



Collections Information Policy for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections of the Chapter of York

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This Collections Information Policy (also known as a documentation policy) is for the museum and archive & manuscript collections of the Chapter of York, the governing body of York Minster (henceforth 'the Chapter'). It applies to information about all items in the care of the museum and archive services of the Chapter, including those on the cathedral Inventory, which is subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and the Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020.

Name of service: York Minster Undercroft and Treasury (Museum Accreditation No. 293); and York Minster Archives (ARCHON code: 195)

Name of governing body: The Chapter of York, Registered Charity Number 1201499, of 8-10 Minster Yard, York, YO1 7HH

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: June 2024

Policy review procedure: The Collections Information Policy for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections will be published and reviewed from time to time by the Chapter of York, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: June 2029

Dissemination: collections staff, volunteers involved in collections information activities and the Senior Executive Team.

1. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set a framework, within the limits of the institution's resources, for the development and management of relevant, useful and useable collections information, and to guide the planning of collections information activities.

Collections information is information an organization collects, creates, holds and maintains about its collections and/or collected items. It supports:

- accountability for collections and the objects within them
- effective management of collections, and their development, care and conservation
- access to collections, including for research and public engagement

The Chapter recognises that collections information is fundamental to the fulfilment of the purpose of its collections and is committed to creating, maintaining and making available good quality and up-to-date information about them.

Specific collections information objectives are set in the Collections Information Plan (documentation plan). The museum and archive service maintains procedural manuals to guide and ensure consistency in delivery of collections information-related activities.

This policy has been written in accordance with the Statement of Purpose for the Collections. Details of access to collections information are provided in the Collections Access Policy. The Collections Information Policy should also be read in conjunction with the Strategic Plan of the Chapter of York, the Forward Plan for the Collections, the Collections Development Policy for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections of the Chapter of York, the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan, York Minster Library Collections

Information Policy, the Conservation Management Plan for York Minster, the Emergency Plan and Business Continuity Plan and the Chapter's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Standard.

2. Context and Legal Framework

The Charitable Purpose of the Chapter of York

The charitable purpose of the Chapter of York is—

- (a) to advance the Christian religion in accordance with the faith and practice of the Church of England, in particular by furthering the mission of the Church of England;
- (b) to care for and conserve the fabric and structure of the Cathedral Church building;
- (c) to advance any other charitable purposes which are ancillary to the furtherance of the purpose referred to in sub-paragraph (a) or (b).

Extracted from Constitution of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.1, Article 3(1)

Statement of Purpose for the Collections

The museum, library and archive services seek to preserve, develop, interpret and make accessible to all the collections of the Chapter of York, supporting Chapter's mission and charitable purposes, and enriching people's lives through enabling participation, learning, understanding, inspiration and enjoyment.

Statutes of York Minster

The Collections are referred to in the *Statutes of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.17, Article 40 (1)-(4)*

- 40.** (1) The Chapter shall maintain a Library and Archives whose purpose shall include the promotion of sacred learning.
- (2) The Chapter shall make appropriate provision for the direction and oversight of the Library and Archives and for the care and conservation of the historic and working collections of the Cathedral.
- (3) Where it may in the opinion of the Chapter assist the Chapter in fulfilling requirements imposed upon it by the Measure or by the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 or where it may otherwise further the Chapter's charitable objects as set out in the Constitution, the Chapter may at its discretion operate an Accredited Museum, as defined by the applicable Arts Council England national quality standards, within the Cathedral or within such other precinct property of the Cathedral as the Chapter may from time to time determine.
- (4) The Chapter may enter into agreements with the University of York ... or any other institution of Higher Education concerning the management and administration of the Library and Archives and concerning the care and use of the historic collections of the Cathedral.

