

East Sussex Record Office Collections Information Statement and Policy



Date: May 2016

Document summary

This statement and policy lays out how East Sussex Record Office will document its archive holdings and establishes its priorities for cataloguing.

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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 is essential to support the role and aims of ESRO. It takes into account the recommendations of The National Archives (TNA) for documenting collections¹ and current government policy on archives.² It should be read alongside East Sussex County Council's and The Keep's other service policies and business plans.

1.3 Maintaining accurate documentation of our archival holdings is a fundamental element of the work of ESRO. This information forms two parts: information regarding acquisitions and cataloguing. Both are collected and stored using the specialist archive software CALM.

1.4 ESRO recognises that good documentation of its holdings, through accessioning and cataloguing, is fundamental to collection management, and to relationships with our donors, depositors and users.

1.5 ESRO 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.

1.6 An internal staff working group regularly reviews all operational work with regards to maintaining collections information. A procedural manual for accessioning and cataloguing in CALM is in course of preparation.

2 ACCESSIONING

2.1 Recording the provenance of material entering the custody of ESRO is a crucial part of our activities. Using the Accession component of the CALM database, 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, any restrictions on custody or access and its size in linear feet. Deposits received under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, Public Records Act and Manorial Documents Rules 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 papers accession

¹ <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/documenting-collections.htm>

² *Archives for the 21st century*, November 2009
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/aft21c/archives-for-the-21st-century.pdf>

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.

2.4 Formal receipts incorporating ESRO's Terms of Deposit or Gift, as appropriate, countersigned by the transferor, are issued when required. As well as the name and address of the source and terms of transfer, they record details of any restrictions on access, and (in the case of gifts) whether intellectual property rights are included.

2.5 Before 2012, transfers of records of East Sussex County Council from ESRO's Records Management Section were not assigned accession numbers, but since that time such records have been allocated ACC numbers for the purposes of physical control.

2.6 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, an index to those registers and in the office's filing system.

2.7 Details of the sources of accessions are not available to the public, although such information is occasionally included in the older paper lists.

2.8 A simple receipt for each accession, listing the Accession Number and contact details, is handed to the donor or depositor, if present, at the point of receipt. Unless it is decided to proceed directly to cataloguing, using the criteria set out in section 6 below, a fuller list of the accession will be produced in due course, if possible within twelve months of receipt.

3 TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF ARCHIVES

3.1 Standard Terms of Deposit (now Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives) have been used by ESRO since 1997. They can be adjusted in certain aspects by negotiation. A copy is included as an Appendix to this policy.

3.2 Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives are signed by the source only in respect of records received on loan or subject to other conditions. They are retained as part of the series of paper accession registers, the use of which is now confined to such documents.

4 DONORS, DEPOSITORS AND PURCHASES

4.1 ESRO takes relationships with donors and depositors very seriously. Beginning at the point of accession, we seek to acquire all relevant information regarding a collection that owners can supply. In the case of deposits, we stress that transfer to ESRO 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.

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

4.3 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.

4.4 In order to retain archives in the public domain, for over 20 years ESRO has had an active policy of purchase, which has been made possible by the generosity of our Friends' organisations, Friends of East Sussex Record Office and (from 2014) Friends of the Keep Archives.

5 CATALOGUING

5.1 Cataloguing the material within ESRO's custody is essential to enable staff to manage the material effectively and to enable public access.

5.2 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 ESRO's CALM database and online catalogue.

5.3 Older catalogues, particularly those inherited from former institutional custodians, may not meet current standards. Work will continue, largely with volunteer labour, both to widen the coverage of the CALM catalogue and to enhance its scope.

5.4 Cataloguing is carried out either directly in the CALM database or by means of imports from Excel spreadsheets. Once the documents have been located in the repository, the lists are uploaded to the online catalogue which is shared with the others partners at The Keep.

5.5 Unless required by the source, hard copy catalogues are no longer produced, but those which exist, along with some card indexes and handlists, will be retained for public use until demand for them no longer exists.

