Archives Appraisal Policy

REVISION	REVISION DATE	OWNER	REFERENCE	COMMENT
00	July 2017	Archives & Records Manager	ARC-POL-003	New policy

Archives Appraisal Policy

1.   Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to establish the principles used by the Royal Armouries Archive Service in the selection of records of long-term historical value for permanent preservation, and the identification of records of low or no further value for disposal. The Museum recognizes that appraisal is an important quality control mechanism, and a positive and essential activity of archives management.

2.   Relationship with other policies

This policy supplements the:

- Information and Records Management Policy, which deals with the retention and disposal of the Royal Armouries current and semi-current records, and the Archives Development Policy, which deals with the acquisition, disposal and deaccessioning of records,

- Collections Development Policy, which deals with the acquisition, disposal and deaccessioning of the objects in the Royal Armouries collection.

3.   Aims

The aims of this policy are:

- to ensure that the Museum's appraisal strategy selects archives of the highest archival value.

- to assess the significance of collections, series and items, and to develop a rational and consistent appraisal methodology.

- to encourage rational and consistent appraisal decisions, valid over time, for all records of potential archival value created by or on behalf of the Royal Armouries, or produced by other individuals and organisations whose collections are held at the Royal Armouries, and to document these decisions.

- to ensure accountability for appraisal decisions.

- to ensure the appropriate destruction of duplicate material and ephemera and to destroy all other unwanted material confidentially, if not wanted by the vendor or depositor. Material will occasionally be offered to other archive services or Places of Deposit.

- to raise awareness of usage and potential future research, and to assess these needs alongside the overall acquisition strategy as set out in the Archives Development Policy.

4.   Scope

4.1.   This policy applies to records created by or on behalf of the Royal Armouries being considered for permanent preservation as part of the archives, and other personal papers and organisational records acquired by the Museum through purchase; exchange, gift or transfer; or deposit.

4.2.   Those records created by or on behalf of the Royal Armouries without archival value can be disposed of when no longer required for operational purposes, as outlined in the Museum's Retention and Disposal Schedule. The maintenance of the schedule and guidance on the management of disposal of records is provided by the Archives and Records Manager.

4.3.   The right to appraise archives acquired by exchange, gift or deposit should be negotiated and recorded in the acquisition or loan agreement.

4.4.   The policy covers the appraisal of both newly acquired/deposited archives, and also considers the re-appraisal of existing collections.

4.5.   The policy applies to records in all formats, irrespective of age, including paper and digital records.

5.   Responsibility

5.1.   The appraisal of records created by or on behalf of the Royal Armouries is primarily the responsibility of the Information Asset Owners under the guidance of the Archives and Records Manager.

5.2.   The Information Asset Owners are responsible for the secure disposal of records which are not retained or selected for transfer to the archives.

5.3.   The Archives and Records Manager is responsible for the processing and preservation of records transferred to the archives.

5.4.   The appraisal of other personal papers and organisational records acquired by the Museum should be carried out by the Archives and Records Manager or by curatorial staff under the supervision of the Archives and Records Manager.

General Procedures

5.5. The appraisal of records should be carried out in accordance with the guiding principles outlined in Section 9, and all decisions, including the retention, disposal or the transfer of records should be recorded.

5.6. Appraisal decisions should be applied at the series level, applying a process of macro appraisal, although further refinement may be required at the file level.

5.7. It is essential to retain the context in which documents are created in order to ensure the evidential value of records for future researchers. Appraisal should not be carried out below file level.

5.8. The advice of the research community (as represented by local universities offering museums studies courses etc.) concerning the likely research value of records should be considered.

5.9. The realistic potential use and benefit of preserving the records should be taken into account when assigning archival value.

5.10. These criteria can also be used to re-evaluate existing archival holdings.

6. Royal Armouries Public Records

6.1. The system for the appraisal of the Museum's public records at five years (for ongoing business value and potential archival value) and 25 years (for archival value) established by the Grigg Report (1954) is, in most circumstances, no longer viable for digital records for a number of reasons:

- digital records are vulnerable, and may become inaccessible due to format obsolescence or deletion. The Museum needs to capture decisions about the value of digital records early in their lifecycle. This is vital to ensure essential context is maintained and to allow for efficient and effective appraisal of the records;

- the increasing volume, proliferation and complexity of digital records means that a file-by-file approach is prohibitive and resource-intensive;

- from 2013 the 30 Year Rule will be gradually reduced to 20 years over a 10-year transition timetable. More records will need to be reviewed in a short space of time to comply with the change in legislation;

6.2. The appraisal of digital records created by or on behalf of the Royal Armouries should therefore be carried out either:

- at an early stage in the records life cycle, as close to their creation as possible, or

- when the records are no longer required for operational purposes, or
- according to the Museum's Retention and Disposal Schedule (see Appendix One).

