



# GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ARCHIVES

Presented to Parliament by  
the Lord High Chancellor  
by Command of Her Majesty  
December 1999

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# CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword by the Lord Chancellor	2
<b>I. Principles of Government Policy on Archives</b>	
1 Benefits of the policy	5
2 Outcomes of the policy	6
3 Scope of the policy	6
4 How archives can help Government to achieve its objectives	6
5 Value of records	7
6 Objectives of the policy	8
<b>II. Putting the Policy into Practice</b>	
7 Challenges and responses	11
8 Access to records and archives	11
9 Records management	13
10 Digital records	13
11 Selection of records	13
12 Preservation	14
13 Standards and performance	14
14 Resources and management	14
<b>Annexes</b>	
A Background to the development of the Government Policy on Archives	17
B Summary of a National Structure for Archives	19
C Legislation and Guidance relating to Public Sector Archives	20
D The Main Archival Standards	22
E Inter-Departmental Archives Committee: Introduction and Terms of Reference	24



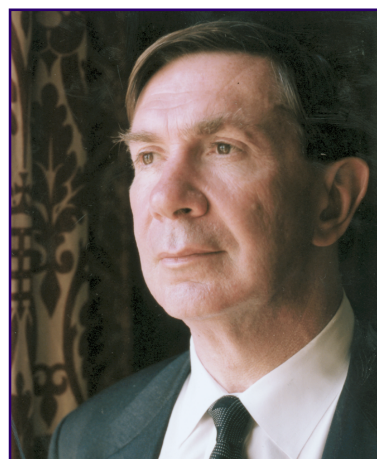
The text of this Command Paper is also published on the Public Record Office website:

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Cover photograph: Schoolchildren viewing the Public Record Office, *National Archives* website.  
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## FOREWORD

by The Lord Chancellor



Modernising the country's institutions and improving access to information for all our citizens are among the Government's key policy objectives. The Government is keen to harness the knowledge and expertise of the archive sector, which it believes has a significant role to play in the pursuit of these objectives. We have therefore produced for the first time a comprehensive statement on our policy for archives. As the senior Cabinet Minister with responsibilities in the field of archives, I am presenting this paper to Parliament, with the agreement and active support of my ministerial colleagues who also have responsibilities in this field across the United Kingdom. In particular colleagues from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Departments represented on the Inter-Departmental Archives Committee (IDAC), which is chaired on my behalf by the Keeper of Public Records, have made significant contributions to the development of the policy. This paper is, therefore, an example of how 'joined-up' government works to good practical effect.

Archive services have both administrative and cultural functions. The vast quantity of records which are nowadays produced by large organisations in many formats (from conventional paper files to computer disks, tapes and e-mails) need to be managed under the guidance of qualified archivists and records managers. Effective records management is essential to good governance and, of course, to making records accessible to the public. The sector also has in its custody many unique and irreplaceable archives of enduring historical value, which collectively represent the foundation collections of the English speaking world. This documentary heritage is an important, but often underrated, cultural asset for us all to share.

The revolution in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) gives the sector a great opportunity to make major advances both administratively and culturally. In the *Modernising Government* White Paper we have set ourselves challenging targets, including the electronic storage and retrieval of all newly created public records by 2004 and the delivery of all dealings with Government in electronic form by 2008. Systems need to be designed, which will enable creating organisations to retrieve rapidly the information required for business purposes, which will provide public services which people will

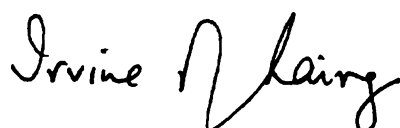
want to use and which will ensure that records of long-term historical value can be permanently preserved. Records managers and archivists need to contribute their expertise to the development of these systems at the earliest possible stage if critical information is not to be lost.

Although the upsurge of interest in family and local history has caused a steady increase in the number of visitors to archive services in recent years, it still remains the case that the number of people who come to archives is comparatively small, and does not include all sections of the community. In particular the sector needs to do more to attract ethnic minorities, women and young people, all of whom will find information of use to them in archives. Here again developments in ICT give the sector a chance to reach out to these groups and to provide genuinely inclusive services. If information about collections and digitised images of the most popular records is made widely available on the new information networks, then the sector may capture the imagination of social groups which have not hitherto had much contact with it. On-line access to archives needs therefore to join with the developing People's Network for public libraries and the National Grid for Learning, so that school pupils and lifelong learners can use this unique national resource. The Government will provide an appropriate framework for this activity, but the sector needs to mobilise as quickly as possible and to make a strong case for the funding of imaging and digitising archives projects to its funders and the grant-awarding bodies.

