
Statement of Collecting Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Suffolk County Council's Libraries and Heritage Committee has agreed the following statement of collecting policy for its archives service, the Suffolk Record Office.

2 SERVICE PURPOSE

2.1 To identify, collect and preserve the documentary heritage of Suffolk and to make it available for use both now and in the future; to encourage public awareness of the significance of archives.

2.2 To meet the needs for local studies printed resources relating to the county of Suffolk for leisure, educational and cultural activities; to promote the appreciation of printed local studies material in Suffolk

3 GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

3.1 The Suffolk Record Office serves the county of Suffolk as defined in 1974 and administered by Suffolk County Council. It comprises the historic counties of East Suffolk and West Suffolk, and the county borough of Ipswich.

3.2 The Suffolk Record Office comprises three offices, each with its own collecting area. The Bury St Edmunds office covers the old West Suffolk county area, the Ipswich office the old East Suffolk county area, with the exception of that area now included in the modern Waveney District, which is the responsibility of the Lowestoft office.

4 STATUTORY BASIS FOR THE ARCHIVES SERVICE

4.1 The principal statutory basis for the Record Office derives from the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the Local Government Act 1972 and the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 - amended in the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992.

4.2 As a principal council, Suffolk County Council is obliged under the Local Government Act 1972 'to make proper arrangements with respect to any documents which belong to or are in the custody of the Council or any of its officers'. The Record Office fulfils this obligation through its public service points and through its county council archives service.

4.3 Under the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972, Suffolk County Council, through its archive service, is the appointed archive authority for all

local government districts within the county of Suffolk and is responsible for ensuring the proper care of the records of parish councils.

- 4.4 The three offices of the Suffolk Record Office have been inspected and approved by the Lord Chancellor for the deposit of designated public records under the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967. These records include those of Quarter Sessions, coroners, probate, magistrates courts and health authorities.
- 4.5 The three offices of the Suffolk Record Office have been approved by the Master of the Rolls for the deposit of manorial and tithe records under the Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and the Tithe Rules 1960.
- 4.6 The Suffolk Record Office has been designated the Diocesan Record Office for the deposit of the records of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and of its constituent archdeaconries, deaneries and parishes under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 - amended 1992.

5 STANDARDS

- 5.1 The Suffolk Record Office has adopted as policy the following non-statutory standards: *British Standard 5454 - Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*, (revised 1989); *A Standard for Record Repositories* issued by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1990.

6 ACQUISITIONS

- 6.1 The Suffolk Record Office will acquire material worthy of permanent preservation in the following categories:
 - 6.1.1 Records of Suffolk County Council and those of its predecessors
 - 6.1.2 Records of other local authorities and statutory bodies operating within Suffolk
 - 6.1.3 Public records offered to the Record Office under the terms of the Public Records Acts
 - 6.1.4 Records of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and its constituent parishes, rural deaneries and archdeaconries
 - 6.1.5 Records of organisations, businesses, individuals, societies, public and private institutions, and other activities germane to the history and life of the county of Suffolk
 - 6.1.6 Published and printed material germane to the history and life of the county of Suffolk
- 6.2 The Suffolk Record Office will acquire records, and published and printed material, by gift (including bequest); purchase; deposit on indefinite loan; statutory deposit; official transfer. All acquisitions will be acknowledged on receipt. Deposited material will be subject to the Suffolk Record Office's 'Guidelines governing gifts and bequests of records to, and deposits in the Suffolk Record Office'. The Record Office reserves the right to refuse material unless clear and valid title of ownership can be proved.
- 6.3 Archival, and published and printed material fulfilling the criteria noted in Section 6.1 above, will be considered for acceptance regardless of date and format (subject to any exclusions

noted in Section 7 below). Formats include: paper and parchment manuscripts, printed material, prints, drawings and photographs, tape recordings, newspapers, microform.

- 6.4 Complete libraries (eg parochial and dissenting libraries) will be considered for acceptance by the Suffolk Record Office on an individual basis. Terms and conditions for acceptance will be negotiated individually.
- 6.5 Material will only be accepted by the Suffolk Record Office provided it will be open for public access either after processing by the Record Office (including listing and essential conservation work) or after a fixed period of time, agreed in consultation with the depositor).

7 EXCLUSIONS

The Suffolk Record Office will not normally accept:

- 7.1 Artefacts, specimens and other three-dimensional objects falling within the collecting policies of local museums. Only where there is a special relationship between an artefact and the associated archives will the Suffolk Record Office seek to keep the material together.
- 7.2 Frames, tin trunks, deed chests and other containers. These will normally be disposed of by the Suffolk Record Office (with permission) or returned to the owner.
- 7.3 Films and video recordings, which fall within the collecting policy of the East Anglian Film Archive, based at the University of East Anglia. The Suffolk Record Office will normally retain film and video recordings which form an integral part of an archive (for instance a publicity video for a business) but may (with permission) offer the East Anglian Film Archive the opportunity to copy such material.
- 7.4 Works of art, which fall within the collecting policies of local museums and art galleries. The Suffolk Record Office will maintain close links with such institutions to avoid a conflict of interest over topographical views by notable artists or which are of particular artistic merit, which may fall within the collecting policies of both the Suffolk Record Office and the museums and galleries.
- 7.5 Material which falls outside the stated geographical collecting area of the Suffolk Record Office, unless forming an integral part of a collection which cannot be divided without loss or archival value, or relating primarily to a Suffolk community.
- 7.6 Material judged not to be of permanent historical value.

8 DISPOSAL

- 8.1 The Suffolk Record Office will abide by the usual principles of archive administration, including that of archival integrity, but may, if it is considered appropriate, split collections of archives (with the permission of the owners) and transfer material to another office of the Suffolk Record Office or to other repositories.
- 8.2 Material not considered worthy of permanent preservation at any stage of processing by the Suffolk Record Office (including cataloguing) will either be returned to the owner or will be disposed of by the Suffolk Record Office with the owner's consent.

8.3 Future development of the Suffolk Record Office's collection policy (see Section 9 below) will include a tightening up of the criteria for the selection of archival material for permanent preservation, which may offer some scope for the reduction of existing collections by re-appraisal (subject to obtaining permission from the depositor where necessary).

9 COLLECTION POLICY DEVELOPMENT

9.1 It is accepted that there is scope for developing the collection policy in the future as priorities and resources allow. The following are ways in which the Suffolk Record Office may develop its policy:

9.1.1 Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the present holdings of the Record Office and by means of an active acquisitions policy (including surveying in the field, questionnaires and targeted promotional activity) fill gaps and eliminate weaknesses.

9.1.2 Develop selection/retention schedules within the main classes of archives (such as parish, civil parish, district council, school and charity records) enabling stricter and more uniform criteria for selection of archives for permanent preservation to be developed.

9.1.3 Using such selection/retention schedules and professional judgement and expertise, re-appraise existing collections with a view, where appropriate, to de-accessioning with the consent of the owner where necessary.

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Suffolk Record Office web site: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

Suffolk Heritage Direct website: <http://www.suffolkheritagedirect.org.uk>