



The University of
Nottingham

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**UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**Archive Collections Information Policy
2022**

1. Scope

This policy documents the information obtained, maintained and made publicly accessible about our archive and manuscript collections and specifies what archival standards will be followed.

2. Background and legacy information

Manuscripts and Special Collections (MSC) has been collecting archives since the 1930s. In common with many other archive services the legacy information on our collections is not as comprehensive or consistent as we would like:

- Little documentation survives to explain the terms on which the early collections (1930s-1950s) were acquired. References sometimes appear in minutes of Council or Senate. In the case of major gifts and transfers it is likely that there was correspondence (now lost) with the Principal (before 1948), Vice Chancellor (after 1948) or other personnel.
- Formal Agreements were apparently only drawn up for substantial family and estate collections. The Registrar signed these Agreements on behalf of the University. They were usually on terms of indefinite loan.
- The Librarian was the principal agent responsible for early acquisitions, which were managed according to library standards, though in collaboration with The National Register of Archives. The Librarian's correspondence does not generally survive but where it does it can give significant evidence of donations or of the long-term expectations of depositors.
- The origins and history of MSC within library services meant that until the early 1990s the Librarian continued to negotiate significant acquisition prospects. Restructuring in the 1990s enabled increasing professionalisation, with acquisitions following MSC's nationally registered Collection Policy (approved by University Council in 1997).
- The first register of collections provided an inventory of material already acquired. An Accessions Register for all new accessions was opened in 1960 (after the first Keeper of Manuscripts took up post in 1958). Several major early collections were not formally 'accessioned' until their absence from the register was discovered during the EMCAT project (see below); information about their acquisition was found only in their catalogues or in library reports.
- The Accessions Register, and the extended record in the CALM database, which had been imported from MODES, covers all acquisitions since 1960. Whilst the hard copy Accessions Register, recording all pre-1960 accessions, was discontinued in 2015 these records have all been entered into CALM. Many of the records (c. 3,500) are in fact accruals to existing collections. It had been common practice to acknowledge receipt of accruals through correspondence, on the assumption that an original valid Agreement was in place. This assumption was not always accurate, if only because the original lender may have died.
- Many entries in the Accessions Register lacked supporting documentation to clarify ownership or the role of the transmitting agent. The terms 'Gift', 'Deposit' or 'Purchase', inserted in a column recording collection status in the hard copy register, can be the only evidence.
- The named 'donor' or 'depositor' was often only an agent. Typical examples are collections transferred by academics, who were given the material for research purposes, or by the Librarian, who had received gifts or loans. In these circumstances, MSC staff may have no knowledge of the ultimate source of the collection.
- In 1987 new Agreement forms were introduced for both deposited and donated collections. These were intended to be used for all new accessions. However, small undocumented accessions from different sources continued to be received and inconsistency in following up

the return of draft Agreements has meant that some significant accessions also lack full title documentation.

- Agreement forms have been customised for key collections and changed to improve curatorial security. For example, depositors now generally agree that 'indefinite loans' should be 'in the first instance' for a specific term of years, and generally not less than 25 years. This raises an issue about tracking the expiry of such terms and ensuring Agreements are renewed as intended and that all conditions are observed. New accessions procedures address this.
- A current project has reviewed all legacy ownership information and gaps in information are being filled and Agreements updated and renewed, wherever possible.

In the same way legacy catalogues do not exhibit the consistency and detail of modern standards-driven finding aids:

- In the period immediately after the Second World War, the Library acquired a number of large and significant collections. The priority at the time was to catalogue these collections for audit/security reasons and the resulting catalogues were essentially little more than inventories of documents, with reference number, date, document type e.g. letter, and the correspondents in the case of a letter. Extent, level and content description were hardly ever included.
- Since the initial large influx of material in the post-war period, new cataloguing has not been able to keep pace with accessions and a significant cataloguing backlog has accumulated over the years.
- An early attempt to catalogue manuscripts using STATUS was abandoned in favour of using the DOS based system MODES in the mid-1990s. MODES was used from this time to catalogue a considerable number of collections, with varying degrees of detail, including some series of records within the Archdeaconry of Nottingham collection.
- A period of intensive externally funded cataloguing in the mid-late 1990s with the appointment of a number of additional fixed term staff, together with the move towards more standardised cataloguing within the archives sector in general, led to the introduction within MSC of more consistent cataloguing practices, recording of data and personal and place name indexing.
- In 2003-2005 the significant amount of cataloguing data on MODES system was migrated to the Archive Management System CALM. Despite many advantages offered by CALM, some functionality in the search mechanisms for the Archdeaconry data was lost from MODES. This led to some adaptation of the CALM Performance module which was used purely for Archdeaconry data. This data was integrated with the main CALM catalogue as part of the CALM v.10 upgrade in 2015-2016.
- Upon the migration of data from MODES to CALM, public access to an online catalogue of the archive collections was made available for the first time. A specially developed public interface was introduced for searching Archdeaconry data. This was in use until the re-integration of the Archdeaconry data in 2015-2016 and the replacement of DServe with CALMView as the public interface to the archives catalogue.
- In 2004 MSC was involved in the EMCAT project, a regional partnership of the five local authority archive services and the University of Nottingham, funded by the East Midlands Museums Libraries and Archives Council. The project's objective was to collect comparative data about archive holdings and their catalogue status, with a view to identifying the scale of backlog in cataloguing and the potential for further collaborative projects. Data was submitted on an agreed Excel spreadsheet and examined factors such as the application of

Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation to archive collections, the quality and extent of existing catalogues and the significance of collections.