The forthcoming creation of the new Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) by DCMS in April 2000 will also give a very welcome stimulus for archive services to work more productively within the cultural sector as a whole.

This policy paper thus sets the broad framework for the participation of archives in cross-sectoral collaborative projects with libraries and museums. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the National Council on Archives which, through the creation of the new Regional Archive Councils, is doing so much to promote cross-sectoral liaison at regional level.

These are tremendously exciting times for all those who work in records management and archives and for those who use their services, either on site or increasingly via the Internet. It is my belief that archive services are poised to take full advantage of technological developments to preserve and give access to our unique collections and to provide the country with a sure foundation for the future.



Irvine of Lairg  
Lord Chancellor



# I. PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON ARCHIVES

## 1. THE BENEFITS OF THE POLICY

- 1.1 It is the right time for the Government to build on past achievements and to establish a national policy on archives and records management for England and the UK government, for a number of reasons:
  - 1.1.1 New information and communications technology now offers vastly improved potential for general public access, so that many more people, from a wider range of backgrounds, can access the rich, under-exploited national cultural asset of our archive collections. This also provides a powerful tool to develop the educational potential of archives, in line with a main strand of government policy.
  - 1.1.2 The Government's policy of devolving cultural activity out into the regions gives both the need and the opportunity to link regional and national archival efforts into a concerted whole. This will only be achieved if the various elements of the archive community can work effectively together, and also across cultural sectors with others in related fields, especially libraries and museums.
  - 1.1.3 Greater openness at all levels of government is being progressively achieved and it is particularly important that the contribution archives can - and do - make to this is recognised and developed. Without effective record-keeping the right of the citizen to information will remain purely theoretical and cannot be put into practice.
  - 1.1.4 Developments in information and communications technology are placing radical new demands on the whole process of records management, the selection and storage of archival material and public access. Electronic digitised records demand new processes, standards and practices across the records management and archive sectors, both public and private.
  - 1.1.5 These technological changes will also enable the archival world to move effectively towards the higher standards of information management which are being demanded generally.
- 1.2 Because of its ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the nation's collective memory - evidenced through its archival collections - is properly maintained, the Government has agreed this clear statement of its policy on archives.

## 2. THE OUTCOMES OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 This policy contains high-level objectives for archives.
- 2.2 As a direct result of the needs identified by this policy, the organisational and structural responsibilities for archives at all levels - local, regional and national - will need to be adapted to enable it to achieve the objectives of the policy.
- 2.3 An action plan will identify how the agreed objectives are to be implemented, and will be revised and renewed from time to time, as appropriate.

## 3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 The Government's archives policy takes account of the unique role played by archive repositories in the management of current records and the selection of historical archives, for which there is no parallel in other cultural sectors. It also acknowledges the crucial need to develop a cross-sectoral agenda, whereby archives will forge closer links with museums and libraries. It has regard to the effectiveness, economy and efficiency of a policy for England in particular and, where appropriate, for the UK as a whole. It also encourages private institutions with substantial archives to adopt a similar approach to that set out in the policy.

## 4. HOW ARCHIVES CAN HELP GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE ITS MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The three key aims of any archive are to select the most important records for long-term safekeeping, to ensure that they are then safely preserved and stored and properly managed and to ensure that everyone who needs to can have ready access to them.
- 4.2 Archives, properly managed and resourced, make vital contributions to seven of this Government's most important policy objectives; these are:-
- 4.2.1 *Public access:* Archives can offer ready access for all citizens to the unique and irreplaceable primary sources on which much of the world's storehouse of knowledge and information is based.
- 4.2.2 *Modernisation of public services:* it is imperative that electronic government succeeds, and its success will depend on our ability to manage, store and retrieve digital records. If public authorities are to deliver the high quality public services that citizens have a right to expect and to co-operate effectively with one another in the information age, then they must ensure that their information systems are compatible and that business transactions are recorded securely.
- 4.2.3 *Open and accountable government:* The Government wishes to do away with the climate of excessive secrecy by establishing a general citizen's right of access. The right of access to official records, whether through Freedom of Information, Data Protection or more open government



generally, will increasingly depend upon effective records management. This encompasses the creation of reliable records and arrangements for their speedy retrieval when requested.

