

WORCESTERSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACQUISITIONS AND DISPOSALS

Paragraph 3.2 of the Historical Manuscripts Commission 'A Standard for Record Repositories' states: 'The Archivist in charge should draw up, and the governing body should approve, a clearly defined statement of collecting policy which indicates the subject areas within which records are sought and acquired, any geographical restriction affecting the scope of material collected and the various media for which appropriate storage and access facilities are provided'.

The Record Office will seek to develop general guidelines to help in the identification of those items most likely to be worthy of permanent preservation. Where appropriate, use will be made of existing guidelines developed by such bodies as the British Records Association. The Record Office will seek to ensure that the acquisition of collections reflects the broadest social, economic and ethnic range of the life and work of Worcestershire people and institutions, past and present.

POLICY STATEMENT: the following shall be the Acquisition Policy for the Worcestershire Record Office:

A: Introduction

The Worcestershire Record Office is:

- Approved by the National Archives as the agent of the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs for the deposit of specified classes of public records under the terms of the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967
- Recognised by the Master of the Rolls for the deposit of manorial and tithe records
- Designated by the Diocese of Worcester as the Diocesan Record Office and thereby the repository for the deposit of Anglican parish records under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992)
- Empowered under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 to acquire by deposit, gift or purchase other archive collections.

B: Type of material to be accrued

1. The Record Office aims to:

- a) make proper arrangements for the care of the records of its parent authority and predecessor authorities, as required by the Local Government Act 1974;
- b) receive appropriate deposits of records under the Public Records Acts;
- c) act as Diocesan repository for the Diocese of Worcester and in particular to receive deposits, or arrange for deposit at repositories

acting as its agents, of material covered by the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978;

- d) locate and preserve all records from private sources, which it judges worthy of preservation, relating to social, economic, political and ecclesiastical activity in the defined area of collection (see Section C) with the aim of ensuring their long term preservation and their use, both now and in the future;
 - e) acquire, by purchase or otherwise, copies of records held elsewhere which complement the main collection and bear on activities relating to the area of collection.
2. The Record Office recognises that other bodies and institutions will hold and seek to acquire Worcestershire material. It therefore aims to co-operate with such other bodies holding their own records, or maintaining special collections relating to a particular subject, so as to encourage the preservation of the material and access to and use of it. (As appropriate it will act in an advisory role to bodies and communities which wish to maintain their own records but require guidance and expertise). In this way it will avoid duplication and conflict, but nevertheless will assert its primacy where it considers it has an overriding claim.
 3.
 - a) The material accrued will be in the form of printed or manuscript items on paper or parchment, maps and plans, photographs, microforms, audio tapes, photocopies, videos, electronic or other computer media (e.g. printout tape, disk, optical disk) and all other relevant archival formats. In the case of electronic and computer media where the long-term preservation status has not yet been established, and in the case of audio and video tapes, microforms and photographs where irreversible deterioration may be present, the Record Office reserves the right to adopt suitable migration policies to ensure the continued readability and long-term preservation of the material concerned.
 - b) The Record Office does not normally have a special interest in the acquisition of published material except where it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotation, or is of value as a research aid. Nor does it normally have an interest in the acquisition of works of art (with the exception of maps and topographic drawings or prints) or other objects.

C: Areas of collection

1. The Office will hold material covering activities in the current administrative area of Worcestershire, geographic areas formerly in the county of Worcestershire and its constituent authorities, and the Diocese of Worcester. It will not seek to collect new material from areas no longer within the administrative area. Its responsibility for the archives of the former County of Hereford and Worcester means that it will hold material relating to areas within the present Unitary Authority of Herefordshire.
2. Existing arrangements for diocesan material in the Dudley and Himley Deaneries within the Worcester Diocese shall not be held to prejudice the Office's primary responsibility for these diocesan archives.

