

# OXFORDSHIRE HISTORY CENTRE POLICY DOCUMENT PD028

## Cataloguing archives

### 1. Scope

1. This policy is deemed to cover all archive catalogues, indexes and finding aids held in Oxfordshire History Centre.
2. An archive catalogue is defined as a multilevel set of descriptions which cover the contents of an individual collection (fonds) of documents and relate its component parts to one another, enabling users to locate information within the collection and understand its context. The catalogue further enables users to identify individual items in a collection for the purpose of requesting access to them in the public searchroom.
3. An index is defined as a list of personal names, place names, or subject terms, enabling identification of documents within a collection containing them or having relevance to them.
4. A finding aid is defined as any other document, list or database allowing any form of physical or intellectual access to a collection.

### 2. Standards

1. All archive catalogues created in Oxfordshire History Centre will conform to the International Standard on Archival Description (General) [ISAD(G)].
2. All catalogues created in Oxfordshire History Centre will use CALM cataloguing software.
3. Best practice in cataloguing and indexing will be monitored and followed subject to financial and staffing constraints. This will include benchmarking with other archival bodies.
4. Formal professional issues' meetings will be convened as necessary within Oxfordshire History Centre in which all professional cataloguing staff will participate, to review cataloguing issues and make strategic decisions relating to them.

### 3. Staffing

1. Cataloguing in its entirety (i.e. cataloguing a collection from the initial sort to the production of the final structured catalogue) will be undertaken only by those members of staff professionally qualified as archivists or studying for the qualification.
2. The initial stages of a catalogue (sorting and rough listing) may be carried out by volunteer assistants within Oxfordshire History Centre. Every such volunteer will be interviewed to determine their suitability for such work before being allowed to proceed, and will be allocated a mentor from among the

professional archivists to oversee their work. All volunteers will be subject to the guidelines laid down in the Volunteer Policy.

#### **4. Support of Cataloguing**

1. A list of cataloguing priorities will be kept, from which new cataloguing initiatives will be drawn (see policy document PD006). These priorities will be determined by:
  - Legal requirements on cataloguing collections
  - Searcher usage of existing collections of particular types
  - Searcher requests for material to be catalogued
  - Length of time a collection has been in the office
  - Lack of representation of a type of collection in our catalogued holdings
  - Whether collections are listed, but not to a sufficient degree of detail to ensure security of those records when they are produced
  - Whether the current catalogue is recent enough to be ISAD(G) compliant
2. Funding may be accepted from depositors or interested parties to underwrite the cataloguing of an individual collection, but not if this leads to work being concentrated on a collection which does not meet the criteria in 1 above.
3. External funding strands may be sought to support cataloguing, but not if the fundraising process will take a length of time disproportionate to the outcome of the cataloguing process, and not if the outcome of the cataloguing process will be a minor spinoff of unsought outreach or other work.

#### **5. Cataloguing Process**

1. All cataloguing will be carried out in accordance with the Oxfordshire History Centre Cataloguing Manual. This Manual will be reviewed every 12 months at an archivists' meeting to ensure it conforms with best practice.

#### **6. Availability of Catalogues**

1. A hard copy of newly-created catalogues will be maintained in the public searchroom in an appropriate binder, labelled on the spine and colour-coded for ease of access. Exceptions to this will be catalogues of post-1830 Quarter Sessions rolls, and some planning records from RDC and UDC collections both of which produce a high volume of paper catalogues.
2. An electronic copy of every newly-created catalogue will be made available through the Heritage Search facility on the Oxfordshire County Council website. Access to Heritage Search will be available free of charge through any PC with internet access, and will be available on all the public PCs in the Oxfordshire History Centre searchroom. A copy of all new catalogues will be sent to The National Archives.
3. Until all electronic catalogues are available on Heritage Search, hard copy card indexes for all collections will be made available in the Oxfordshire History Centre searchroom. Thereafter, hard copy indexes will be discontinued for future catalogues.

4. Oxfordshire History Centre will seek to retro-convert existing hard copy catalogues into electronic format in order to disseminate them more widely, and will seek to upgrade them to ISAD(G) standard as part of the process. Advantage will be taken of any national programmes and funding strands which support this aim, subject to financial and staffing constraints.

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Revised by Mark Priddey, March 2012, July 2014, March 2015

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