shared with other partners in The Keep.

6.6 Hard copy catalogues are no longer produced, but those which exist, along with some card indexes, will be retained for public use until demand for them no longer exists. These can be found in the Reference Room at The Keep.

6.7 Less than 1% of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office's holdings are unlisted, awaiting cataloguing.

6.8 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office aims to catalogue in detail to file level to improve accessibility to our holdings through our online catalogue and make best use of frontline resources. Where appropriate, we use volunteers to catalogue discretionary (non-statutory) accessions, or to help us to create more detailed catalogue entries of any existing collection through item level descriptions (for example, the names of witnesses and the probate values of wills, or listing individual photographs in an album).

7. Priorities

7.1 East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office works within the scope of its statutory duties and the resources available to deliver them. Priority is given to the acquisition and processing of statutory and non-discretionary material, Cateogories 1-5 in 1.1 above.

7.2 Several factors will be considered when prioritising accessions for cataloguing:
7.1.1 Accession Category: Priority will be given to Categories 1-5.
7.1.2 If the accession is likely to be in immediate demand by the public.
7.1.3 If the accession is a grant-aided purchase for which the funder requires a full catalogue.
7.1.4 If the age, language or technical content of the material are sufficiently difficult to make a detailed description by an archivist necessary for its future use by the public.

7.3 Considerations which might argue against prioritising material for cataloguing include:
7.3.1 How long the documents are closed for public inspection.
7.3.2 If the documents are unfit for production and require conservation.

8. Publicising new accessions and existing holdings

8.1 Information about new accessions is shared with users in the following ways:

8.1.1 Between 1978 and 2014 the county archivist's *Annual Report* included lists of accessions. These are catalogued and held in hard copy.

8.1.2 Annual accession reports (where public records have been acquired) are supplied to The National Archives, and relevant material notified to the Manorial Documents Register.

8.1.3 Noteworthy accessions, some purchases, and noteworthy collections that have recently been made accessible, are publicised in The Keep newsletter ('Keeping Up') which is sent to subscribers. The Keep also operates Instagram, X and Facebook accounts to publicise our collections and services.

8.1.4 Catalogued collections are searchable on our website. Since 2024, East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office has been making digital material accessible via the online portal Universal Access. Additions to this are publicised as above and linked to their catalogue entry online.