



# Cataloguing Strategy

**2014-2018**

## **Cataloguing Strategy 2014-2018**

### **A - Strategy Aims**

Cataloguing is a core responsibility of the Archive Service. Through this cataloguing strategy, West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) aims to achieve a strategic, managed and flexible approach to creating new and improved information about the collections in our care, and to make this information available to the widest possible audience. This applies to traditional archive collections and born digital archives.

### **B – Background**

Through cataloguing, we maintain a record of our archival holdings and provide the tools for people of all ages and backgrounds to find out about themselves and their communities and to develop an appreciation of their own history and identity.

Uncatalogued collections are a significant barrier to WYAS's aim of opening up access to the history of the region. Keeping a bulk of unsorted, uncatalogued collections also incurs WYAS unnecessary expense in storing material which may be suitable for transfer or disposal. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 has imposed an imperative on local authorities generally to sort and document properly all records in their care to which access may be sought. This includes most archival records held by WYAS.

In common with many established record offices in the UK, WYAS has a growing accumulation of material which is not catalogued and therefore not easily accessible to the increasing numbers of users undertaking historical research. New accessions of material also arrive continually, needing to be appraised (evaluated for permanent retention as archives), sorted and described.

Cataloguing is a crucial part of our public service as it improves both the quantity and quality of users' research, and aids the answering of enquiries by WYAS staff. This strategy continues and progresses the work outlined in previous cataloguing strategies. It takes a positive, pragmatic and, importantly, a flexible approach in order to maximise available resources for cataloguing.

### **C – What makes a good catalogue?**

For the purposes of this Cataloguing Strategy, a good catalogue is defined as one conforming to current professional standards, namely the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)), and meeting the requirements of the Service's Calm database.

The fundamental multilevel description rules outlined in ISAD(G) specify:

1. Description from the general to the specific

2. Information relevant to the level of description
3. Linking of descriptions
4. Non-repetition of information

The six essential elements of any catalogue are as follows:

- Reference number(s) [Calm FindingNo and RefNo]
- Title
- Creator (i.e. entity (person/organisation) responsible for creating the records)
- Covering date(s)
- Extent (normally given in cubic metres or description of physical unit, e.g. bundle)
- Level of description, e.g. collection, section, item

In order to make catalogue information available to the widest possible audience, new cataloguing work will, wherever possible, be incorporated directly into the Service's Calm database and made accessible over the Internet. However, it is recognised that interim box listing (see PATH 6) can provide more immediately a local means of access to large collections, even before they are fully catalogued.

Other standards and templates used in the construction of new and revised catalogues include the International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families (ISAAR(CPF)) and the National Council on Archives Rules for the construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names, together with WYAS Service internal standards for the arrangement and description of archives. Processing methodologies for born-digital collections are designed to work within the framework of the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO14721:2012).

WYAS continually works on enhancing the quality of collections information available to the public and for instance has made significant progress in its development of Calm. An image database was installed in 2009 and over 5700 images have been added to date. The public facing side of our catalogue is regularly upgraded to new, more user-friendly versions and a public image gallery has been developed to showcase images from themed collections.

The potential for public participation in collections enhancement work could be highly significant if developed effectively. WYAS is exploring the use of 'crowdsourcing' techniques as a way of harnessing the power and volume of the public's knowledge and experience. There is great potential, and indeed a willingness from online users, to contribute to our online resources in a variety of ways, such as adding to collections descriptions and contributing to wikis.

## **D – Achieving our Aims**

WYAS has identified nine paths towards achieving our cataloguing aims. Details of the cataloguing projects can be found separately.

### PATH 1: Cataloguing Projects

These are distinct cataloguing projects, led by WYAS's professional archivists. Given the funding bid to the HLF for a new building for WYAS, Wakefield, the focus of cataloguing projects will be the records of WYAS, Wakefield.

### PATH 2: Collections Weeks – Local Authority Archives

WYAS hold very numerous and sizeable local authority archives, which are often housed in outstores. Due to size and location of this material, and the need to maintain our public opening hours, it can be difficult cataloguing the material without setting aside specific blocks of time. WYAS will therefore continue to seek permission for the closure of public searchrooms for two weeks during each calendar year (usually in March and November). Such 'collections weeks' are conceived as an opportunity to make a concerted and co-ordinated effort towards improving the documentation of, and hence access to, local authority archives.

The stated objectives of collections weeks are:

- To achieve demonstrable progress in documenting local authority archives at each office
- To inform future planning for improving access to local authority archives
- To build on previous work towards a unified, Service-wide approach to the archival appraisal, sorting and classification of local authority records

Local authority collections form the backbone of WYAS holdings and are of particular importance as local authorities themselves are subject to the Freedom of Information access regime. The emphasis of collection works will, therefore, continue to be on these collections, including school records.

### PATH 3: External Funding Bids

Some collections are so large they cannot be easily undertaken within our existing resources. We will continually seek opportunities for grant funding to enable us to undertake these large scale cataloguing projects, and will look to take part in any regional cataloguing initiatives.

### PATH 4: Collections under 0.2 M<sup>2</sup>

An audit in 2003 (See ABL Cultural Consulting *West Yorkshire Archive Service: Priorities for Collections Storage and Access* February 2004) identified strategic priorities for the Service. One of these was to identify small collections under 0.2 cubic metres (a maximum of 10 archive boxes) with the aim of cataloguing these small collections. With the accrual of new deposits this principle remains sound today and locally based staff will continue to catalogue small deposits as part of their background work.

#### PATH 5: Optical Character Recognition (OCR) of paper catalogues

The manual retro-conversion of paper catalogues into Calm which was a priority 2000-2012 has been replaced by the more productive use of OCR software. This is the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text, which can then be inputted into Calm. Despite the need for staff to check format and text, this does increase significantly the number of catalogues and entries being added to WYAS database for public use through Calmview.

#### PATH 6: Surveys, box listing and collection arrangement

An accurate survey or box list is better than none at all, and is quicker and easier to produce than a fully structured catalogue. Other large collections already have a temporary box list but require the final, formal arrangement to be implemented. Guided by the results of a national audit of uncatalogued collections called 'Great Escape!' each office has an identified priority list of collections to which access can be immediately improved by box listing or final arrangement.

#### PATH 7: Collections Development Work

Each year, professionally qualified and paraprofessional staff within the service, will identify collections development project. The aim is to develop a coherent Service-wide framework to support ongoing cataloguing and collections management work; for example, writing appraisal and cataloguing guidelines for specific categories of records.

#### PATH 8: Collections promotion

The collections are the basis of any archive service and much skill, training and experience go into making our collections publicly available. Accessible collections allow an enhanced quality of service for the public. If users and potential users, however, do not know what material we have, important collections can remain under used. Collections promotion will form part of a wider WYAS strategy as directed by the Audience Engagement and Learning Co-ordinator.

#### PATH 9: Born-Digital Collections

Records once created as hard copy are now being created on computer and may only exist in a digital format. Ever changing technology means the challenge to capture and permanently preserve these records is ongoing. What makes something worthy of permanent preservation is governed by its content and not by its format. The techniques, however, involved in managing digital material are very different from traditional archives. A professional member of staff has been given the responsibility of progressing our digital preservation work to ensure that these records are being preserved, made accessible and integrated with our traditional catalogues.

**Review Date**

This strategy covers the period up to 2018 and will be reviewed and updated in early 2019.