Aim & purpose

This collections information policy focusses on the provision of intellectual access to collections, both by users and by staff for management purposes. It will assist in decision making and prioritising work in a range of circumstances, including:

- Providing access to the holdings which is balanced with their long-term preservation and legislative requirements;
- Cataloguing work by staff and volunteers;
- The submission of funding bids with a cataloguing and information enhancement aspect.

Context

The Service is committed to providing access to the resources in its care and to managing them in line with professional best practice through the provision of high quality information about its collections. In this area it subscribes to PAS 197:2009 *Code of practice for cultural collections management*, the Archives and Records Association *Code of Conduct* (2012)[1] and the CILIP *Code of Professional Practice* (2012)[2], in addition to the cataloguing standards listed below. The statutory framework in this area also includes the Equalities Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The table below highlights in bold those policies, plans and strategies which are of particular relevance to the Collections Information Policy:

Archives & Special Collections Strategic Plan 2013-23			
Preservation policy	**Acquisition policy**	**Collections information policy**	Access policy
Digital Preservation Strategy **Digitisation Strategy** Conservation management action plan Disaster Recovery Plan Centre design	**Collections Development Strategy**	**Collections intellectual management action plan**	Volunteering policy Activity Plan encompassing plans for learning, audience development, participation and training **Digital Engagement Strategy Interpretation plan** Centre design

Scope of the collections information policy

Collections information encompasses all information written and gathered about collections, whether during transfer or accessioning processes, during cataloguing, or subsequently. Collections information includes

- Accessioning information, including ownership;
- Cataloguing, indexing and other descriptive information;

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[1] http://www.archives.org.uk/membership/code-of-conduct.html
[2] http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/about/ethics/code-professional-practice

- Information about disposals (under the disposals provisions in the Acquisition Policy);
- Information about intellectual property rights;
- Supporting finding aids such as repository or subject guides and indexes.

The policy covers all materials, regardless of whether they are in analogue or digital format or whether they are archival or special (published) collections.

Note that this policy excludes University records in the care of Schools and Services until those selected for permanent preservation as archives are transferred to the permanent holdings of the Archives & Special Collections Service.

Background

The approach to creating and maintaining collections information depends on the size of a Service's cataloguing backlog and on the legacy of cataloguing systems and professional standards used in the past. These circumstances form the practical context to establishing and improving levels, breadth and depth of collections information.

From June 2011- September 2013 the staff establishment of the service comprised 1.86fte: 1fte professionally-qualified University Archivist & Records Manager and 0.86fte Archives Assistants. The level of establishment resource available for cataloguing and associated work on both archives and special (printed) collections has been around 5% of the professional resource and around 30% of paraprofessional (some 0.05fte and 0.26fte respectively). From October 2013 the Service has an additional permanent post of Assistant Archivist (1fte) which increased the establishment resource available for cataloguing to around 0.5fte.

For the 20 years preceding 2011 the service staff comprised 0.5fte; on the creation of the service in 1991 the University Archivist immediately inherited approx. 350 linear metres of uncatalogued archival collections and an unknown quantity of uncatalogued special (printed) collections. Since that time the holdings have grown exponentially and in 2013 comprise 1572 linear metres of archives and approximately 1000 linear metres of special collections.[3]

The Service began to implement the collections management system Calm in 2012; prior to that time catalogues of archival material were produced by the University Archivist in typescript and using MS Word. Special collections materials were listed using MS Excel. Whilst all these lists are generally consistent with one another, they do not conform to the minimum standards for archival or library description as listed under the Cataloguing information policy statements section below.

Accession information was not consistently recorded in an Accession Register or similar, although the Service has inherited an extensive internal analogue and digital archive where such information was recorded and can be researched.

Backlogs

Backlogs are defined as material about which detailed information is not available routinely and remotely; backlogs therefore include collections with card indexes, typescript catalogues, survey lists and other forms of finding aid.

