



Collections Development Strategy

to 2018

Our Mission

The West Yorkshire Archive Service exists to preserve the past, serve the present and protect the future. We do this by collecting and looking after the unique documentary heritage of the region and by helping members of the public use and enjoy these records.

Preserving the past, serving the present, protecting the future

Our Vision

To provide a welcoming and engaging service that will inspire people to use the archives of West Yorkshire, enabling them to celebrate their identity and understand their past, present and future.

Aims

This Collections Development Strategy is designed to provide a framework for the delivery of the aims of our Collections Development Policy to allow us to understand our collections, to protect our collections and to strengthen our collections to ensure we continue to be able to fulfil our mission to collect, preserve and provide access into the future to the written heritage of West Yorkshire.

Background

WYAS is one of the largest local authority record offices in the country, serving the communities in Leeds, Wakefield, Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees. WYAS is a designated local Place of Deposit under the Public Records Act and serves as Diocesan Record Office for the former Church of England Dioceses of Ripon and Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford and the new Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales (Leeds).

Our collections span over 800 years of history and extend to c.3000 cubic metres. They reflect the key institutions, organisations and industries of our region as well as individuals and local communities. Our collections represent the five local councils and their predecessor bodies, local courts, prisons, police and fire services, hospitals, poor law institutions, religious bodies, large and small businesses, educational institutions, large family and estate collections, community organisations, local charities and local individuals. They tell the stories of local families and people and of the communities and places in which they work and live.

WYAS has five public searchrooms and stores records in seven strongroom locations across the district. Our collections development activities will ensure that our collections continue to reflect the written heritage of our region and our facilities and services continue to allow us to care for and provide access to those collections in ways which best meet the needs of the communities we serve.

Objectives

WYAS's collections development work falls into three main themes, under which a number of key objectives have been identified:

Understanding the collections: Robust and accurate collections information provides vital data for the good management of collecting activities, collections care and provision of access to collections. It allows planning and development work to be carried out in a sustainable manner, allowing best use of resources to provide maximum impact.

- We will seek to collect, create and maintain accurate and detailed collections information to allow us to manage our collections professionally and effectively.
- We will undertake surveys of existing holdings and legacy material to understand our collections to support good collections management decisions.

Protecting the collections: WYAS has a responsibility to preserve and protect the collections it cares for to ensure that we can continue to provide access to the archives for future generations. Our facilities for storage and access, along with our key collections management and access policies and procedures are the tools we use to protect the collections in our care.

- We will continue our ongoing programme of buildings and facilities improvements.
- We will ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place to allow us to manage our collections in line with recognised professional standards and best practice.
- We will undertake proactive collections care activities as part of a managed programme.¹
- We will ensure appropriate access arrangements are in place to allow our communities to engage with and enjoy the heritage we care for on their behalf.

Strengthening the collections: Archive collections are not static and in order to remain relevant to the communities they represent and should continue to grow as current material is added via additional deposits to existing collections or as new material is deposited that has been selected to represent new organisations, industries and individuals that reflect the continuing history of the region.

- We will continue to build and maintain strong relationships with our existing and potential depositors to ensure our collections continue to reflect the history of our region.
- We will use the data we have gathered to understand our collections to enable us to ensure that our collections reflect the full range of institutions, organisations, communities and individuals that make up our region.
- We will continue to research and develop ways to collect, storage, preserve and make accessible born-digital archive material.
- We will support the development of a strong heritage community in West Yorkshire by continuing to work in partnership with other cultural heritage organisations, by continuing to support volunteer activities in our region and by working with our Community Archive Network to provide a framework for good heritage management and best practice sharing.

Achieving our objectives

PATH 1: Improved facilities

WYAS has an ongoing programme to improve and upgrade facilities for both public access and engagement and for the storage of records:

- Central Archive Store (CAS) construction at WYJS Morley (2004)
- WYAS Bradford to Bradford Central Library (2006)

¹ See also the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan framework.

- WYAS Leeds to WYJS Morley (2012)
- WYAS Wakefield to West Yorkshire History Centre (WYHC, 2016)
- WYAS Leeds Nortech store to CAS at WYJS Morley (2016)

We will continue to initiate and support projects to upgrade our collections storage and access facilities, specifically at WYAS Calderdale and Kirklees.

In 2017 the WYAS Calderdale office will be relocating to the new Calderdale Library & Archive building with significant improvements for user access in a building shared with Calderdale Local Studies and Family History, allowing access to multiple resources and reference works for local and family history. The new building is in a key heritage and cultural area with the Halifax Piece Hall and the Square Chapel Centre for the Arts. The Library and Archive's central location puts it close to many cafes, include new facilities in the adjacent Piece Hall building set to reopen in 2017 after a major refurbishment project. The new facility will provide extended storage space, format based storage, Inergen fire suppression and improved air handling to provide PD5454 compliant storage. Collections will all be packaged, condition checked and barcoded as required prior to removal.

We will seek funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in partnership with the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees MBC to create a new storage facility for WYAS Kirklees collections on the University Campus. Public access facilities will be co-located University Special Collections in the award winning Heritage Quay facilities to provide access to Kirklees' archive collections, create opportunities for volunteering, formal and informal learning and exhibitions. As the first stage of the application process has recently been successful, the project partnership will now develop its bid for the funding required. If successful, the Kirklees archive collections will move to the multi-award winning facilities at Heritage Quay on the University campus in 2019.