- 4.2.4 *Education:* Archives can provide for schoolchildren, students and ‘life-long learners’, an unparalleled immediacy of contact with the events of history through exposure to the original documents of the time; increasingly, they make key information relevant to the national curriculum and self-directed learning available through their participation in the National Grid for Learning and other networks.
- 4.2.5 *Social Inclusion:* By providing services for all citizens, archives can help to bridge the gap between those who can afford access to information and those who otherwise cannot.
- 4.2.6 *Economic Regeneration:* Archives contain information which is potentially of great value to business and can help to promote the Government’s major economic objectives. In particular, the progressive digitisation of archive collections will make them more accessible to the creative industries operating in the cultural sector. Also, archive repositories can boost tourism by attracting visitors from far afield who wish to consult their unique information sources.
- 4.2.7 *Regionalism:* Government policy is to encourage the establishment of stronger regional groupings, for the cultural sector just as for others. Many excellent archival collections and resources are managed in the public sector at local and regional levels and it is vital that these are given the best opportunity to contribute to policy objectives.
- 4.3 To ensure that the archives sector contributes to the attainment of these policies is the task, not just of central government, but the whole breadth of the public sector, including local, regional and national government. Archives in the higher education sector also have a major part to play. The Government also wishes to do all it can to encourage private organisations and individuals holding historically significant archives to make their own contributions to these objectives.

## 5. THE VALUE OF RECORDS

- 5.1 Records created in the course of any organisation’s business transactions are a vitally important asset. Properly managed, they provide authentic and reliable evidence of those transactions. This is clearly of value in the short-term to the creating organisation, so that it may manage its own affairs and so that it may account for its actions - to auditors, shareholders or to the public. Without efficient record-keeping practices, no government or organisation can possess a collective memory and operate effectively in the present. As far as the public sector is concerned, citizens have a general right to obtain information about the activities carried out by organisations acting on their behalf. This right goes to the heart of democratic accountability and is essential if public bodies are to be subject to informed public scrutiny. However, it must also be recognised that the individual citizen has a right to privacy concerning personally sensitive

data supplied in confidence to government or private organisations. The requirements of Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Human Rights legislation need to be meshed together in a clear and consistent way.

- 5.2 Researchers will make use of historical records to study the organisations themselves - their policies and actions - but the reasons for which archives are used are now increasingly diverse. Academic historians and students do, of course, continue to produce studies of public authorities, businesses and other institutions, but researchers - often working in their leisure time or in retirement - now make use of archives to exploit the information they contain. Family historians, for example, use records of army service for purposes which have nothing to do with the state's need to document an individual's time in uniform. Also, as access improves through the use of electronic media, remote access, even across national boundaries, becomes not just possible, but increasingly easy, thus widening the value of archives to all users.

## 6. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

- 6.1 Set out below are the objectives and the expected outcomes of the Government's policy; they aim to build on the sector's strengths and address its development needs, to enable it to make its full contribution to society and to Government policy:-

- 6.2 *To ensure that ready access to archives, in the most useful and convenient way, is offered to all the nation's citizens and to other users.*

To achieve this, the Government wishes to promote:-

- high standards of service for users, including up to date information on the location of archival material, consultation with users and customer care
- innovative use of information and communication technology as a means of encouraging a widening cross-section of society to use archives
- increasing use of archive material for educational purposes
- close co-operation and effective partnership with all relevant bodies, to deliver services in the most efficient and economical way.

*The outcome* should be that all citizens and others wishing to use archive collections have at their disposal a convenient and affordable means of doing so.

- 6.3 *To enable the educational sector at all levels to have proper access to the nation's archival resources, so that national educational needs are met.*

To do this the Government wishes to ensure in particular that:

- the archival sector contributes to the greatest extent possible to the National Grid for Learning and other information networks
- the needs of 'life-long learning' are also given a high priority
- the needs of the higher education sector particularly with regard to scholarly research, are met.

*The outcome* will be that close cross-sectoral links between the archival and education sectors are established, developed and used to national benefit.

- 6.4 *To ensure that public institutions, at local, regional and national level, select, preserve and manage their current records and their archives, regardless of medium, in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements, guidance and agreed professional standards.*

To achieve this, they must:

- provide effective systems for the management of current records, both electronic and paper
- provide for the selection of those records which are of enduring value as historical archives
- provide for their permanent preservation.

*The outcome* will be that the entire official archival record is looked after in a comprehensive network of provision.