6.3. Appraisal should focus on:
- key functions (i.e. governing the museum, facilitating access and learning, managing the collections, and promoting the museum
- key activities (e.g. strategy and decisions, research, public engagement, and collections information)

6.4. Retention will generally be determined by the ongoing value of the records for assisting efficient and effective administration; enabling decision making and policy development; and allowing the Museum to be accountable in terms of the management of resources, as well as legal and financial scrutiny.

6.5. Transfer to the archives will generally be determined by the additional value to the organisation and wider society. This can include 'evidential' value derived from the way the record documented the history, structure and functions of the Museum, the history and development of the Collection, and 'informational' value in providing research material on persons, places and subjects.

6.6. All material for disposal will be dealt with confidentially.

7. Other Records and Archives

7.1. The appraisal of new acquisitions and deposits may be carried out in two stages, either before receipt into the Royal Armouries, or after receipt as part of the cataloguing process.

7.2. Where possible, the archives should be appraised on-site before acquisition/deposit takes place. This generally be undertaken at a 'series' level and will enable staff to identify series or types of records not worthy of long-term preservation. This pre-acquisition appraisal helps avoid the unnecessary expense of taking this material into the Museum and removing it at a later stage. It is of course entirely possible that a collection will be rejected in its entirety. Pre-acquisition appraisal will also provide an opportunity to identify and reject collections, or parts of collections, whose informational value duplicates others already held by the Museum.

7.3. For newly acquired collections, appraisal will generally be carried out during the cataloguing stage on a file-by-file basis.

7.4. The Museum will ensure that the right to appraisal is embedded in each acquisition/acquisition loan agreement. After appraisal, owners of collections will be offered a choice of taking back appraised items, or allowing the items to be sent for confidential destruction.

7.5. Re-appraisal will often be necessary for collections if no or little appraisal was carried out at the time of acquisition.

7.6. Two methods of appraisal will be used for existing collections depending on their size and complexity:

- File-by-file. Smaller collections may be appraised on a file-by-file basis. Appraisal on a larger scale will also use the file-by-file method and in some cases this will be supplemented by macro-appraisal.

- Macro-appraisal. Larger collections may be appraised on a series basis, where the value of the records can be assessed at departmental or unit level rather than at an individual file level. This type of appraisal encourages organisation-wide analysis of functions as a guide to identifying records of value for archival purposes. It can identify areas of overlap so avoiding duplication of information and sometimes of sources selected for the archive.

7.7. In the case of public records deposited under the Public Records Act, the Museum will liaise with the National Archives to identify any series or items not considered worthy of long term preservation.

7.8. All material for disposal will be dealt with confidentially. On rare occasions it may be offered to other archive services or Place of Deposit. Material on acquisition loan will be offered back to the lender unless the lender cannot be traced (using the last available contact details the lender has supplied).

8. Guiding Principles

8.1. Appraisal for archival purposes concentrates largely on the historical value of records, any value for current business purposes having been superseded, but some records such as the Board papers, minutes etc. may retain their business value long after they have been acquired by the archive.

8.2. Historical value can be broken down into two areas:

- 'evidential value', the way the record documents the history, structure and functions of an organisation; and
- 'informational value', or value in providing research material on persons, places and subjects.

8.3. Records selected for permanent preservation by the Museum should be of the highest archival value, and appraisers may need to take into account different criteria depending on the type of collection being appraised (e.g. company records of a gunmaker or the personal archives of arms and armour collector).

8.4. Appraisers should also be aware of potential levels of interest from the Museum's main user-groups, and where possible retain material which will add significantly to main topics of research.

8.5. Appraisers should consider keeping material which may not exactly conform to any established criteria, but which does have information which is of interest, or which may be presented in a lively and engaging way.

8.6. All routine and duplicated material should be systematically removed from the collection.

8.7. In some circumstances material may be suitable for long-term preservation by virtue of its suitability for audience development and appraisers should also bear this in mind when appraising ephemeral material.

8.8. Sampling methods should be used pragmatically, with appropriate methodologies implemented which are applicable to the collection under review.

8.9. All disposal decisions made after acquisition/loan of a collection should be recorded in the EMu Archives Management System at the appropriate level for the material destroyed, including reasons for disposal – direct duplicate, duplicates information held elsewhere, not considered worthy of permanent retention. Regular statistics should be kept to record the amount of material appraised and destroyed.

9. Review

This document will be reviewed annually and updates in corporate policy and plan, legislation and international conventions will be amended or added where relevant.

