

**A NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND
RECORDS POLICY FOR WALES**

ARCHIVES COUNCIL WALES

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**Produced by the Archives Council Wales
2001**

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INTRODUCTION

Archives are the raw material of history. They represent the collective memory of a nation, institution or individual. In the first instance records are created for administrative, legal or personal reasons but once this immediate usefulness has diminished records may become archives providing evidence of past events. They are essential for historical research but archives also have an important role to play in providing evidence for the accountability of public institutions, decision-makers and opinion-formers. Archival material need not be old to be of importance: some records have an archival value the moment they are created.

The definition of ‘archives’ used for the purposes of this policy is, therefore, broader than that commonly used. The word archive is much used at present but its use by the wider public is often very different from the meaning employed by those involved in the professional care of archives. It is often applied to records containing information no longer in current use and which are removed to a less accessible place of storage, with only a cursory element of selection and few expectations as to how long they will be kept. In professional terms, archives are documents created and/or accumulated by institutions, businesses, or even individuals in the course of their daily life and work and retained in perpetuity.¹ To be more specific, we can use the definition of archives as it was stated in the 1989 edition of the key British Standard BS 5454. Archives are:

‘Documents preserved permanently by the persons responsible for the transactions of which such documents are the records, or by their successors or appointees, in their own custody, and normally in the arrangement in which the documents were created’²

The records we create today may become the archives of tomorrow, but if they are allowed to accumulate in an uncontrolled way, chaos will ensue. A vast quantity of records are now being produced in a variety of formats and they need to be managed by professional records managers and archivists. Records management is defined as the:

‘field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records’³

Records management is essential for effective administration, and ultimately for making records publicly available for consultation and research. The retention of too much information will be as unhelpful to future researchers as the retention of too little. Not all material is of archival value, and a properly maintained system of records management will identify and eliminate material that may not merit permanent retention.

¹ C Kitching, *Archives: the Very Essence of our Heritage*, (1996)

² BS 5454:1989 p. 2

³ International Records Management Standard

The fact that archives are unique and irreplaceable imposes a heavy responsibility on those who care for them. Preservation is the basis of all work with archives. Archival material can be fragile and it may deteriorate easily. It needs to be stored under the correct environmental conditions, safe from threats of fire, flood and theft. Access to archives should be as unrestricted as possible taking into account issues of privacy, security, risk to integrity, and legal considerations, but access should only be granted following careful identification and listing of the material, and must never be allowed at the expense of preservation.

Professional archivists are graduates who hold a primary university degree and a subsequent qualification in archive administration. To achieve such a qualification, archivists receive training in a wide range of subject areas: the administration, preservation and storage of archives, records management, access issues and the preparation of finding aids. The employment of a professionally qualified archivist should ensure a high level of expertise in all aspects of the care and preservation of archives and in making them available for use by the public. Records managers may be archivists who have chosen to specialise in the management of current records or they may hold a specific qualification in records management. Archive conservators who are responsible for the preservation and repair of archival material also hold recognised professional qualifications.

Archives and archivists have already made significant contributions to a number of areas identified as priorities for government policy.⁴ Public access has been a feature of the majority of archive services since their inception and services have become increasingly aware of the needs of social inclusion. Similarly the use of archives at all levels in education has been encouraged by the archive profession, whether it be schoolchildren undertaking projects on their local area, staff and students at universities involved in academic research or members of the public participating in local or family history evening classes. Archivists have long been participants in the education of life-long learners and are well placed to continue and increase their contribution in this area, provided they are adequately resourced.

This policy statement prepared by the Archives Council Wales (ACW) is designed to provide an aid to policy makers and to promote informed debate about archives and archival issues in Wales. ACW represents institutions and organisations involved with the administration of archives in Wales. It aims to provide a regular forum for the exchange of views, to influence policy, to bring matters of current concern to the attention of relevant bodies and to provide a focus for collaborative projects. The advent of the National Assembly for Wales and movements towards cross-sectoral collaboration have led the members of the ACW to conclude that it is an opportune time to produce a coherent statement of the principles and standards underlying archives and records management practice in Wales.

Acknowledgements

The Archives Council Wales gratefully acknowledges the financial support received from the Society of Archivists and CWLIS in producing this document.

⁴ *Government Policy on Archives*, Cm4516, (1999)

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Principle 1 – General statement

A civilised society, concerned to uphold the rights of the citizen, to encourage efficient administration and to ensure that its history is accessible to all, should make provision for its archives to be preserved and made available for consultation.

Principle 2 – Records Management

Publicly funded bodies should be required, and other bodies and individuals encouraged, to develop effective records management and to ensure the informed selection and preservation of archival material.