- 6.5 *To encourage private organisations and individuals to manage their records effectively, to preserve their historical archives and wherever possible to facilitate public access to them.*

To achieve this, the Government will:

- ensure that free and impartial advice on the care of their archives is available to all owners in the private sector
- maintain fiscal incentives to private owners considering the disposal of their papers to facilitate their gift or sale to a public repository
- promote the protection of nationally pre-eminent private archives through the schemes for acceptance-in-lieu of tax and conditional exemption.

*The outcome* will be a better appreciation of the contribution which archives of private origin can make to an understanding of our national, regional and local history and a more holistic approach to their care.

- 6.6 *To enable the archive sector to prepare for the processing of increasing quantities of electronic data.*

To do this, the Government will:

- promote new standards for the handling of electronic data
- encourage the organisation of training and development resources, so that the sector as a whole has sufficient knowledge and expertise to comply with the new standards.

*The outcome* will be that the archive sector will adapt itself to the information revolution, and meet successfully the challenges which it is producing.

## 6.7

*To add maximum value to the information resource held by the archive sector.*

To achieve this, the Government:

- will encourage cross-sectoral collaboration with related cultural sectors, in particular libraries, museums and galleries with broadly similar cultural and service objectives.

*The outcome* will be that the archive sector can play a full part in, and itself benefit from, the regional arrangements for the broader cultural sector.

## II. PUTTING THE POLICY INTO PRACTICE

### 7. CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

- 7.1 Archives are created by a wide range of organisations, ranging from central and local government to commercial companies and voluntary societies, as well as private individuals, and are originally generated for a functional purpose. Without an archive, an organisation has no collective memory to inform the direction of its current activities. Archives throw light not only on the history of the organisation which created them but also on the many subjects about which people wish to find out information. Archives are, therefore, essential both for democratic accountability and historical research in all its forms.
- 7.2 *Strengths:* Archives have a wealth of irreplaceable primary source material which cannot be found in other cultural institutions. The sector has achieved a great deal with only modest resources and minimal legislative protection. There is a nation-wide network of archive provision which has comparatively few major gaps. Some archives are centres of excellence of national and international renown, with first-class public access, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilities and records storage. Innovation flourishes at a local level, producing best practice solutions which are then applied elsewhere, and part of the role of central Government is to create the right conditions for this to continue.
- 7.3 *Development Needs:* Developments in ICT now make it possible for archives to build on these strengths by pooling local and specialist resources in an inclusive national access network. Many of them will need significant investment in ICT in order to participate fully in the network and to make available their material to a much wider public for the first time. Some also require improved accommodation, so that their holdings survive in good condition and therefore remain available to future generations of users. Nearly all archives need special training programmes to cope with the challenges posed by electronic records and a stronger focus on the records management systems which electronic records require.
- 7.4 The regional structures for archives need to be able to influence cultural strategies and the allocation of resources at the regional level. The aim should be to increase the participation of archives in cross-sectoral programmes with libraries, museums and other cultural organisations, and at the same time to enhance the legal and administrative role played by archives in the efficient keeping of records, both paper and digital. In this connection the sector should benefit from surveys and needs assessments conducted at a regional, rather than national, level. The question of an appropriate home for the records of regional organisations needs to be addressed jointly by the regional archive structures and the appropriate bodies in central government.

### 8. ACCESS TO RECORDS AND ARCHIVES

- 8.1 The policy emphasises the importance of maximising access to current and potential users. This section amplifies some of the thinking behind that.

8.2 If current records and historical archives are to be efficiently managed then a sound access policy across the public sector is required. There are two aspects to this.

### 8.3 *Legislation to promote and regulate access to records*

Legislation governing access to public archives is set out in **Annex C**. Records created by public sector bodies which are of enduring historical value and which are over 30 years old should be accessible to the public, unless personal privacy, confidentiality or other specified considerations require a longer closure period. The present 30 year access rule has legal force only in England and Wales and is applied purely by convention in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Access to records less than 30 years old should also be encouraged whenever possible, in accordance with the White Paper on Open Government (1993), in line with the Government's Freedom of Information Bill (1999), and the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985. However, this must be done in ways which are compatible with the Data Protection Act, 1998.

It should be noted that there has been no significant change to primary legislation for over 30 years and, depending on current legislative initiatives – notably Freedom of Information which, bears on central government and the public sector as a whole – it may be necessary to propose a review of archival legislation in due course.

