

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER RECORDS AND ARCHIVES COLLECTION AND ACQUISITION POLICY

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Revision History

DATE	VERSION	DESCRIPTION	CHANGED BY
7/10/2019	1.1 Collection and Acquisition Policy	Review and minor revisions in alignment with Records Management Policy – adopted by Research Committee	EP
07/06/2017	1.0 Collection and Acquisition Policy: Final	Review and revision of policy adopted by Research Committee	EP
29/6/2005	2005 Archive Policy: Final	Statement of Collecting Policy adopted by Research Committee	EP
1995		First Archive Policy adopted by Senior Management Group	BW

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Westminster's Records and Archives was established in 1994 and is a professional division within Professional Services. University Records and Archives collects and preserves records, the corporate memory of the University, created by the University and its predecessors in order to make them accessible to students, staff and the general public both now and in the future.
- 1.2. University Records and Archives derives its authority to collect from policies agreed within the University. The first Archive Policy was adopted by the Senior Management Group in 1995. This Collection and Acquisition Policy, which updates the previous document, was adopted by the University Research Committee on 7 October 2019.
- 1.3. The Policy will be reviewed every five years in accordance with the recommendations of The National Archives. It will be made publicly available online: www.westminster.ac.uk/archives
- 1.4. The University has adopted The National Archives' *Standard for Record Repositories* (2004) <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/standard2005.pdf> and the accompanying *Framework of Standards* <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/framework.pdf> to help it achieve best professional practice in safeguarding and making accessible the collections in its care.

2. Scope of Collection and Acquisition Policy

The University Records and Archives Collection and Acquisition Policy forms part of the mission of Professional Services to help meet the University's strategic objectives relating to teaching, research and administration. It aims to acquire records for which it is the appropriate repository, and not to compete with others.

3. Collection Strengths

We seek to acquire archives, manuscripts and other primary source material relating to the history of the University and its predecessor bodies as follows:

- 3.1. Records created by and relating to the University and its predecessor bodies, including the Royal Polytechnic Institution, Regent Street Polytechnic and the Polytechnic of Central London.
- 3.2. Records created by and related to the wide range of sports and social clubs associated with the former Polytechnic, the Secondary School and the Polytechnic Touring Association.
- 3.3. Personal papers of former students and staff where these help document the history of the University, or support teaching and research.
- 3.4. Non-current institutional records of long-term historic value will be transferred to the Archive as a result of the University's records management programme.¹ Specifically, all records created by senior staff members are automatically transferred to University Records and Archives for review and appraisal when

¹ See *University of Westminster Records Management Policy* 2019.

the staff member leaves the University. See Appendix 1 for details of the internal records transfer process.

4. Other collecting areas

We also seek to acquire records unrelated to the history of the institution, where:

- 4.1. These records build upon and complement our existing holdings or the University's research strengths, or address identified areas of current weakness; provided that there is no conflict with other repositories.
- 4.2. These records currently fall within the subject areas of:
the history of media,
communication,
architecture, and
planning
- 4.3. Within the University, decisions on these type of acquisitions are made by the University Archivist in consultation with Deans of Faculty and the Chair of the Research Committee as appropriate.

5. Archives in special format

The University of Westminster Archive has excellent storage facilities for the majority of archives and we hold collections in many formats and media. However, before we can accept records held in electronic, cine film or audio-visual format, we will need to discuss with the donor the various options for dealing with specialised or vulnerable media. This may include directing donors/depositors to specialised repositories such as the British Film Institute or the British Library.

6. Terms and conditions of acquisition

In order to protect the rights of the donor and the integrity of the archives themselves, we abide by the following terms and conditions:

- 6.1. No records will be accepted without an agreement form detailing the specific terms and conditions of donation or deposit. University Records and Archives will not accept archival donations or deposits on behalf of the University of Westminster where the University Archivist has not been party to the agreement.
- 6.2. No records will be accepted without clear and valid title of ownership. The University Archivist must be satisfied that the donor/depositor has proper authority or title to transfer the records.
- 6.3. Only items which, in the judgement of the University Archivist, are of sufficient quality for long-term preservation will be accepted. Material which is judged to be ephemeral, unsuitable for public access, of no long-term historic value or duplicate will be disposed of or returned according to the agreement signed in advance with the donor/depositor.
- 6.4. Records will normally only be accepted as donations or purchases and not a loans. Where loan is unavoidable a deposit agreement will be signed by both parties. This may take the form of a legal contract.