Legislative Framework and Codes of Practice

As a cathedral collection, the Collections are subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020. Objects (including library and archive material) deemed by the Fabric Advisory Committee to be of 'architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest' must be recorded on the cathedral's Inventory. Not every item on the Inventory is necessarily part of the Museum, Archive & Manuscript or Library Collections, and vice versa. This is discussed in greater

detail in the Collections Development Policies. However, there is much overlap, and the legal requirements of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020 must be taken into account. The Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) guidance *Cathedral Inventories, 2021*, acknowledges Museum Accreditation and Archive Service Accreditation standards and is designed to intersect with these.

York Minster Archives is a place of deposit for public records under the Public Records Act 1958. The Chapter must therefore make arrangements for the preservation of and access to public records.

Further to the above, the museum and archive service will comply with the following when compiling collections information and making it available internally and to the public:

- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (to the extent that they apply to the public records held by York Minster Archives)
- Data Protection Act 2018

Collections information activities will be informed by relevant professional, sectoral and ethical standards, including:

- BS EN 17820: 2023 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for the Management of Moveable Cultural Heritage Collections*
- Museum Accreditation
- Archive Service Accreditation
- Spectrum: The UK Museum Collections Management Standard
- *Cathedral Inventories*, Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, 2021
- ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description
- Anglo-American Cataloging Rules. American Library Association / Canadian Library Association / Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
- ISAAR (CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families
- Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names
- The Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association
- Code of Ethics, Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)
- Cataloguing Code of Ethics

3. Collections Information Activities

Collections information activities are planned by the professional staff of the Collections & Interpretation team (which includes the Head of Collections & Interpretation and a qualified and experienced Curator, Archivist and Librarian) and carried out by members of the permanent staff, trainees, or dedicated project staff or volunteers, as appropriate. Staff and volunteers are trained in relevant procedures.

The museum and archive service may seek external funding for collections information projects, where appropriate.

The museum and archive service has arrangements in place to ensure that the Chapter owns the copyright in collections information created during work for the Chapter, where appropriate.

4. Historical Background to Collections Information

The collections information currently in use has been created over the past circa 120 years (see appendices). Information/documentation backlogs are discussed in the Collections Information Plan (documentation plan). This seeks to address, where possible, any gaps in collections information, including historical gaps relating to acquisition and deposit that predate current procedures.

Historical collections information may contain language that may now be considered inappropriate, out of date, or offensive or reflect outdated ideas, practice, and analysis. The museum and archive service proactively acknowledges this in relevant contexts and provides means by which users may contact the service about information they feel is of concern, so that staff may review it, in consultation with the Cathedral Heritage Committee, a sub-committee of the Senior Executive Team of York Minster, the remit of which includes the consideration of 'contested heritage'. The results of reviews will be recorded and may lead to collections information being updated.

5. Collections Information Systems

The Chapter is committed to providing and maintaining systems that enable the recording and retrieval of collections information, including via public on-line catalogues and, where appropriate, off-line electronic and paper components of information systems, in accordance with the Collections Access Policy.

The museum and archive service will maintain an electronic collections management system (CMS) as the primary tool for creating, holding and managing collections information, supported, as necessary, by ancillary electronic and paper systems. The CMS currently in use is Calm ALM, supported by files held on onsite servers and a cloud-computing platform used across the organisation; legacy accession registers, finding aids, loans registers, conservation registers, shelf lists; and receipt files. As far as it is appropriate to do so, the museum and archive service will transfer information held in the ancillary systems to the CMS.

Digital records of the Chapter and its associated organisations who share its IT arrangements are stored on onsite servers and a cloud-computing platform, which are managed by the Chapter's Finance & IT Department; while the archive service stores born-digital archives that it receives from external sources in a directory on a server. Born-digital archives received from external sources are documented using the CMS. A strategic review of records management and associated systems infrastructure is planned by the organisation, incorporating further development of digital preservation systems and protocols. The archive service will contribute to the development of the Chapter's arrangements for the management, including documentation, of digital records and archives as required.

Working with the Finance and IT Department, the collections service will:

- review the CMS and other systems regularly to ensure that they are suitable for the management of the Chapter's collections and collections information requirements, including their future development, and that the information they contain is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the systems.
- ensure that measures are in place for the security and long-term preservation of the Chapter's collections information, whether paper or digital, including copies and back-ups and secure storage.

