

BERKSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

ACQUISITIONS POLICY



Issued August 1993
Revised February 1997
Revised April 2005

1 Scope

This policy governs the acquisition and disposal of archival material, in whatever format, in the Berkshire Record Office. It does not include Office policy for the acquisition of published material or duplicate sources.

Archives may include any of the following: handwritten or typescript primary sources, maps, plans, designs, drawings, photographs, printed material, audio-visual or electronic media.

2 Governing legislation and standards

2.1 The Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972 enabled all principal authorities (including all 6 Berkshire unitaries) to become archive authorities and acquire records by gift, purchase or deposit. West Berkshire Council has been appointed archives authority on behalf of the 6 Berkshire authorities under the terms of the joint agreement. Berkshire Record Office exercises the power of acquisition on behalf of the 6 Berkshire authorities.

2.2 Various pieces of legislation impact on archives acquisition. Berkshire Record Office will acquire archives subject to the conditions and principles laid down in the following:

- Public Records Acts 1958, 1967
- Manorial Document Rules 1959
- Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, revised 1992
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

2.3 The following standards are required to be met for certain archives to be acquired. Berkshire Record Office will apply these standards to all its holdings:

- The National Archives Standard for Records Repositories 2004
- National Council on Archives Standard for Access to Archives 2003
- British Standard 5454: 2000

In addition Berkshire Record Office will seek to implement best practice guidance on acquisition from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Society of Archivists, or other recognised national bodies.

3 Acquisition criteria

3.1 Geographical collecting area

Berkshire Record Office will collect documents relating to both the historic and the modern Royal County of Berkshire. This may include documents relating to places outside the county if there are ethical reasons for keeping a collection together or if they enhance an understanding of the County's history. Berkshire Record Office will also respect the varying administrative boundaries recognised by depositors, and seek to acquire records according to the creating body's record-keeping structure.

3.2 Archives as information or evidence

Berkshire Record Office will appraise archives for their historical value before they are acquired. This value will be judged in the context of existing collections and the use made of them. Further details on selection are given in the appendix.

The Record Office will seek to ensure that its collections reflect all aspects of Berkshire's communities and their activities, past and present. An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the collection should be prepared as part of an acquisitions strategy.

3.3 Creating bodies

Berkshire Record Office is the designated repository under statute for the following archives:

- The records of the 6 Berkshire unitaries and their predecessor bodies
- Records of other Berkshire statutory bodies such as schools
- Local public records held under the Public Records Acts, such as hospitals, courts, prisons and the Thames Conservancy

- Ecclesiastical records from parishes and deaneries within the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, as well as records of the Archdeaconry itself and some records of the Diocese of Oxford

In addition, Berkshire Record Office will seek to acquire archives from all types of record-creating bodies within Berkshire. These include:

- faith groups other than the Church of England
- clubs and societies
- businesses
- families (including landed estates)

3.4 Items not normally accepted

Berkshire Record Office will not seek to acquire archives that are wholly or mainly audio-visual in nature. However, it will accept audio-visual items that are an integral part of a larger archive (though these may be lodged in a repository with specialist facilities if this is judged to be in the interests of the records).

We will not acquire potentially hazardous items such as cellulose nitrate film or infested material that would pose a risk to the repository or other collections.

We will not acquire archives damaged beyond repair, unless the continuing historic value of the damaged artefact is judged to be significant.

We will not acquire archives that are subject to unreasonable restrictions on public use, or that may cause us to commit an offence.

4 Methods of acquisition

Berkshire Record Office will acquire archives by transfer, deposit, gift or purchase. Gifts and deposits will be accepted according to the terms of the regulations governing the gift and deposit of documents current at the time of acquisition, published separately. Gifts will be preferred unless a depositor has an ongoing legal need to retain title.

The Record Office will document each acquisition in an accessions register, which will be permanently retained in the Office. The Record Office will issue receipts signed by the Office and the depositor for all archives on permanent loan to the Office. The Record Office will further preserve all documentation relating to each acquisition. These records will form the legal basis for evidence of title.

