

# Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service

## Appraisal and Disposal Policy

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# Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service

## Appraisal and Disposal Policy

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### Introduction

- 1.1 Staffordshire Archives and Heritage comprises Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, the William Salt Library and the County Museum Service. The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service is an Accredited Archive Service administered and funded by Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council under a joint agreement. The William Salt Library is a charitable library managed by the Archive Service on behalf of the Trustees. The County Museum is a provisionally Accredited Museum funded by Staffordshire County Council and works in partnership with museums across the region to provide museum development support.

The Archive Service operates Staffordshire Record Office, Stoke-on-Trent City Archives and the William Salt Library. A significant proportion of the County Museum Service's collection is on long term loan and public display at Shugborough Estate. The Archive Service provides services for Staffordshire County Council in relation to its legal documents and archives.

The vision is:

Connecting people to the collected stories and heritage of Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and beyond.

The mission is:

To connect people to the memories of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, by engaging them with the collections we develop and preserve for current and future generations.

### Context

- 2.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service is a multi-repository service, serving the communities of the County of Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. Its role is not confined to historical, academic or learning communities because

archives can be a powerful tool in helping to foster a sense of community, continuity and belonging. They can stimulate an interest and enjoyment in learning about the past at all levels.

- 2.2 The Archive Service operates within a framework of archive legislation and other legislation which governs record-keeping.
- 2.3 This Appraisal and Disposal Policy has been drawn up in accordance with best practice as exemplified in The National Archives Appraisal Policy (2012) and Deaccessioning and Disposal (2015). [Both documents are under review by The National Archives, April 2023]. It operates in conjunction with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service's Collections Development Policy (revised 2019) and is supported by in-house appraisal guidelines for specific collection types. The policy and guidelines are intended to aid, rather than replace, the professional judgement of archivists, who operate according to the Archives and Records Association Code of Conduct, and to offer ethical guidance. Disposal decisions will be made according to the table in Appendix I. The Appraisal and Disposal Policy underpins and supports the philosophy of the Joint Archive Service, which has a rich and diverse archival legacy inherited from past generations. Our responsibility is to ensure that this legacy is preserved and made as accessible as possible and that we make proper provision for the preservation of the archives created from the present day.

## Policy Statement

- 3.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service seeks to ensure that its archive collections reflect the broadest range of the life and work of the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, past and present. In addition, the Archive Service has a responsibility to ensure that the archive can be maintained within available resources and is sustainable in the long term. To this end, it is necessary to make decisions about which records to retain. The Appraisal and Disposal Policy supports this by providing a framework for the selection of records, and reappraisal, retrospective appraisal and deaccessioning of existing collections.
- 3.2 Appraisal is a process of determining which records are of long-term historical value and are worthy of permanent preservation as archives, irrespective of medium.
- 3.3 Deaccessioning takes place after re-appraisal or retrospective appraisal of existing collections. Records selected for disposal are either returned to the depositor, offered to another suitable repository or destroyed confidentially.
- 3.4 This policy is based on the Appraisal Values set out in Appendix 2 of The National Archive's Appraisal Policy (2012) and the regulatory framework and principles for deaccessioning and disposal set out in The National Archives' Deaccessioning and Disposal, guidance for archives (2015).

## Policy Aims

- 4.1 To ensure that appraisal and disposal practice is informed by current archival legislation and other legislation relating to the keeping of records.

- 4.2 To ensure that appraisal and disposal practice supports the aim of the Archive Service to reflect the broadest range of the life and work of the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, past and present, through its archives.
- 4.3 To assist archivists in selecting records of the highest value in terms of their evidential, administrative or historical importance.
- 4.4 To assist the Archive Service in managing its available storage capacity and financial resources.
- 4.5 To promote objective, structured and open decision-making about appraisal and disposal.

