



Borthwick Institute for Archives

Access to Archives Policy



This policy sets out the basis on which we provide access to the archives in our care.

1. Policy

Mission Statement

We support and expand the University of York's cultural endeavour and contribute to human understanding through collecting archives, preserving them and making them widely available for research to all people, now and in the future.

1.1 Access Statement

Access is the primary purpose for which we collect and preserve archives. We therefore seek to provide the maximum access possible, balanced against statutory and contractual constraints and the preservation needs of the records.

We will provide access to the archives in our care to everyone unless:

- We judge that access to a record or records is likely to cause harm to them
- There is a legal bar to access
- The owner of an archive has placed a restriction on access

Where any of these circumstances apply we will explain what the circumstances are and, wherever possible, endeavour to remove the access barrier encountered.

We work to remove barriers restricting access to the archives, be they physical or intellectual. We observe the University's policies and practices in relation to [equal opportunities](#).

Access to information about Archives in our care

1.2 We facilitate access to information about the archives in accordance with the legislation and standards in [Appendix A](#), our Archives Development Policy and Archives Information Policy. Further information will be created in accordance with associated Plans.

1.3 We provide information about our services through our website, printed guidance and in response to individual enquiries. We aim to keep the information we publish about our services accurate and up to date.

1.4 The Borthwick catalogue (Borthcat) is the primary and authoritative source of information about the archives we hold. We keep it accurate and up-to-date within resource constraints. Borthcat is harvested by archive aggregators and accessed by Internet search engines. Borthcat is printable for researchers who need printed information about our holdings.

1.5 We disseminate information about our holdings as widely as possible, in as timely a manner as resources allow, and as appropriate to the archives in question. We encourage and facilitate the publication by others of information about our holdings, of studies of our holdings, and of studies using our holdings.

1.6 We report information about the archives we receive to The National Archives on an annual basis.

1.7 We provide in-person physical access to the archives in our care to everyone during our published hours. We publish changes to these opening hours (for reasons including staff meetings, training and Bank Holidays) annually using the University academic year, and add information about irregular changes as soon as they are known to us. Unforeseen changes are published on our website and elsewhere, as appropriate to the circumstance, in a timely manner.

1.8 We will consult with researchers if we consider permanent changes to our opening hours.

1.9 The Borthwick building is fully accessible and we assist researchers with physical or sensory impairments. This includes the provision of high-contrast surrogates, hearing loops, adjustable furniture and interpreting records in our care.

1.10 We provide trained and qualified staff to assist researchers to access, use and understand the archives and the facilities available to access them ([see Appendix B](#)).

1.11 We do not provide legal advice on the content of records.

Fees and charges

1.12 Access to the Borthwick building, Borthcat and in-person access to the records is free. We charge for value-added services, which may include providing copies of records, self-service

photography, permissions to publish, media work and commissioned research. Our service charges are published on our website and reviewed annually. We will always publish changes to charges in a timely fashion.

1.13 Where access to records is through a statutory provision, such as via Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests, the statutory charges apply.

Access to information via original records

1.14 We provide appropriate space and facilities designed to meet the preservation needs of the archives, the needs of researchers and the requirements of legislation and standards. A list of these spaces and facilities is given in [Appendix B](#).

1.15 We provide researchers with public access to records in our searchroom.

1.16 We provide educational groups, volunteer groups, community groups and the media with public access to records in our Lifelong Learning Rooms.

1.17 If the searchroom is not available Borthwick staff will endeavour to provide other appropriate space for researchers to consult records, taking into account the use, security and preservation of the records and their status as originals or surrogates.

1.18 Access to records in our care is contingent upon the researcher agreeing to our rules and regulations for the preservation and security of the archives. The rules and regulations are published in our searchroom and on our website.

1.19 Borthwick staff may deny access to records and to the Borthwick building following our published [Exclusion procedure](#).

1.20 We encourage researchers to request records for their research in advance of a visit in order to make best use of their time with us. It is not necessary to make such requests except as described in 1.22, 1.23 and 1.24. Records are retrieved from the strongrooms at regular intervals as specified in searchroom notices and on our website.

1.21 We endeavour to retrieve records within 15 minutes of receiving a valid request to see them. If we think a request will take longer than this we will inform researchers as soon as possible and keep them updated as to the status of their request.

1.22 Unlisted archives present particular access problems. Where researchers require access to unlisted archives they are asked to contact the Borthwick in advance of their visit so that we can make appropriate arrangements to facilitate access while continuing to observe the preservation needs of the archives.