5 Liaison with other institutions

5.1 Printed material and ephemera

Berkshire Record Office will liaise with Library, Museum and Heritage Services within the 6 Berkshire authorities to ensure that books and documents are directed to whichever is the most appropriate destination. Berkshire Record Office will apply the following guidelines:

- Manuscripts and archives shall be acquired by Berkshire Record Office
- Printed secondary material shall be acquired by Library Services, except where it has a clear archival context and/or forms part of an archival collection
- Prints, illustrative material and ephemera may be collected by either. Berkshire Record Office will preserve such material where it has a clear archival context and/or forms part of an archival collection
- The integrity of collections shall be respected
- The Record Office will acquire printed secondary material for reference in accordance with its library policy.

5.2 Photographs

Berkshire Record Office recognises that Library, Museum and Heritage Services may collect photographs. Berkshire Record Office will acquire photographs where they were created as an archival record (for example, as a buildings survey undertaken by a record-creating body) or where they form part of an archival collection.

5.3 Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

Berkshire Record Office and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies will liaise regarding archives that cover the geographical area of Buckinghamshire transferred to Berkshire in 1974. The following protocol has been agreed:

- There is a general presumption that archive collections should not be split
- Records of local authorities before 1974 will be acquired by CBS; records of those after 1974 will be acquired by BRO. It has been agreed that the Slough Borough Council archive, including records of Slough Corporation from 1863, will be acquired by BRO
- Records of criminal courts before 1971 will be acquired by CBS; records of those after 1971 will be acquired by BRO
- Records of coroners' courts before 1974 will be acquired by CBS; records of those after 1974 will be acquired by BRO

- Records of hospitals and health authorities before 1948 will be acquired by CBS; records of those after 1948 will be acquired by BRO
- Records of schools before 1974 may be acquired by either CBS or BRO
- Privately created archives for may be acquired by either CBS or BRO

Neither CBS nor BRO will seek to transfer archives already held within their collections unless agreed with the depositor/donor.

5.4 Oxfordshire Record Office

Berkshire Record Office and Oxfordshire Record Office will liaise regarding archives that cover the geographical area of Berkshire transferred to Berkshire in 1974. The following protocol has been agreed:

- There is a general presumption that archive collections should not be split
- Records of local authorities before 1974 will be acquired by BRO; records of those after 1974 will be acquired by ORO
- Records of coroners' courts before 1974 will be acquired by BRO; records of those after 1974 will be acquired by ORO
- Records of schools and parish councils before 1974 may be acquired by either BRO or ORO
- Privately created archives may be acquired by either BRO or ORO

Neither BRO nor ORO will seek to transfer archives already held within their collections unless agreed with the depositor/donor.

6 Disposals

6.1 Transfer of archives to other repositories

Berkshire Record Office will transfer archives to a more suitable repository if it is felt that the documents and the users of those documents would benefit from their relocation. There will be a presumption that collections should not be split. Approval from the donor/depositor will be sought.

6.2 Destruction of documents

Berkshire Record Office will ensure that any archives not deemed to be worthy of permanent preservation at the time of acquisition will either be returned to the donor/depositor or destroyed confidentially.

6.3 Sale of documents

Berkshire Record Office will not sell any archives acquired by donation, deposit or transfer. From time to time archives purchased privately or at auction may include items that fall outside the acquisition criteria. In such circumstances Berkshire Record Office may sell items. Appropriate repositories will be contacted first.

Acquisitions Policy
Berkshire Record Office

APPENDIX

Guidelines for selection

- 1. Informational and evidential value** This involves a regard for the context of an item as well as its content. In general, items that are part of a larger archive or relate directly to items in another archive have greater value than items that do not possess such a context.
- 2. Core records** The core records of any organisation or individual should always be kept. Core records are those which record the major decisions and activities of the organisation or individual in question.
- 3. Supporting records** Supporting records should be selected in accordance with the degree to which they enhance or correct the core records. Core records can often contain only limited information about the decisions and activities of the organisation or individual, and the preservation of some supporting papers can reflect the thinking behind decisions or activities. Supporting records that duplicate information contained in the core records, or provide information of low value will not be kept.

If the core records of an organisation or individual are missing and only the supporting documentation survives this naturally assumes a greater significance and a larger proportion of it will probably be selected for permanent preservation.

- 4. Drafts, duplicates etc** Draft and duplicate documents will not be kept unless they provide evidence of the development of an important record.
- 5. Particular Instance Papers** Otherwise case files. Depending on bulk and importance, these should be considered for sampling in accordance with recognised sampling procedures.