- 6.5. Individual items or collections relating to the history of the University may be purchased. Acquisitions purchased with the assistance of grant aid will be held subject to the terms and conditions of bodies from whom such aid has been received.
- 6.6. Only records which can be made available for research, learning and teaching, will be acquired; although an agreed period of closure may be necessary for sensitive material.
- 6.7. All acquisitions will be recorded in the Accession Register. Information on the nature and circumstances of each acquisition will be recorded. This will include the date and terms of transfer, the name and address of the donor/depositor, brief details of the records and any reference number necessary to allow the records themselves and any related documentation to be traced.

7. Selection procedure for significant donations

- 7.1. Significant donations which are substantial in volume and resource intensive, require assessment according to an agreed procedure, prior to acceptance.
- 7.2. Prior to agreement to accept a donation or acquire a collection the following local procedures should be followed:
 - 7.2.1. The selection criteria detailed in 3. and 4. above will be applied to the potential acquisition.
 - 7.2.2. A template (Appendix 3) will be completed by the member of staff and sent to the University Archivist at the earliest opportunity.
 - 7.2.3. The University Archivist will undertake a risk assessment of the potential acquisition, to determine whether the benefit to the University is proportionate to identified risks.
 - 7.2.4. A costing exercise, to determine anticipated start-up costs (e.g. storage requirements) and anticipated ongoing revenue costs (e.g. cataloguing, maintenance and conservation, costs associated with scholarly use).
- 7.3. After the assessment and costings exercise the University Archivist should take the consequent findings and recommendations to the Director of Student and Academic Services for consideration.
- 7.4. The Director of Student and Academic Services, advised by the University Archivist, is responsible for recommending to the University, decisions on substantial donations and proposed acquisitions of archives, following the assessment procedure outlined here, following consultation with relevant University colleagues, including academic staff, and having regard to the interests of other relevant organisations.
- 7.5. Guidance for staff considering an archive acquisition is available in Appendix 2.

8. What we don't acquire

- 8.1. **Material that would normally be acquired by other archive repositories**
 - 8.1.1. In acquiring records every effort will be made to avoid conflict and duplication with the collecting policies of other archive repositories.

Other archive repositories will be consulted and/or potential donors/depositors referred to them as appropriate.

8.1.2. No attempt will be made to secure the acquisition or removal of any records held in another archive repository, except with the consent of the owner of the records and in consultation with the archivist in charge and governing body of that repository. No records will be acquired or disposed of in contravention of the terms of any legislation pertaining at the time, in particular the Public Records Acts.

8.1.3. In the case of dispute between the University of Westminster and another repository as to the proper custodian of the records, the advice of a neutral arbiter such as The National Archives will be taken.

8.2. Copies or facsimiles

We do not usually accept collections that comprise wholly or largely photocopies or facsimiles of original material, except in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where the whereabouts of the original is now unknown, or where it is known to have been destroyed and no other version exists.

8.3. Archives requiring long closure periods

Archives requiring restricted access for a lengthy period of time, e.g. confidential or personnel files, will not normally be accepted, although one or two files requiring restricted access within a larger collection will be accepted.

8.4. Published material

We do not normally seek to acquire published material, as opposed to original archive material. Donors wishing to deposit large collections of published material may be referred to the University's libraries.

The only exceptions are:

8.4.1. Small amounts of published material forming part of a larger archive;

8.4.2. Rare or unique publications where they are deemed appropriate subject to the selection criteria detailed in 3. and 4. above.