3. The nature of the archive collections will dictate that the Office will hold material relating to other areas, and conversely that material relating to this area will be held by other collecting bodies. The exchange of lists and use of copying will help resolve any problems.
4. In the case of collections relating to areas on or near the borders of the Office's area the arrangement of consulting individual or local preference will continue, but without prejudice to the appropriateness of the repository and the principles of archival integrity.

D: Methods of Acquisition (see also separate policy on Terms of Deposit)

1. The Record Office will acquire records:
 - By means of the statutory obligations and powers itemised in the Introduction
 - By responding to ad hoc approaches from owners and custodians of documents for their deposit or donation
 - By active outreach, including planned and ad hoc survey work. This activity will be defined annually within the Unit Business Plan
 - By occasional purchase by private treaty or at auction.
2. Documents will normally only be accepted if they are to be available for public inspection either immediately after processing or at the expiry of an agreed definite period of closure (which may be because of statutory or appropriate personal considerations).
3. The Record Office will not normally accept collections it cannot preserve and maintain in an appropriate British Standard environment.

E: Disposals

1. All collections will be assessed either prior to donation or deposit or, by agreement, at a later date, and the Record Office reserves the right to refuse, return or recommend for destruction any material not deemed to be appropriate for permanent preservation.
2. In the case of collections already accepted, that were not so assessed at the time either of their original acceptance or before listing, the Record Office will, where necessary, carry out such assessment at a later date. Regard will be given to the views of the original donor or depositor as appropriate and possible.
3. Subject to the overriding principle of the integrity of the archives, the Record Office will, where appropriate and after consultation with the donor or depositor, transfer archive materials to more suitable repositories.
4. There shall be a strong presumption against the disposal of records accepted into the repository on the basis of the considerations and procedures set out in section 'D' above.

F: Collection Development

1. In order to meet the policy aim of reflecting as broad a picture of the history of Worcestershire as possible, the Record Office will seek to concentrate on perceived areas of weakness in the collections as well as seeking to maintain areas of strength. The assessment of strength and weakness will take account of both geographical and subject area considerations.
2. It may be appropriate from time to time, where a collection has been accepted on the basis of its being a particular local example of the records generated by an activity, to reassess its retention should a similar, but better quality, example become available, or where a similar collection is offered as a gift where the existing collection is held as a loan.
3. The identification of a strength in the holdings of the Record Office does not mean that it is not interested in acquiring further important collections when opportunity arises (e.g. certain local family archives).
4. An assessment of the current strengths and weaknesses is appended and will be reviewed from time to time.

G: Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically, and in any case within five years, to ensure its continuing applicability. As a working document it may, however, be subject to modification depending on local circumstances pending a formal review.

Approved by the General Purposes Committee : 25 September 1991

Adopted by Worcestershire County Council :19 November 1997

Revised May 2003, Approved by Members January 2004

APPENDIX (as at July 2003)

Areas of strength

Perceived strengths in the existing collections are:

- Quarter Sessions records
- Magistrates' Courts records
- Local Authority (County and District Councils) records
- Town and parish council records
- Records of former Boroughs
- Ecclesiastical parish records
- Diocesan records
- Poor Law records
- Nonconformist churches, particularly Methodist and Society of Friends, records
- Family and estate records
- Solicitors' records
- Photographs of the county
- Oral history records
- Hospital and mental health records, including nursing and practice records
- Political organisations' records
- Police records
- Coroner's records (late 20th cent. onwards)
- Personal journals and diaries

Areas of weakness

Perceived weaknesses in the county-wide coverage include:

- Business archives of many significant local trades and industries
- Charities
- Voluntary Sector organisations
- School log books
- Trades Union records
- Many less main stream Non-conformist churches
- Minority ethnic and religious bodies (especially non-Christian)
- Agricultural and farming records
- Records of sporting clubs and societies
- Military records (personal and individual)
- Records of artistic and cultural organisations and individuals
- Architectural records
- Petty Sessional records
- Personal and family papers of the 20th century

The Record Office will seek to address these perceived weaknesses by making them known as widely as possible through outreach activities, through planned survey work and by direct approach to potential depositors/donors.