### 8.4 *Measures to promote practical access to archives*

Government policy is to improve and widen access to all sectors of society, particularly schoolchildren and 'life-long learners'. The policy is based firmly on the need to do this by taking full advantage of ICT developments as well as improving standards of service for those users who wish to access material in the traditional way, i.e. through the consultation of original documents in public searchrooms. Specifically this means:-

#### 8.4.1 *Information about archives*

A key priority should be to provide accurate general and specific descriptions of all historical archives as quickly as possible on the emerging information networks, so that a wider public is made aware of their existence. Archivists should take full account of public demand for access to particular collections in planning programmes for the detailed cataloguing of their holdings. The necessarily gradual process of producing electronic versions of existing paper catalogues should not hold back cataloguing of unrecorded material, using ICT and modern standards.

It is of crucial importance to the archive sector as a whole to establish a framework or infrastructure, both national and regional, to permit the development of remote, on-line access to catalogues of holdings.

#### 8.4.2 *Digitisation for access to archives*

Digitised images of the most popular records should proceed in tandem with the production of on-line catalogue information, because potential

new users will experience archives for the first time through ready access to these digitised images. These images will need to be periodically refreshed and preserved for the long term according to approved standards. Access to archives should also be enhanced through the participation of archives in educational programmes both on-line and on-site at all levels and outreach work should be targeted at social groups which have not hitherto used archives. This work should be accompanied by digitisation programmes of material of use to particular sectors in schools, in colleges and in libraries and via television and other channels to maximise the utility of archives for the country and for the world.

- 8.5 While ‘content creation’ for archives is a matter for the respective organisations with the assistance of funding agencies and suitable enabling structures, archives should participate fully in the emerging information networks and on the Internet in partnership with other cognate sectors in establishing a framework.

## 9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The management of current records - those which have not yet been sent to an archive - forms an essential backdrop to the later archiving of important records, as well as being important in its own right for business reasons. It is an expensive business. Within central government alone, it has been estimated to cost some £35m a year. These resources must be used effectively to ensure that records are created to document an organisation’s principal activities, that they are maintained in an orderly manner - available for retrieval - and that they are stored cost effectively. In deciding how long to keep records, organisations must pay heed to the existing statutory requirements - to be found in statutes as diverse as those governing health and safety and company accounts - and should have a view to the creation of a permanent historical archive.

## 10. DIGITAL RECORDS

- 10.1 Technological change has transformed the task facing records managers. Most records are now created electronically, sometimes called ‘born digital’, and it is appropriate that they should also be held electronically if their original characteristics are to be maintained. The management and maintenance of electronic records will only be successful if the systems which create the records are designed appropriately. Work on this task - which is quite distinct from the digitisation of records created in paper form - is already well advanced in central government but this issue requires greater attention from organisations across the public and private sector if reliable records are to be created for current and future use.

## 11. SELECTION OF RECORDS

- 11.1 The permanent historical archive can only be - should only be - part of the whole: many current records do not merit preservation once their business purpose has passed. The selection of the permanent record is a demanding task which should be conducted according to clear policies which, wherever

possible, should be publicly available. Selection activities should be integrated with current records management to ensure that action is taken sufficiently early to ensure that the appropriate records are identified for permanent preservation.

## 12. PRESERVATION

- 12.1 Archives, in whatever medium, are especially vulnerable to the effects of natural and man-made disasters as well as to the degenerating effects of age. They should, therefore, be kept to standards which offer the highest possible degree of protection against ageing and disasters. They are also very sensitive to rapidly fluctuating temperature and humidity and accidental or malicious damage, and so they have to be kept in carefully controlled storage areas within secure buildings. Archives which are physically deteriorating should be identified and receive professional conservation treatment, so that the unique information which they contain can be passed on intact to future generations.

## 13. STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE

- 13.1 In common with all aspects of public life, the management of records and of archives services in the public sector should be in accordance with published standards and performance against those standards should be measured and the results made available to the public. Standards now exist - for example, for the cataloguing of historical archives, the storage of records and the legal admissibility of electronic records, - and elsewhere work is currently under way to prepare such standards (notably for public services, for records management and for the long-term management of electronic records). The Government wishes to promote this process and in particular to encourage participants from across the sector to ensure that appropriate training is developed to support the delivery of services to the new standards. The Government also recognises that standards can ultimately be enforced only by giving the appropriate archival bodies sufficient powers of inspection.

