

Collections Management Policy (2019-2024)

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1. Purpose of Document and Review

The Collection Management Policy sets out the principles by which BT Archives acquires, accessions, manages and preserves its archive collections (access is covered in a separate policy).

A review of the Policy will be completed every five years and approved by the Head of Heritage & Archives. Reviews can be carried out before this time if needed.

2. Relation to Other Policies and Plans

The Collections Management Policy is intended to give an overview of the way collections are managed. The following policies and plans complement this:

Title	Description	Reviewed/Refreshed
Strategic Plan	Vision and mission of Heritage & Archives; strategic outcomes; key goals and developments.	Every 5 years
Heritage Policy	Our public-facing policy, which outlines commitments to the preservation and ongoing access of our collections.	Every 10 years
Acquisition		
Collections Development Strategy and Plan	Plans for development of collections, including acquisition.	Annually
Collections Management		
Collections Manual	Working document, which sets out in-depth the processes and procedures by which we	Ongoing working document

	manage our collections, including process of accessioning; catalogue arrangement; data management; authorities and guidelines for CALM (our cataloguing software). Also sets out legacy approaches.	
Cataloguing Strategy		Annually
Collections Care and Conservation Plan		Annually
Disaster Plan		Every 5 years
Digital Strategy (to be created)		Every 2 years
Access		
Access Policy		Every 5 years
Access Plan		Annually

3. Introduction and Scope of Archive Collection

BT is the world’s oldest communications company with a history stretching from the foundation of the Electric Telegraph Company in 1846.

BT Archives, established in 1986, preserves the records of BT and its predecessors and promotes access to the records and their content internally as a corporate resource, and externally to national and international communities.

BT Archives is appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a Place of Deposit for Public Records, for those records created prior to BT’s privatisation in 1984.

The preservation and promotion of the historical records within BT Archives

- provides a source of knowledge about past actions and decisions, which can inform decision making in the future
- fulfils BT’s obligations under the Public Records Act 1958, as amended 1967
- supports BT in compliance with the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 2000
- forms an integral part of BT’s corporate responsibility programme
- provides legal evidence
- demonstrates accountability
- substantiates claims of quality and performance
- advances the study of the history and impact of telecommunications by providing a basis for historical research

4. Acquisition

4.1 Acquisition Principles

BT Archives will acquire and preserve material which reflects the development and operations of British Telecommunications plc, its predecessors and subsidiaries both in the UK and overseas, from

the formation of the Electric Telegraph Company in 1846, BT's earliest direct predecessor, to the present day.

BT Archives does not normally accept records of other telecommunications companies from which BT cannot claim descent or ownership, nor those of international or professional bodies of which BT may be a member e.g. International Telecommunications Union, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation etc.

BT Archives does not seek to compete for records with other repositories, and seeks to avoid competition, conflict and duplication of effort with external repositories. It works closely with other repositories with related collections e.g. The Postal Museum Archive and our museum partners.

BT Archives uses functional analysis of the business at different points in its history to identify gaps in holdings and priority collecting themes.

Guidance on appraisal criteria is given in the Collections Manual.

4.2 Formats Accepted

Material offered to BT Archives will be considered on its archival information value rather than its format or medium. Records are accepted in most formats, including, but not exclusively, manuscript, typescript, printed, machine readable, electronic, photographic, microform, artwork and film.

The only condition on format is our 'duty of care', that is BT Archives may not accept:

- material which requires immediate costly work in order for it to be preserved or accessible, unless resource can be secured for its transfer and preservation
- material which through its unstable nature might create a risk to the collections overall.

We aim to provide sustainable preservation for our collection. This includes digital records and those stored on old media formats. Working with our colleagues in IT, we aspire to implement as soon as possible a digital repository that will enable ongoing and sustainable preservation and access of our digital material.

BT Archives also accepts artefacts that add to the body of knowledge, and our understanding, of BT's corporate history.