Principle 3 – National Network of Archival Provision

There should be a network of archive services and repositories for national, local authority and other archive-creating bodies, in order to ensure that all geographical areas of Wales are provided for and that every category of archive-creating body is able to find an appropriate home for its archives.

Principle 4 – Access

There should normally be unrestricted access to all archives held by publicly funded bodies, subject to the needs of preservation and confidentiality or any specific legal requirements.

Principle 5 – Preservation

Preservation is the most fundamental function of archive professionals and archive services. It should include the provision of an adequate building and storage facilities, environmental control, access to professional conservation services, and adequate public access facilities.⁵

Principle 6 – Funding and Constitution

Adequate funding must be available at national and local levels to enable archive services to meet recognised national and international standards.

Principle 7 – Professional Training

All those having professional and senior managerial responsibility for records and archives should be qualified archivists, conservators, or records managers, or have ready access to such advice.

Principle 8 – Outreach and Education

The value of archival information within all levels of education should be recognised, as well as the social and community benefits that can accrue from the provision of archival facilities.

⁵ For the purposes of this policy *preservation* and *conservation* are interpreted as follows: *preservation* means the protection of archives and records against damage or deterioration; *conservation* means the application of technical treatment or repair to the physical form of damaged or deteriorated archives or records.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Principle 1 – General statement A civilised society, concerned to uphold the rights of the citizen, to encourage efficient administration and to ensure that its history is accessible to all, should make provision for its archives to be preserved and made available for consultation.

- 1.1 There is a need to promote the understanding of archives, archival issues and sound records management practice throughout Wales.
- 1.2 Archives reveal the past, explain the present and guide the future. They are essential to good administration, to the democratic and legal rights of the citizen, and to a proper understanding of both the past and the present. None of these things can be assured if archives are not properly preserved. Their preservation and accessibility to all must therefore be the foundation of an archives policy on which everything else is built.

Principle 2 – Records management Publicly funded bodies should be required, and other bodies and individuals encouraged, to develop effective records management to ensure the informed selection and preservation of archival material.

- 2.1 The national archive heritage of Wales would be more fully preserved if record-producing bodies adopted a comprehensive view of their records from creation to disposal. Due care and attention should be given to the management of modern records in all media throughout their life-cycle, thus ensuring administrative efficiency by retaining only those records which are required for administrative, legal, commercial and historical purposes. Professional archival appraisal of records as part of an integrated records management system will ensure the preservation of records which are of value for historical or other research purposes, and will assist compliance with legislative requirements in fields such as Freedom of Information and Data Protection.
- 2.2 Steps should be taken to develop expertise in the management and preservation of electronic records, having regard to emerging international best practice.

Principle 3 – National Network of Archival Provision There should be a network of archive services and repositories for national, local authority and other archive-creating bodies to ensure that all geographical areas of Wales are provided for and that every category of archive-creating body is able to find an appropriate home for its archives.

- 3.1 A National Record Office for Wales should be established with responsibility for Welsh public records including records created by the National Assembly

for Wales. It should also superintend the management of records produced by Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies.

- 3.2 Schemes presented under Section 60 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 should continue to be monitored by the National Assembly to ensure that all local authorities in Wales, either jointly or singly, provide an adequate archive service.
- 3.3 All archive collecting bodies in Wales should have publicly accessible policies on collection and acquisition in accordance with the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) *Standard for Record Repositories*.
- 3.4 Communication and co-ordination between member institutions of the archival network in Wales is crucial to avoid duplication of effort. There is also a need for more effective communication between the archives and records management profession and policy-makers, including the National Assembly.
- 3.5 A mechanism should be established to facilitate effective comment on archival issues by both users and owners of archives in Wales.

Principle 4 – Access There should normally be unrestricted right of access to all archives held by publicly funded bodies, subject to the needs of preservation and confidentiality or any specific legal requirements.

- 4.1 The right of access to archives is of fundamental importance; there should be a presumption of openness. Access should be open to all and, at least for the purposes of historical research, should in principle be free of charge.
- 4.2 Archive services should aspire to the *Standard for Access to Archives*, and produce and make available a public access policy defining the rights and responsibilities of users.
- 4.3 All public records and other records produced by publicly funded bodies should be accessible within a period of thirty years of their creation unless personal privacy, commercial confidentiality or public security requires a longer closure period. Access to records less than thirty years old should be in accordance with the principles set out in the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection legislation. No archive service should impose conditions of access which are more stringent.
- 4.4 Reasonable restrictions on access placed by private owners of deposited archive collections should be respected.