5.6 In preparation for the move to The Keep, it was necessary to barcode all the containers holding ESRO material, which in turn required them to have a presence on the CALM catalogue. In the period leading up to the move in 2013, 30% of our holdings – getting on for a quarter of a million documents – were entered in CALM.

5.7 As part of that process, the opportunity was taken to deepen the level of description of many record groups in CALM and hence on the online catalogue. Although levels of description vary, there are no uncatalogued documents at ESRO.

5.8 ESRO has traditionally catalogued in detail, a policy which we consider even more important since the increasing diversity of our user-base requires the provision of clearer and more ample descriptions.

5.9 Such detailed cataloguing still takes place (see 6), but it has been the case since 1980 if not before that the majority of accessions are listed at box-level. Since 2013 the requirement to barcode individual containers has required a CALM entry for each, so confining descriptions to Fonds or Series level is no longer an option.

5.10 We make extensive use of volunteers to augment existing catalogues with more detailed information – for example the names of witnesses and the probate values of wills – and to undertake more detailed cataloguing of material which would otherwise be held under its Accession number.

6 PRIORITIES

6.1 With accessions running at over 350 a year the three archivists in the Document Services section, assisted by teams of volunteers, have of necessity to adopt a discriminating approach to the treatment of new material.

6.2 Several factors are relevant to our policy with regard to new accessions:

- are they likely to be in immediate demand?
- Are they additions to an existing list to which they can easily be added?
- Is the transferor pressing for a list?
- Is the accession a grant-aided purchase for which the funder requires a full catalogue entry?
- Is the age, language or technical content of the material sufficient to make a detailed description by an archivist necessary to its future use by the general public?
- Have the records been transferred with an accompanying list, is it manuscript, typescript or electronic, and how easily can it be migrated into the CALM catalogue?

6.3 If the answer to any of these questions is positive, then we will strive to produce a list and mount it on the online catalogue within a month of receipt.

6.4 Considerations which might argue against prioritising material for cataloguing include:

- the documents are closed to public inspection
- the documents are unfit for production and require conservation
- the documents are unlikely to be in high demand

7 PUBLICISING NEW ACCESSIONS AND EXISTING HOLDINGS

7.1 Information about new accessions is shared with users in a number of ways. Between 1978 and 2014 the county archivist's *Annual Report* included lists of accessions, which from 2014 have appeared as a PDF on the Keep website. The narrative description of the more significant accessions, formerly included in the *Annual Report*, will from 2016 be carried by the *Newsletter* of the Friends of the Keep Archives.

7.2 Annual accession reports are supplied to the National Archives, and relevant material notified to the Manorial Documents Register.

7.3 Especially in the case of purchases but with all newsworthy items, new accessions are publicised on our own website, in the local and occasionally in the national media.

7.4 Where additional funding is available (for example from our Friends' organisation), work is carried out to make the online catalogue more responsive to searches. This includes rendering dates into a consistent format and adding the modern spelling of places, adding Creator names and biographies, and flagging places.

7.5 A series of summaries of information about places, with links to the major archive groups relating to them, is also being created.

7.6 Both existing holdings and new accessions, particularly purchases, are discussed on the News and Blogs section of our website.

8 REVIEW

8.1 This Policy will be reviewed within five years.

EAST SUSSEX RECORD OFFICE: TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF ARCHIVES – DEPOSITS

This statement sets out the terms on which it is our practice to accept deposited documents, and we will assume that they are acceptable to you unless you notify us otherwise. If they are not, or if there is anything which you do not understand or wish to discuss, please telephone (01273 482348/482352) or email thekeep@eastsussex.gov.uk .

East Sussex Record Office has received the documents on the attached list on loan; they remain your property, which you may withdraw, either permanently or temporarily, upon reasonable notice in writing. In the case of permanent withdrawals, reasonable notice shall consist of a period of time sufficient to allow us to make copies of your documents for us to keep for our own use or for sale to members of the public for the purposes of research or private study.