## Method of Appraisal

- 5.1 The method adopted by the Archive Service is macro-appraisal based on functional analysis. Macro-appraisal entails the decision to retain, destroy or sample records at series level (or above) rather than assessing individual documents. This is the most appropriate approach given the available resources. Functional analysis identifies the functions of organisations and is used to select series of records of high informational value for permanent preservation.
- 5.2 There will be occasions when this method is inappropriate, for example in appraising records of private individuals. It will also be appropriate on occasions to make a more detailed check to weed out duplicates, ephemeral or non-archival records. Archivists should use their professional judgement at all times. Prior to carrying out a reappraisal and retrospective appraisal programme, appraisal guidelines will be developed to assist archivists and added to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service Cataloguing Manual.
- 5.3 Archivists must be aware of current archival legislation and any other related legislation which impacts upon record keeping. The Archive Service will ensure that staff training includes legislative changes.
- 5.4 Archivists should be aware that there are constraints and limits to our implementation of this policy. The agreement of depositors in relation to the appraisal and destruction of records is sought at the time of deposit where possible but there will always be occasions when the Archive Service does not have the permission to destroy records in a deposited collection, particularly for collections deposited some years previously. However, there is always the option of returning records to their depositors.

## Implementation: Appraisal, Re-appraisal, Retrospective Appraisal and Deaccessioning

- 6.1 Key decisions about a collection are taken prior to deposit and accessioning in accordance with the Collections Development Policy. However, on first cataloguing a collection, whether soon or several years later, it may become apparent that further appraisal is required. Appraisal and disposal decisions should be taken by archivists in accordance with this policy and the decision tree in Appendix 1. Member approval for

disposal is not required at the first cataloguing stage as this represents standard professional practice.

- 6.2 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service holds some collections that are known to hold material that does not meet the current selection criteria in the Collections Development Policy. It is probable that these collections were not fully appraised on accessioning or cataloguing. Past local government reorganisation has also changed the collecting boundaries since some collections were deposited. The Archive Service will undertake a review of existing holdings and identify collections that require re-appraisal or retrospective appraisal.
- 6.3 As part of a programme approved by the Archives and Heritage Management Team, the Service will carry out re-appraisal or retrospective appraisal of collections in accordance with the regulatory framework and principles for deaccessioning and disposal set out in The National Archives' Deaccessioning and Disposal, guidance for archives (2015). The aim will be to weed duplicates, ephemera and records outside the Archive Service's current collecting criteria. Following re-appraisal or retrospective appraisal a summary list of records proposed for disposal will be presented to the Chair or Vice Chair, as appropriate, of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee for approval prior to deaccessioning and disposal as a delegated decision.
- 6.4 Appraisal decisions and disposal methods must be documented to leave an audit trail and retained as a permanent record in the deposit file for the collection and the Freedom of Information Legislation file. This is a requirement under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000. (See Appendix 2 for template for record of disposal from one collection. For small disposals, such as photocopies or other duplicates from a number of collections, a simple list may be presented.)

## Implementation: Disposal of Collections

- 7.1 Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service reserves the right to refuse, return or recommend the destruction of any material not deemed to be appropriate for permanent preservation. Such decisions will be made in accordance with the Archive Service's Collections Development Policy.
- 7.2 The Service may also transfer collections with the agreement of the depositor to other archive or local studies repositories if this is more appropriate.
- 7.3 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee accepts the principle that collections in its ownership will not be sold as stated in the Service's Collections Development Policy.
- 7.4 These conditions are reiterated in the Terms of Deposit of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service (revised 2020).
- 7.5 Where re-appraisal and retrospective appraisal has taken place, disposal decisions must be approved by the Chair or Vice Chair, as appropriate, of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Archives Committee as a delegated decision.

## Definitions and Categories

8.1 In the context of this policy, archives are defined as:

“materials created or received by a person, family or organisation, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in them or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of governance, original order and collective control: permanent records”.<sup>1</sup>

8.2 Archives may be in any format including paper, parchment, digital media, microform, photographic or analogue tape. In the case of digital media and analogue tape, the long-term preservation status of such materials is not yet proven. The Archive Service reserves the right to adopt suitable migration policies, if necessary, in partnership with other archive bodies, which will ensure the readability and long-term preservation of the information contained in such media.

8.3 The key definitions in the National Archives’ guidance are:

- Appraisal – the process of deciding whether an item or group of items has continuing value in accordance with the collecting organisation’s mission statement.
- Deaccessioning - the formal, documented removal of a collection or item from the accession register or custody of the archive service.
- Reappraisal – a renewed process of appraisal for collections or items which have previously been appraised.
- Retrospective appraisal – appraisal of collections or items where evidence of previous appraisal to an approved standard is not apparent.
- Disposal – the physical act of transferring the collection or item from the archive service to another destination. This covers transfer to another repository, return to depositor or donor and as a last resort, destruction. Also called removal.<sup>2</sup>

## Review

9.1 This policy will be reviewed every five years.

[May 2023]

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<sup>1</sup> The National Archives, [‘Deaccessioning and disposal: Guidance for archive services’](#) p 30.

