

Collections Development Policy

September 2023

Dorset History Centre
Bridport Road
Dorchester
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Service Description

The **Joint Archives Service (JAS)**, based at **Dorset History Centre (DHC)** is operated on behalf of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, and Dorset Council. Partnership between the two authorities as delivered through the joint service sits at the heart of JAS activities and underwrites the protocols and processes by which DHC acquires material. This is enshrined in the 2022 Inter-Authority on Archives which was approved by the Cabinets of both councils.

Local history services (primarily local studies library material) are provided locally at **Poole History Centre** and **Bournemouth Library's Heritage Zone** respectively.

DHC is the sole local authority archive within the county with Accredited status as conferred by The National Archives. Local studies library services and the Historic Environment Record are operated on behalf of Dorset Council.

Our Vision

That Dorset History Centre is the physical and virtual hub for the archival and recorded heritage of the county of Dorset in both hard copy and digital formats.

Our Mission

To acquire, preserve and make accessible the archives of the county of Dorset and so promote cultural, economic, educational and social well-being.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 "Imagine a world without archives. Without records, we could not prove where and when we were born, or who owns the property we live in. We could not trace our ancestry, explore our collective and individual identities, or challenge established views of the past. Without this collective memory, the evidence store for our histories, we could not hold governments and organisations to account. The impact of archives is felt across society: inspiring art and literature; influencing product design and branding; enabling insightful and pioneering research; and informing decision-making in organisations of all types." (*Archives Unlocked, Releasing the Potential, 2017*).¹
- 1.2 The JAS acquires, preserves, and makes accessible archives, records, local studies, and literary material for use by present and future generations. DHC makes these collections accessible to visitors as well as providing worldwide access online and through a range of off-site activities.
- 1.3 The development of the collections will be planned, as far as possible, to support the strategies and objectives of the two partner councils, the policies, strategies and interests of relevant national and regional agencies and local stakeholders, including

¹ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archives21centuryrefreshed-final.pdf>

users. JAS will endeavour, wherever possible to locate and acquire material relating to under-represented groups and be reflective of social change.

2. Aim and Purpose

- 2.1 The aim of this policy is to indicate the type of records that are underrepresented within the JAS's holdings and to describe the methods and strategies by which this situation is being addressed.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy relates to all material (archives and local studies) relevant to the county of Dorset incorporating the areas administered by BCP Council and Dorset Council. It references material that is currently within the custody of the JAS and collections that lie elsewhere but which may at some future date be transferred to DHC for permanent preservation.

4. Current collection strategy

- 4.1 The JAS collects all records which the funding councils have a legal obligation to permanently preserve. JAS staff meet regularly with officers from different councils, hospitals, the police, magistrates, and other organisations to discuss archive policy, agree retention schedules and inform user groups of their activities.
- 4.2 The JAS also offers advice to museums and libraries as to appropriate archival collection policies to ensure that functions are not duplicated, and that historic material resides in the most appropriate conditions.
- 4.3 The JAS selectively acquires archives which represent all aspects of life in the geographical county of Dorset, sampling those areas where there is no statutory obligation to acquire, but without which future generations may not be able to form a clear understanding of events and decisions that were taken in the past. Records are appraised for their informational and/or cultural significance before being accepted for preservation. It is this cultural heritage, along with the natural and built environment and museum collections, which defines Dorset's particular identity.
- 4.4 The following types of archives have an established route of deposit at the JAS, though the JAS has to maintain these contacts and does need the support of the relevant bodies to ensure that deposits of these records continue:
- Records of local government: county, borough, district, town and parish councils, and their predecessor bodies. Transferred according to nationally and locally produced retention schedules.²
 - Records of national government, mostly the records of coroners, magistrates and county courts, hospitals, prisons and Customs and Excise.³
 - Records of religious bodies: DHC is the designated diocesan repository for the archdeaconry of Dorset and also receives records of other denominations.⁴

² The latest retention schedules for schools and parish councils can be downloaded from the [DHC website](http://www.dhc.gov.uk). Archivists will liaise with departments within the district, borough and county councils to establish which records are suitable for transfer based upon the guidance for local authorities provided by The National Archives: <http://www.esd.org.uk/foi/records%20management%20retention%20guidelines%20for%20LG.pdf>

³ The new 20-Year Rule for Public Records has affected the quantity of material received at DHC. Current collection policy is based upon advice from The National Archives and from, the ACPO police retention schedule.

⁴ Tithe Act, Parochial Records Measure; The JAS has also produced a reference guide to church records suitable for deposit.

