

# Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

## HALS Archive Acquisitions Policy

*This policy sets out Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies (HALS)' principal objectives in its acquisition work. These objectives provide the basic definition of the archive which will be acquired in the future. They do not form an exhaustive list of all the records which will ever be acquired (we cannot anticipate every type of record that may be created or offered to us) but the themes provide clear direction to acquisition work and to making review decisions.*

### **1. Strategic objective**

HALS' principal objective is to collect and preserve records of historical value from key Hertfordshire organisations, bodies and people, that will together provide a rich research resource for this and future generations.

### **2. Definition of purpose**

HALS will collect the core evidential records of organisations, which demonstrate their principal actions, policies and decisions. Such records should normally comprise only about 5% of the total record output of an organisation.

In addition HALS will collect records which are of interest to the local community and for historical research, such as photographs, or records of individuals and families that have had a significant impact in the county or beyond.

### **3. Definition of records**

Records are documents of any date created or accumulated by organisations or individuals during the conduct of their affairs. They may include manuscript, printed, typescript and computer-generated text, musical and other notation, maps, plans, drawings, photographs, film or audio tapes.

### **4. General principles**

- ◆ HALS aims to collect no more than 5% of the overall record output of any organisation it represents in its archive
- ◆ HALS will collect, in preference, consolidated summary information (such as registers) rather than masses of individual files
- ◆ HALS will continue to test its success in selecting records of historical value through ongoing consultation with users and depositors
- ◆ HALS staff will continue to bear in mind the costs of accepting material into the archives (including conservation, cataloguing and storage costs) and weigh these against the value of the records and the benefits of keeping them

### **5. Collecting responsibilities**

HALS has a responsibility to collect for a number of organisations under various pieces of legislation or agreements:

- ◆ Hertfordshire County Council. The *Local Government (Records) Act 1962* confers powers to local authorities to provide archive services, and to acquire records of 'local significance' over and above their own

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administrative records, care for them and make them available to the public to study. Under the *Local Government Act 1972 (ss.224-9)* local authorities are required to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council or any of their officers'. In 1999 DETR issued guidance on the interpretation of 'proper arrangements.'

- ◆ Public bodies in Hertfordshire. HALS is appointed a 'Place of Deposit' for public records by the National Archives, acting on behalf of the Lord Chancellor, under the *Public Records Act 1958* (amended by the *Public Records Act 1967*). This covers the records of designated public bodies in Hertfordshire, which may be defined by the Lord Chancellor, and include various local court records, military records and NHS records. Please see below for further details.
- ◆ Diocese of St Albans. HALS is designated by the Bishop of St Albans as the St Albans Diocesan Record Office (in an agreement with the County Council dating from 1934) under the provisions of the *Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978*. This is in respect of diocesan records pertaining to the whole diocese, and parochial records for the Archdeaconries of Hertford and St Albans only (Bedfordshire and Luton Archives Service holds a similar designation for the parochial records of the Archdeaconry of Bedford).
- ◆ Tithe and manorial records. HALS has been recognised by the Historical Manuscripts Commission as a proper repository for tithe and manorial records under the provisions of the *Law of Property Act 1922 (s.144A(7))* and the *Tithe Act 1936 (s.36(2))*, as amended by the *Local Government (Records) Act 1962 section 7(1)*.

Under the *Local Government (Records) Acts* HALS is empowered to collect records from a range of other organisations, and in common with all other County Record Offices in the country collects documents in the following categories:

- ◆ Other local authority records, i.e. district / borough and town / parish council records
- ◆ Records of local businesses
- ◆ Records of local community organisations
- ◆ Family and estate records

### 6. Explanatory notes

6.1 Records will be accepted by transfer from Hertfordshire County Council departments and other Hertfordshire Local Authorities and by donation, deposit or purchase. Priority in acquiring records will be given to those which are at risk of loss, destruction or damage.

6.2 Records relating to places which, during the period when the records were created or accumulated, were not in the county of Hertford nor created by bodies or individuals based in Hertfordshire will only be acquired if they are part of an archive group which was formerly based in the county or has a particular connection with Hertfordshire. For example, HALS holds many records relating to Barnet, part of Hertfordshire until 1965, including the parish

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records through the Diocese of St Albans but unless new Barnet material offered to HALS forms part of this historic series it will not normally be accepted.

6.3 HALS recognises that the integrity of archival groups should be preserved as far as practicable, and will consult, where appropriate, with other record repositories in respect of archives which relate partly to other counties, in seeking to ensure that they are housed in the most appropriate repository.

6.4 Records are acquired with the intention that they shall be preserved permanently, but they may be reviewed at a later date: for example, in relation to subsequent accessions of or relating to the same body or individual. No deposited records will be destroyed or transferred to another repository without the permission of the owner or depositor.

6.5 It is a condition of acceptance that records will be available for public access (subject to their being fit for production) either immediately or from a specified date, which may be at the end of a statutory period of closure.

6.6 HALS does not actively seek to acquire for its archives copies or transcripts of documents, historical and genealogical notes and pedigrees, but may choose to hold these in its library. It may, however, accept such material as part of a larger archival group or if it complements another archive held by or likely to be acquired by HALS. Copies or transcripts may also be accepted if the original is unavailable or is believed to be at risk.

6.7 HALS does not actively seek to acquire sound recordings or films but will accept such material if it was created or collected by an archive-creating body or individual, usually, though not exclusively, as part of a larger county wide archival group. In general, films will be referred to the East Anglian Film Archive in Norwich. Sound recordings will not normally be accepted but it may be appropriate for HALS to accept transcripts of tapes stored elsewhere.

6.8 Also HALS may accept significant watercolour paintings for its collection but not paintings in oils as these require specialist storage conditions which HALS is unable to provide. Oil paintings or other such objects will be offered to an appropriate museum.

6.9 Photographs, prints or engravings will be collected by HALS in its role as the only county wide repository for Hertfordshire. Collections more local in nature may be considered more appropriate to be housed in a local museum.

6.10 HALS will not normally acquire records in a format which requires for their preservation, consultation or interpretation, storage conditions or specialist skills or equipment which HALS does not, or does not plan to, provide. If such records are at risk of loss or destruction, however, they may be accepted on a temporary basis until a suitable repository for them can be identified. HALS might acquire electronic records but not materials in a foreign language unless it can be provided with a suitable catalogue, index or translation.

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6.11 When assessing potential donations or deposits, HALS will, when appropriate, refer owners and custodians to other record repositories, museums and libraries with relevant collecting policies.

6.12 Records will not be accepted by HALS if they are still required by their owner or creator for administrative purposes. They should be at least 10 years old after which time, in most cases, their regular administrative use should be over. Only in exceptional circumstances would HALS accept records less than 10 years old – for example if their owner has died or the society or creating organisation has ceased to exist thus placing the records in danger of loss.

6.13 Also unless a statutory closure period exists records will not normally be accepted by HALS if they cannot fully be made available to the general public for study.

6.14 Items in very poor physical condition requiring extensive conservation work will not be accepted on deposit unless they are of exceptional interest or very early in date.