

City of Westminster Archives

Disposal Policy

March 2023



City of Westminster

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy explains when, why and how City of Westminster Archives will dispose of material within their collections.
- 1.2. It covers all material in the archive and local studies collections, as well as material donated to City of Westminster Archives which has not been formally accepted in to either collection.
- 1.3. Decisions about disposal are made by qualified archivists, with the support of other colleagues, in line with this policy. The Service Lead (Archives, Collections & Resources) will have final approval, as set out in section 6, Disposal Process.
- 1.4. Long-term access to information is at the core of the Westminster City Council Fairer Westminster strategy by: -
 - Providing cultural and learning opportunities for Westminster residents by maintaining access to materials.
 - Ensuring long-term access to the information and services they need to improve their lives.
 - Appropriate disposal of material makes it easier to find the information and services people do need to improve their lives, by providing remote and onsite access to collection material.

2. Statutory Position

- 2.1. City of Westminster Archives provides an archives and local studies service in compliance with the requirements of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, the Local Government Act 1972, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and the Westminster City Council Library Bylaws.
- 2.2. The Archives is designated by the Bishop of London, under the terms of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, as the repository for ecclesiastical records for the pre-1965 City of Westminster.
- 2.3. The Archives has been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a repository for specified classes of public records under the provisions of Section 4 of the Public Records Act 1958. These include Petty Sessions records, probate records of the Westminster Commissary Court and Coroner's Court Records. The archives are stored under the conditions specified in BS 4971:2017.
- 2.4. The Archives is recognised by the Master of the Rolls as a repository for manorial and tithe documents under the Law of Property Act 1922 and the Tithe Act 1936.

- 2.5. The Archives is recognised by the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) as a suitable repository under the *Standard for Record Repositories*.

3. Acquisitions

- 3.1. City of Westminster Archives has an Acquisitions Policy which sets out the categories of material it can accept and the terms under which these are accepted.

- 3.2. Records are acquired by: -

- transfer from Council Departments
- transfer from Records Management
- donation

Documents will only be purchased if they are deemed to be of outstanding importance to the City of Westminster. Indefinite loans are only offered in specific circumstances as set out in section 4.1.2 of the Acquisitions Policy.

4. Selection for Disposal and De-Accessioning

- 4.1. Potential acquisitions will only be accepted in line with the archive's Acquisitions Policy. Material which has already accepted, but not yet accessioned or formally integrated into the collections, may be disposed of for the following reasons:

- The records do not meet the criteria set out in the Acquisitions Policy.
- The collection contains a high proportion of objects and would be better suited to a museum.
- There are more appropriate repositories for the collection, for example subject specialist archives or another local authority.
- The records have no long-term historical value.
- The records are damaged beyond repair, contains dangerous/ hazardous material, have an untreatable infestation which will put other collections at risk.
- The material is an exact duplicate of items already in the collections, and no more copies are required.
- The packaging the records are in is not suitable for permanent retention and can be separated and disposed of.

- 4.2. Items which have already been accessioned into the collections may be re-appraised at any time. It may be deemed that disposal is the best option if:

- The records no longer meet the criteria of the archive's Acquisitions Policy.
- The collection contains a high proportion of objects and would be better suited to a museum.
- There are more appropriate repositories for the collection, for example subject specialist archives or another local authority.
- The records have no long-term historical value.
- The owner has unreasonable or overly complex closure or access requests for the records.
- The records are damaged beyond repair, contains dangerous/ hazardous material, have an untreatable infestation which will put other collections at risk.
- The material is an exact duplicate of items already in the collections, and no more copies are required.
- The material is a surrogate of records held by another institution and they are the primary holders of the information.

5. Methods of Disposal

5.1. Return to owner

Material can be returned to the creator/depositor/owner of the records, where this is the most suitable option.

5.2. Transfer to more appropriate archive, museum or library

If a more appropriate repository has been identified for the material it can be transferred if:

- The identified repository has agreed to receive it.
- The new repository is either accredited under the relevant national scheme, or it has proved it meets sector standards in terms of acquisition, care, and access.
- The transfer of deposited records has been agreed with the record owners in cases where this is not City of Westminster Archives.

5.3. Destruction

If the material is beyond repair, contains dangerous/ hazardous material, or has an untreatable infestation, it can be destroyed in agreement with the Conservator and the record owners in cases where this is not City of Westminster Archives.

5.4. Use for learning or educational purposes

In cases where material is duplicated or does not hold enough historical value for permanent retention, it may still be suitable for use for education and learning purposes, such as with the handling collection. This should be done in agreement with the Education and Interpretation Officer and the record owners in cases where this is not City of Westminster Archives.

5.5. Sale or donation

City of Westminster Archives does not allow the sale of any material from its archive collections, rare book collections, photographic collections, or theatre collections.

In a small number of cases the sale of published material may be permitted if it meets all the below criteria:

- The item is a published book, magazine, or periodical.
- The item is easily available through other public archives, libraries, or museums (including City of Westminster Archives in the case of duplicates).
- The item is not rare and is of low financial value.
- There are no ethical concerns about its sale.
- The item is the property of City of Westminster Archives and therefore its legal right to sell.

Material which meets all the above criteria can also be donated free of charge e.g. to a book charity.

6. Disposal Process

6.1. Un-accessioned material

6.1.1 Un-accessioned material can be disposed of by a qualified Archivist in consultation with the donor/owner.

6.1.2 Unsuitable packaging can be disposed of without additional approval.

6.1.3 In cases where the material has been left orphaned, no contact details have been provided, and contact has not been possible through any other reasonable means, the Senior Archivist, with approval from the Service Lead (Archives, Collections & Resources) will take the most appropriate action and ensure a written record is made of the decision.

6.2 Accessioned material

Accessioned material will require a strong case for disposal. This should be put together by the Senior Archivist, with supporting information from the Conservator or Education and Interpretation Officer where required. Written approval is required from the Service Lead (Archives, Collections & Resources) and a written record is made of the decision.

7. Review

This Disposal Policy will be reviewed in March 2025.