- 4.5 Access to individual documents will be dependent on their physical condition, and may be restricted if handling will result in deterioration or loss of information.
- 4.6 Finding aids are the fundamental key to access. Archive holding bodies have an absolute responsibility to produce them. They should conform to recognised national and international standards. They should also be widely disseminated, and made publicly accessible through deposit with, or if in electronic format, linked to, the National Register of Archives.
- 4.7 Internet and digitisation technologies must be engaged where appropriate to facilitate remote access to finding aids and lists and to digitised images both for in-depth study and as mediated exemplars for educational use and by those commencing archival study.
- 4.8 All archive services, as a priority, should keep facilities for those with disadvantages under review, and strive to increase opportunities for access by such groups. Disadvantages to be considered range from physical or mental disabilities to social deprivation, disaffection, or geographical remoteness. It should be remembered that those who find opening hours inconvenient are also a disadvantaged group.

Principle 5 – Preservation Preservation is the most fundamental function of archive professionals and archive services. It should include the provision of an adequate building and storage facilities, environmental control, access to professional conservation services, and adequate public access facilities.

- 5.1 The formulation of a national policy on preservation and conservation for archive services in Wales is a matter of urgency.
- 5.2 Consideration should be given to setting up regional conservation units to allow all archive-holding bodies, of whatever size, access to professionally trained conservators working to recognized standards.
- 5.3 The record storage areas of archive buildings should, as far as possible, conform to BS5454.

Principle 6 – Funding and Constitution Adequate funding must be available at national and local levels to enable archive services to meet recognised national and international standards.

- 6.1 Publicly funded bodies which acquire archives should recognise their responsibility to care for them properly, and that a financial commitment is required on their part to do so. The funding required will vary according to the

scale of the operation being supported. It should be stressed however that both capital and revenue costs are involved, and that the former are certain to recur at intervals, while the latter must be assumed to be perpetual.

- 6.2 Budgetary control is the key to achieving a stable service. Archive service budgets, regardless of size, should be clearly identifiable, and professional staff should have an effective voice within the management structure of their organisation.
- 6.3 Central government should consider making a financial contribution to the care of locally deposited public records under Section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958.
- 6.4 Funding should be assured to support research into issues of importance for the archive and records management professions, including standards, preservation, and issues surrounding electronic media. Archivists, records managers and conservators in Wales should be encouraged to make a contribution to the global consideration of professional concerns. The two University of Wales training courses in Archives Administration and Records Management have a role in undertaking and fostering research and should be supported. Facilities for the training of archive conservators in Wales also require support.
- 6.5 Archive services should be properly constituted in accordance with the recommendations of the HMC *Standard for Record Repositories*. The governing bodies of archive services, which have not yet adopted the HMC *Standard* as the basis for the management of their operations, should be encouraged to do so as soon as possible. Achieving HMC Approval and PRO Approval (where public records are held) should be the standards to which all archive services aspire. Archive services and other bodies that hold designated public records must comply with the Public Record Office guidelines *Beyond the PRO: Public Records in Places of Deposit*.

Principle 7 – Professional Training All those having professional and senior managerial responsibility for records and archives should be qualified archivists, conservators and records managers, or have ready access to such advice.

- 7.1 Employers should foster, and professional bodies in Wales respond to demands for, continued professional development for staff at all levels in Welsh archive services.
- 7.2 The provision of Welsh language services is an essential requirement for equality of access. Funding should be made available both to support initial training for archive service staff and to maintain language skills.

Principle 8 – Outreach and Education The value of archival information within all levels of education should be recognised, as well as the social and community benefits that can accrue from the provision of archival facilities.

- 8.1 Archive services should be ready to extend facilities to educational groups, and should in particular recognise their role as providers of resources both for individual learners and as part of the life-long learning infrastructure.
- 8.2 Group and individual work on local heritage matters can encourage the benefits of community awareness and social cohesion, and thus archives should recognise their potential as agents for social change.
- 8.3 While archive services have their own particular remit, responsibilities, methodology and requirements, cross-domain working on specific matters with museums, galleries, libraries and other heritage and learning institutions can open up new ways of sharing aims, objectives and resources. Archive services should be aware of such possibilities and actively seek out opportunities for cross-domain co-operation where this can be of benefit.

APPENDIX

This appendix includes details of the main policy statements, legislation and standards that apply to archives and records management in Wales and more widely in the United Kingdom.

A Policies

An Archives Policy for The United Kingdom, National Council on Archives 1996

Cm 4516: *Government Policy on Archives*, Lord Chancellor's Department (December 1999).

