



worcestershire county council

STANDARD FOR ACCESS TO ARCHIVE SERVICES

SUMMARY OF THE STANDARD AS ADOPTED BY WRO

Scope: The Standard defines quality in archive access services. Access services are the means by which records are offered for use either directly or indirectly through mediation. Legal rights to access records are not within the scope of this standard.

Definitions: The standard is based on the concept of a *community* which the archive service is constituted to serve. This community may extend beyond the formal boundaries of its responsible body. The archive will probably serve multiple communities. *Stakeholders* are persons, corporate bodies or defined groups with an interest in the present and future activities of the service. These include depositors and future users (the purpose of the preservation of the records).

General principles:

- The WRO shall subscribe to the aims and spirit of the standard. In implementing the standard the WRO shall in its interpretation be guided by the aims and spirit rather than a narrow interpretation of the text.
- The WRO shall aim to serve its community as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- The WRO shall seek to serve all of its community, devising a range of services appropriate to the community's stated or implied needs.
- The WRO shall aim to encourage as much access by users to primary source material as is compatible with the permanent preservation of unique and irreplaceable material. There should be a presumption of openness and any restrictions should conform to tightly defined criteria.
- The WRO shall define the objectives it is seeking to achieve, and consult with stakeholders to develop and review that definition. The satisfaction of users shall be amongst the primary objectives.
- The WRO shall explicitly plan to achieve those objectives and consult with stakeholders in developing that plan.
- The WRO shall have systems to measure its performance against its plans. These may include recording systems, logs and paper-trails as well as numerical performance data.
- The WRO shall have user feedback mechanisms and complaints procedures, and clear channels of communication to and from other stakeholders.
- The WRO shall explicitly respond in its plans to over- and under-performance and to stakeholder feedback to maintain an appropriate balance of resources over the full range of objectives.
- The WRO shall communicate to stakeholders its definition of stakeholders, its objectives, its plans, its performance, the means of communicating with it, and its response to feedback.
- Access services function through processes in which the user is an active participant and in which the user has responsibilities as well as rights. The WRO shall communicate and if necessary enforce these responsibilities.
- The WRO shall ensure that all requirements of the standard are auditable.

Main provisions:

1. Access aims and objectives:

- It is clear whom the WRO is intended to serve.
- It is clear what the WRO is intending to achieve in providing access to its collections.

2. Key principles: equity:

- The WRO is aiming to satisfy users throughout its community.
- The WRO does not discriminate against any member of its community

3. Key principles: communication and openness:

- The WRO has open, effective two-way communications with its community.
- The WRO's access service policies are available for scrutiny and comment.

4. Key principles: responsiveness:

- The WRO responds effectively to comments and complaints from users.
- The WRO regularly reviews stakeholders' assessments of its performance and makes improvements where possible.
- The policies of the WRO reflect the views and interests of its stakeholders.

5. Key principles: effectiveness and efficiency:

- The WRO is managed so as to provide best value for money for its stakeholders.
- The WRO innovates to deliver better services and achieve best value. It actively manages risk when doing so.
- The WRO regularly reviews the effectiveness of its actions in achieving its aims, and makes improvements where possible.

6. Service management:

- It is clear who is responsible for the service and how they can be contacted.

7. Staff participation and responsibilities:

- Everyone at the WRO is involved in delivering the right service to users.
- The staff are guided by clear standards of service.
- All staff providing services are individually identifiable.
- The service is provided by staff who have been fully trained for their jobs, or who are supervised trainees.
- Most service delivery problems are resolved by staff at the interfaces.

8. User responsibilities:

- Users are aware of their responsibilities in helping to ensure the preservation of archival material.
- Users treat staff courteously and respect conditions regarding the use and acknowledgement of information from the WRO.
- Users show respect for other users.

9. Service information:

- The WRO is known by the community it serves.
- Anyone with a potential interest in the WRO can easily find out about it.
- Users understand their rights of access to the services of the WRO.

10. Access to services:

- Information on the practical arrangements for access to services is made available to users.
- Users are easily able to find the WRO.
- Services are available at the times when the community requires them.

11. Access to content:

- Users are able to find specific records and items of interest in the WRO.
- There is reasonable access for anyone to consult finding aids.
- Users have a choice in the means of access to content.
- Restrictions on access to content are clearly communicated to users.
- Users are able to obtain copies of relevant materials or are given clear reasons where restrictions are imposed.
- The community benefits from the content in ways other than direct access.
- Where enquiries cannot be answered at the WRO, staff do their best to refer them accurately to an appropriate source.

12. Services for new researchers:

- Service design allows new researchers (remote or on-site) to make full use of the WRO with confidence and with the minimum of delay.

13. On-site service delivery:

- Researchers are able to get access to services
- Researchers are accommodated appropriately when they visit the WRO.
- The environment for consulting documents is appropriate to the nature of the material.
- WRO processes and standards are clearly explained and readily intelligible to the user.

14. Remote service delivery:

- Users can find out about content without visiting.
- Remote access services are being developed to open up the content to a wider range of users.