6. Information Requirements for Collections Management Activities

The museum and archive service carries out collections management activities in accordance with *Spectrum: The UK Museum Collections Management Standard* and *Cathedral Inventories*, CFCE, 2021.

Where *Spectrum's* information requirements are not appropriate to the archival material, alternative units of information from appropriate professional standards are substituted in the archive service's procedural manual.

Appendix A: Historical Background to Museum Collections Information

The first list of objects (many of which are now part of the cathedral Inventory and / or the museum collections) dates to c.1510 and is held in the York Minster Archives. A translation was made in the 17th century (YMA M2/2n). A further inventory, 20 Mar. 1535[/36] is held at the Borthwick Institute and printed in Yorkshire Archaeological Journal, xxxv, pp.390-393.

York Minster Archives also holds records (often incomplete) relating to inventories of objects dated 1567, 1616, 1633, 1662, 1681, 1691, c.1900, 1921-1927 and 1977-1984.

Some objects were recorded in card index format from c.1985, to support the compilation of a list of items held by the cathedral. The card index includes basic office furniture and display boards as well as collections material. In the 1990s the card index was transferred to a Microsoft Access database (the Accession Register). At this time non-collections material was largely removed and items were reassigned categories according to the previous thematic reference code system.

The card index does not include a raft of what were later termed 'treasures', now incorporated into the Heritage Collections (see Collections Development Policy 2023, pg. 14). During work towards the York Minster Revealed project and reopening of the Undercroft Museum in 2013, the category 'museum treasures' was created and items assigned a MU/TR reference number which were then added to the Microsoft Access database. For example, this category includes grave markers, roof bosses and archaeology.

From 2013 records of collections objects were transferred and added to an electronic collections management system (CMS), the Calm ALM database. This database forms the current inventory and accessions database, superseding other formats. It includes the categories of objects: furniture, heritage collections, historic textiles, monuments and statuary, silver and worked stone.

Archaeological collections, worked stone, monuments and stained glass had not usually been included in the Microsoft Access database and were added directly to Calm ALM. Stained Glass has been added using literature by Canon John Toy, Peter Gibson and Professor Sarah Brown. Archaeological artefacts are being added using the archaeological archives and finds recorded in *Excavations at York Minster. Vol 1, Part 2: The Finds* (Royal Commission on Historic Monuments of England, HMSO, 1995). Worked stone has been added using notes generated by Cathedral Archaeologist Stuart Harrison.

The electronic collections catalogue (Calm) can be searched on-line, using the public interface accessed via the Collections website.

Appendix B: Historical Background to Archive & Manuscript Collections Information

Today, York Minster Archives (henceforth YMA¹) manages collections comprising the institutional archives of York Minster, records from external sources (henceforth 'extra-institutional records'), and non-record manuscripts (henceforth 'manuscripts'), while York Minster Library (henceforth 'YML') manages the printed library collections of the Chapter of York (henceforth 'the Chapter'). However, before YMA was established, YML managed the collections that are now managed by YMA, and information about them is divided between YML and YMA's information systems. To provide context for the history of information about the collections now managed by YMA, a brief history of the management of those collections is given first.

Management of the Collections

The present incarnation of YML came into existence shortly after a bequest of manuscripts in 1414 and continued throughout the fifteenth century to receive bequests of books. Only a few survived being replaced by their printed or reformed equivalents (Barr, 494-97), but by the early seventeenth century YML had begun to acquire historical textual manuscripts,¹ by the late seventeenth century it had begun to acquire extra-institutional records,² and by the mid-eighteenth century it had begun to acquire music manuscripts (Barr 510; Griffiths, 'Music' 633, 635).

