

University of Manchester Library

Collections Information Policy (Archives)

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this policy is to set out the objectives and processes by which the Library creates, maintains and makes available information/metadata about its archive collections.

The UML has custody of archive collections of international significance. These date from the medieval era to the present day, and currently comprise over one thousand collections. The archive collections cover a wealth of subject areas and can support research and learning in a wide range of fields.

The creation of high quality information about our archive collections serves two major purposes: it improves the discoverability and accessibility of the collections to our users; and it enables the Library to manage its collections more effectively, supporting their security and preservation and the efficient use of resources.

Collections information

Information is acquired and created at various points in each collection's custodial lifecycle. Some of this information is created according to external and/or in-house standards; other information may be created more informally, but it will nevertheless need to be integrated with other collection information to ensure that a full and accurate record of the collection is maintained.

Collection information may be created by the following processes:

- Acquisition
- Accessioning
- Cataloguing and indexing
- Location management
- Usage management
- Preservation management

Systems

The Library employs a variety of technical systems to create and manage information about its archive collections. We recognise the importance of ensuring these systems are intellectually connected, even if technical integration and interoperability is not possible.

The Library uses EMu collection management software as its main system for managing information about its Special Collections. EMu is used as an internal management tool to create integrated information about:

- collections (Catalogue module);
- accessions (Accession Lots module),
- locations and storage (Locations module);
- collection care (Conservation module);
- external loans (Loans module);
- people/organizations (Parties module).

The Multimedia module used to associate documents/images etc. which cannot be directly integrated into the EMu database. EMu is therefore our main source of information about our archive collections.

CRM (customer relationship management) software is used to collect, collate and manage information about enquiries and reading room use of special collections materials.

Preservica digital preservation software is used to store and manage our digital archive collections. Preservica creates and maintains technical and administrative metadata about digital collections for the purposes of the ingest, preservation and dissemination of that digital content. Externally-created (descriptive) metadata about digital content can also be associated with internally-created metadata in Preservica.

Oxygen XML editing software is used to create Guide to Special Collections entries and EAD-XML finding aids. EAD finding aids are uploaded to the JISC Archives Hub, although the Library has local administrative control of its data for purposes of uploading and revising its on-line catalogues; our microsite has the sobriquet of 'ELGAR' (ELectronic Gateway to Archives at the Rylands).

Accessioning

All incoming archive collections are recorded in the EMu Accession Lots module. This includes both analogue and digital collections. Each accession record captures information about the creator/donor of the archive, content, quantity, access conditions, physical condition and the mode of acquisition.

Our accession records date back to 1996 when Special Collections introduced a formal accessions register, in the form of an Access database. Accessions before this date were not recorded in a single register. Although we do not retroactively accession pre-1996 collections, we have undertaken several exercises to locate information about the acquisition and provenance of pre-1996 collections, and this information has now been captured in the relevant collection's EMu Catalogue record.

Other information may be created during the course of the acquisition process: surveys, inventories, photographs of collections etc. This is linked to the Accession record using EMu Multimedia records module.

Since 1998 accessions have been reported annually to the National Archives and are recorded in Accessions to Repositories.

Ownership

The Library acquires archive collections through donation, bequest, deposit (indefinite or fixed-term loan), purchase and (in the case of University archives) internal transfer. Donations and bequests are recorded in a formal Donation Agreement and deposits in a Loan Agreement. Copies of these agreements and any associated correspondence with donors and depositors are lodged in the individual physical collection file and/or in the relevant EMu record.

Catalogue information (internal)

All archive collections are recorded and described in EMu's Catalogue module.

In addition to standard descriptive metadata, Catalogue records include enhanced information about locations, access and permissions, and collated information about existing documentation about each collection held by the Library and elsewhere. Catalogue records are linked to other EMu

records which record relevant information about the collection: accessions, locations, loans, and conservation work.