8.5. Art or artefacts

We do not encourage the acquisition of acquisitions of artefacts or works of art unless they are a small part of a much larger archive collection, or where they have a special significance or association. Small items of memorabilia, such as medals, relating to the history of the University will be held in the Archive.

9. Ensuring the long-term preservation of archives

9.1. Once selected and accessioned, records will be preserved permanently in accordance with the agreement signed with the donor or depositor and made available to researchers from both within and outside the University.

9.2. However, University Records and Archives reserves the right to conduct a periodic review of material and, where necessary, to recommend their disposal or destruction. This may be for the following reasons:

9.2.1. Material has been acquired in the past which belongs more properly with records in another repository, in which case the records may be transferred with the consent of the owner where necessary and with the knowledge of both governing bodies, subject to any relevant statutory provisions being observed.

- 9.2.2. Duplicate, ephemeral or non-archival material which in the past has been incorrectly deemed suitable for permanent preservation.
 - 9.2.3. Non-archival material (e.g. books) currently stored in the archives which should either be in the library, off-site or disposed of.
 - 9.2.4. Material acquired in specialist format which is either no longer accessible, e.g. floppy disks, or poses a threat to itself and other collections, e.g. nitrate film. In this case, every effort will be made to conserve or transfer the material to an accessible format and to find a more suitable repository for the original items where necessary.
 - 9.2.5. University Records and Archives becomes unable, either temporarily or permanently, to provide proper care for the collections, in which case they should be transferred, on such terms as will have been prior agreed with the donor/depositor, and with the consent of both governing bodies, to another appropriate repository with similar overall objectives.
 - 9.2.6. The owner requests the return of items on deposit. This may occur where the collection is formally on loan, in which case the return will be governed by the conditions laid out in the original agreement form with the depositor. However, older material donated in the past without adequate terms or lack of provenance may also find itself the subject of a legitimate claim by heirs to the original owner.
- 9.3. University Records and Archives has no intention to de-accession records once received, except, in accordance with the wishes and requirements of donors, to evaluate and select for destruction those documents deemed not to be worthy of long-term preservation. The intention shall have been made clear at the time of transfer in the formal agreement between University Records and Archives and the donor/depositor.
 - 9.4. University Records and Archives will not sell any archives that it owns, save by reallocating records not deemed relevant to the collection which were originally acquired by purchase.
 - 9.5. Certain grant awarding bodies stipulate that records acquired or conserved with their grant may not be disposed of or transferred to another organisation, or at least not without their express authority. University Records and Archives will honour any such terms and conditions pertaining to collections of this sort.

10. Access and Security

- 10.1. All records which are open to inspection by the public will be clearly described, in publicly-available finding aids, whether in hard-copy or electronically. Information about new acquisitions and any restrictions on access or use will be added to the archive catalogue and sent to The National Archives for inclusion on its annual Accession Survey.
- 10.2. Our aim is to make the archives collection as widely available as possible. Details of how to access the University Archive can be found on our website: www.westminster.ac.uk/archives
- 10.3. The archives are open to staff and students during opening hours, and to the general public by appointment. The Reading Room is under constant supervision during opening hours.

- 10.4. New readers will be asked to provide proof of identity before being given access to archival documents, and to sign an undertaking that they will respect the access conditions. All readers are required to sign the register in the Archive Reading Room; by doing so they agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the Reading Room, a copy of which is available in the Reading Room for inspection.
- 10.5. The Archive Reading Room is wheelchair accessible. In addition, special assistance can be provided for readers requiring extra help to access the material held here by prior arrangement. Restrictions will normally only apply where the records might be damaged or compromised, e.g. no copying is allowed for conservation reasons.
- 10.6. For security and preservation reasons, readers must put coats and bags in the lockers provided and only use pencil or laptop computers to make notes. They should not write on or trace directly from any records.
- 10.7. While photocopying or scanning is not allowed for preservation reasons, readers may take photographs using cameras or telephones for reference purposes only. No flash is allowed and photography can only be undertaken with the express permission of University Records and Archives staff. Readers will be required to sign a copyright declaration form and list the items they are photographing. We will also help readers obtain high resolution images if required.