This document will be reviewed by the Archives and Records Manager and approved by the Head of Collections and the Director-General and Master of the Armouries in the case of other public records and archives.

10. Risk Management

The associated risk of non-compliance with this policy is:

Impact of non-compliance: High

Likelihood of non-compliance: Medium

11. Effective date

This policy is effective from the date of signing.

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Director General & Master of the Armouries

Date………………………

Appendix One

Institutional Records for Permanent Preservation

This list is summarised from the Royal Armouries Retention/Disposals Schedule, and is not intended to be definitive. Any records deemed to have 'evidential' or 'informational, value may be selected for permanent preservation.

GOVERNING THE MUSEUM

Board of Trustees

- Trustee appointments and correspondence
- Board Papers and Minutes
- Committee Papers and Minute
- Charity Commission annual returns
- Titles, Leases to property
- Corporate-level legal agreements

Funding agreements

- Government funding agreements
- Other major funding agreements

Planning materials

- Strategic plans
- Business plans
- Other Strategies

EB/Directorate

- Directorate papers and minutes

Monitoring

- Triennial Reports
- Annual report and accounts
- Reports relating to Strategic plans, Business plans and strategies
- Internal audit reports
- External audit reports

Policies

- Register of current policies

- Master current policies (signed)

ADMINISTERING RESOURCES

Information and Records Management

- Procedures (file plan, retention schedule, disposal log, Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act, other legislative requirements)
- Related training materials

Finance

- Handbooks
- Financial regulations
- Asset registers

HR

- Procedures (Recruitment, Performance Management, Leavers, Leave and Sickness)
- Records relating to individuals in senior posts (Director, Senior Curators) should be reviewed for historical value.

DEVELOPING THE MUSEUM (FUNDRAISING)

- Buildings/ Capital project sponsors - Individual case files, funder records
- Exhibition sponsors - Individual case files, funder records
- Corporate Funders - Liaison with funders files
- Individual Donors - Case files including correspondence
- Fundraising Events - Case files (filed by event and date)
- Friends of the Museum - Meetings minutes

MANAGING BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

- Procedures - Staff Handbook
- Buildings files - Plans and drawings
- Buildings files - Signage and signage records
- Grounds – Plans
- Grounds - Signage and signage records

- Professional Services - Architects, engineers and designers, builders and cleaners correspondence/contracts
- Health & Safety - Procedures – all staff (including forms and logs)
- Health & Safety - Procedures – specific e.g. kitchen, special facilities
- Security - CCTV policy
- Security - CCTV procedures
- Security - General security procedures

MANAGING COLLECTIONS

- Documentation - Internal standards
- Documentation - Strategic plans
- Documentation - Procedures (such as object movement procedure, accession procedure etc.)
- Documentation - Object entry files and exit files
- Documentation - Object files and/or accession files
- Documentation - Accession registers
- Documentation - Disposal records
- Documentation - Loans in /out records
- Documentation - Collection audit reports
- Documentation - Projects (e.g. research, gallery, outreach)
- Collections Care - Procedures
- Collections Care - Collections Disaster/Emergency plan
- Collections Care - Major incident reports -
- Collections Care - Theft and damage reports
- Study Collections - Space specifications
- Exhibitions - Planning (proposals, meeting minutes)
- Exhibitions - Space specifications
- Exhibitions - Individual exhibition case files including: Narratives/Concepts, Research notes, Object lists, Design specifications, Mounts & fixings, Label text (final), Loans correspondence, Installation schedule, Images, Copyright licenses, Press materials, Budget, Sponsorship agreements, Insurance, Transport records, Visitor comments
- Research - Lectures / talks / publications by members of staff
- Research - External research on collections by others
- Research - Subject reference files (research)

FACILITATING ACCESS AND LEARNING (EDUCATION)

- Education Research - Professional papers/talks/lectures by members of staff
- Education Resources - Handling collection documentation
- Education Resources - Electronic learning resources and development documentation
- Schools & Formal Learning - Programme materials
- Schools & Formal Learning - Individual schools project materials
- Access and Programmes - Programme materials
- Access and Programmes - Project records
- Interpretation - Audio guides

PROMOTING THE MUSEUM (MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNICATIONS)

- Public Relations and Media - Press releases
- Public Relations and Media - Advertisements
- Media Coverage - Press cuttings (could also be TV or radio broadcasts)
- Print and Publications - In-house publications by members of staff (including books, articles, leaflets and brochures)
- Print and Publications - Printed materials (e.g. posters, brochures and leaflets)
- Web - Design, development, site map
- Picture Library - Copyright permissions and supporting correspondence for RA exhibitions, publications etc
- Visitor Information - Visitor research