There are 6 types of backlog

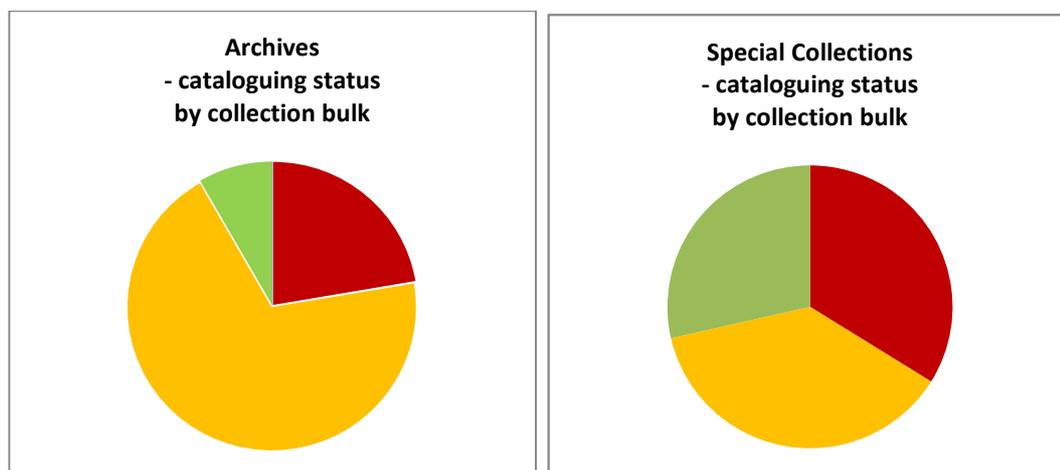[3] Source: archives & manuscripts SCONUL return 2011/2

1. Special collections catalogues in MS Excel
   Prior the introduction of Calm in 2012 Excel was used for basic cataloguing of special collections material so that standard information is generally recorded about individual items. These do not conform to professional standards but form a useful basis for special collections cataloguing.
2. Word-processed archive catalogues
   During the decade prior to the introduction of Calm in 2012 catalogues were word processed (MS Word). These documents comprise unstructured text and do not conform to current professional standards. Some also fall under backlog type 3:
3. Archive catalogues that have been retro-converted as part of the Access to Archives programme and are available on the national A2A database.
   These are not available in electronic form in the Service's own systems as they require considerable editing if they are to meet current standards.
4. Archives which have accessioning information but no cataloguing information in Calm. Many have survey lists or other unstructured notes, in a range of formats including MS Word and MS Excel, which can form the basis of cataloguing to professional standards.
5. Previously catalogued material only available in paper/index card format.
   A variety of styles and standards have been inherited, which do not meet current professional standards. Many are difficult to use by the uninitiated and they require considerable input from staff to explain how the systems work.
6. Items which have not been catalogued and for which no accession information exists.

The charts below indicate the proportions of material held which (as at November 2012) were as follows
Green – backlog types 1, 2, 3 or 5
Amber – backlog type 4
Red – backlog type 6

**Archives
- cataloguing status
by collection bulk**

**Special Collections
- cataloguing status
by collection bulk**

Archival collections

A formal prioritisation of the backlog of archival collections was undertaken using the Logjam methodology in November 2012 and a cataloguing priority action plan based on the Logjam scoring drawn up. Logjam uses a weighting based on criteria including whether a collection is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000; its significance in local, regional or national terms; whether the physical condition of the collection prevents it from being catalogued. These criteria

create a priority score for each collection, which then are used to rank collections in order to plan cataloguing.

Combined with a rating based on the complexity and size of collection, the action plan aims to fully catalogue all collections held at May 2013 over the next 5 years. It identifies which collections will be catalogued by our establishment professional resource, which collections may appropriately be catalogued by supervised student work placements and other volunteers, and which require dedicated or specialist professional resources and as such are suitable for targeted funding applications.

Special (printed) collections

During 2013 significant work has been undertaken on the legacy of our printed holdings to bring the material retained in line with the Acquisition Policy (2011). As of November 2013 around 136 linear metres of material has been transferred to other HE institutions in Yorkshire and Greater Manchester area to complete their existing holdings (for example, to fill gaps in runs of journals) or removed for re-sale through Anybooks. Detailed records have been created and will be permanently retained of all material deaccessioned in this way, as described in the Deaccessioning policy statements below. Once this work is completed (in 2014) a cataloguing priority action plan will be drawn up for the special collections backlog, following a modified form of the Logjam methodology.

Accessioning information: policy statements

An accession register will be kept to record essential information about the nature and circumstances of each archival acquisition. Signed Gift and Deposit forms and agreements will be retained alongside the accession register.

All special collections acquisitions by bequest, donation, exchange or purchase will be recorded, whether of individual items or of groups or whole collections.

Notice of every new acquisition of an archival collection and of any restrictions on its access or use will be made public at the earliest opportunity, including through notification to The National Archives in the annual Accessions Return.

The accession register will be kept in digital format, using the Calm Accessions database, following best professional practice. A full list of the mandatory and optional information is given in the Calm procedures manual. The information will include the date of acquisition, the name and address of the source, brief details of the items, the terms of deposit, rights information (both copyright and identifiable data subject rights) and collection and accession numbers which allow the items concerned and any related documentation to be traced.

All incoming material, whether archives or special collections, will be fully accessioned within two weeks of receipt as stated in the Service Access Policy (2011).

