

The Accessions to Repositories programme: Guidance Notes

The programme collects information on the records archives have received during the previous year. Participating archives are asked to report all new accessions. This allows for accurate analysis of trends and collecting practices. However, please do not include any personally sensitive data. We ask all participating repositories to read the guidance below and use the *updated template* to submit their accessions return. This helps us analyse the data more easily and comprehensively. Please see the section 'what will happen to the information you send us' for more details on how we use accessions data.

Please do not modify the subject line when replying to the invite email as the subject allows us to identify and process returns more dynamically.

Taking Part

Invitations to participate are sent out in early December to repositories known to be actively collecting beyond their own institutional records. If you usually participate but have not received an invitation by the middle of December, please [contact us](#).

Please use the template attached to your invitation email to aid our processing of the data.

The deadline

Complete the updated Accessions return template and send it to nra.accessions@nationalarchives.gov.uk by **02 February 2026**.

[The template is also available on our website.](#)

This deadline allows for sufficient time to process and analyse the information gathered.

What information is collected for the survey?

The survey aims to collect information on all newly accessioned material to gather a full snapshot of collecting patterns across the sector.

Please mark newly accessioned records that you believe to have the most evidential, cultural, or societal impact, or records you would particularly like added to Discovery, with a 'y' in the 'collections highlight' column in the template.

The template

We ask all repositories to **use the template provided**. Please contact us if this is a problem. Please do not add to or change the order of columns in the template, as this will adversely affect our ability to process and analyse the data; we rely on the format being consistent.

All returns should include the following details:

ARCHON number

This can be found by [searching Discovery](#), and will be included in the subject line of your email.

Creator of records

As far as possible, this should include full name, dates, epithet (e.g. occupation), descriptor and/or function for any entities (corporate bodies, families or individuals) that created the records. More details will help us to disambiguate creators, add information to our resources and link between related collections. Please note the creator is not necessarily the same as the depositor.

Summary description

Brief information about the records.

Covering dates

The covering dates for the whole collection, preferably in the format yyyy-yyyy (e.g. 1858-1957).

ISAD (G) reference number and/or accession reference

The collection reference number and/or accession reference.

Quantity

The extent of the collection being accessioned in this year. Please use linear metres where possible or give a general sense of the material (e.g. "1 box"). Try not to mix units. **For digital collections, please give the quantity in Mb or Gb.**

Additional deposit?

Is the deposit an addition to an existing collection in your repository? If yes, please provide the reference number.

Collection highlight?

Let us know the highlights of your collecting over the past year. Please also use this field to flag records you would like us to add to Discovery or highlight in our communications with researchers and the sector.

Catalogue link

A permanent URL. This is a web address that will consistently point to your specific information resource such as an entry in an online catalogue.

Keywords

A handful of terms reflecting the main themes covered by the content of the documents comprising the collection. This will enable us to surface themes and trends when analysing the data.

Please note: We send the same template to all contributing archives. If your archive service is not a Place of Deposit, please ignore the blue 'Fields for public records only' section of the template.

Please let us know as soon as possible if your archive service has not received any deposits during the past year or does not have the capacity to complete a return.

Example template:

[View the example template below, or download it here](#)

(This is an example only. Please use the template attached to your invite email)

Accessions Return															
Move the cursor over the headings in the table for more guidance.															
											Fields for public records only				
ARCHON Number	Repository Name	Creator of the records including full name, dates, epithet, descriptor and/or function. Please do not include sensitive personal data	Summary description	Covering dates	ISAD(G) reference code	Quantity of accessioned collection* If digital please give quantity in Mb or Gb	Additional deposit? (Y/N)	Collection highlight? (Y/N)	Persistent URL of catalogue entry	Keywords	Public Record? (Y/N)	Transferring body for public records only (note that the creator and transferring body may not always be the same)	Quantity in linear metres of public records Please use numerical value only to allow us to sum automatically	Quantity in Mb of born-digital public records	Are the records open or closed? (Open/Closed)
41	EXAMPLE London Metropolitan Archives	EXAMPLE Woolwich Infirmary	theatre registers	1990-2004	HOB/R5	4 linear metre; 8.2Gb	Y	N	n/a	heart surgery, biopsy, transplant	Y	Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust	4	8396.8	closed
41	EXAMPLE London Metropolitan Archives	EXAMPLE Richard Lloyd & Co Ltd, tool manufacturers, Birmingham	digital records	1901-2000	MS 4767	4.8 Gb	N	Y	n/a	drills, lawnmowers, bankruptcy	N				
41	EXAMPLE London Metropolitan Archives	EXAMPLE Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Coroner	post mortem papers and inquest file	1995-2005	CORB	0.6m	Y	N	http://calmview.cardiff.gov.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=CORB		Y	Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys Coroner	0.6		closed
41	EXAMPLE London Metropolitan Archives	EXAMPLE Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, 1874-1965, Knight, Prime Minister and historian	personal papers with background corresp and papers. Includes audio tapes of speeches.	1945-1965	CHUR	20 boxes	Y	Y	http://www-archives.chu.cam.ac.uk/per/node?reference=CHUR	war, empire, communism, India, history	N				
41	EXAMPLE London Metropolitan Archives	EXAMPLE Battle Magistrates' Court and Bexhill Petty Sessions	Adoption registers	1927-2000	12509	6.5 linear metres	N	Y	n/a	maternity home, Catholic, inspections	Y	Eastbourne, Hastings and Worthing Combined Magistrates' Courts	6.5		open

What will happen to the information you send us?

Changes to the survey

Last year, to make the best use of our collective resources and deliver greater impact, we made some adjustments to how we process and analyse data from the survey.

1. We have streamlined the processing of accessions returns received through the annual survey, placing increased emphasis on analysing the data. This will enable us to better understand collecting practices within the sector and provide more valuable insights on trends and gaps in collections. Analysis of last year's accessions data can be found in A Year In Archives.
2. To make our processes more efficient we have retired the separate [accessions webpages](#) since they got limited usage and were difficult to search. However, select accessions data will continue to be added to the National Register of Archives (NRA) and Discovery. The entire dataset will also be published on data.gov.uk, ensuring continued accessibility and usability.
3. The changes to our processes also mean it will be necessary to mark highlights and Public Records with a 'y' in the appropriate fields in your accessions return template; in an evolution of current practice, just marked items will be added to the NRA and Discovery.

By focusing on data analysis, we can draw conclusions based on concrete evidence rather than anecdotal information. For example, we can measure the diversity within the dataset and can track changes over time, reflecting societal shifts, and identifying gaps in the types of archives included in the survey.

We plan to use newer technologies such as harnessing AI and Machine Learning to gain more nuanced insights from the data. These advancements will help us identify patterns and themes, providing a deeper understanding of the sector. Our analysis of accessions data also feeds into many areas of our work including sales monitoring, the manorial documents register, and work relating to digital capacity building in the sector.

To find accessions data on Discovery, search the catalogue for 'Annual Return YYYY', filter held by: other archives, then select the repository whose accessions you are interested in and click 'Refine'.

For assistance with completing the survey, [please contact Archives Sector Development](#).

[More information about the programme can also be found on our website](#)

[For information about contributing to Discovery please visit our website.](#)