

Collecting Policy

Our vision

Working with partners to be the physical and virtual heart of Suffolk's past, present and future archives and to encourage all those interested in the county's history in their journeys of discovery.

Our mission

Suffolk Archives helps residents and visitors engage with our county's rich heritage. It collects, conserves and communicates the recorded history of Suffolk from the 12th century to the present day, empowering people in exploring their roots, remembering their past, and planning their future.

1. Purpose of policy

1.1 This policy is one of a suite of policies relating to the collections at Suffolk Archives (SA) and should be read in conjunction with our Collection Development Policy.

2. Background

Suffolk Archives is part of Suffolk County Council (SCC)'s Growth, Highways and Infrastructure Directorate. Official record keeping in Suffolk can be traced back to the first significant repository in the Abbey of St Edmund. In the 1930s the first professional local government archivist was appointed. By the 1950s joint archive committees were formed for Ipswich and East Suffolk and Bury St Edmunds and West Suffolk. With local government reorganisation in 1974 the services in Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds joined to become the Suffolk Record Office. In 1985 the Lowestoft branch opened to serve the north east of the county.

With the building and opening of The Hold in 2019-2021, Suffolk Archives was formed and the archival material from the Lowestoft branch of the Suffolk Record Office was moved to Ipswich, with Local Studies and other ephemeral collections remaining in Lowestoft. At the end of 2024, the Lowestoft and Bury St. Edmunds branches of Suffolk Archives were relocated to The Hold in Ipswich and all of the archival, Local Studies, and other collections held by Suffolk Archives were united under one roof. Suffolk Archives is based at The Hold and continues to collect historically significant material from across the County. SA has built up a very comprehensive record of Suffolk life and will proactively seek to strengthen its holdings through contemporary collecting.

SA acquires and preserves for everyone unique and authoritative archives which constitute unrivalled sources for the study of most aspects of Suffolk life and makes them available to:-

- Support the local economy through heritage tourism
- Offer a variety of learning opportunities that support children and young people to develop knowledge, skills and confidence and promote adult health and wellbeing
- Empower citizens to participate in the development of their communities and to help themselves
- Promote Suffolk's natural advantages and to help protect and improve its built and historic

environment

- SA also collects and preserves diverse local studies printed and pictorial resources relating to the county, to foster and promote community identity and cohesion, and provide accessible education resources focused on life in Suffolk

It seeks to make all this material more accessible through partnership working with communities, local heritage organisations, educational partners and grant funders.

3. Statutory context and authority to collect

A statutory framework for archive care has developed gradually. Its principal components are:

- **Local Government Act 1888**- establishing County and Borough Councils and allowing them to act independently of administrative counties.
- **Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967** – SA has been appointed as a ‘Place of Deposit’ for particular types of local public records (e.g. Quarter Sessions, coroners, probate, magistrates’ courts, hospitals and health authorities).
- The Law of Property Act 1922 with the Manorial Documents Rules, 1959, 1963 and 1967 and the Tithe Act 1936 with the Tithe Rules, 1960 and 1963 - SA has been approved for the deposit of manorial and tithe records.
- **Local Government (Records) Act 1962** - Empowers SCC, as a principal council, to acquire records of local significance by purchase, donation or deposit, care for them and make them available for study by the public.
- **Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964** – SA is designated as a public library and acquires printed and illustrative material to support and complement our archival collections
- **Local Government Act 1972** - Obliges SCC to make proper arrangements for documents which belong to, or are in the care of the Council, or any of its officers; including historic records relating to Suffolk and records given to, or purchased by the authority, or deposited with them. SA fulfils this obligation through The Hold, through its county council archives service, and by making records of this nature accessible to relevant audiences.
- **Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 amended in the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1992** – SA is the designated Diocesan Record Office for the deposit of records of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and of its constituent archdeaconries, deaneries and parishes.
- **Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010**

In addition to the above SA acknowledges the legislation providing access to information including:

