



Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums

Tyne & Wear Archives Collections Information Policy

Approved by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Strategic Board:
March 2022

Date for next review: March 2027

1. Introduction

Our aim is to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others.

Our vision for the future is for everyone to have access to museum and archive provision in Tyne and Wear, to use this access and to value it for the significant and positive impact that it makes upon their lives.

Our commitment is to a World-class service that is innovative, imaginative, creative, totally inclusive, secure and sustainable.

2. Governance

Tyne & Wear Archives, part of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) provides an archives service on behalf of the five local authorities of Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Newcastle City Council is the lead authority.

TWAM is a regional museum, art gallery and archives service, managing nine museums and galleries across Tyneside and the Archives for Tyne and Wear. TWAM holds collections of international importance in archives, art, science and technology, archaeology, military and social history, fashion and natural sciences.

TWAM is supported by the four local authorities in Tyneside and Newcastle University. TWAM is also a National Portfolio Organisation funded by Arts Council England. Tyne & Wear Archives is additionally funded by Sunderland City Council under a service level agreement.

In addition to holding wide-ranging collections documenting the history of the Tyne and Wear area, Tyne & Wear Archives is recognised as an approved Place of Deposit (POD) for records subject to the Public Records Act, 1958. These include records of hospitals, magistrates' courts and coroners. The shipbuilding collections held are designated as of national and international significance and are also inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World register.

Tyne & Wear Archives enables the region's five local authorities to meet the provision for the proper arrangement of records and archives in the Local Government Act, 1972.

3. Purpose

This policy has been developed to define the information that Tyne & Wear Archives will gather and create about its collections. The policy includes standards, acquisition, accession, appraisal and cataloguing of records and also how information relating to these processes is made available. This policy is part of TWAM's overall strategy for the delivery of museums and archives services

4. Guiding principles

Tyne & Wear Archives 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.

For the purposes of this policy, archives are defined as an accumulation of records from an organisation or individual, which are no longer needed to conduct current business and which are selected for preservation because of the evidential and historical information they contain.

Records are defined as including, but not restricted to, manuscripts, typescripts, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, digital records, sound and moving image recordings, printed works and any other formats that form an archive, or an integral part of an archive, of an organisation or individual.

5. Standards

All archive catalogues created in Tyne & Wear Archives will conform to the International Standard on Archival Description (General) or ISAD (G).

All catalogues and information about collections will be created or imported into specialist archival collections management software.

6. Acquisitions

Tyne & Wear Archives will only acquire records that come within the terms of its Collection acquisition and disposal policy.

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 Archives Manager. Possible restrictions to

public access are discussed with depositors and donors at the time of acquisition or during cataloguing if appropriate.

7. Accessioning

Recording accurate and appropriate information about the provenance and custodial history of the records in the Tyne & Wear Archive collections is important to maintain the integrity of the collections and ensure their use as historical evidence for reference and research.

Each acquisition is given a unique accession number at the time of receipt and this is used to manage the records until they are listed or catalogued. This number is also included in any correspondence concerning the record.

Information about each accession is recorded in the collections management database. This includes:

- Accession number
- Date of acquisition
- Title/Creator of the record
- Terms of deposit
- Covering dates
- Quantity in linear metres
- Summary description
- Details of donor, depositor or transferring department.
- Access conditions
- Custodial history
- Any other relevant information

Donor and transfer information remains confidential and it is not available to researchers.

8. Appraisal

Appraisal of collections is important in our aim to hold records that reflect all aspects of life in Tyne & Wear, in the past and present, including all of its communities. Appraisal is necessary to make the most effective use of our resources and 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, when they are being arranged and listed or during later collections reviews.

Depositors and donors are also encouraged to check through records before bringing them in to remove multiple copies and unrelated items. We may select for disposal any items not deemed suitable for permanent preservation or not within the terms of the Collections acquisition and disposal 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. Further work is required to develop our plans for a digital repository and our procedures for processing digital records.

9. Cataloguing

Cataloguing archive collections is important so that they can be managed efficiently and provide public access to the information they contain. Cataloguing provides detailed information about the individual records and files that make up an archive collection.

Tyne & Wear Archives has been cataloguing collections using Axiell's CALM database since 2000. All cataloguing since then conforms to current professional standards including the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard of Archival Description [ISAD(G)].

Provision of more detailed information about the collections through cataloguing has a number of strands:

- Small newly acquired collections/items are catalogued to item level as soon as possible after receipt as resources allow.
- Additions to existing catalogued collections are incorporated as soon as possible after receipt as resources allow.
- Additions to existing uncatalogued collections (or those for which only legacy catalogues in non-electronic form exist) are added to the Cataloguing Priorities Database, which helps to assess the relative hierarchy of collections to be worked on.

- Larger newly acquired collections are added to the Cataloguing Priorities Database and take their place in the hierarchy for cataloguing according to the assessment criteria.
- There is a programme for addition of suitable legacy catalogues to CALM through scanning, re-keying and use of volunteers as appropriate.

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.

10. Withdrawals

Depositors can withdraw records temporarily for an agreed period if needed for example for use in an exhibition. Advance notice of this is required and permission in writing from the depositor is required. Records on deposit also can be withdrawn permanently. Tyne & Wear Archives reserve the right to charge reasonable costs for storage, cataloguing or conservation work carried out.

11. Access to collections information

Completed catalogues are regularly added to the online catalogue and are notified to the National Archives for linking to the National Register of Archives

Information about selected and significant newly acquired material is reported to the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Strategic Board.

Newly acquired material may be featured in the press, social media, academic and special interest journals etc.

Uncatalogued accessions are included in relevant User Guides, available on the TWAM website.

12. Links with other policies

This policy should be read with reference to the following:

- Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Archives Collection Acquisition and Disposal Policy