We undertake to store your documents in secure accommodation, and to make them available to the public in a supervised Reading Room during the office's normal opening hours, which may be altered from time to time. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure the long-term survival of your documents by protecting them from damage by climatic extremes, flood, fire, theft or physical misuse. East Sussex Record Office works to the Archives Accreditation Standards overseen by The National Archives, and our purpose-built repository at The Keep, Falmer, adheres to PD 5454:2012, the British Standard for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents.

All the documents will be freely available to the public, unless you wish to impose a closure period from the document's final date, or other restrictions on access or copying. Such records will be produced only with your written authority (in which case it is important to notify us of any changes in contact details). In addition, we will endeavour to prevent the use of any document by a searcher whose aims appear to be prejudicial to your interests. In such cases, we will refer applications to inspect open documents to you as though the documents in question were closed. We observe Data Protection legislation and do not make sensitive personal data available to the public.

We may mark documents indelibly for reasons of security, and may repair any of your documents which are damaged or fragile in accordance with our conservation programme. You will be liable to pay the costs of this work only if you withdraw the documents permanently. We will request your permission before we or other bodies use your documents in public exhibitions, and will satisfy ourselves of the suitability of the environment and security of the venues.

We may make copies of your documents, either for our own use or for sale to members of the public for the purposes of research or private study. We undertake not to employ any method of reproduction which may cause damage to them. We will not attempt to investigate the ownership of copyright in your documents, but will require people to whom copies are supplied to sign a declaration of compliance with current UK and European legislation. Applications to publish reproductions of your documents will be referred to you but unless you wish otherwise we will deal with requests to publish minor extracts.

We reserve the right to dispose of duplicate and non-archival material (by destruction as confidential waste if necessary), unless you have previously indicated a wish to have such documents returned.

Private depositors On your death, your documents will become the property of your personal representatives, or of anyone to whom you leave them by your will. We will need firm evidence of your death and of your wishes before we will treat any other person as the owner of your documents.

Non-private depositors Please let us know of any changes within your organisation, such as the name of the current contact, or changed address.

AGREEMENT

I have read and accept the enclosed terms and conditions of deposit.

Name (printed)
depositor

Signature.....Date

EAST SUSSEX RECORD OFFICE: TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF ARCHIVES – GIFTS

This statement sets out the terms on which it is our practice to accept gifts of documents, and we will assume that they are acceptable to you unless you notify us otherwise. If they are not, or if there is anything which you do not understand or wish to discuss, please telephone (01273 482348/482352) or email thekeep@eastsussex.gov.uk .

East Sussex Record Office has received the documents on the attached list as a gift; they will become the property of East Sussex County Council.

We undertake to store the documents in secure accommodation, and to make them available to the public in a supervised Reading Room during the office's normal opening hours, which may be altered from time to time. We will take all reasonable steps to ensure their long-term survival by protecting them from damage by climatic extremes, flood, fire, theft or physical misuse. East Sussex Record Office works to the Archives Accreditation Standards overseen by The National Archives, and our purpose-built repository at The Keep, Falmer, adheres to PD 5454:2012, the British Standard for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents.

We may mark documents indelibly for reasons of security, and may repair any documents which are damaged or fragile in accordance with our conservation programme. Before we or other bodies use the documents in public exhibitions, we will satisfy ourselves of the suitability of the environment and security of the venues.

We may make copies of the documents, either for our own use or for sale to members of the public, making use only of methods of reproduction which will not cause damage to them. Unless you have retained copyright we will act as owner of all intellectual property rights in the documents.

We reserve the right to dispose of duplicate and non-archival material (by destruction as confidential waste if necessary), unless you have previously indicated a wish to have such documents returned.

Unless you specifically retain them, any copyright or other intellectual property rights which you may possess in the documents will also become the property of East Sussex County Council.

AGREEMENT

I have read and accept the enclosed terms and conditions of gift.

Name (printed)
.....
donor

Signature.....**Date**