- **The Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations of 2018**
- **Freedom of Information Act 2000**
- **Environment Information Regulations 2004**

4. Standards

SA has adopted as policy the following non-statutory standards:

- The National Archives Standard for Record Repositories 2004
- PD5454: 2012 Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents and its replacement EN16893:2018 Specifications for the location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage and use of heritage collections
- BS4971: 2017 Conservation & Care of Archive and Library Collections
- Guidance and standards which inform digital preservation strategies and processes including:
 - The Dublin Core Metadata Element Set (ISO Standard 15836)
 - BS 4783 Storage, Transportation and Maintenance of Media for Use in Data Processing and Information Storage
 - The OAIS (Open Archival Information System)
 - Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically

5. Scope of our collections - what we collect

SA collects both archives and local studies materials. These include but are not limited to the following: manuscripts, printed, typescript and computer-generated text, prints, drawings, watercolours, engravings, posters, glass plates, lantern slides, photographs, recordings, newspapers, microform, music and other notation, maps and plans in hard copy and digital formats.

6. Geographical area

SA 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.

SA operates from one office, based in Ipswich, but offers a comprehensive service to collect material from all areas of the county.

7. Range

SA provides a broadly based, relevant, multi-disciplinary approach to collecting and recording everyday life in Suffolk and making it accessible to the people of the county and others. It recognises that people from many different cultural backgrounds play a significant role in the history and culture of Suffolk and therefore priority will be given to communities which are currently underrepresented in our collections, and, as a result, to generating and engaging new audiences.

SA welcomes archives and printed and published material regardless of date or format (subject to any exclusions noted in section 9), which can contribute to a better understanding of the history of Suffolk and add to the overall picture of the county's past, present, and future. Please note however that whilst we are very interested in collections or documents relating to Suffolk, we have limited storage space and therefore assess and evaluate collections before they are accepted in the following categories:

Records of SCC and those of its predecessors which show the economic, social and demographic condition of Suffolk as documented by SCC's dealings with individuals, communities and organisations including :

- formulation of policy and its execution
- management of revenue and expenditure
- external relations
- regulation and support of economic activity
- formulation and delivery of social and cultural policies
- reform of organisational structure
- interaction with citizens and impact on the physical environment

It will also seek to acquire records belonging to the council as a Commissioner/Funder of other agencies.

Public records offered to SA under the terms of the Public Records Acts, including archives of:

- other historic and current local authorities and statutory bodies operating within Suffolk e.g. district, borough and town councils
- the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and its constituent parishes, rural deaneries and archdeaconries
- non-Anglican religious bodies in positions of influence in Suffolk e.g. Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, United Reform, Jewish, Sikh, Muslim etc.
- organisations, businesses, individuals, clubs, societies, pressure groups, charities, public and private institutions, and other activities relating to the history and life of the county of Suffolk and its people.
- all Suffolk communities that record their development and aspirations, including ethnic and other minority groups
- past and present Suffolk society which reflect its cultural diversity, growth and development.

Published and printed local studies material relating to the history and life of the county of Suffolk including:

- Books and pamphlets on any aspect of the history of Suffolk or of individual places within the county
- Biographies or autobiographies of Suffolk people
- Periodicals, either commercially published or produced by Suffolk-based organisations
- Parish and village magazines; sale particulars; Ordnance Survey maps; commercially produced maps; newspapers; annual reports, yearbooks and accounts of local authorities, organisations and societies; church guides; sermons; school magazines; newsletters.
- Reference material, which will help users of the service to carry out their research

So far the majority of material acquired by SA has been in traditional formats such as paper or parchment. An increasing quantity is now being received in electronic formats as born digital material. SA also accepts digital copies in place of original material i.e. scans of photographs or photographs of community events, demonstrations, or protests where it would not be viable for SA to collect original records or artefacts e.g. protest signs.