Legacy collections

During the lifetime of this policy (to 2017) accession records for archival collections which arrived with the Service prior to September 2011 will be created as part of the cataloguing processes, described in the cataloguing action plan (see below). This will include research into the ownership status, IPR and other related issues.

Accession records for "named" special collections which arrived with the Service prior to September 2011 will be created during a research project in 2014/5. This project will include research into the ownership status and other related issues.

Procedures

The Service will maintain and regularly review its procedures for accessioning, ensure that staff are fully trained in them, and will undertake periodic quality checking of the implementation of these procedures. These will cover:
- establishing and recording collection status (ownership, terms of deposit, applicable access legislation, access restrictions, intellectual property rights)
- appraisal
- physical condition checks including metadata for digital items
- marking, labelling, cleaning and housing items.

Cataloguing information: policy statements

It is recognised that encouraging and improving access to the collections in its care is a key objective for the Service: access to information fundamentally depends on adequate catalogues for searching and retrieval.

The Service will work towards providing a single, complete catalogue covering all the collections in its care, which will be available online. Catalogues of individual archives will also be available in hard copy in the searchroom, for the purposes of browsing and overview research. The catalogues will as far as possible conform to the following international standards and best practice:
- International Standard for Archival Description (General) – ISAD(G) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 1999);
- International Standard for Describing Functions – ISDF 1st edn (International Council on Archives, 2007);
- International Standard Bibliographic Description – ISBD consolidated edn (IFLA Cataloguing Section/ISBC Review Group, 2011);
- Guidelines for the Cataloguing of Rare Books, CILIP, 2007;
- Dublin Core metadata set for digital image and digital audio-visual metadata (ISO 15836)
- International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families - ISAAR(CPF) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 2004);
- Rules for the Construction of Place Names – NCA Rules (National Council on Archives, 1997);
- The UK Archival Thesaurus – UKAT (UKAT, 2004).

The Service will use the collections management system Calm to manage the full range of cataloguing information identified in the Calm procedures manual, both that required for minimum compliance with international standards and that identified as a management requirement by the Service.

The Service will seek to reduce its cataloguing backlogs as quickly as is reasonably possible, and will ensure that as much incoming material is catalogued to international standards as soon as reasonably possible after receipt .

All collections held as at May 2013 will have a collection level description by May 2018 at the latest, with collections acquired since May 2013 having a collection level description within one month of receipt.

Cataloguing priority action plans will be implemented as described above and will be reviewed annually during service planning.

The Service will also seek to publish guides to its holdings to improve and encourage access to the collections.

The Service will work with colleagues in the region and nationally to develop a 'joined up' approach to increasing access to the collections and will take part in initiatives such as the Archives Hub and projects under the auspices of the UK Archives Discovery Network. It will supply copies of completed archive catalogues to the National Register of Archives.

The Service will work with University staff facilitating student work placements, with local heritage groups and other societies, and with individuals, to undertake cataloguing, transcription and indexing which provide added value to cataloguing information.

The Service will improve and add to existing information about individual items or groups of items on an ad hoc basis, including the addition of digital images, the results of research, new interpretations of items or retrospective documentation. This is most likely to be as the outcome of externally-funded projects, as identified in the Collections Development Strategy (2014).

Archival collections

Archival collections will be catalogued to a minimum of collection (*fonds*) and series level, following the principles of "More Product Less Process" which aims to make the maximum number of catalogue records available to users in the minimum amount of time.[4] The same high quality of research and description is undertaken as in "traditional" cataloguing, but at the higher levels of hierarchy – meaning that groups or series of records are described, rather than individual files and documents. Additional information may be added at lower levels where the size, significance, access arrangements or other needs of an archival collection warrants this kind of intensive processing at item or piece level. Examples may be individual items which are potentially valuable on the open market would be referenced at piece level for security reasons; digitised items may require an item-level catalogue record for maximum ease of use and for digital image metadata to be processed most efficiently. Information created during a survey or boxlisting exercise will be re-purposed at appropriate levels of description.

Indexing

As many name authority files for corporate, family, individual and place names and subject/term authority files will be attached to catalogue records of archival collections at the higher levels of hierarchy during the cataloguing process. Linked Data and other standards will be used to enable data exchange with international and national portals. Subject/term authority files will be attached to catalogue records for special collections.

Procedures

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[4] Greene, M.A. and Meissner, D *More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing* (*American Archivist* 68) http://archivists.metapress.com/content/c741823776k65863/

The Service will maintain and regularly review its procedures for cataloguing, ensure that staff are fully trained in them, and will undertake periodic quality checking of the implementation of these procedures. These will cover

- The use of Calm cataloguing templates and security settings to promote compliance with standards and best professional practice;
- Establishing appropriate levels of authority control and indexing;
- Location control during the cataloguing process;
- Appraisal during the cataloguing process and deaccessioning;
- Storage and preservation activities during the cataloguing process eg. quarantining, digital preservation activities, re-packaging.

