

East Riding Archives

Collections Information Policy

East Riding Archives collects the archives and written heritage of the East Riding, its communities and its people. We preserve this unique collective memory for present and future generations. We encourage and support the use of our collections by everyone for research, learning and enjoyment.

1. Introduction

The East Riding Archives (ERA) exists to collect, preserve and make available the archive and local studies collections in the custody of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

ERA recognises that maintaining accurate and appropriate information about the records in its care is essential to promote efficient collections management and to improve public access.

The purpose of this policy is to define the information that ERA will gather and create about its collections. The policy includes acquisition, accession, appraisal and cataloguing of records and also how information relating to these processes is made available.

Records are defined as manuscripts, printed works, newspapers, typescripts, maps, plans, photographs, postcards, computer generated records, sound and digital archives and any other formats that form an integral and organic part of the archives of an organisation or individual.

2. Acquisitions

ERA will only acquire records that come within the terms of its Collections Development Policy.

Records may be acquired by deposit, gift, transfer or purchase. A deposit means that the ownership of the records is retained by the depositor while custody of them is transferred to ERA. A gift is an outright donation to the East Riding Archives in which ownership of the records is transferred to East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

Copies of records may be acquired if the owner does not wish to deposit or donate the original items.

Each depositor and donor is provided with a receipt signed by staff giving summary information about their records and a formal agreement giving the terms of deposit or gift.

Maintaining contact with depositors and donors of early or small collections has been a difficult area for us in common with other similar archive services. Depositors and donors since 2004 have been asked to inform ERA about changes in contact details and records ownership as part of the terms of their agreements with us. We also contact them when cataloguing work is completed or requests are made to use images from their collections.

Records are accepted on the basis that they will be made available for public access (subject to being fit for production) as soon as possible or from a specified date, which may be at the end of a statutory closure period or one agreed with the Treasure House & Archives Manager.

Possible restrictions to public access are discussed with depositors and donors at the time of acquisition or when the records have been listed depending on the content and size of the collection. ERA will also provide access to information in records in its custody within the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Depositors and donors of digital records are asked to provide supporting technical information if possible and confirm that records can be copied and migrated for preservation purposes.

3. Accessioning

Recording accurate and appropriate information about the provenance of the records that we hold is important to maintain the integrity of the collections and answer enquiries about them.

Each collection is given a unique accession number at the time of receipt and this is used to manage the records until they are listed. This number is also included on the agreement and receipt relating to the records.

Information about each accession is recorded in our accession registers and CALM database. This includes the terms of deposit, covering dates for the collection, summary of its contents, extent in cubic metres, restrictions on access or copying and date the records were received.

Details about the source of the accession and contact information are also recorded in the database. This information is confidential and it is not therefore available to researchers.

ERA has recorded current accessions information on this database since 2001. Details about collections received before then have also been added from earlier accession registers and paper lists. The database includes therefore some information about collections from 1950 onwards although there is often less detail available for earlier accessions.

4. Appraisal

Appraisal of collections is important in our aim to hold records that reflect all aspects of life in the East Riding past and present covering as many communities, individuals and organisations as possible. It is necessary to make the most effective use of our resources. It also balances the interests of depositors and donors with the needs of researchers and the wider community.

Records are assessed according to their value for evidential, legal or business purposes as well as for being a resource for current and future research. Emphasis is placed on keeping primary records in a collection to avoid repetition of information. The contents of new accessions may also be reviewed with reference to existing collections to avoid duplication of sources.

Records may be appraised by staff at the point of acquisition, during the accessioning process or when they are being arranged and listed. Depositors and donors are also encouraged to check through records before bringing them in to remove multiple copies and unrelated items.

We will select for disposal any items not deemed suitable for permanent preservation or not within the terms of the ERA Collections Development Policy. These will be returned, destroyed confidentially or transferred elsewhere in accordance with the wishes of depositors and donors.

Digital records, digitised copies and analogue media will be assessed for their preservation needs and migrated to a more suitable format and storage medium as required. Copies are also made for preservation purposes and public access, these are then reviewed every five years. Further work is required to develop our plans for a digital repository and our procedures for processing digital records.

5. Cataloguing

Cataloguing our collections is essential so that we can manage efficiently the information they contain and provide public access. Listing priorities are assessed each year and included in our annual service plan, supported by a more strategic based three year service development plan.

We have been cataloguing our collections on our CALM database since 2000, supported by an in-house CALM Cataloguing Manual. All listing since then conforms to current professional standards including the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)].

Summary collection level descriptions of all our catalogued holdings are available on the CALM database with more detailed information being given on the levels below. This includes finding number, extent in cubic metres or physical unit, date, record title, description and restrictions on access or copying. Information about digital records also includes their original format and storage medium as well as details about work for preservation purposes and public access.



Depositors and donors are provided with paper or electronic lists of their records depending on their preference. Information about recently listed collections is also added to our East Riding Archives Online Catalogue to enable public access. All of our old paper based lists were added to the Online Catalogue by 2004. This means that the Online Catalogue now provides comprehensive coverage for every catalogued collection that we hold.

Volunteers have made a significant contribution to the information in our Online Catalogue and continue to do so. This includes improving existing catalogue entries by adding more detail and creating new entries by abstracting information about people or subjects from various records.

ERA in common with other archive services has a backlog of unlisted archives and this is a major barrier to public access. The backlog has been more actively managed since 2007 with staff dedicated specifically to cataloguing. This has enabled work to be completed on a variety of collections. New accessions of frequently used records such as parish, school and parish council are generally now catalogued on arrival. Other small collections are usually listed within a year by the cataloguing staff to avoid adding to the backlog. The remaining unlisted collections were surveyed in 2015 and work relating to these is now part of our service plans.

Summary information about newly deposited or donated collections is also provided each year for the annual Accessions to Repositories Survey, organised by The National Archives.

6. Withdrawals

Depositors can withdraw records temporarily for an agreed period if needed for example for use in an exhibition. Advance notice of this is encouraged and permission in writing from the depositor is required. Records on deposit also can be withdrawn permanently. The depositor then may be asked for reasonable costs for storage and any cataloguing or conservation work.

7. Links with other Policies

This policy should be read with reference to the following:

East Riding Archives Collections Development Policy
East Riding Archives Collections Access and Engagement Policy
East Riding Archives Collections Care and Conservation Policy

This policy also links to the ERA Collections Management Manual which includes the acquisition, accession, appraisal, arrangement and cataloguing of archives and printed sources.

8. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary to take into account any changed circumstances.