8. Collections process

Definitions:

Donor – Individual or organisation giving or donating archives or local studies materials to Suffolk Archives, with ownership transferring to SCC.

Owner – Individual or organisation who, or which, owns archives or local studies materials, or to who or which these items belong

Depositor – Individual or organisation placing archives in the care of SA for safe keeping on long term loan.

Bequest – Archives or local studies materials left to SA under the terms of a will i.e. a legacy.

SA adds to its holdings by responding to offers of archives from organisations and individuals, and by liaising with stakeholders, partners and other external bodies to seek out material which is at risk of loss, destruction, damage, or sale:

- **as a donation or bequest transferring ownership to SCC, which is the preferred option for establishing custody for public benefit.** SA will assume material is offered as a **donation** unless the owner indicates otherwise on the 'entry form'. Those wishing to leave a bequest are encouraged to contact SA for further advice. Published and printed local studies material will only be accepted as a **donation** or bequest.
- **as a statutory deposit or an official transfer or presentation after the records are no longer required for current use from SCC departments (directly or via the Records Management Centre), other local authorities, statutory bodies etc**
- **by Permanent Direction issued under Section 9 (2) of the National Heritage Act 1980 for archives accepted by HM Commissioners of Revenue and Customs under the Acceptance in Lieu scheme**
- **under the Cultural Gifts Scheme - The provisions contained in Schedule 14 to the Finance Act 2012 enable an object (or collection of objects) to be donated and held by SA for the benefit of the public or the nation in exchange for a tax reduction for an individual or company.**
- **under Conditional Exemption Tax Incentive Scheme - The owner of 'designated archives' must undertake to look after and preserve them in the UK and secure reasonable access for the public, including access without a prior appointment by placing them in the safe keeping of SA.**
- **as a deposit on indefinite loan** – where ownership remains with the depositor. Deposits are not normally accepted unless they remain in the custody of SA for a minimum of twenty years.
- **through purchase** – only collections and individual archives of outstanding importance to

the county will be considered for purchase, dependent upon the availability of grants or other external funding. The Friends of Suffolk Archives play a key role in raising funds and purchasing archives which otherwise might be lost to the county. A small quantity of local books and periodicals are purchased each year to add to local studies reference collections.

Digital material is accepted as above, but due to its nature, certain additional specifications relating to file formats, metadata etc are also required for long term preservation and provision of access. See *Terms of donations, bequests, deposits and transfers*.

Staff will check incoming digital material for compatibility with our systems. Owners, donors and depositors are responsible for providing their archives in acceptable file formats. If SA is unable to read a file with existing software, an alternative version will be requested.

Accepting additional archives from existing depositors and donors also helps us to add to our holdings and compliment and expand existing collections of material.

Those interested in offering material to SA are advised to read the *Terms of donations, bequests, deposits and transfers* and discuss the collection or items with an Archivist prior to making an appointment to bring them in.

All donations and bequests will be subject to future revisions of this *Collecting Policy* and associated procedures without further notification from SA.

9. Exclusions

SA will not normally accept

- material: -
 - which falls outside the stated geographical collecting area of SA, unless forming an integral part of a collection which cannot be divided without loss of archival value or relating primarily to a Suffolk community.
 - of a low historical or informational value or which does not contribute to an understanding of the creating body or individual e.g. large ephemeral collections
 - of a highly specialist nature. In these cases, SA may be able to advise on a more suitable repository for the material.
 - which is still in semi-current use by the creating body. If storage space is an issue, there are commercial storage options and Church of England bodies can make use of the Church of England Records Centre's charged for accommodation.
 - with long closure periods, complex access restrictions or limitations on the disclosure of catalogue information for reasons of confidentiality. It is recommended that owners retain such material until the closure periods and access restrictions can be lifted.
 - whose ownership cannot be reasonably established (unless specifically anonymously donated) or is disputed.
 - which is already well-represented unless it is of exceptional quality or of particular historical significance.
 - That duplicates items already held in SA collections or held in other publicly accessible

collections.