## 14. RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

- 14.1 The Government will, subject to its overall policies on funding for the public sector, support the archival sector through the allocation of resources to meet these objectives, making the best use of available public resources. It looks to the archival sector to make effective use of its resources through management which is geared towards best value for money and reduction of costs, for example through collaboration on infrastructure schemes which have broader usefulness and offer potential for cost sharing. It also looks to the archival sector to maximise income where possible by exploring other sources for income, such as: revenue earning through sale of goods and services; obtaining sponsorship; setting up public and private partnerships for projects where appropriate; securing funds from lottery sources and other actions in line with overall government policy.



## **ANNEXES**



## ANNEX A

# BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS POLICY

- A.1** In 1998 the Interdepartmental Committee on Archives (IDAC), which brings together the heads of UK national archival institutions and other government departments with responsibilities for archives, considered an Archive Policy document submitted by the leading archival associations. On the basis of IDAC's advice, the Lord Chancellor, who, as the senior Cabinet Minister with archival responsibilities, performs a 'gate-keeping and co-ordinating role' in this area, sent the Government's response to the President of the Society of Archivists on 14 October. While welcoming the archive community's proposals, the Lord Chancellor suggested that more work needed to be done on the use of ICT as a way of improving access to archives for all citizens, especially 'life-long learners'. He also emphasised the Government's commitment to improve the public's right to know by the further development of Freedom of Information proposals throughout the public sector.
- A.2** On 14 December the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published its response to the public consultation concerning its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The DCMS announced the creation of a Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC), a new body which will replace the Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) and the Libraries and Information Commission (LIC) and also have an archives remit. As a corollary of this structural change, the DCMS also accepted the need to extend IDAC's membership and terms of reference. In order to encourage participation by archives alongside museums and libraries in the new regional cultural groupings, the DCMS asked the National Council on Archives, the umbrella body for all public and private archival interests throughout the UK, to take the lead in developing regional arrangements for archives.
- A.3** Agreeing to this way forward, the Lord Chancellor explained his views concerning the enhancement of IDAC to the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport on 11 December and stated that it should be tasked with:
- Preparing a national archives policy for the relevant ministers to consider
  - Putting to ministers options for a new nation-wide structure for the archives of the UK Government and England, taking into account devolution to Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the developing regional structures in England
  - Addressing the legislative basis for the eventual resulting structure and the working relationship between the archive sector and MLAC, without prejudice to that structure.

#### A.4

The DCMS announced the terms of reference of its group to consider the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council:

‘To advise ministers on how the decision to create a new national body for libraries, museums and archives might be best implemented, including the functions and responsibilities of the new body, its relationship to existing institutions in each sector, and the balance to be struck in its work between sectorally specific and cross sectoral issues’.

The final report of the MLAC Design Group was published on 8 June and the new body will begin to operate on 1 April 2000. The Chairman and Chief Executive of MLAC have now been chosen and the appointment of the other Board members is expected to be finalised soon.

#### A.5

Unlike some cultural sectors, archives have not hitherto benefited from a stable structure throughout the English regions. The DCMS has, therefore, asked the National Council on Archives to help it establish a regional structure for archives so that the sector can play a full part in the work of the regional cultural consortia. As a first step in the process, the NCA has appointed a representative in each region from the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG) to act as a ‘groundbreaker’, with the remit of investigating the opportunities for developing contacts with other cultural organisations operating at the regional level. Shadow Regional Archive Councils, comprising professional archivists, users of archives and representatives of libraries and museums interests, have now been set up in all of the eight English Regions and also in London.