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/archives/archivepolicy/default.htm>

Government Policy on Archives: Action Plan (September 2002)

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/archives/actionplan/default.htm>

B Legislation

Legislation relating to Local Authority Archive Services

Local Government (Records) Act 1962

(This empowers local authorities to promote use of their own records and to acquire other records by purchase, gift, loan or deposit)

Local Government Act 1972 section 224

(See also Guidance on '*proper arrangements*' for archives issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, March 2000)

<http://www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/section224/index.htm>

Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 section 60

(See also *Guidance on the Care, Preservation and Management of Records under Section 60* issued by the Welsh Office June 1995)

Legislation relating to particular types of records

Welsh Public Records

Government of Wales Act 1998 (c.38) section 116 Status of Welsh Public Records, section 117 Transfer of Responsibility, section 118 Meaning of 'Welsh Public Records'

<http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/19980038.htm>

Memorandum of Understanding between the Public Record Office and the National Assembly for Wales

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/NAWPROMoU/MoUEnglish.htm>

Public Records

Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967

Manorial Documents

Law of Property Act 1925 as amended by the Law of Property (Amendment) Act 1924 and the Manorial Documents Rules 1959 (SI 1959/1399), as amended by the Manorial Documents (Amendments) rules 1963 (SI 1963/976) and the Manorial Documents (Amendment) Rules 1967 (SI 1967/963).

Tithe Documents

Tithe Act 1936 and the Tithe (Copies of Instruments of Apportionment) (Amendment) Rules 1963 (SI 1963/977)

Parish Records

The deposit of the records of the Church in Wales is governed not by legislation but by an agreement of 23 July 1976 with local authority record offices and a further agreement of 14 September 1976 with the National Library of Wales and the Representative Body of the Church in Wales. By the last agreement all episcopal, diocesan, capitular and provincial records are to be deposited at the National Library of Wales.

The agreement between the Representative Body and the local authority archive services is currently being redrafted to take into account new local authority boundaries following local government reorganisation in 1996.

C Standards for Archive Keeping

General

BS5454: 2000 *Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents*

HMC Standard for Record Repositories Historical Manuscripts Commission (3rd ed) 2001

<http://www.hmc.gov.uk/advice/standrds.htm>

Beyond the PRO: Public Records in Places of Deposit (Guidance about preserving and making available to users public records kept outside the Public Record Office) PRO 1994

Conservation and Preservation

British Standards Institution, *Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents: recommendations* (2002)

Preservation and Conservation: A guide to policy and practices in the preservation of archives C Pickford et al, Society of Archivists 1997

Archives in Museums

Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom
Museums and Galleries Commission, (Revised ed) 1996

<http://www.hmc.gov.uk/advice/standrds.htm>

D Access

Standard for Access to Archives – a working document Public Services Quality Group
2000. (This document is likely to become a British Standard in the near future.)

http://www.hmc.gov.uk/archives/psqg/National_Standard_Summary.htm

E Records Management

ISO 15489-1: *Information and documentation – Records Management - Part 1: General.*

ISO 15489 –2: *Information and documentation – Records Management – Part 2: Guidelines*

Lord Chancellor’s Code on Practice on the Management of Records, issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (2002)

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/foicode.htm>

The Public Record Office produces a wide range of guidance on all aspects of records management, including electronic records. Copies of publications are available on application to the Standards Project Manager or from the Public Record Office web site.

<http://www.pro.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/standards/default.htm>

F Archival Description and Cataloguing

ISAD(G) General International Standard Archival Description (2nd ed) International Council on Archives Committee on Descriptive Standards, Stockholm 1999

<http://www.ica.org/biblio.php?pbodycode=CDS&ppubtype=pub&plangue=eng>

International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families. International Council on Archives Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Ottawa 1996

<http://www.ica.org/biblio.php?pbodycode=CDS&ppubtype=pub&plangue=eng>

Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names 1997, National Council on Archives 1997

<http://www.hmc.gov.uk/nca/title.htm>

G Data Structure

Encoded Archival Description

Encoded Archival Description Tag Library, version 2002, Society of American Archivists, 2002

<http://www.loc.gov/ead/tglib/index.html>

Encoded Archival Description Application Guidelines, version 2002, Society of American Archivists

Not yet available. See <http://www.loc.gov/ead>

Encoded Archival Description Application Guidelines, version 1.0, Society of American Archivists, 1999

<http://www.loc.gov/ead/ag/aghome.html>

H Professional Standards

Society of Archivists Code of Conduct 1994

<http://www.archives.org.uk/thesociety/codeofconduct.asp>

International Council on Archives Code of Ethics 1996

<http://www.ica.org/biblio.php?pbodycode=CDS&ppubtype=pub&plangue=eng>

Map of Sir John Glynne's Seat at Broad Lane
Flintshire Record Office (A/315)

Grant of Arms to Swansea University 1921
Swansea University Library