- A wide range of archives generated by community groups, businesses, the arts, charities, families, estates, individuals, and other organisations.⁵ These collections form a cross-section of aspects of work, education, and leisure within the county.
- 4.5 The JAS maintains a local studies library for Dorset and material is transferred from the Dorset Library Service to maintain this. In addition, items are donated to the service by individuals and groups. The following local studies material is collected by the JAS:
- Local studies library material for Dorset and is solely funded in this area by Dorset Council.
 - Local studies stock including books, maps and audio-visual material relating to the county of Dorset.
 - Local studies collections including works on the history of the county and other areas including geology, demography, architecture and a substantial local authors section.
- 4.6 The JAS acquires this material by the following methods:
- Deposit: collections may be held on deposit for organisations which retain ownership such as the Church of England or Citizens Advice Bureau.
 - Donation: where ownership is passed to the JAS. Donation, rather than deposit, is strongly encouraged.
 - Transfer: from local and national government bodies.
 - Terms and conditions of deposit may be found on the DHC website.⁶
- 4.7 Archival material is selected according to the various retention schedules for different organisations however there are common appraisal principles of not accepting duplicates, ephemera or documents that are unlikely to be of long-term historic interest. Almost all physical formats and born-digital records are accepted unless they cannot be safely stored.⁷
- 4.8 Items of historic interest that do not relate to the geographical county of Dorset are not accepted, except where they form an integral part of a wider Dorset related collection. DHC will suggest an appropriate alternative repository and may act as an intermediary.
- 4.9 Periodic reviews are undertaken of the collections held at DHC to ensure that they contain material that is worthy of permanent preservation. Reviews are informed by changes to retention schedules and by national guidelines.⁸ In the rare instance that previously accessioned documents are found to be unsuitable for permanent retention they will be de-accessioned following a careful and considered process. De-accessioned documents are offered back to the depositor before being destroyed as confidential waste.

5. Collections Development

- 5.1 Whilst the JAS holds a range of collections that represent the life and history of Dorset and its people, as the culture of life in Dorset changes it is necessary to ensure that the collections continue to represent all aspects of life in the county. Therefore, the JAS has identified some areas where there is less or minimal representation of some types of records or records of some specific organisations in Dorset.

⁵ The JAS has produced a retention schedule for charities and other not for profit organisations. Examples of collections for which DHC has recently received cataloguing grants since 2015 include the Bankes estate, Poole Borough archive, Herrison Hospital, and the archive of Dame Elisabeth Frink.

⁶ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/libraries-history-culture/dorset-history-centre/terms-of-agreement-deposit-of-archives-at-dorset-history-centre.aspx>

⁷ A small number of document types cannot be safely stored at DHC. These include combustible nitrate negatives. DHC will advise as to the most suitable place of deposit or alternative methods of preservation.

⁸ The National Archives: *De-accession and disposal: Guidance for archive services* OGL, 2015.

- 5.2 As modern life is constantly changing this will be a continuing and on-going process. However certain areas have already been identified as requiring collections development:
- Business archives, particularly those of the new industries in the geographical county of Dorset
 - Records of the wider religious, sexual, and ethnic minority communities
 - Records of the arts and creative life including those of artists, makers and of the cultural industries.
 - Records of political parties and of the parliamentary representatives (MPs) of the county.
- 5.3 Since these records are not deposited at the JAS by traditional means the JAS requires a proactive approach to acquiring these collections. The JAS currently uses a number of methods to reach the creators and owners of these records:
- The JAS works with a range of communities in the county and supports community groups in project work. This raises awareness of the work of the JAS and enables contacts to be made with communities who may have records which are underrepresented in the collections.
 - The JAS also works in partnership with other services in Bournemouth, Dorset, and Poole who themselves have a network of contacts in their area. In working with these partners, the JAS aims to identify collections that may be worthy of long-term preservation.
 - The Learning and Outreach programme brings staff of the JAS into contact with a range of organisations and groups.
 - The marketing activities of the service raise awareness of the JAS and signposts potential depositors to useful information on the collections.
 - The JAS works with voluntary and professional organisations such as the Dorset Museums and the Dorset Archives Trust to create networks through the county as ‘the eyes and ears’ alerting the service to possible collections

6. Standards and legislation

- 6.1 There is no overarching legislation relating to the collection and preservation of archives. Several pieces of legislation deal with different sections of material preserved at DHC.
- i. For records of local government: Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government (Records) Act 1962.
 - ii. For the records of churches and other religious bodies: the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992; the Tithe Act, 1936.
 - iii. For the records of courts, coroners, prisons, hospitals, and other government bodies: the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967; and the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.
 - iv. For historic estate records the Manorial Documents Rules 1959 (amended 1963 and 1967)
- 6.2 Access to all collections complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- 6.3 For the Local Studies collection, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to maintain a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service.

7. Review of the Policy

- 7.1 The policy will be reviewed in consultation with interested organisations, stakeholders, and individuals every 3 years to consider any new legislation, regulations, guidance, or business practices. The next review of this policy will take place in September 2026.

8. Further information or comment

8.1 Copies of this policy are available in large print.

8.2 To comment on this policy or for further information about it, contact the Service Manager for Archives and Records at:

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Tel: 01305 250550

E-mail: archives@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov/dorsethistorycentre