



Nottinghamshire  
County Council

**Nottinghamshire  
Archives**

# **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES**

## **ACCESS POLICY**

**2009**

## **1. Introduction**

This policy has been drawn up in compliance with the Public Services Quality Group *Standard for Access to Archives* and after consultation with the Local Studies/Archives Policy Co-ordination Group and Nottinghamshire Archives Users' Group.

The Policy has been approved by Nottinghamshire County Council Cabinet member for Culture and Regeneration and the responsible officer on behalf of Nottingham City Council Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure and Tourism.

## **2. Who We Serve**

Nottinghamshire Archives serves all those individuals and communities interested in the archives of the County of Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham.

## **3. Our Purpose**

### **Mission Statement**

Nottinghamshire Archives actively seeks to acquire and preserve appropriate archives for Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham and to make this resource accessible for public use.

## **4. Making Our Collections Available**

### **The Search Room**

Our Search Room contains extensive indexes and catalogues to help visitors identify what archives may help their research. Many catalogues can be accessed through through our online catalogue at <http://nawcat.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/> or at [www.a2a.gov.uk](http://www.a2a.gov.uk)

Access to the Search Room to view original archives is by CARN (County Archive Research Network) ticket and is subject to specific forms of official identity. A Code of Conduct is available that is applicable to both visitors and Archives staff.

Archives can be viewed either in original format or through microfilm or other surrogate formats. Computers are also available to provide internet access to local and family history websites.

Members of staff are always on-hand to help with enquiries about the finding aids and to help direct individual visitors to particular research material. We aim to respond promptly and efficiently to enquiries by telephone, by letter and e-mail. All enquiry responses are monitored and are required to meet set standards which are identified in our Customer Charter. A variety of outreach events are held every year

to help users and potential users and to promote collections. These events are advertised through a mailing list, the media and on our website.

Access to the Search Room is free. There are however charges for reproduction services, for priced publications and for the use of our own research service.

All our fees and charges are reviewed annually and published in both hard-copy and internet formats.

### **Reprographics Services**

The Service provides photocopies of archives at A4 and A3 sizes and has a digital copying service which includes images by e-mail and on CD. A price list, revised annually, is available by post, at reception or can be viewed on the website. A Preservation & Conservation Policy states where limitations on copying may need to be exercised in the event of potential damage by the copying process such as to wax seals or fragile items.

### **Enquiry Service**

Archives staff can provide basic information from our indexes and catalogues free-of-charge and can suggest possible avenues of research.

### **Archives Research Service**

The Archives operates its own research service for searches in archives. Research can be undertaken subject to an initial enquiry and agreement on the length and content of research. The research is on a fee paying basis. Details of the service can be received by post or can be viewed on the Archives website. A list of private record agents is also available by post or from the website.

### **Publications**

Publications available include:

- Information about our services and facilities in our introductory leaflet; this also includes a map showing our location.
- A leaflet on services we provide to owners of archives.
- A leaflet to help family historians assess what relevant collections we have for them and how to use our services.
- Information sheets on many different types of records, on our main indexes and catalogues and other aspects of the Archives service.
- A range of local and family history publications for sale to the public.

## **Our Website**

User information can all be accessed through our website. The website has:

- Details of our opening times.
- A location map.
- Details of our enquiry services.
- A number of policies and strategies relating to the service, access and performance standards.
- Information about our collections.
- A document of the month section.
- Various information sheets and details of publications.
- A summary guide to parish registers and non-denominational registers
- Information about events and other details to help visitors and remote enquirers use our services and facilities.

The website is being extended on an on-going basis.

## **5. Auditing Our Service**

### **Business Plan**

Each year the Archives produces a Business Plan that sets down specific work targets for acquisitions of written and visual archives, the preservation of archives and conservation facilities, cataloguing and indexing of collections, public Search Room standards and learning and outreach activities. The Plan is published on our website. The performance of these targets is monitored through meetings of the Archives Management Team. Performance results and related statistics are returned annually to The National Archives self-assessment of archive repositories that sets national standards for repositories in the UK.

### **Evaluation and PSQG Survey**

The Archives also undertakes evaluations of many aspects of its activities, including talks, workshops and project work. The Service makes use of the Museums, Libraries & Archives (MLA) Inspiring Learning For All framework which seeks to establish learning outcomes and monitors them on a regular basis.

The Archives Service is regularly subject to a national PSQG (Public Services Quality Group) Survey of Visitors to British Archives that is held every one and a half to two years. The survey asks visitors to record their comments on a wide range of services

and facilities in order to improve the service. The survey provides an insight into the level and quality of service given by Nottinghamshire Archives and enables a comparison with other public services in the UK.

## **6. Restricted Access**

While most archives are available under the normal production system provided by the Archives service, some documents are subject to closure restrictions. These restrictions apply to some classes of Public Records (many for 30 years), including the records of magistrates courts, county courts, coroners' records and there are limitations on some hospital records (including patient records under 100 years), some parish records, social services material and some school records. The service cannot provide electoral register data within 10 years. A full list of restricted records is being prepared. Most restrictions are highlighted in the Search room catalogues.

The Archives follows restricted access procedures as required under the Data Protection Act, 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 which permits access to certain pieces of closed information under certain relevant guidelines.

Applications under the Freedom of Information Act, 2000 for information from any restricted records must be addressed in writing to the Principal Archivist.

## **7. Public Service Standards**

### **Customer Charter**

Our customer charter pledges us to meet the highest possible standards of public service. A copy of the charter is available in hard copy format or can be viewed on the Archives website.

Our pledges will ensure prompt response times to enquiries and requests for copied documents, efficient document production times and high levels of public advice. Our performance can be viewed on the Archives website.

### **Complaints & Comments**

There is a customer procedure for both comments and complaints which receive a response within 5 days. Forms are available from a dispenser in the entrance lobby or from Reception. Customers may write or e-mail direct to the Principal Archivist and all complaints are monitored both by the Archives service and the Departmental complaints officer. The response to all comments/complaints is reviewed annually.

## **8. Meeting the Needs of Our Stakeholders**

Our stakeholders are those individuals or organisations with a direct interest in the Archives service. They include Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council, our users (both visitors and 'remote' users) and the depositors of archives.

The needs of these stakeholders are monitored and evaluated through PSQG, as above and individual evaluations and other surveys. A User Group exists to serve the stakeholder community. It meets twice a year and is composed of appointed representatives of various stakeholder bodies while three posts are elected on a triennial basis. In 2008/9 existing partnerships are being reviewed and this process will impact on our current Learning & Outreach work and on the Archives Audience Development Plan.

## **9. Code of Conduct**

We have a Code of Conduct for visitors to the Archives. This is displayed prominently on the Archives premises. A copy can also be downloaded from our website.

## **10. The Media**

Nottinghamshire Archives welcomes interest from the media in its work. Contacts with the media are regulated through a Media Policy which is available by post or on the Archives website. Contacts with the media are reported to Nottinghamshire County Council's Communications section.

## **11. Access, Equality & Social Inclusion**

The Archives Service is committed to the development of positive policies and activities to promote equal opportunities in employment and in the delivery of services regardless of race, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation or age. It is also committed to identifying and removing barriers of social exclusion that may prevent access to its services and facilities.

A Learning & Outreach Policy (copies available by post or from our website) seeks to develop methods of broadening our 'user base' and attracting a more diverse audience. Since 2007 this work has been further developed by the introduction of an Audience Development Plan.

## **12. Date**

The Policy was approved on 27 Feb 2009.