## ANNEX B

# SUMMARY OF A NATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR ARCHIVES

- B.1** In December 1998 the Lord Chancellor asked his officials in the PRO, working in close consultation with IDAC, to put forward options for a new UK-wide structure for archives, which would take account of the devolution of powers now carried out in Scotland and Wales and planned for Northern Ireland, the development of regional bodies in England, and the creation of the new Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC).
- B.2** At present responsibilities for archives are distributed among a number of government departments:- the Lord Chancellor, as the Minister responsible for the PRO; the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), which has some powers in relation to local archives and is the sponsoring Department for the Historical Manuscripts Commission and the British Library; the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR), which is responsible for the main legislation relating to records in local authority custody; and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which is seeking content from the cultural sector for the National Grid for Learning. In this context, IDAC considered five main options as follows:-
- B.2.1** **Do nothing:** DCMS intends that MLAC will take the lead in the establishment of a framework to promote cross-sectoral collaboration among libraries, museums and archives. Continuation of the status quo would inhibit the participation of archives in this new framework.
- B.2.2** **Measured change, existing ministerial responsibilities retained:** IDAC has revised its terms of reference and expanded its membership with the addition of the NCA and MLAC as expert advisers. The advantages of this solution are that it is an example of ‘joined up government’, it is easy to implement, and it offers sufficient flexibility for MLAC to operate effectively. However, relations between IDAC, as the forum for the co-ordination of archive policy within Government, and MLAC, as a new body which has the remit of providing advice to Government on cross-sectoral issues, will have to be precisely defined.
- B.2.3** Three more radical options were also considered but these would entail major upheavals and would be dependent on fresh legislation, for which it will be very difficult to find space in the crowded legislative timetable over the next three years.
- B.3** The imminent creation of MLAC demands that a workable framework for archives should be put in place as quickly as possible. Accordingly, Ministers agreed IDAC’s recommendation in favour of the second option in B.2.2 (measured change) because of its relative ease of implementation and the scope for future flexibility which it offers.

## **ANNEX C**

# **LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE IN RELATION TO PUBLIC SECTOR ARCHIVES**

### **United Kingdom**

Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967.

Data Protection Act, 1998.

Draft Freedom of Information Bill, 1999.

Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

PRO, Access to Public Records: A Manual of Guidance, consultation draft 1999.

### **Scotland**

Public Records (Scotland) Act, 1937

Public Registers and Records (Scotland) Act, 1948.

### **Northern Ireland**

Public Records (Northern Ireland) Act, 1923.

### **Wales**

Government of Wales Act, 1998 Ss.116-118.

### **Local Authorities: England and Wales**

Local Government (Records) Act, 1962.

Local Government Act, 1972 S.224: 'proper arrangements'.

DETR and the Local Government Association, 'A note on guidance on 'proper arrangements' for archives', 1999.

Local Authorities (Access to Information) Act, 1985.

### **Local Authorities: England**

DNH (now DCMS), Guidance on the Care, Preservation and Management of Records following changes arising from the Local Government Act, 1992, July 1995.

## Local Authorities: Wales

Local Government (Wales) Act, 1994 S.60.

Welsh Office, 'Guidance on schemes for the care, preservation and management of records under S.60 of the Local Government (Wales) Act, 1994', June 1995.

## Local Authorities: Scotland

Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1994 Ss.53-54.

Series of guidance notes issued to the new local authorities by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland, 1994-96.

## ANNEX D

# THE MAIN ARCHIVAL STANDARDS

### General

Historical Manuscripts Commission, *A Standard for Record Repositories* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1997.

Public Record Office, *Beyond the PRO: Public Records in Places of Deposit* 1994.

### Records Management

Public Record Office, *Standards for the management of Government records* (Introduction, File Creation, Tracking Records, Disposal Scheduling, Guidelines on the Planning of Records Appraisal, Retention, Storage of semi-Current Records), 1998-99.

British Standards Institution, '*Records Management - A Code of Practice*' (work in progress).

### Electronic Records

Public Record Office, *Management, appraisal and preservation of electronic records* (Vol.1 Principles; Vol.2 Procedures), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1999.

BS 4783 *Storage, transportation and maintenance of magnetic media in data processing and information storage* Parts 1-8, 1988-94.

### Records Storage

BS 5454 *Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition forthcoming.

### Conservation

BS 4971 *Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents* 1980-88, currently being revised.

### Public Access

Archives Sector Public Services Quality Group, *A Standard for Access to Archives* draft currently in progress, to be completed in the year 2000.



## Cataloguing

International Council on Archives, *General International Standard of Archival Description* [ISAD (G)], 1994.

International Council on Archives, *International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families* [ISAAR (CPF)], 1996.

National Council on Archives, *National Name Authority Files* [NNAF], 1997.

## ANNEX E

# INTER-DEPARTMENTAL ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

### E.1 Introduction

#### *Background*

For some years the Heads of UK National Archive Institutions (Public Record Office, Scottish Record Office, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Historical Manuscripts Commission and British Library Special Collections) met regularly on a largely informal basis to discuss matters of common concern. In late 1995 the Heads identified a need for a new Inter-Departmental Archives Committee as an essential co-ordinating mechanism within government if a harmonised approach to archive policy issues was to be achieved throughout the UK, especially in relation to initiatives taken at European Union level. Invitations to serve on this Committee were accepted by officials from other government departments in the UK with responsibility for archival legislation.