- Partly arising from the EMCAT project and MSC's move to another University Campus more remote from the academic community, a retro conversion project to make all existing hard copy catalogues available online was completed in 2010 after a ten year programme. The early work in this project was achieved through national programmes such as A2A and subsequently through internal projects focusing on the systematic rekeying or scanning (with some enhancement) of hard copy catalogues into Excel spreadsheets, the data from which was then imported into CALM.
- The early post-war inventories were deemed to be satisfactory for many years, until research patterns and working methods radically changed in the 1990s. Since that date MSC staff have been working on an ongoing project to upgrade existing catalogue descriptions to make them ISAD(G) compliant and to provide further details for researchers.

Since 2004 CALM has been used for all accessioning, cataloguing and indexing. Staff use a CALM Manual produced in-house to ensure consistency in data entry.

3. Accessioning

Recording the provenance of material within our custody is a crucial part of preserving the integrity of the collection. All new acquisitions are accessioned on CALM within one week of receipt. The accession record will give a preliminary indication of the scope, content and creation dates of the collection, record its legal status, any restrictions on access, its size (cubic capacity), as well as the contact details of its source and date of accession.

A formal receipt is generated from CALM for every acquisition, requiring the countersignature of the depositor or donor. This receipt is supplied with a copy of MSC's 'General conditions governing the gift/loan/internal transfer of Archives' available as a separate document, and is legally binding. The unique number assigned to each accession will subsequently be linked to the catalogue record.

Integral to the accessioning process is the management of information relating to the source of the material. This is retained in the Depositors database in CALM. Combined with information in the LegalStatus field, this now supplies the detail needed to authenticate ownership and the legal status of collections held.

Accession reports are supplied annually to The National Archives.

4. Cataloguing

Cataloguing collections within our custody is essential to enable staff to effectively manage our holdings and enable public access as appropriate. All new cataloguing is undertaken in CALM and conforms to the principles and mandatory elements of the *General International Standard of Archival Description (ISAD(G))*. Older catalogues may not meet these standards and work is ongoing to update and improve these.

The level of description employed in each catalogue will be dictated by the significance of the collection and the needs of the user.

Any restrictions on access are recorded in the AccessConditions field. This is a publicly available field. Further information providing reasons for restrictions, such as data protection compliance or owner request, is recorded in the AccessNotes and ConfidentialityNote fields which are only accessible to MSC staff.

Information about Copyright and Reproduction rights appears in the Copyright and ReproductNote fields within the Collection Level Record. This information is generic, alerting users to the fact that material may be in copyright and that reprographic copies can be supplied for educational and private study purposes only. Access and Copyright information is added to the component level catalogue records if items have a specific status which differs from that applying to the collection as a whole.

Copyright holders, where known, are not usually named in our online catalogue records but supplementary information is available for staff in the accessions records and ConfidentialityNote field where appropriate.

Catalogues are made available online through CALMView and individual records are also accessible within the Library catalogue via a search interface using Primo. Collection level descriptions are provided to the Archives Hub on a regular basis. Some Family and Estate collection catalogues were mounted on A2A and so can now be accessed through The National Archives (TNA) Discovery platform. Web addresses of new catalogues are also sent to TNA for inclusion in Discovery.

5. Indexing

Index terms will be created mostly at collection level, using the National Council for Archives, *Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names* (1997). Subject indexing at collection level will employ Library of Congress Subject Headings and at lower levels will follow an in-house thesaurus where subject indexing is considered appropriate

6. Locations Database

Manuscripts and Special Collections managed without any form of locations finding aid until the 1990s, relying on the arrangement of collections in the Store and staff knowledge to find/retrieve documents, but at that time a decision was made to establish a basic Locations Register. This was created in-house with technical assistance from elsewhere in the University. The manuscripts Locations Register was initially held in PCFile. This information was then transferred to an Access database which was faster and more sophisticated. As part of the move to King's Meadow Campus (2006), NEXUS (the company who did the move of the physical stock) took the existing database and re-populated it with new locations at King's Meadow. The original locations at Hallward Library were still available to be viewed.

The database was upgraded from Access 2007 and transferred to CALM Locations.

Searches can be made by location (run, bay shelf), collection name, collection reference or accession number. Every run, bay and shelf in the Store, including map cabinet drawers, has a unique identifier.

7. Collections Information Plan

In common with most other archive services MSC has a cataloguing backlog and the reduction of this is a key objective which underpins and supports many of the strategic priorities within the MSC Forward Plan. Cataloguing priorities will be determined by a number of factors including the significance of the collection, user needs and the availability of resources or external funding. The Collections Information Plan establishes priorities for accessioning and

cataloguing activities and the annual programme of work will include a mix of new cataloguing and catalogue improvement and will also include actions to improve legacy information on ownership and to update agreements.

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