BT Archives will accept published sources for its reference library and information files to support the archival collection. The acquisition of published material is not, however, a primary aim of BT Archives and the reference library does not set out to be a comprehensive library on the history of telecommunications.

4.3 Methods of Acquisition

BT Archives acquires material through the following channels:

- Regular transfers directly from core BT lines of business
- Regular transfers through BT records management

- Ad hoc transfers from within BT e.g. when sites close
- Occasional transfers from The Postal Museum Archive under the terms of the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967
- Transfers of items from partner museums
- Donations from BT people
- Donations from members of the public
- Purchase from E-Bay or the antiquarian trade
- Output from BT Archives' oral history programme

4.4 Terms and Conditions of Acquisition

BT Archives will acquire material by internal transfer, statutory deposit, gift or purchase.

Where an external individual or organisation is unable to dispose of its records or where the records are of exceptional significance to BT Archives, a long term loan will be considered only in exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis.

All material must come from a bone fide source and have a demonstrable provenance. Depositors must have the authority to transfer the material and are required to sign a gift agreement.

All donations and loans will be confirmed in writing by either a deed of gift form or loan agreement as appropriate signed by both parties.

On transferring material to the archive, copyright will be assigned to BT Archives unless stated otherwise.

For acquisitions from external sources, it is a condition of acceptance that material will be available for public access either immediately or at the expiry of a specified period.

All acquisitions will be by prior agreement. BT Archives reserves the right to refuse ad hoc transfers whatever the source.

5. Accessioning

All new acquisitions are recorded in the CALM accession database (full guidance is provided in the Collections Manual). This accession record will give a preliminary indication of the scope, content and creation dates of the records, record their legal status and any restrictions on access, date of accession and shelf location. Information relating to the source of the material is retained in the Depositors database.

The unique number assigned to each accession will subsequently be linked to the catalogue record in CALM. The full detail of the accession, including the donor's contact details, will not be made available to the public.

Donors and/or record creators are encouraged to supply as much information as they can about the content and context of the material.

All gifts or permanent transfers are acknowledged in writing (email or letter) and include full details of the material and terms of Deposit. A form is issued for all external deposits, requiring the countersignature of the donor.

We do not attempt to keep detailed information on accessioning or disposal of duplicates, material produced by other institutions, or published books. This enables us to tackle our cataloguing backlog more quickly.

Semi-current transfers made under a Safe Custody agreement are recorded in a dedicated, secure database. A unique identifier is assigned and sent to the records owner. Records subsequently selected for permanent preservation are accessioned and catalogued in CALM.

Initial appraisal is undertaken at the point of accession. More detailed appraisal may occur during the cataloguing process and destructions noted in the accession record (carried out as per deposit agreement or transfer arrangements).

6. Cataloguing

BT Archives recognises that good documentation of its collections is fundamental to collections management and sustained access.

BT Archives will gather, preserve and share information about its collections through accessioning and cataloguing.

BT Archives works towards meeting common international cataloguing standards for each format.

- Archival material will be catalogued with due regard for archive professional standards, namely International Council on Archives *General International Standard of Archival Description, ISAD(G)*, second edition 1999; National Council on Archives *Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names (NCA Rules)*, 1997; International Council on Archives *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, ISAAR(CPF)*, second edition, 2004
- Artefacts will be catalogued with due regard for SPECTRUM 5.0, The UK Museum Collections Management Standard, 2017
- Library items will be catalogued with due regard for Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, second edition (AACR2), 2002 (2005 update).

For born digital archives, BT Archives recognises the need for, and will seek to acquire, additional technical metadata required for the purpose of long term preservation and access. Developing procedures for born digital records is a priority which will be planned in our Digital Strategy.

BT Archives maintains physical control of its collections via its CALM locations database and clear labelling of packaging and/or material.

An internal staff working group reviews all operational work with regard to maintaining collections information. A procedural manual for collections management is available to staff and volunteers in their collections information work (Collections Manual).

