

Shropshire Archives
Collections Information Policy
November 2015



Gateway to
the history of
Shropshire
and Telford



1 Introduction

1.1.1 Overview and history

Shrewsbury Corporation established a borough library and museum in 1885, largely through the efforts of the Shropshire Archaeological Society. In 1898 a Records Committee was set up by Salop County Council, initially to report on the records of the clerk of the peace, but an honorary archivist was appointed only in 1934. In 1947, Salop County Council created a Record Office to organise their Quarter Session records and large estate, parish and other official collections, and this appeared to duplicate some of the work of the Shrewsbury Borough Library and Museum. A guide to these holdings was produced in 1952.

The Borough Library became part of the County Library Service in 1974 and its extensive collections formed the basis of a local studies library with a county-wide role. The County Record Office continued to be organised independently but became the principal repository for the vast collection of manuscript material deposited with the County Council. The re-organisation of County Council services in 1988 led to the creation of the Leisure Services Department and the County Record Office and Local Studies Library were finally administratively united as the Records and Research Unit.

1.1.2 Shropshire Archives and the Records Management Service

Further re-organisation in 1995 led to the creation of Shropshire County Council's Information and Community Services Department which funded the £1.8 million project to build the Records and Research Centre. Located in Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, the purpose-built centre has four levels with a total floor space of 1,500 square metres. At the same time a Records Management service was established at Shirehall to manage the records and information created by Shropshire County Council. Following local government reorganisation in 1997, an agreement between Shropshire County Council and Telford and Wrekin Council secured funding to maintain the Service's remit over the historic county.

In 2004 following public consultation, the service was renamed Shropshire Archives, gateway to the history of Shropshire and Telford. In 2009 Shropshire became a unitary council and inherited large quantities of archives and records from the former Borough and District Councils. This meant that additional storage space was required and an out store was established to house both records and archives in 2012.

1.2 Mission Statements

Shropshire Archives will take the lead in preserving and improving access to Shropshire's archives and local history collections in order that individuals and communities can better understand, research and appreciate their heritage.

The Records Management Service will work to ensure that Shropshire Council manages its information and records sources in an appropriate, efficient and economic manner.

1.3 Service Objectives

1.3.1 Objectives –Shropshire Archives

- To fulfil a custodial role in the preservation, acquisition and cataloguing of Shropshire's archives and local history collections

- To promote and provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to use Shropshire's archives and local history collections to better understand, and appreciate their heritage
- To develop and to promote best practice in the preservation, enhancement and use of Shropshire's archives and local history collections
- To develop and to support sustainable partnerships and to enable communities and people to engage, explore, conserve and enjoy their own heritage

1.3.2 Objectives – The Records Management Service

- To ensure that information and records sources are retained only for as long as is necessary for legal compliance and administrative need.
- To develop and promote best practice and legal compliance in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of information and records sources.
- To co-ordinate the selection and offering of records and material to Shropshire Archives, thereby contributing to the corporate memory of Shropshire Council.
- To work with the Information Governance team and the Information Governance Group to ensure Shropshire Council's compliance with legislation relating to information and record keeping.

2 Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to define the information that Shropshire Archives will gather and provide about archival and printed collections. It supports the Mission Statement shown above and should be seen in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy.

The policy outlines the history of collections information and cataloguing within Shropshire Archives and the current cataloguing systems and professional standards used. The policy is supported by the Collections Information Plan which sets out the objectives through which the service will achieve the aims of this policy.

The policy and plan are live, working documents which will be reviewed as and when necessary.

3 Collections Information

Shropshire Archives captures information at various stages during the processing of material, from the point of deposit or purchase through to cataloguing and subsequent work. As an archive and local studies service there are different but related procedures in place for archive and printed material

This policy covers information gathered:

- At the point of deposit and during accessioning
- During cataloguing
- Through location and movement control
- Concerning demand, usage and disposal
- Concerning physical condition, preservation and conservation activities

This information is recorded and maintained in a variety of places and formats. These include but are not limited to:

- Accessions Register (paper and electronic)
- CALM Collections Management Software

- Correspondence files for depositors, which may be used to augment the information found in accessions and catalogue records
- Document request slips
- Locations guide
- Other finding aids, including handlists and specific indexes
- Marking and labelling of objects

4 Point of deposit/Accessioning

4.1 Archives

Since the Record Office was established in 1947 all deposits have been given a unique accession number starting with 1, though in the past accruals were sometimes given the same number with the word 'additional' added.

A deposit or gift agreement is completed for all accessions, unless they are internal transfers or purchases. The agreements are signed by the depositor/donor and the Team Leader Archives. The original is retained by Shropshire Archives and a copy supplied to the depositor/donor. The agreement is legally binding.

There is a legacy of collections received in the past without formal agreements. Shropshire Archives is committed to reducing this backlog and securing appropriate agreements for such collections.

A receipt is also provided to the depositor/donor provided a summary description of the accession.

If depositors//donors wish to provide lists prior to deposit they are encouraged to do so following a standard spreadsheet format which can then be imported directly into CALM.