1.23 Photographs require cool/cold storage to maximise their lifespan. Photographs must be requested at least 24 hours in advance of a visit so that we can allow them to acclimatise to searchroom conditions.

1.24 Digital records may require technical processing before they can be consulted by researchers. Where researchers require access to digital records that have not already been made available by us online, researchers are required to contact the Borthwick in advance of their visit so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Access to archives via surrogates

1.25 We make copies (surrogates) of records to increase access to them and to secure the preservation of the archives in our care. Where surrogate records exist access to the originals of those records will be provided in line with our Conservation Care and Preservation Policy.

1.26 We will use any format available to us to create surrogates and make them available for use. Examples of formats we use include: digital, microfilm, microfiche and physical (such as photocopies, transcriptions by staff, the public, record societies and other clubs and societies).

1.27 We provide free onsite access to online digitised records.

1.28 We are not responsible for the accuracy or quality of surrogates created by external bodies.

Creating surrogates for research

1.29 We supply physical and digital copies via our Reprographics service and in line with our Digitisation Policy.

1.30 Our ability to provide copies of records is governed by preservation status, copyright and information law, terms of licences, terms of deposit, technical capacity and staffing availability.

1.31 We provide advice in regard to the copying options available on a case by case basis. Researchers will be advised of charges before submitting orders. We aim to complete all requests within 20 working days of receipt of payment where the medium in question allows.

1.32 Researchers may make their own copies of records in the searchroom subject to payment of the applicable fee and to the provisions of the Borthwick's Care and Conservation and Digitisation Policies.

Access to information in or about records for researchers who do not wish to visit the Borthwick

1.33 We welcome enquiries via email, telephone, post, in person and via social media. We respond to enquiries within 10 working days.

1.34 We undertake research about information contained in archives in our care, and transcribe and translate records, at the charges published on our website. We aim to complete such work within 20 working days of receipt of the appropriate fee, and will advise if a request might take longer than 20 days to complete.

1.35 We provide online access to the archives in our care, to the information we know about them, and to the services we provide. We provide access online via:

- Our website, which is the primary and authoritative source of information about our services, operations, history, staff and projects. It is regularly maintained and hosts up-to-date information on our opening times, charges and contact details.
- Borthcat, through which we provide fonds-level information for all our archives within 3 months of an archive being acquired, and detailed sub-fonds and lower level information and links to copies of records following our strategy and plans thereafter.
- Archive information providers, such as Archives Portal Europe, the UK Archives Hub, TNA's Discovery and general internet search engines, with which we share our Borthcat information.
- Content providers, such as the University of York, the Humanities Research Institute, FindMyPast and Ancestry, through which we provide access to surrogates of records in our care.
- Social media of every appropriate kind, through which we aim to provide informative and entertaining access to the Borthwick's activities and archives.

1.36 We promote our activities and archives via a wide range of means, including:

- Conferences
- Lectures, seminars and talks
- Teaching and learning related to our archives and the skills needed to interpret them
- Escorted visits to the Borthwick
- Local and family history fairs and events
- Exhibitions, on site and off site

1.37 We welcome opportunities to collaborate with schools, community groups and educational bodies, following our Learning and Outreach Policy.

Restrictions on access

1.38 We may restrict access to, and use of, records due to the physical condition of a record, the technical environment that a record requires, the legal restrictions relating to information in a record, or adverse behaviour by a researcher, following our Guidelines on withdrawal of access to records (Appendix C).

1.39 We may permit access to restricted personal information where research accessing such information is conducted solely for historical or statistical purposes, will not support measures or decisions with respect to particular individuals, or be likely to cause damage or distress, and the researcher agrees to conditions consonant with Data Protection law, including making the results of the research available only in an anonymised form.

1.40 Where we judge that records are in poor physical condition and at risk of further damage we may restrict access to them in line with our Care and Preservation Policy. In such

circumstances we will endeavour to facilitate access by other means, including via surrogate copies.

1.41 We will indicate in Borthcat where access restrictions apply.

Feedback

1.42 We welcome feedback on our services, holdings and policies and will review all feedback by the appropriate people at the appropriate time.

1.43 We participate in customer satisfaction sampling and surveys. Such surveys might include surveys administered by TNA, Archives for Yorkshire, the Archives and Records Association and the Public Services Quality Group.