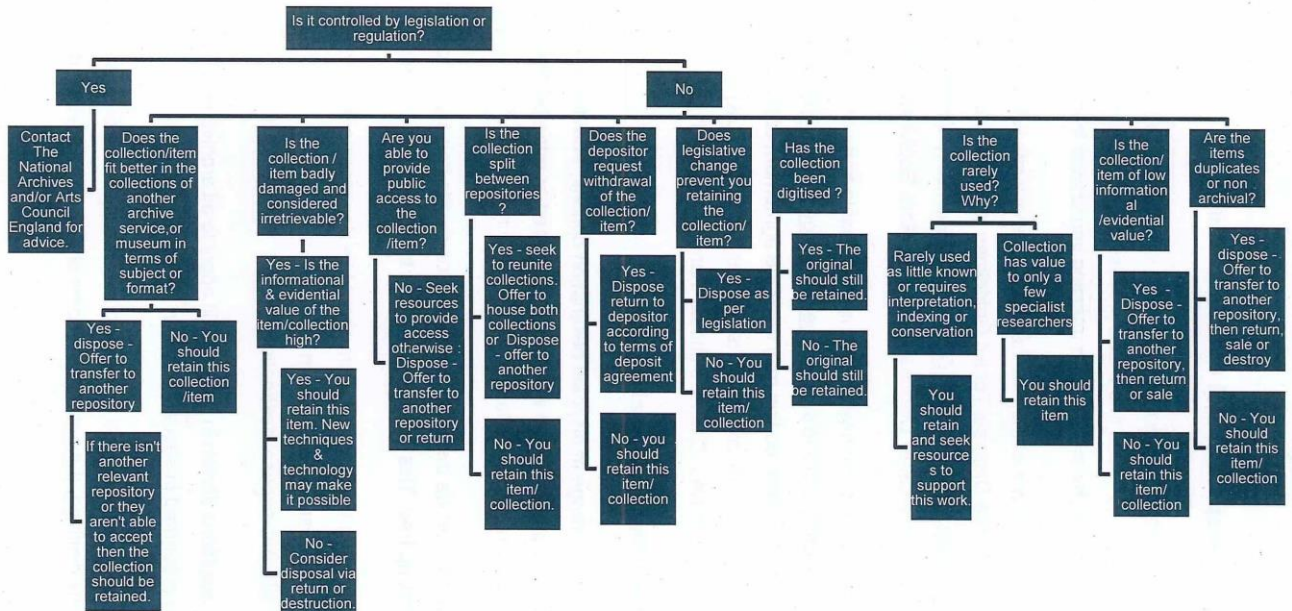
<sup>2</sup> The National Archives, [‘Deaccessioning and disposal: Guidance for archive services’](#) p 8.

# Appendix 1



Disposal destination decision tree

Disposal Destinations include: Transfer; Return to Depositor/donor; Sale; Destruction.



## Appendix 2

### Reappraisal and Disposal Record Sheet

#### Part One: Collection Information

Staffordshire Record Office / Stoke-on-Trent City Archives  
(delete as appropriate)

Collection reference:

Collection title:

Date of deposit or donation:

Ownership:

(indicate if owned by the Archive Service/governing body, privately owned by identified individual(s) or continuing organisation, or if current owner cannot be identified)

Legal obligations and conditions of acquisition/grants:

(indicate whether under Acceptance in Lieu scheme, or subject to purchase or cataloguing grant, etc. Also check if there is a record of any previous appraisal process)

#### Part Two: Appraisal Information

Date of appraisal:

Appraisal decisions:

A. Records to be returned to depositor or transferred:

Quantity:

Reasons:

To whom returned/transferred:

Date returned/transferred:



B. Records to be destroyed:

Quantity:

Reasons:

Permission gained from owner or permission not required (please specify):

Date of destruction:

Deaccessioned in paper accessions register and on CALM accessions database

Paper and online catalogues removed or updated

The National Archives notified

Signature of Archivist:

Date:

Signature of member of Joint Archives Committee (if delegated decision):

or

Date of approval at Joint Archives Committee:

File in appropriate deposit file, and Freedom of Information Legislation file