Borthwick Institute for Archives

Guide to Definitions of Terms

This document provides a guide to terms used in policies and other documentation created by the Borthwick Institute. Where a term has an accepted meaning the source for this meaning is given. Where possible we use terms recognised by the International Council on Archives.

Definitions

Aggregation finding aid: a finding aid that brings many individual finding aids together and allows them to be searched as a whole or individually. Our current tool, Borthcat, is based on the international AtoM (Access to Memory) platform.

Appraisal: Appraisal is the process of assessing records to determine how long to retain them. Archival appraisal is the particular process of establishing and qualifying the value of records in order to distinguish those records of enduring value from those of no further value. The former may then be preserved continuously for an unlimited period of time, while the latter may be eliminated.

Archive: An archive is the whole of the records of an organisation or an individual and selected for permanent preservation. An archive is not limited in physical format nor in its date. For further explanation see the International Council on Archives' [Guide to Archives](#).

Born-digital records: these are records created digitally in the day-to-day business of an organisation, such as word processed documents, PDFs, emails, image files, videos and so on. Definition taken from *[Digital Cataloguing Practices at The National Archives](#)*, March 2017.

Borthcat: The Borthwick catalogue on line is our aggregation level finding aid**.**

Collection: A group of documents, which may also be records, that have been deliberately gathered together, their primary relationship to each other being the act of collecting rather than, as with an archive, the organic creation of records as part of a business activity. A collection may form part of an archive if it is associated with records relating to the collector.

Conservation is the *concentrated active care* of damaged or fragile documents in any format. It involves invasive procedures, which alter the state of documents in order to stabilise or repair them.

Digital preservation is the *active management of digital archives* to ensure they remain accessible and retain their authenticity over the long term.

Digital surrogates: records created by converting analogue material such as paper, microfilm or microfiche to digital images. The paper record remains in the custody of the archive as the original public record. Definition taken from *[Digital Cataloguing Practices at The National Archives](#)*, March 2017.

Digitisation - The term digitisation describes the creation of digital copies of physical materials. This includes records, images, audio and video.

Digitised records: these are the result of analogue material being digitised to a high standard, with provenance metadata captured separately and embedded in each file, in order to become the accessioned public record. The digital version becomes the official record for permanent preservation in lieu of the original analogue source, which would generally be destroyed after five years or deposited elsewhere. Definition taken from *[Digital Cataloguing Practices at The National Archives](#)*, March 2017. At the Borthwick Institute, this term is used primarily for digitised audio-visual material.

Document: Information recorded but not yet selected for permanent preservation. There is no limit to the format of documents (medium or carrier).

Finding aid: A tool to assist researchers finding the archives and records they need for their research. This includes high level tools such as Borthcat, which aggregates the individual finding aids for each archive, as well as more specific and detailed finding aids to parts of an archive, such as a place or person index.

Fonds: The entire body of records of an organization, family, or individual that have been

created and accumulated as the result of an organic process reflecting the functions of the creator.

Fonds-level finding aid/description: a finding aid that gives an overview of the whole of an archive. It allows archives to be searchable at a high level before detailed finding aids are created.

Identification, arrangement and description: The process by which finding aids are created.

New archive: includes completely new archives and additions to existing archives. It also includes records and documents, not forming or being part of archives, acquired by the Borthwick to be used for research beyond the Borthwick staff.

Preservation is the *holistic preventive care* of archives.

Publish: to make publicly available by whatever method. This can include making a policy available online, or formal publication through a conventional publisher.

Rare Books: The published works in the University Library selected by Library staff for their provenance, age or rarity.

Repository: Any organisation directly responsible for preserving archives and making them available to the public. In the UK they are often called record offices, but have many other names. The [International Standard](#) for describing repositories prefers the term 'Institution with archival holdings'.

Record: Recorded information in any form or medium, created or received and maintained, by an organization or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs. Records are the constituent parts of an archive.

Researchers: all users of the archives and rare books and the Borthwick's facilities and services.

User community: encompasses everyone who uses our holdings either directly or indirectly, regardless of location. This includes, but is not limited to:[1]

- Members of the public, both on-site and remotely
- Academic researchers including both students and researchers. This includes students from schools, further, higher and continuing education
- External groups, including family/local history groups, volunteers and the media
- Associates/stakeholders, including archival donors/depositors and commercial partners
- Staff at the University of York

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[1] Based on Customer Service Excellence customer segmentation exercise 2014