Complaints

1.43 We manage and respond to complaints following the [Information Services Complaints Policy](#)

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy covers access to our

- Archives in any format or media
- Surrogates in any format or media
- Services of any kind provided by the Borthwick Institute

2.2 All researchers accessing archives, surrogates or services are covered by this policy.

3.0 Oversight

3.1 Overall responsibility for Access is with the Assistant Director of Information (Keeper of Archives).

3.2 The Borthwick Senior Management Team is responsible for overseeing policy implementation.

4.0 Policy implementation documents

4.1 This policy is supported by the following policies and implementation documents:

- Borthwick Institute policy and terms definitions guide
- Archives Information Policy
- Care and conservation policy, plan and procedures
- Digital preservation plan and procedures
- Reprographics procedures

- Digitisation policy, plan and procedures
- Access plan and procedures
- Learning and Outreach Policy
- Forward plans
- University of York Information Security Policy
- University of York Data Protection Policy
- University of York Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme

Document history and status

Dec 2015	G Brannan	Began first draft
Apr 2016	G Brannan	Incorporated BSTM comments
Jul 2016	G Brannan	Reformat to ISD policy style
Dec 2016	G Brannan	Staff comments included
Feb 2017	G Brannan	Public consultation
May 2017	G Brannan	Final draft
July 2017	C Webb	Tidying amendments
10th August 2017	Information Services SMT	Approved

Review cycle 5 years

Date of next review September 2022

Appendix A

Legislation and standards

We provide access to the archives in our care within the following statutory, contractual and standards framework. We will adapt our services to meet any applicable legislation introduced over the lifetime of this policy.

Legislation

- The Law of Property (Amendment) Act 1924
 - Manorial Documents Rules 1926 and 1959, The Manorial Documents (Amendment) Rules, 1963 and 1967, and Statutory Instruments 1959 No. 1399, 1963 No. 976, 1967 No. 963.
- Tithe Act 1936
 - Tithes (Copies of Instruments of Apportionment) (Amendment) Rules 1960-1963 (SI 1960/2440) and (SI 1963/977)
- Public Records Act 1958, amended 1967
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992 and 2003
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Access to Health Records Act, 1990
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3391)
- Equality Act 2010
- Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015
- Agreements for the deposit or gift of archives to the Borthwick

Standards

- Customer Service Excellence Standard
- National Council on Archives Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) Access Standard 2006.
- PAS 197: 2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management
- PD 5454: 2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials

Appendix B

Spaces and Facilities

- Searchroom
 - 24 spaces for consulting records
 - 1 height-adjustable desk
 - 1 space for consulting outside records
 - 1 public access access terminal
 - Hearing loop

- Microform room
 - 2 digital microform readers for 35mm and 16mm film, fiche and card
 - 3 public access terminals
 - 12 35mm microfilm readers
 - 1 microfiche reader

- Lifelong learning suite
 - 30 seating spaces with tables
 - When divided, each room has a capacity of 12
 - 40 seats set in lecture style
 - 2 projectors
 - 2 whiteboards
 - Hearing loop

- Exhibitions
 - 8 table-style glass exhibition cases
 - 5 column-style glass exhibition cases

- The Yorkshire Room (LBU/002)
 - 18 seats
 - Large screen

Appendix C:

Guidelines on withdrawal of access to records

1. We will provide access to records unless:
 - We judge that access to a record is likely to cause harm to a record, following our Care and Conservation Policy
 - There is a legal bar to access
 - The owner of an archive has placed a restriction on access
 - A researcher does not abide by our rules and regulations
 - A researcher behaves in a manner which is threatening, abusive, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate toward staff or other researchers
 - A researcher behaves in a manner that in the opinion of staff poses a threat to the ongoing preservation of records in our care.
2. Where any of these circumstances apply we will explain what the circumstances are and endeavour to remove the access barrier encountered.
3. Where we withdraw access to a record because access to it is likely to cause harm to that record, or because of a researcher's behaviour, we may require that the researcher accesses the record by means of a surrogate to be created at cost to the researcher following our published charges, through a third party, or through the Borthwick's paid research service.
4. Where researcher behaviour is the prime cause of withdrawal of access to a record, we may also withdraw access to the Borthwick building.
5. The Keeper of Archives will normally decide on withdrawal of access to the Borthwick building. Where the Keeper is not available the decision to withdraw access may be made by an archivist or a member of the Information Services Senior Management team.
6. Where access to the Borthwick building is withdrawn we will tell the researcher in writing why the decision has been made, who has taken the decision and what steps must be taken to access the building in future.
7. Researchers may challenge decisions made under these guidelines by contacting the Keeper of Archives.