- whose significance is outweighed by serious physical defects, deterioration or other damage, particularly where information is inaccessible or has been lost due to the condition of the material
- Films and video recordings. These fall within the collecting policy of the East Anglian Film Archive.
- Collections that are a specialism of another repository without first consulting that organisation e.g. Britten Pears Arts.
- 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 SA seek to keep the material together.
- Works of art. These fall within the collecting policies of local museums and art galleries. SA 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 SA and museums and galleries.
- Archives in a format or language which require for their preservation, consultation or interpretation, storage conditions or specialist skills or equipment which SA does not have or does not plan to provide.
- Books or periodicals of general historical interest (even if they contain some references to Suffolk) and new collections or library collections of wholly printed published material except where these relate substantially to the wider archival holdings of SA.
- Duplicate books and periodicals.
- Digital archives in proprietary file types or which use proprietary software e.g. MS PowerPoint presentations, family history programmes etc.
- Frames, tin trunks, deed chests and other containers. If archives are contained in these when they are brought to SA, the containers will normally be disposed of by SA (with permission) or returned to the owner.

10. Other terms and conditions including charges:

- Only collections and items which are judged to be of sufficient quality for permanent preservation will be accepted.
- Priority in acquiring archives will be given to those which are at risk of loss, destruction or damage, or are of particular historical significance
- All material except purchases will be subject to SA's *Terms of donations bequests, deposits and transfers*. Archives will only be accepted if accompanied by an 'entry form' signed by the person depositing or giving the material, or someone authorised to act on behalf of an organisation, business, individual etc. This constitutes the contract for deposit or donation.
- Archives presented as donations will normally be maintained at our expense.
- All correspondence will be sent to the depositors last known address. It is the responsibility of the depositor to inform SA of any changes of contact details, or ownership, where applicable. If SA need to contact a depositor and are unsuccessful despite reasonable attempts to establish and trace contact by the Archivists, and if archives have been in the

custody of SA for seven years or more, they will be presumed to have been donated to SCC.

- SA requires the owner or depositor to offer items or collections in reasonable order. Extraneous material e.g. empty folders, carbon paper and duplicates should be removed. Guidance can be provided as to the types of records SA considers for permanent preservation, depending on the type of organisation or nature of the material, through reference to the Micro Collecting Policy. This can be provided by and discussed with the Archivists on contact.
- The original filing structure or arrangement of the archives should be preserved where possible to assist researchers to better understand the inter-relationships between items within a collection.
- SA requires the owner or depositor to provide an electronic list or schedule of their material with relevant contextual information e.g. the administrative history and structure of the creating organisation or key individuals at the time of deposit especially where the bulk is likely to render the documents otherwise inaccessible until processed. SA may charge for the creation of an initial list or schedule if this is not provided by the owner or depositor.
- SA requires the owner or depositor to provide information, where known, on the intellectual rights e.g. copyright relating to any of the items transferred, presented or offered as a donation, bequest or deposit. This will be recorded on the Entry Form and on the SA cataloguing system but will not be made publicly available unless it is requested and the contact is in the public domain.
- Donors, owners, depositors or their representatives are required to inform SA of any known personal or commercially sensitive information contained within material offered, so appropriate restrictions on access can be agreed with an Archivist.
- Donors, owners, depositors or their representatives requiring legal advice about their collections, associated rights and access restrictions should approach a Solicitor. SA cannot provide advice in such situations.
- SA requires donors, owners or depositors to make arrangements for their material to be delivered to the SA.
- The owner or depositor is advised to have their collection valued for insurance purposes prior to transferring to the custody of SA. Items of a high monetary value should be separately identified prior to deposit.
- In the case of collections containing material in need of extensive conservation treatment, the council may request additional financial assistance from the depositor towards any reconditioning, rebinding and repair.
- Material purchased with the assistance of grant aid will be held subject to the terms and conditions of the bodies from which such aid has been received.
- Copies and transcripts are usually only acquired where the originals are not available or are believed to be at risk or are of significant value to archive users. Such material might also be accepted as part of a larger archival group or if it complements another archive held by or likely to be acquired by SA.
- Collections of historical and genealogical notes and pedigrees and one name studies are only accepted if they are judged to be of major importance to the history of the county.
- In order to ensure the long-term survival of digital archives SA requires digital material to be supplied in open file and uncompressed or widely used formats