At the first meeting of the Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, which was convened by the Keeper of Public Records and took place in the Chancery Lane branch of the Public Record Office on 14 February 1996, the following terms of reference were agreed:-

#### E.1.1

*Aim:* The main aim of the Inter-Departmental Archives Committee is to bring about as much consistency in the handling of archive policy matters within government throughout the United Kingdom as is compatible with respect for the different legislative and governmental structures of each of its constituent countries. In particular, it will closely monitor and seek to influence the increasing number of developments in the European Union which are about archives or have implications for archives. The Committee will co-ordinate responses from the United Kingdom to these developments so that the collective influence of UK countries is maximised on decisions taken at European Union level. It will also consider and recommend policy initiatives in other areas where it believes that a common approach across the United Kingdom would be appropriate or where knowledge and experience already acquired in one UK country may be relevant to the situation in another.

#### E.1.2

*Composition:* The Committee comprises the Keeper of Public Records, who will represent the Lord Chancellor's Department (LCD) and the Public Record Office; the Heads of the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), who have both been nominated to serve by their respective government departments (Scottish Office, Northern Ireland Office); officials from other government departments with responsibility for archival legislation (DCMS, DETR, Welsh Office); and the Secretary of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and the Director of Special Collections at the British Library, who serve as expert advisers. Officials from other government departments or organisations may be co-opted onto the Committee or invited to attend particular meetings in order to

help the members formulate advice to ministers, as necessary, about particular issues. Continuity will be maintained by the Committee's Secretary, a post which will normally be filled by an official from one of the government departments involved on a rotating basis. It will be the task of the Secretary to ensure that the initiatives agreed by the Committee are followed up.

## E.2 Revised Terms of Reference

In April 1999 IDAC agreed the following revision to its terms of reference:-

### *General aims*

1. To achieve consistency in the handling of archive policy matters within government throughout the United Kingdom, taking full account of the different legislative and governmental structures in each of its constituent countries.
2. To put forward an appropriate policy and legislative framework for archives within Government, covering archival institutions in both the public and private sectors, for approval by Ministers and to review archival policy continuously to ensure that it is aligned with general government policy. To put forward options for a new nation-wide structure for archives.
3. To encourage the development of cross-sectoral strategies, involving the archival, library, museums, educational and commercial sectors, in co-operation with the new Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) and other relevant bodies.

### *England*

4. In view of the current distribution of responsibilities among several departments (Lord Chancellor/PRO, DCMS, DETR), to co-ordinate responses to issues of common concern.
5. To work with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the National Council on Archives in the development of a regional structure for archives in England.

### *Scotland/Northern Ireland/Wales*

6. To provide a forum in which the government archival interests of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales can be discussed irrespective of the forms of devolution adopted.

### *United Kingdom*

7. To promote consistency of government archival policy and practice in the United Kingdom. To decide on matters proper to the United Kingdom as such.

*Europe*

8. To speak on United Kingdom Government archival interests to the European Union Secretariat. To monitor and influence developments in the European Union concerning archives and to co-ordinate actions so that the collective influence of UK countries on EU policy and operational decisions is maximised.

### E.3 Present Membership of the Committee

Since 1996 DfEE has joined IDAC as a Departmental member, while the National Council on Archives (NCA) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) have been added as expert advisers. In addition, the Committee meets once a year with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG) and separately with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on funding issues.

*Departmental Members*

Lord Chancellor's Department / PRO	Sarah Tyacke, Keeper of Public Records
Scottish Office / NAS	Patrick Cadell, Keeper of the Records of Scotland
DOE Northern Ireland / PRONI	Gerry Slater, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)	Roger Stratton-Smith, Libraries and Information Division
Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)	Ralph Tabberer, Head of Education and Training Technology Division
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR)	Brian Nash, Local Government Sponsorship Division
National Assembly for Wales	Jane Edmonds, Culture and Recreation Division

*Expert Advisers*

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council	Matthew Evans, Chairman or Neville Mackay, Chief Executive
National Council on Archives	Vic Gray, Chairman, National Council on Archives
Historical Manuscripts Commission	Chris Kitching, Secretary
British Library	Alice Prochaska, Director of Special Collections

*Secretariat*

Public Record Office	David Leitch, Head of Archive Inspection (Executive Secretary)
	Stuart Bagnall, Central Management Department (Administrator)

Further information about the Committee can be obtained from the Executive Secretary, Archive Inspection Services Department, Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond TW9 4DU.

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