7. Reappraisal, Deaccessioning and Disposal

Archive materials and objects formally accepted into BT Archives' collections are intended for permanent preservation. However, we may reappraise our collections as needed (particularly those that were accepted into our collection prior to a formal collection policy) and to deaccession and dispose of as necessary, honouring terms of deposit for each collection and following archive good practice and professional principles. Reappraisal will be carried out using the collections criteria laid out in the Collections Manual and will be conducted by qualified Archivists.

A record is retained of destructions, including rationale and, where appropriate, authority obtained.

All confidential destruction is carried out on site by BT Archives staff or by BT Security approved contractors.

8. Loans

BT Archives will only loan original material on condition that the loan party will comply with BS 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archive and library collections* (at the discretion of the Head of Heritage & Archives). The exception to this is short-term loans for internal events, but in this situation a member of the Archives team must transport material and be present at all times. Loans for conservation treatment or exhibition are managed by loan form.

Gifts: we do not offer any heritage material as gifts to individuals at any level of the organisation or elsewhere. We will work internal colleagues to source duplicates or offer facsimiles as appropriate.

9. Preservation

9.1 Guiding principles

BT Archives takes a strategic, risk management approach to collections care.

BT Archives aims to care for its physical collections in according with professional standards, BS4971:2017 - Conservation and care of archive and library collections, and Benchmarks in Collections Care.

Appropriate measures for storage and packaging, creation, care and use of surrogates and handling training will be adhered to and described in the Collections Manual.

BT's current records are now primarily created and managed in digital form. BT Archives is addressing these challenges and we will prioritise working towards a digital repository with digital preservation capabilities to professional best practice and standards, for example ISO 16363:2012 – Audit and Certification of Trustworthy Digital Repositories.

Collections care is the responsibility of all staff and users.

9.2 Conservation

BT Archives undertakes a rolling conservation programme to identify material that is in need of conservation work and to prioritise requirements within the framework of resources available. External funding will be sought for high priority treatment that is beyond existing resources.

BT Archives commissions qualified and/or accredited conservators to carry out assessments and treatments, using information from sources such as the Institute of Conservation (Icon) Conservation Register.

All conservation treatments carried out are documented.

9.3 Emergency Planning

BT Archives maintains an up-to-date Disaster Plan and makes it available to all relevant BT people.

All BT Archives people are trained in disaster response.

9.4 Auditing and Benchmarking

BT Archives completes an annual self-assessment, which will inform our Collections Conservation and Care Plan.

Appendix A – External Standards and Guidelines

Collections Management

- The Collections Trust, *Benchmarks in Collections Care*

Collections Information

- International Council on Archives, *General International Standard of Archival Description, ISAD(G)*, second edition, 1999
- National Council on Archives, *Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names (NCA rules)*, 1997
- International Council on Archives, *International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families, ISAAR(CPF)*, second edition, 2004
- The Collections Trust, *SPECTRUM 5.0, The UK Museum Collections Management Standard*, 2017
- American Library Association (ALA), the Canadian Library Association (CLA), and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, second edition (AACR2), 2002 (2005 update)

Preservation

- The National Archives, *Standard for Record Repositories*, 2004
- International Organization for Standardization, ISO 14721:2012: Space data and information transfer systems -- Open archival information system (OAIS) - Reference model. ISO 16363:2012: Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories.
- BS 4971:2017: Conservation & Care of Archive & Library Collections, 2017.

Access

- National Council on Archives, Public Services Quality Group (PSQG), *Standard for Access to Archives* (2008)

BT Archives Collections Management Policy was written with reference to the British Standards Institute PAS 197:2009 *Code of practice for cultural collections management*, 2009 and The National Archives *Developing a Collections Information Policy*, 2015.

BT Archives seeks to abide by all relevant archive and records legislation, including but not limited to:

- Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967 (as superseded by the Freedom of Information Act, 2000)
- The Government Security Classification Policy, 2014
- Data Protection Act, 2018