e.g. TIFF, WAV and XML with associated metadata. Ideally, the original formatting within the document will be preserved. Permission to make multiple copies and to migrate data to new versions of software as necessary for long term preservation is also required. See *Terms of donations, bequests, deposits and transfers*.

- SA also requires permission to make electronic copies of digital collections available in the Searchroom and online for public access.

11. Transfers and presentations of local Public Records

Creating bodies transferring or presenting local public records to SA as a designated 'Place of Deposit' e.g. prisons, coroner's courts, hospitals etc are advised to read The National Archives guidance on *transferring records of Local Interest to Places of Deposit* prior to contacting SA.

12. Deposits and transfers from local authorities including SCC

Archives created by SCC, Borough, District, Parish or Town Councils can be deposited directly with SA or transferred from Records Management Services within Suffolk according to agreed retention guidelines included in local file plans, taxonomies, the Local Government Classification Scheme, Service List etc. Archives requiring long term preservation especially those created in digital format should be transferred at the earliest opportunity to ensure information of evidential value is kept and remains accessible. This protects local government interests and assets and captures how:

- decisions were reached and implemented
- the councils interacted with Central Government, local partners and people and other agencies
- the councils delivered their core business functions to local residents
- the councils met statutory obligations

Material that is not required to be kept for legal, fiscal, business or democratic purposes may still have an enduring social, cultural, and historic value and therefore should be offered to SA for appraisal and potential sampling prior to destruction.

Significant archives requiring permanent preservation created by organisations commissioned to deliver SCC services should be deposited in or transferred to SA to ensure continuity and to meet statutory obligations.

All SCC archives deposited in or transferred to SA by directorates, departments, sections, individuals or commissioned services etc will become general SCC assets managed by SA with advice and support from Suffolk Legal, SCC Information Governance, and directorate Strategic Information Agents.

13. Public availability

- An annual list of accessions is published on the SA and The National Archives websites.
- SA will supply electronic copies of its catalogues to the owners, depositors and The National Archives, where requested
- SA is committed to providing access to its catalogues in the Searchroom, and on its website.
- SA is committed to promoting access to collections. Archives will not be accepted unless the depositor or donor agrees to them being available for public use either immediately or at the end of a specified closure period. Closure for a short-fixed period of time or restrictions on access may be agreed in consultation with the depositors and donors. Legal and administrative restrictions on access to archives will be observed in compliance with relevant legislation e.g. Freedom of Information and Data Protection Regulations. Where material is considered to be sensitive personal data it will be closed for 100 years after the date of birth of the 'data subject', where known, or calculated as near as possible. Ongoing contact with depositors to consider users' applications to view these archives may also be required. Where data protection issues are concerned SA will be guided by Suffolk Legal and SCC Information Governance.
- Some collections, or specific items within them, may not be available if they are in need of conservation. However, access will be facilitated wherever possible.
- Access to uncatalogued collections will be dependent upon prior arrangements being made with the Archivist and may incur a research charge.

14. Selection, disposal and withdrawal

SA will appraise and select archives offered in line with best practice. When assessing potential acquisitions, it will advise owners and custodians about other organisations with relevant collecting policies, if this is appropriate. Where there is overlap with other collecting bodies, material will be acquired in consultation with them. Local agreements will be negotiated as appropriate. In case of dispute, the advice of Suffolk Legal will be sought.