Collections information in use: policy statements[5]

The Service Access Policy covers statutory rights of access to information, restrictions and other practical matters for users. This section describes the use and development of collections information.

The Service will use the Calm collections management modules to manage information about locations, loans and conservation of individual items; these databases will be linked to catalogue records for archives at appropriate levels of description. The use of the locations and loans modules in particular will facilitate the annual audit or stocktake.

The Service seeks to develop a virtuous circle of collections information in use. The aim is to ensure that the resources put into cataloguing give audiences information that is accurate, insightful, relevant and accessible. Whilst archival description and finding aids are the most important of access tools, the Service does not presume either to be able or for it to be desirable that the archive catalogue provides a single, authoritative voice on the content, context, meaning and significance of the records it describes.

The Service therefore recognises that information about the collections in its care may be held by others outside the staff or volunteer resources formally connected with the Service. It aims to acknowledge and tap into sources of information, expertise or understanding from outside the Service and to give respect and value to these "other voices" by making newly-revealed information about records permanently accessible to all audiences through enhanced cataloguing, description and interpretation.

The Service will employ a multi-layered and flexible approach which is responsive to and incorporates audience generated input whilst at the same time retaining a definitive status within catalogue records undertaken to professional standards as described above. This will react to the needs and responses of audiences. The Service will also be proactive in improving and adding to existing information about individual items or groups of items on an ad hoc basis, including the addition of digital images, the results of research, new interpretations of items or retrospective documentation. This is most likely to be as the outcome of externally-funded projects, as identified in the Collections Development Strategy.

Different types of information will be handled and attributed as follows:

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[5] The influence of the *Revisiting Archival Collections Toolkit* is acknowledged here (Collections Trust 2009 http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/revisiting-collections/995-revisiting-archive-collections-toolkit)

- *Factual information which can be verified* will be recorded in the catalogue records, with the edit dated and attributed.
- Additional *subject keywords* will be added to catalogue records, or information incorporated into subject guides or their equivalent, without attribution.
- Opinions, narratives, associations, memories or new information which is presented as factual but which cannot be verified will be held, displayed and attributed in a free text system linked to catalogue records. This will ensure that users' responses, personal opinions or interpretations can be read in parallel with the catalogue, but with a clear distinction made between the sources of information.

Procedures

The Service will maintain and regularly review its procedures for the use of collections information, ensure that staff are fully trained in them, and will undertake periodic quality checking of the implementation of these procedures. These will cover:
- Location control whilst items are used by visitors, on exhibition on-site etc;
- Loans in and out;
- Audit and stocktaking;
- Handling user-generated information

Deaccessioning

Appraisal is the process of distinguishing material of continuing value from those of no further value so that the latter may be eliminated. The policy of the Service is to develop and implement strategies which enable robust and coherent appraisal decisions to be made, and that these appraisal decisions are transparent and fully recorded.

Appraisal for archival purposes selects records of the highest archival value, avoiding duplication. All records can be deemed of potential archival value but the Service must be able to preserve and conserve records permanently and must therefore limit its acquisitions to records of the highest archival value supporting the strategic objectives and collection themes of its Acquisition Policy and Collection Development Strategy. Appraisal decisions take account of the provenance of records (the organisational and functional context in which they were created) and their content; the Service will also follow the principles of macro appraisal which encourages organisation-wide analysis of functions as a guide to identifying records of value for business and archival purposes. appropriate for both analogue and digital records.

The Service will record information about appraisal decisions and dispositions relating to archives (as outlined in its Acquisition Policy) at the highest level of archival hierarchy in the catalogue, in keeping with the International Standard for Archival Description (General) – ISAD(G) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 1999), the International Standard on Information and documentation: Records management – Part 1: General (BS ISO 15489-1, 2001) and the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the management of records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (2009)

The Service will document the disposition of special collections materials including the date and staff member involved, the criteria used in appraisal and the disposition methods as outlined in the Acquisition Policy. Such information will be held outside the catalogue (other than recording

disposition of items within a wider collection for which a collection-level record is included in the catalogue); it will be permanently retained.

Procedures

The Service will maintain and regularly review its procedures for the use of collections information, ensure that staff are fully trained in them, and will undertake periodic quality checking of the implementation of these procedures. These will cover:

- Deaccessioning and disposal.

Responsibility for the policy

This policy was approved by the University Research Committee on 11 March 2014.

It will be reviewed and revised in 2018.