After YML moved to its current premises (1810), some textual manuscripts and extra-institutional records were placed in a case numbered 'XVI' (Barr 513). Perhaps from c. 1943, when YML acquired MSS ADD/2 (Ker and Piper 791),³ others were classified 'MSS ADD' (manuscripts additional to those in the case numbered 'XVI'). Music manuscripts were placed in cupboards numbered 'XVII' (Barr 513; *Liber continens catalog[um] folio 1r*), but by 1958 had been reclassified 'M' (Pilgrim, 100). By the mid-1960s some extra-institutional records were being treated as discrete archives or placed in artificial collections other than MSS ADD (*Accessions Register* 502; 'COLlections'; Longley, *Guide* 117-18); others, however, continued to be classified 'MSS ADD' (see, e.g., *Accessions Register* 521).

The keeping of institutional archives at York Minster has a recorded history going back to c. 1346, when an inventory of some eighty documents was entered in a chapter act book (Longley, 'I' 59). From at least 1509, the registrar to the Dean and Chapter of York (henceforth 'the Dean and Chapter') was in charge of the Dean and Chapter's archive (see, e.g., Longley, 'I' 60; Longley, 'II' 105-06),⁴ while the Vicars Choral of York Minster (henceforth 'the Vicars') administered their own archive (Longley, 'II' 108-12).

The Vicars' archive appears to have begun to migrate to YML by the late nineteenth century (Longley, 'II' 111) and the Dean and Chapter's appears to have begun to come within the purview of YML in 1939, when the archbishop asked the librarian to make a survey of it in connection with a proposal for a new registry to be built to the north of YML (in 1940 he produced a nine-page typescript list showing the locations of documents, compiled as an air raid precaution; Longley, 'II' 108).

¹ If MSS XVI/N/7 (an early-fifteenth-century New Testament) was, as Ker and Piper presume, part of a benefaction of 1628 (Barr 500; Ker and Piper 751-52).

² The first appears to have been a cartulary of St. Mary's Abbey, York (MSS XVI/A/1 or COLL/1698; Longley, *Guide* 117).

³ Gilson does not refer to the York Gospels as MSS ADD/1 in his 1925 *Description of the Saxon Manuscript of the Four Gospels in the Library of York Minster*.

⁴ There is no reference to a registrar at an earlier date in Aylmer and Cant's *A History of York Minster*.

It is probable that by 1977 the staff of YML who were responsible for administering the institutional archives were responsible for administering all extra-institutional records too, including those classified 'MSS XVI' and 'MSS ADD' (see Longley, *Guide*). By the early 1990s, YMA was being described as a repository in its own right, on an equal footing with YML, and within a decade of a view being expressed that 'most archive offices today [1992] regard all historical manuscripts of a unique nature as within their province' (Dorrington, 22), YMA had become responsible for administering not only the records classified 'MSS XVI' and 'MSS ADD' but also the manuscripts classified 'MSS XVI' and 'MSS ADD.'

Collections Information

Donations of manuscripts and extra-institutional records in the period c. 1686-1924 were recorded in *Liber donorum* (Barr 504, 506; Receipt; see, e.g., Ker and Piper 697, 701, 705, 717, 718, 730, 793, 794, 795, 798). From 1958, acquisitions of manuscripts and extra-institutional records were inconsistently recorded in YML's accession registers. From 1966 acquisitions of extra-institutional records, and from c. 1995 acquisitions of manuscripts, were recorded in a separate accession register, entitled *York Minster Library, Archives, Accessions Register* (cited in this appendix as *Accessions Register*).

A catalogue was drawn up in c. 1671 of the forty-three manuscripts then in YML (Barr 505); sixty-five appear in [Bernard's] 1697 *Catalogi librorum manuscriptorum Angliae et Hiberniae in unum collecti cum indice alphabetico* (3-4; t. 2, pt. 1); and the new catalogues of the Fothergill Collection and main library transcribed between 1773 and 1775 include sections for the manuscripts (Barr 510-11), which now numbered over one hundred.⁵ In 1925, M. R. James began a new catalogue of (presumably textual) manuscripts, which was not completed (Barr 530).⁶ The dates that the final versions of comprehensive manual catalogues of the MSS XVI and MSS ADD were initiated are not stated, but presumably these were between 1925 and 1992, when Ker and Piper published a catalogue of the medieval manuscripts (691-826). The music manuscripts were catalogued in c. 1782, 1850, and 1981 (Griffiths, 'Music' 633, 635; Griffiths, *Catalogue*). A catalogue of YML's most substantial holding of extra-institutional records, those forming part of the Hailstone Collection, was compiled in c. 1900 (Barr 522; Longley, 'II' 111-12).