If depositors withdraw their archives less than twenty years after the date of deposit, SA will require them to pay towards the storage, packing, cataloguing and conservation costs incurred up to the date of withdrawal. The amounts charged will be determined by Suffolk Archives Management Team. These will be based on a comparison of the total cost of the services provided and the public benefit derived from access to the collection up to that point. Any payments already made by the depositor towards the packing, storage, cataloguing and conservation of these archives will be taken into account. SA reserves the right to not return the collection or item until these charges have been paid.

SA will follow professional practice in evaluating and selecting material worthy of permanent preservation, including the preservation of the integrity of a collection. It may, if considered appropriate, split collections (with the permission of the owners) and transfer material to other repositories subject to any relevant statutory provisions.

Material not required for permanent preservation at any stage of processing (including cataloguing) will either be returned to the owner, offered to another organisation, disposed of in a

confidential manner (if necessary), or recycled. Permissions for return or disposal will be agreed with owners on deposit of the material. If owners do not arrange for the collection of unwanted material within 3 months of written notification by SA, it will be disposed of, as applicable. Records will be kept of all disposal decisions. SA will charge depositors for transferring and disposing of more than a box of material.

Future development of SA's collection policy may include revisions to the criteria for the selection of material for permanent preservation. Existing collections or items within them may be re-appraised against new acquisitions to ensure the available storage is used for optimum benefit. We will consult depositors, if up to date contact details are available, during this process offering them the chance to receive back any unwanted material or consent to its disposal in a confidential manner. SA reserves the right to dispose of donations and bequests and to sell duplicate local studies materials.

If SA becomes either temporarily or permanently unable to provide proper care for collections, they will be transferred to another appropriate repository with similar overall objectives on such terms as may be agreed in writing with the consent of the depositor and both governing bodies.

It will only be possible to preserve digital files in the formats outlined in *Terms of donations, bequests, deposits and transfers*. Digital files will be preserved and managed within secure, structured and dedicated folders. However, technology changes rapidly and although every effort will be made to migrate digital files to new formats to prevent obsolescence, make regular backups, and store these securely to provide disaster recovery processes, some formats might not be capable of future migration, backups may fail or files may become corrupted.

15. Collecting policy development

This collecting policy will be developed as priorities and resources allow. SA may develop its policy by:

- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of its present holdings.
- Implementing an active acquisitions policy (including surveying in the field, questionnaires and targeted promotional activity) to fill gaps in collections
- Developing selection/retention schedules within the main classes of archives (such as parish, civil parish, district council, school and charity) to enable stricter and more uniform criteria for selection. Please see the *Micro Collecting Policy*.
- Making formal arrangements for continuing deposits of county council archives, diocesan archives and transfers of Public Records.
- Maintaining contacts with depositors and donors to ensure existing archive collections develop over time.
- Identifying and consulting with under-represented groups to make new contacts, identify new collections that are worth preserving and raise awareness of archives among new audiences.
- Working with communities to identify collections that may need to be kept more secure in our care.

- Researching, developing and sharing strategies and tools that will help to meet new challenges for example, in preserving digital archives.
- Working closely within a national network of archive services so that collections are acquired by the most appropriate service and information about them is widely available.
- Liaising with The Friends of Suffolk Archives and other local groups and stakeholders to secure significant archive material that is being offered for sale privately or at auction.
- Purchasing and obtaining new local studies stock.

16. Related documents

This policy informs the Collection Information, Collection Development and Access policies

17. Date for next review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation.

Last reviewed July 2025

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www.suffolkarchives.co.uk

If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **03456 066 067**.

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor
telefone para o número abaixo. 03456 066 067

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Jeigu jums reikia šios informacijos kita kalba,
paskambinkite 03456 066 067

Lithuanian

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku
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Dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru a înțelege această informație într-o
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Romanian

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى المساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على
03456 066 067

Arabic

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Russian

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