

Accessions to Repositories: Guidance for local authority places of deposit reporting public records

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 assessment of public records as well as 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.

Why am I invited?

We have identified your archive as being [a local authority place of deposit appointed to take in certain public records specified in secondary legislation](#).

What extra data is needed in relation to public record accessions?

In addition to the primary fields, we need archives to mark-up public records on their return, and provide the following additional data:

- The creator of those records
- The organisation/body which transferred them
- Whether the accession is a public record
- The quantity, in linear metres or Mb
- Whether the records are open or closed

Please ensure you indicate which accessions are public records by putting a 'y' in the public record field. We rely on your information and cannot always check returns to look for unmarked public records. Providing this information allows The National Archives to showcase your accession of public records on Discovery and demonstrates your ongoing commitment to fulfilling your responsibilities as a Place of Deposit under the Public Records Act.

For queries and guidance on what to flag as 'public record' in your return, [please see our FAQs](#).

What information is collected for the Accessions to Repositories 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 must include the following details:

ARCHON number

This can be found by searching <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-home> 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), and 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. **When reporting public records exact dates and volumes in linear metres, and Mb for born-digital material, are needed.** Only public records formally selected for permanent preservation and accessioned should be reported.

Additional deposit?

Whether the deposit is 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.

For Public Records only:

Public record?

Please indicate whether the accession is a public record with 'y' or 'n' in this field. [A definition of a public record is available on our website.](#)

Do *not* include here any records received as 'presentations' under s.3(6) of the Public Records Act - once received by you, they cease to be public records (you will have been contacted by The National Archives if this is the case)

Transferring body for public records only

The organisation responsible for depositing the records. The records they transfer may have been originally created by a predecessor body or unit, and so the 'creator' and 'transferring body' may not be the same. Occasionally, records are received by an organisation or individual that may not appear to be directly involved in government business, in which case please give details. **Please do not give personal data as part of your response.**

Quantity in linear metres of public records

The reporting unit needs to be linear metres for reporting the volume of public records.

Quantity in MB of born-digital public records

The reporting unit needs to be MB for reporting the quantity of born-digital public records.

Are the records open or closed?

Please indicate whether the records are open and accessible to the public or closed

Reporting in linear metres or MB

For consistency with current reporting of 20-year rule transfers by government departments, the reporting unit will need to be **linear metres** or **MB for born-digital** public records. Consistency in the reporting unit also allows us to analyse fluctuations in accessions of public records.

1 gigabytes = 1024 megabytes

Repositories reporting accessions volumes in cubic metres should collect this data in the usual way, but then **multiply the number of cubic metres by 12 to give a linear metre equivalent** rather than calculate directly on the basis of their own local shelving arrangements.

Example: 10.5 cubic metres of Bedford Hospital theatre registers = 126 linear metres

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/perl/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

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.

New Burdens funding

Please note that New Burdens funding is now completed. It ran for 10 years from 2015-2024 inclusive. The last chance to claim was in the 2024 accessions to repositories survey.

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.

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

[More information about the programme can also be found at here.](#)

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