

Managing Paper Records

What kind of paper records are you collecting?

- letters
- maps
- newspapers
- diaries
- reports
- videos
- oral history transcripts
- meeting minutes
- leaflets
- documents (passports/ certificates)
- photographs
- publications
- advertising
- project paperwork

Any of the above could be digital rather than paper i.e. emails rather than letters, or blog rather than a diary. Digital files that are records of your project need to be included in your collection.

Why collect paper records?

- Impact on the wider community
- Recognition of unique attributes and contributions
- A record of individual voices, stories and experiences
- Evidence of rights and responsibilities
To preserve the past
- To record change over time
- For historic research
- Lasting impact for a project
- Increase visibility
- Evidence of activities, organisations and institutions
- Sense of identity, self, place
- Inspiration and direction for activities today
- Recording alternative viewpoints

How?

Care and conservation (*Essential*)

There are many things that damage archives including

- Heat
- Light
- Damp
- Insects / rodents
- Fire
- Water

Attics are usually too hot and dry and garages usually too cold and damp. So storing your archives in folders then in a box (with no holes) is a great start. Then find a suitable location for the box. You are looking for a safe, dry, secure location so avoid putting them near radiators, water pipes or in unsecure rooms.

If a record is damaged, for example a photograph is ripped or water damaged it is tempting to have a go at repairing it. Using a laminator, sellotape or trying to separate documents that are stuck together will always cause further damage to them. It is best to leave them as they are, package them carefully and seek help from a conservator. AIURRRC can help you to contact a conservator to get further advice.

For digital material there are certain standards that it is good to work towards when creating them (see managing image handout in your pack). Whenever you create digital items ensure that you save them in more than one place. It is good practice when creating any digital files to back them up onto a portable hard drive as well as your own computer. Organise them in named folders on your storage devices. Think about how to group them in a meaningful way and give file names that make finding things really easy.

Permissions (*Essential*)

For you to be able to use the material that you have collected, for example in a website, publication or exhibition, you will need to obtain the correct permission. It is important to be clear about what you are asking for when obtaining permission on your project and specify it exactly on your permissions form. An example archive permission form is available on the Coming in from the Cold website (<https://cominginfromthecold.com/>) which gives an idea of what to consider and can be used as a template.

An archive will need the correct permissions to be able to accept the collection, store it, make it available to the public and promote it. It would be worth speaking with the archive you are hoping to donate your material to before you start and they will be able to support you and give you guidance on the permissions they will require.

Archive log (*Desirable*)

Collecting permissions, especially when there maybe multiple permissions for a single person, can be tricky. It would be a good idea to set up a log to help keep track. This log can be extended to record other useful information for each archive item such as context, key words, location, dates etc. Excel is an easy programme to create a log in and can often be used by an archive as the starting point for a catalogue.

AIURRRC will be producing an archiving tool kit that will be available soon but there are many useful sources online. In particular the Manchester Histories Archive Toolkit 4 has some great examples, hints and tips to help.

<https://manchesterhistories.co.uk/getinvolved/toolkits>

You will also find guidance that can help your project on the Community Archives website at: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/>