11. Donating records to the University of Westminster Archive

Please contact the University Archivist at University Records and Archives, 4-12 Little Titchfield Street, London W1W 7BY, or email archive@westminster.ac.uk or telephone +44 (0) 20 3506 9602 if you would like further information about donation archives to the University of Westminster Archive.

Date for next formal review of policy: October 2024

Appendix 1: Internal Records Transfer Process

1. Introduction

1.1 University Records and Archives (URA) collects and preserves records, the corporate memory of the University, created by the University and its predecessors in order to make them accessible to students, staff and the general public both now and in the future.

1.2 Records created by staff as part of their role as an employee are University records.

1.3 URA is responsible for determining which University records are transferred to the University Archive to be retained permanently.

1.4 The purpose of this document is to outline how the transfer of internal records will be managed.

2. Transfer Form

2.1 The transfer form will be completed where appropriate for internal records being transferred to the University Archive, and the information on the form is used to populate the finding aids for the records.

3. Finding Aids

3.1 The records will be assigned an accession number, and then catalogued to a level and in a manner appropriate to their nature and number. Catalogue information about the records will be available on the public website.

3.2 Records retaining current business value, relating to current and on-going events and activities, or with particular sensitivities, will not have their catalogue information made publically available. In the case of such records, URA will apply a 5 year period from the date of the youngest record to the publication of cataloguing information. At the end of the 5 year period this decision will be reviewed by URA, with a view to making some or all of the cataloguing information available. Throughout this period, cataloguing information will be available to URA staff for the purposes of managing the records.

4. Storage and Preservation

4.1 Physical records

4.1.1 The records will be stored in a secure environment under conditions which conform as far as possible with the British Standard Institute specification on the storage and preservation of archives (BS EN 16893 (2018)) or any modification thereof.

4.1.2 The Archive will take all reasonable precautions to preserve the records from damage, loss or theft. All archive holdings are included in the University's disaster recovery policy, which aims to restore the collections to a usable state in the event of any damage occurring.

4.2 Digital Records

4.2.1 Born digital or digitised records will be stored in our secure digital storage and preservation service Arkivum/Perpetua, provided by an external third party called Arkivum.

5. Access

5.1 The University of Westminster is subject to the [Freedom of Information Act](#). As a result, all information held by the University and therefore the University Archive is open to access, subject to relevant exemptions.

5.2 For records as defined in 3.2 above, requests for access will be considered in line with the University's [Freedom of Information Policy](#) and [Data Protection Policy](#).

5.3 Access to records transferred to the University Archive will be managed by URA staff.

Transfer Form

Transferring Body	
Department/Team	
Contact name	
Contact details	

Description of Records	
Volume of records to be transferred (i.e 1 box, 3GB etc.)	
Date of records (earliest and latest date)	
Brief description	
Off-Site Storage barcode (<i>URA to complete - where relevant</i>)	
Archive Ref No. (<i>URA to complete where relevant</i>)	
Accession number (<i>URA to complete</i>)	

Authorisation	
Signature of transferee	
Date of transfer	

APPENDIX 2: Guidelines for staff who are offered archives as donations to the University

Introduction

These guidelines are intended for University staff who might be approached by a potential donor of an archive. It is important to consider a number of criteria before any donations can be accepted.

Scope

Our archive collections reflect the University's commitment to promote and develop innovative, cutting-edge and interdisciplinary research. They support our strategic priority to focus on 'areas of research and knowledge exchange where we make a difference and where that research is valued for the impact it makes... on business, industry and the wider society'.²

Any donation must be in line with *University Records and Archives Collection and Acquisition Policy*, to which these guidelines are appended.

Procedure

When a member of staff receives an offer of donation, they are requested to work in partnership with University Records and Archive staff and, as appropriate, colleagues from within and outside the University including a legal advisor, from an early stage in the discussions. The Director of Student and Academic Services, advised by the University Archivist, is responsible for recommending to the University, decisions on substantial donations and proposed acquisitions of archives, following the assessment procedure outlined here, following consultation with relevant University colleagues, including academic staff, and having regard to the interests of other relevant organisations.

