

East Sussex Record Office Selection, Appraisal and Disposal Policy



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Document summary

This document sets out the policy by which East Sussex Record Office makes decisions about which records to retain permanently as archives.

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About this document:

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of the East Sussex Record Office (ESRO) is to locate, acquire, collect and preserve archival material relating to past and present life in the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove, to make that material available for use by its owners and by the public at large, both in East Sussex and worldwide. It is based at The Keep, which is run by East Sussex County Council in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex.

1.2 This Policy has been drawn up in accordance with best practice as defined in The National Archives Appraisal Policy (2012) and Deaccessioning and Disposal (2015). It operates in conjunction with the ESRO Collections Development Policy and Strategy (2016) and should be read alongside East Sussex County Council's and The Keep's other service policies and business plans. It is supported by in-house appraisal guidelines for specific collection types. The policy and guidelines are intended to aid, rather than replace, the professional judgement of archivists, and to offer ethical guidance.

2 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Selection is the process by which archive groups or series within those groups are assigned criteria for retention or disposal, in the case of East Sussex County Council by means of Retention Schedules.

2.2 Appraisal is the process by which records of potential historical value are identified and separated from material not deemed worthy of permanent preservation as archives.

2.3 Disposal can result either from the application of Retention Schedules, appraisal at the point of accession or from the retrospective appraisal of existing holdings. Records selected for disposal are either returned to the depositor, offered to another suitable repository or destroyed confidentially.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 ESRO seeks to ensure that its holdings reflect the broadest range of the life and work of the people of the County of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove, past and present. In addition, we have a responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of the archive and that it can be maintained within available resources. To that end, it is necessary to make decisions about which records to retain. This Appraisal and Disposal Policy underpins that task by providing a framework for the selection of records, and for the retrospective appraisal and deaccessioning of existing holdings.

3.2 This policy is based on the Appraisal Values set out in Appendix 2 of The National Archives' Appraisal Policy (2012) and the regulatory framework and principles for deaccessioning and disposal set out in The National Archives' Deaccessioning and Disposal, guidance for archives (2015).

4 POLICY AIMS

4.1 To ensure that selection, appraisal and disposal practice is informed by current legislation relating to the keeping of records.

4.2 To ensure that selection, appraisal and disposal practice supports the aim of ESRO to reflect the broadest range of the life and work of the people of County of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove, past and present, through its archives.

4.3 To ensure that East Sussex County Council manages its current and semi-current records in the most efficient way and to ensure the preservation of an archival residue which serves both the current administrative needs of the authority and the need for an historical record representative of its past activities.

4.4 To assist archivists in selecting records of the highest value in terms of their evidential, administrative or historical value.

4.5 To assist users of the service by directing their attention to material of high evidential value.

4.6 To assist ESRO in managing its available storage capacity and financial resources.

4.7 To promote objective, structured and open decision-making about appraisal and disposal.

5 APPRAISAL – GENERAL

5.1 ESRO's method of appraisal is based on decisions to retain, destroy or sample records at series level (or above) rather than assessing individual documents. This is the most appropriate approach given the available resources. Functional analysis identifies the functions of organisations and is used to select series of records of high informational value for permanent preservation.

5.2 There will be occasions when this method is inappropriate, for example records of individuals or small organisations. It will also be appropriate on occasions to make a more detailed check to weed out duplicate, ephemeral or non-archival records. Archivists should use their professional judgement at all times.

5.3 Archivists must be aware of current archival legislation and any other statutory provisions with a bearing on record keeping. ESRO will ensure that staff training includes awareness of legislative changes and developments.

6 APPRAISAL – RECORDS MANAGEMENT OF ESCC MATERIAL

6.1 The appraisal of records created by East Sussex County Council is governed by Retention Schedules tailored to the output, in both paper and electronic format, of all sections within each department of the authority.

6.2 Such schedules are evolved by a process of discussion and negotiation between the Records Management section of ESRO and the appropriate officers, and are kept under constant review.

6.3 Records are scheduled either for Permanent Preservation, destruction after an agreed retention period or for appraisal.

6.4 Records for Permanent Preservation are passed to ESRO as soon as their current administrative life has expired; other records are kept in ESRO's Record Centre, where they are either confidentially destroyed once time-expired or, if marked for appraisal, passed to ESRO where they are either retained as archives or if not selected for permanent preservation confidentially destroyed.

6.5 Different appraisal techniques are used when appraising archives. For the last 35 years a one-in-ten sample has been retained of all Social Services case-files and other particular instance papers. Policy files are purposively sampled.

7 APPRAISAL – ARCHIVES OF CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

7.1 There are three distinct types of official records which pass to ESRO other than from its parent body East Sussex County Council.

7.2 As Local Place of Deposit for Public records, ESRO receives material which, although normally scheduled for destruction, is retained either in its entirety or subject to appraisal.

7.3 In the first category are included patient records of specialist hospitals, which are retained in their entirety; in the second records of the coroners for East Sussex and for Brighton and Hove, from which an element of every inquest is preserved.

7.4 ESRO provides an archive service for Brighton and Hove City Council, which however undertakes its own Records Management. Retention Schedules for those records are largely based on those governing the records of East Sussex County Council (which until 1997 performed many of the functions involved), but new Schedules involving records for permanent preservation are evolved in consultation with ESRO's Senior Archivist (Document Services).

7.5 The District and Parish Councils of East Sussex all make use of ESRO as a place of deposit for their archives, but ESRO is not involved, other than in general and occasional terms, with their records management activities and our relationship with them is largely reactive.

8 IMPLEMENTATION: APPRAISAL, RE-APPRAISAL, RETROSPECTIVE APPRAISAL AND DEACCESSIONING

8.1 Potential for appraisal is one of the key areas to be addressed in advance of deposit and accessioning in accordance with the Collecting Policy. As much selection as possible takes place at the point of deposit, either by leaving unwanted elements in the hands of the depositor or destroying obviously ephemeral material immediately. Although a few records are fully catalogued at the point of receipt, most remain largely unlisted for lengthy periods. It is usually the case that on cataloguing a collection it becomes apparent that further appraisal is required.

8.2 Such re-appraisal or retrospective appraisal of collections will be carried out by ESRO in accordance with the regulatory framework and principles for deaccessioning and disposal set out in The National Archives' Deaccessioning and Disposal, guidance for archives (2015).

8.3 Appraisal decisions and disposal methods will be documented to leave an audit trail and retained as a permanent record in the deposit file for the collection.

9 IMPLEMENTATION: DISPOSAL OF COLLECTIONS

9.1 ESRO reserves the right to refuse, return or recommend the destruction of any material not deemed to be appropriate for permanent preservation. Such decisions will be made in accordance with the Archive Service's Collections Development Policy and Strategy (2016).

9.2 The Service may also, with the agreement of the depositor, transfer material to other more appropriate repositories.

9.3 East Sussex County Council accepts the principle that collections in its ownership selected for permanent preservation will not be sold.

9.4 These conditions are reiterated in ESRO's Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives (revised April 2016).

10 REVIEW

10.1 This Selection, Appraisal and Disposal Policy will be reviewed within five years. It is however a working document and, depending on local circumstances, may be subject to modification, before a formal review.