Currently, EMu is not well configured to record information about digital archives. Information particular to digital archives is therefore recorded in Digital Processing Manifest records which are created for each digital archive (both pure born-digital and hybrid collections). These records include information about constituent digital media, forensic imaging actions, file formats, checksum creation etc. Information about more complex digital archives is captured in the Digital Processing Checklist document. These documents are linked to the relevant Catalogue record as Multimedia records. In addition, descriptive and administrative metadata about digital archives can be associated with the technical and administrative metadata which is automatically created when digital archives are ingested into Preservice, our digital preservation repository.

Catalogue information (public)

The Library creates a range of publicly available information about its archive collections.

Summary guide

Our most significant collections are described in the Library's Guide of Special Collections, www.library.manchester.ac.uk/search-resources/special-collections/guide-to-special-collections/. This provides a summary overview of a collection with links to more detailed finding aid information.

Cataloguing

The Library aims to create informative and accessible finding aids for all its archive collections. These can range from box or interim lists which provide an inventory of a collection through to detailed multi-level catalogues which follow accepted archival standards for description and indexing. Most public catalogues are created in EAD-XML format for upload onto ELGAR (see below); this catalogue metadata is also integrated into the EMu Catalogue record, where applicable.

Standards and training

Comprehensive cataloguing training is provided in-house for newly appointed archivists, para-professional staff and volunteers. One of our archivists has a matrix responsibility for cataloguing training. We have produced a detailed *EAD Training Guide* (originally created in 2010 and last updated in 2018). In addition, there is a highly detailed *Guide to the Listing of Archives*, produced in 2004. Although some sections of the latter are now obsolete, it contains useful information on many individual EAD elements, and guidelines for cataloguing specific formats such as title deeds and photographic materials.

We will update the *Guide to the Listing of Archives* to ensure that it is fully up to date by 2023.

The Library adheres to the following standards for the description and indexing of archives:

- General International Standard Archival Description 2nd edition
- Encoded Archival Description version 2002
- National Council on Archives, *Rules for the construction of personal, family and place names* (1997)
- Library of Congress Subject Headings

Publication of finding aids

In addition to the Guide to Special Collections, detailed catalogues are made available on ELGAR, our public archives catalogue. Currently ELGAR includes over 850 multi-level archive catalogues. ELGAR

is part of the JISC Archives Hub, and our catalogues are also available on the central Hub, and by extension, Archives Portal Europe.

Collection-level descriptions of archives on ELGAR are also made available on the Library's general catalogue, Library Search.

Collection and finding aid information is also supplied to the National Archives' Discovery catalogue.

Retrospective conversion

In addition to creating new catalogues, the Library has been working to convert older manual and digital finding aids into EAD-XML format, bringing them into line with current descriptive standards and making them available on ELGAR. Substantial progress has been achieved with this work with over two-thirds of existing finding aids having been converted.

Usage information

The Library collects data on the usage of ELGAR finding aids and on archive collections consulted in the Special Collections reading rooms. The Archives Hub supplies monthly statistics of views of our online catalogues on ELGAR and the central Hub, created using Google Analytics. We collect information on use of collections using our CRM (customer relationship management) software; this tracks both collections and component items which researchers have consulted in the reading rooms and which have been used to answer remote enquiries.

Cataloguing Priorities

Since 2011 the Library has used a cataloguing prioritisation methodology to identify uncatalogued and under-catalogued collections, and determine priorities for future cataloguing work. The methodology evaluates collections for their potential significance for research, teaching and learning, and public engagement activities, along with current and desired levels of cataloguing for the collection. This provides a 'score' of cataloguing priority for each collection.

The methodology is currently being updated for a new collections analysis exercise, which will inform future cataloguing activity.

The Library will continue to seek external and internal funding for cataloguing work, and the results of the collections analysis exercise will be used to support funding applications for new cataloguing projects.

Deaccessioning

Please see the Special Collections Deaccessioning Policy for collections information created by our deaccessioning procedures.

Preservation/Conservation

Please see the Special Collections Preservation Policy for collections information created by our conservation/preservation activities.

Review

This policy has been approved by the Special Collections Group. It will be reviewed every three years.

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