The procedure has four stages:

1. Investigation
2. Resource assessment
3. Risk assessment and cost analysis
4. Decision

1. Investigation

An initial investigative discussion should take place between appropriate members of University staff, including the University Archivist, and the potential donor to establish whether the collection is likely to meet a substantial number of the following criteria.

Are the records:

- created by and relating to the University and its predecessor bodies, including the Royal Polytechnic Institution, Regent Street Polytechnic and the Polytechnic of Central London?
- created by and related to the wide range of sports and social clubs associated with the former Polytechnic, the Secondary School and the Polytechnic Touring Association?
- personal papers of former students and staff where these help document the history of the University, or support teaching and research?

If unrelated to the history of the institution, do the records:

² *Being Westminster: Our Strategy 2018-2013* (30 October 2018).

- build upon and complement our existing holdings or the University's research strengths, or address identified areas of current weakness; provided that there is no conflict with other repositories?

- fall within the subject areas of:
 - the history of media,
 - communication,
 - architecture, and
 - planning?

2. Resource assessment

If the collection seems to fit the selection criteria then it will be important to consider a number of quantitative issues to determine the potential resource requirement of the material. The template 'Record of possible donation to the University of Westminster Archive' (Appendix 3) should be used to record this essential information.

3. Risk assessment and cost analysis

The answers to the questions in the template 'Record of possible donation to the University of Westminster Archive' will lead to an informed picture of the collection and its potential benefit to the University.

The University Archivist, in conjunction with the member of staff and any other University staff as appropriate should carry out an analysis of the strengths of the collection, the weaknesses, the opportunities it offers to the University and the threats it might present if the University agrees to take it. This SWOT analysis will indicate the overall balance of risk and gain which the University might encounter.

The assessing team should also consider the risks in terms of their likelihood and impact and suggest mitigating measures which might be put in place to counter these.

A critical question is to consider whether the collection can be managed within existing resources, or what additional financial resources would be needed to manage the collection (including storage, staff and conservation costs). A cost analysis needs to be undertaken to determine the capital and revenue resource requirement of taking the donation.

4. Decision – approval or refusal

Following these considerations, a proposal can be made to take or reject the donation, based on the principles in the *University Records and Archives Collection and Acquisition Policy*.

For small gifts, which can be dealt with using existing resources, this proposal will be made by the University Archivist, in liaison with appropriate staff.

For larger gifts, which will require significant additional resources, the proposal should be referred to the Director of Libraries and Curriculum Support who will take it to the Research Committee if approval is recommended. This will ensure that the decision to accept the proposed donation is made by appropriate Senior University Managers, who will take into consideration the information provided by the assessing team.

APPENDIX 3: Record of possible donation to the University of Westminster Archive

1. Background information

Potential donor's name and contact details
Date and venue of initial meeting with donor and names of those present

2. Details of the potential archive collection

1. What is the broad subject area of the material?
2. What is the format of the material (e.g. manuscript letters, photographs, artefacts, books)?
3. What is the approximate size of the gift (e.g. 200 volumes, 10 cardboard boxes, 30 shelves)?
4. What is the general age of the material (e.g. pre-1900, post-1960)?
5. What is the general condition of the material (e.g. good, suspect mould or pest damage)?
6. Is the donor happy for us to select which records we want or must the collection be accepted in its entirety?

7. Where is the material located? Is the donor able to provide any assistance with transport of the collection to the University?
8. Does the donor have a connection with the University of Westminster? If not, why has the donor decided to offer this gift to us?
9. Has a current or future research interest in this field been demonstrated (e.g. have researchers accessed the collection or published on it)?
10. Who owns the copyright in the content of the donation? Please provide contact details if different from above.
11. Are digital copies of the material in existence, and are these part of the donation?
12. Notes written by whom and when
13. Additional information
14. Actions agreed following initial meeting