PATH 2: Good collections information

Surveys

As part of the process of relocating collections and services to improved facilities we have already undertaken extensive surveys of collections at Leeds, Wakefield and Calderdale. These include condition surveys carried out by conservation staff and barcoding surveys to facilitate location and space management. These surveys have provided valuable data on the formats, accurate extent and state of packaging and condition of the collections. They have also yielded additional granular detail on current collections content, on the content of uncatalogued collections and allowed us to review legacy collections in line with our Collection policy and Terms and Conditions of Deposit.

We will continue to record similar information on new material arriving at the Leeds, Wakefield and Calderdale offices to allow us to manage our collections effectively into the future.

We will extend the surveys to collections at Bradford and at Kirklees to provide us with a complete picture of holdings across the service and to facilitate the development of the *WYA Kirklees at Heritage Quay* project.

Good collections information

We will continue to ensure that collections information regarding the terms and conditions of deposit for new accessions and for newly catalogued material is created in line with the standards laid out in our Terms and Conditions of Deposit, our Accessioning procedure documentation, our Collection Policy, our Access to Records Policy and our Cataloguing Policy.

The primary system of record for collections information will be our current Collections Management System, Calm, to ensure up to date and accurate information is available to all staff. We will continue to develop Calmview as our online catalogue to promote collections discovery and access. A professionally qualified archivist post exists with special responsibility for the development of Calm, supported by a senior member of staff.

We will review legacy collections information and update it in line with current standards.

- We will continue to improve collections discovery information for legacy collections across the service in line with the standards described in our Cataloguing Policy via the framework of our Cataloguing Strategy.
- We will identify orphan collections where the identity of the depositor is unclear and seek to make contact with new depositor representatives. If we are unable to do so we will deal with the orphan collection in line with provisions set out in our General Terms and Conditions of Deposit and document the decision making process in Accession records for the collection.

PATH 3: A strong policy framework

We will ensure that collections management, care and access activities are undertaken within a robust policy framework to allow us to meet our professional, statutory and legal responsibilities.

- Our policy framework will conform to current professional standards and best practice.
- The delivery of activities guided by our policy framework will be supported by clear guidance and procedures for staff and users.
- Our policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they continue to meet the needs of our service and our stakeholders.

PATH 4: Keeping collections relevant

We will use collections information data gathered through our surveying activities, along with information on our stakeholders' needs gathered via consultation and

feedback to identify areas where our collections may not fully represent the region. We will work with under-represented communities to ensure that their written heritage is preserved and accessible to future generations.

We will provide clear guidance and information for communities on how they can deposit collections with us, along with information on how to care for their collections within their own communities.

- Via the development of our website and suitable User Guides on donating archive material and caring for collections
- Via the Community Archive Network

PATH 5: Strong depositor relationships

We will continue to ensure we maintain strong relationships with our key stakeholders and depositors to ensure that transfers of current material are made in a timely and efficient manner.

- Through liaison with relevant creating departments and records and information staff in the five District Councils, carried out by the office Archivists in each district
- Via membership of the West Yorkshire Information Management Forum
- Through our engagement activities and partnerships with organisations, depositors and potential depositors
- Through regular contact with key depositing bodies e.g. Church of England Diocese, West Yorkshire Police, local businesses etc.

PATH 6: Volunteers

WYAS has an established history of working with volunteers. Between 2011 and 2016 volunteers helped the conservation team with the packaging of around 10,000 items in preparation for the removal of the WYAS Wakefield collections to WYHC. We have also worked with volunteers in all our offices who have carried out transcription work, provided additional information on collections content through specialist knowledge and skills and who have helped design and develop resources to assist in creating new access points for our collections.

- We will continue to offer short term volunteer roles for specific projects in each of our five offices. Projects and roles will be identified by the archivist at each office and will be designed to support our service objectives.
- We will repeat the Archive Volunteer Programme aimed at people who wish to volunteer in order to gain professional skills and experience, usually with a view to working in the heritage sector or applying to an archives or heritage related course. The Archive Volunteer Programme will incorporate a number of workshops and training sessions as part of the placement to enhance the CV of those attending.

PATH 7: Supporting community archives

WYAS forms one part of a network of cultural and heritage organisations of all kinds across our region and we will continue to work to strengthen that community and to support our mission to preserve the past, serve the present and protect the future.

- We will continue to work with our Community Archive Network to ensure a strong network of local community archives, serving local communities and benefitting from best practice sharing and skills development.
- We will continue to support Community Archive development via the WYAS Community Archives Accreditation Scheme.
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PATH 8: 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.

WYAS will continue to work to develop strategies and infrastructure to collect, preserve and make accessible digital materials in line with the standards described in the WYAS Digital Archives Policy.

- We will work in partnership with our ICT services provider and the WYJS ICT Business Support Manager to identify ways to further develop our infrastructure for the collection, preservation of and provision of access to born-digital material
- Procedures for the collection, ingest and preservation of born-digital material will be reviewed, updated and communicated to relevant staff.

Review Date

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