At least one loan of a manuscript is recorded in YML's borrowers' registers, maintained from 1716 (Barr 509), but any such borrowing had probably ceased by 1842, when regulations were drafted that limited loans to duplicates (see Barr 517).

YML inherited a list of the Dean and Chapter's archive compiled in c. 1900 (Longley, 'II' 107; Barr 523 ['completed in 1905']) and, it appears, an accession register of sorts, begun in 1903, which had been used to record additions to the archives of the Dean and Chapter and Vicars (*Accessions Register* 531).

Files of receipts have been maintained for transfers from the Chapter's departments and for the acquisition of extra-institutional records since 1967 and 1971, respectively.

Canon Frederick Harrison, Librarian 1925-56, compiled a list of the Vicars' archive, which was superseded by another compiled between c.1977 and c.1982 ('Vicars Choral Archives'). In 1973, the list of the Dean and Chapter's archive was superseded (Longley, 'II' 107) and in 1977 an index was

⁵ The Fothergill Collection, donated in the 1730s, had come with the collector's own classified and author catalogue (Barr 510).

⁶ Whereabouts unknown.

added. Also in 1977, a guide was completed that covers the institutional archives and the extra-institutional records, including those classified 'MSS XVI' and 'MSS ADD.' In the 1990s, a comprehensive subject catalogue of all records and manuscripts was compiled.

More-detailed lists, calendars and indexes of selected institutional and extra-institutional records have been compiled since the 1940s (on early calendars, see Longley, 'II' 108, 112).

A loans register entitled *York Minster Library, Archives, Loans Register, 1987-* included records in any part of the collections in its scope from the outset.

By the early 1990s, *Manual of Archival Description* (the British national standard for archival description, first published in 1986) and in-house indexing rules were in use ('Listing Rules'; 'Filing Rules'). More recently, YMA has used the Canadian national standard *Rules for Archival Description* as the content standard for the description of records, it being the counterpart to *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, which YMA uses as the basic content standard for the description of manuscripts.

Until the 1990s, collections information was handwritten, typed, or, from the late twentieth century, word-processed, held in electronic form, and printed. During the 1990s, several finding aids were created in Microsoft Access database applications.⁷

The Calm ALM collections management and Calm Records Management systems were brought into use at YMA in c.2002 and 2010 respectively. In 2003-04, Longley's *Guide to the Archive and Manuscript Collections in York Minster Library* and entries from calendars of lease registers in the Chapter's archive were contributed to the A2A shared catalogue network (now incorporated to The National Archives' *Discovery* catalogue).

A long-term programme to transfer and standardise collections information held in legacy systems to the Calm systems is in progress. The programme has taken a phased approach. The first and current phase involves the transfer of information *verbatim*. A further phase will ensure that legacy information meets the relevant standards. However, projects that combine both phases may be undertaken within the programme.

The electronic collections catalogue (Calm) can be searched on-line, using the public interface accessed via the Collections website.

Works Cited

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⁷ The database application that would accommodate this *Provisional Index of Manuscripts and Archives* was established 1993-94 ('Instructions'; 'Architectural Plans Project').

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Liber continens catalog[um] libror[um] musicor[um] in bibliotheca cath[edralis] Ebor[acensis] anno MDCCCXXXVII. 1850, York Minster Archives, 'N7.'

Note the discrepancy between the date on the cover (1837) and the date in the text (1850).

See also MSS ADD/684: 'Catalogue of the Anthems and Services contained in the Library and Choir Books of the Cathedral Church of York . . . written in the year of Our Lord 1850.'

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