A paper accession register is maintained but all accessions are now recorded on CALM. The information recorded includes the following:

- Date of receipt of accession
- Name and contact details of depositor/donor
- Accession number, title and summary description of deposit
- Extent of deposit
- Accession category (Gift, Loan, Purchase, Transfer etc.)
- Any access restrictions
- Any copyright restrictions
- Any administrative and custodial history
- Any material in a fragile condition

Shropshire Archives participates in The National Archives' annual Accessions to Repositories Survey to enable up-to-date information to appear on the National Register of Archives. Summaries of significant new accessions also regularly appear in the Salopian Recorder, the Newsletter of the Friends of Shropshire Archives, and in the Transactions of the Shropshire Historical and Archaeological Society.

To comply with Data Protection restrictions and the confidentiality of the agreement made between Shropshire Archives and the depositor/donor, full details of the accessions register will not normally be made available to the public.

4.2 Printed material

An electronic record (Excel spread sheet) is maintained for all items purchased or donated. The information recorded includes the following:

- Date of order
- Date of receipt
- Date of cataloguing
- Author, title, publisher, price
- Acquisition note e.g. donation, purchase

5 Cataloguing (including Accruals) and Indexing

5.1 Archives

5.1.1 Cataloguing

Cataloguing since 1998 has been undertaken using CALM software supported by an in-house Cataloguing Manual. This complies with the following standards:

- The mandatory elements of International Council on Archives, General International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)]
- International Council on Archives, International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families [ISAAR(CPF)]
- National Council on Archives, Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names [NCA Rules]

Prior to the adoption of these standards and the use of CALM, cataloguing was undertaken following a variety of individual styles resulting in great variation in the quality and comprehensiveness of the earlier catalogues and indexes.

Shropshire Archives aims to catalogue parish and non-conformist registers on receipt, as well as smaller accessions (occupying less than half a box), through a combination of staff and volunteer support. External funding is sought to support cataloguing work. Other accessions and backlog collections are prioritised based on demand and availability and skill levels of staff and volunteers.

5.1.2 Accruals

Accruals to existing collections are catalogued separately but linked to previous deposits from the same source through their finding numbers, hierarchical arrangement in CALM and cross-referencing within the catalogue entries.

5.2 Printed works

All new printed materials are catalogued and added to CALM using a standard template. Cataloguing is undertaken using CALM software supported by an in-house Cataloguing Manual. Periodicals are catalogued as group entries and these are updated to indicate the most recent issue received.

The Dewey classification system is used for some reference works, with Shropshire material catalogued according to the Hobbs classification developed for local studies collections by John Hobbs former Shrewsbury local studies librarian. This system is also followed by all local studies reference collections held by Shropshire Libraries, and their printed material is also held on CALM providing a union catalogue of local studies material.

5.3 Indexing

Shropshire Archives has a number of historic card indexing systems which are available in the searchroom and reading room. These generally cover particular types of record or individual collections. Many have been microfilmed by the National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

All printed material is currently indexed on CALM based on standard term lists for places (using the internally created place authority database on CALM) and subjects (using UKAT terms now integrated onto CALM). Indexing of archive collections on CALM is currently selective, based on need and resources. The development of the online catalogue means that improving this area is now a priority, see also the Collection Information Plan.

5.4 Online catalogues and finding aids

Shropshire Archives has maintained an online catalogue since 2004. This is linked to information from Shropshire Museums and local museums' collections and to the Historic Environment Record. The catalogue includes archives and printed material as well as images. New records are added on a quarterly basis.

Shropshire Archives catalogues are also available on A2A, though some catalogues are still only accessible in hard copy format. Work to convert these is ongoing, see also the Collections Information Plan.

6 Restrictions and closure periods

Shropshire Archives collections include records subject to certain access restrictions or periods during which the records are closed. These may be determined by Data Protection legislation, advice and guidance from The National Archives and the Information Commissioner's Office or imposed by the depositor. Shropshire Council's Information Governance officers provide guidance and advice in this area.

Shropshire Archives reviews existing catalogued collections to ensure that sensitive or personal information is not released. Accession and catalogue entries include information regarding any restrictions on access.

Customers are made aware of any restrictions and their rationale. Archive staff receive regular training in Data Protection and Freedom of Information and follow documented procedures when advising customers.

7 Location and Movement Control including loans

Shropshire Archives aims to maintain up to date information on the locations of all the collections in its care. A location guide provides information on all collection locations within the stores and is kept up to date. A list of missing or mislaid document is maintained.

Depositors or donors wishing to withdraw their own archive material temporarily must complete and countersign a form prepared and signed by Shropshire Archives staff, as well as provide evidence of identity or authorisation to allow such a withdrawal. If relevant, written advice on the display of records is supplied. Regular reviews of the list of withdrawn material ensure that material is returned as agreed.

8 Disposals and Withdrawals.

On deposit, Shropshire Archives captures depositors'/donors' permissions to destroy or transfer to another repository any material that we are unable to keep. Where appropriate, these permissions are reconfirmed prior to disposal. Shropshire Archives records details of any disposals including their rationale.

Shropshire Archives makes use of retention and disposal schedules where appropriate, both for its own disposal decisions and when advising depositors about records recommended for permanent preservation. These schedules include those produced by the County Council, Archives and Records Association, Church of England, and other organisations.

The Records Management Service has developed a retention policy for Shropshire Council records including school records, and for parish and town council records. See the *Collections Development Policy* and the *Collection Development Plan* for further information about disposal of archives.

Depositors are made aware on deposit that if a collection on loan is permanently withdrawn, a charge may be made to cover expenditure on storage, cataloguing, preserving and conserving the records.

This policy was written in November 2015 and will be reviewed in November 2020 or sooner if circumstances dictate.