



**MANCHESTER**  
**HISTORIES**

**Toolkit 4**  
Creating your own archive

**HIDDEN  
HISTORIES**

**HIDDEN  
HISTORIANS**

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# Welcome!

This toolkit is number 4 in a series produced by Manchester Histories as part of our Heritage Lottery funded Hidden Histories Hidden Historians project. The other toolkits are:

1. **Doing your historical research project**
2. **Doing your oral history project**
3. **Evaluating your project**

**You can download all the toolkits at [www.manchesterhistories.co.uk](http://www.manchesterhistories.co.uk).**

These toolkits have been written by history and heritage professionals as beginners' guides, to give you the skills and confidence to carry out your historical projects from start to finish. You do not need any special knowledge or experience – just a general interest in history and the desire to research an area of history and heritage that is of interest to you.

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## What is this toolkit about?

This toolkit is a step-by-step guide to the process of creating an archive from scratch. It starts with a basic explanation of what an archive is. Then it outlines the steps you will need to go through to create your archive. By the end of the toolkit, you should feel confident to get started with your archive project.

The toolkit describes the practical actions you should take, provides checklists, top tips from the professionals, includes case studies as well as links to other resources should you need any further information.

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## Who is the author of this toolkit?

Heather Roberts is a professionally qualified archivist. Heather operates HerArchivist Consultancy within Greater Manchester ([www.herarchivist.wordpress.com](http://www.herarchivist.wordpress.com)).

## Introduction: What is an archive?

An archive is a collection of records (that are either physical or digital) that are the evidence of something or somebody in the past, which you keep so that others can remember it in the future.

Almost anything can have its own archive. The most common are archives of a person, a family, a physical place, a length of time, a building or structure, an organisation, an event or a culture. Archives can contain records that are hundreds of years old or only one month old.

The archive does not have to be only full of original records. Some records may exist only as photocopies or digital scans. It is best to have the original but if that is not available, as long as you have the information the record contains, then a photocopy or scan is fine.

### Archives are evidence, history is a story

History is what happened in the past, but what we remember of it is the story we tell. An archive is what helps us piece this story together.

For example, there may be a particular person, whole community or social movement whose stories you want to preserve so that people in the future can learn about them. You may want to create an archive of an organisation that you are involved in, such as a charity or community group you work with. Perhaps there is a building or area whose history you wish to preserve. All of this can be done by creating a dedicated archive.

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## CASE STUDY

An archive of a person such as Ann Adeyemi (a teacher from Greater Manchester) contains her work records, oral histories, some newspaper clippings about her and her work, childhood school records, personal photographs and letters.

An archive of a community organisation such as the Manchester Refugee Support Network may contain meeting minutes, annual reports, project reports, campaigns papers, fundraising papers and correspondence.

Visit the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre website for more information on these two collections: [www.racearchive.org.uk](http://www.racearchive.org.uk)



## Archivist's top tip

Have a look at Greater Manchester Lives catalogue: <http://gmlives.org.uk>. Examine the different kinds of archives and what they contain. This will help you get a better understanding of what archives are and what you can find in them.

## Physical and digital formats

Archives do not have to be physical e.g letters, photos or objects. Archives can be digital, such as a website, a digital photograph or a DVD video.

It is not the format of an archive record that is important, but the information it contains. It is this information which is the evidence of the past and which helps tell the story of history.

For instance, your photographs form part of the archive of your life. You add to this each time you take a photograph on your smartphone or digital camera. The fact that they are not physical paper photographs does not mean that they are not relevant to your archive.



## CASE STUDY

The Manchester Digital Music Archive uses digital images to tell the story of Manchester's varied music scenes through the decades. Users upload their own digital images of music memorabilia such as photographs, adverts and articles, posters and leaflets, tickets, audio-visual clips etc., to add to the archive and therefore add to the story. Some are digitised images of records that exist in paper formats and some are records that are created digitally. [www.mdmaarchive.co.uk](http://www.mdmaarchive.co.uk)



# Getting started: Designing your archive project

Creating an archive from start to finish requires planning. The following is a basic overview of the steps you will need to do at each stage of your project. We'll then go through them all in more detail over the course of this toolkit.

## Step one: Planning your project

Decide what the focus of your archive is going to be. Organise your resources (people, stationery, storage space).

## Step two: Find out what you have

Find what records you have to put in your archive. See if there are records anywhere else and find them! Create categories for your archive.

## Step three: List what you have

Create a list of your archive records. Decide how to store your records. What to do if there are gaps. Think about issues of security, ethics, data protection and copyright.

## Step four: Care for what you have

Identify any threats to your archive. Make sure records are stored securely, and back up any digital records.

## Step five: Share what you have

Decide what to do with your archive once you have created it.



## Step one: Planning your project

Creating an archive can be time consuming work. Plan some archive project basics before moving on to creating the archive.

### **Have a clear focus for your project.**

Be specific. If you want to create an archive of a building, be careful you do not stray into creating an archive of a whole area. Limit yourself and focus your energy and resources.

### **Plot what you already know about your archive's subject.**

Try putting a timeline together of whatever it is you are creating an archive for. Include key dates, people and places.

### **Form a trusted, reliable core group of people to carry out the work.**

If you want to work as part of a group having a reliable team with clear roles and goals will enable your archiving project to run as smoothly as possible.

Make sure you have space to keep what you find. You will need space to store your archive when you find it. Clear a physical space for physical archives and invest in an external hard drive for digital archives.

## Contacting a professional archivist

You may need to contact a professional archivist at various stages in your project. This may be to get advice on what records to keep, for assistance in listing the records you find or for advice and assistance on caring for and sharing your archive. No matter what condition your records are in, no matter how complex or confusing, the archivists you contact will undoubtedly have seen worse so do not hesitate to ask for help.

To get in touch with your local archivist, search for your area on The National Archives' Discovery search engine (see the Further Resources section). Here you can find a list of all registered archives in the United Kingdom and how to contact them. There are local authority and council archivists as well as specialist archivists working in arts archives, race relations archives, scientific archives, community archives, sports archives and many more.

If you are looking for a freelance archivist to dedicate time to work with you on your project, ask your local archivists for recommendations.



## Step one checklist

Before moving on to Step two, check you have done the following activities:

- Decided on what your archive will focus on.
- Created a basic timeline of the period your archive will cover.
- Put together your project team and gathered your resources.
- Know how to contact a professional archivist if you decide you need their help.

## Step two: Find out what you have

In this section you will learn about the three categories of records, where to find them, and what to do with them.

### Searching for records

Sometimes there are obvious places to look for records such as filing cabinets in offices, box files, storage rooms, hard drives etc.

However, sometimes archive records are not always close to hand. For example, an organisation may have relocated, merged with other organisations or be operated by different people now compared to when it started.



## CASE STUDY

Sometimes historical items end up in the most unlikely of places. For instance, did you know that the beautiful 16th century carved wedding bed of Sir Radclyffe and Lady Asshawe, currently on display in Orsdall Hall, was found in a barn in Derbyshire in 2014?

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## Expanding your search for records

Contact people and organisations that have previously worked with or knew the organisation, building, movement, person or event that you are archiving. Ask if they have kept any relevant records.

Do not rely on just one method of reaching out to people when looking for records. Social media is great but not everyone uses it. Newspaper adverts are good but not everyone reads the newspapers. Telephoning and emailing is useful as it lets you have a conversation about the project but not everyone has the time to talk. Use all methods at your disposal.

Do not ask for records to be anonymously delivered to you. People may have records that they wish to give you, or to copy or scan and share with you. If so, you need to know who they are, their contact details, why they have the records, when they gave you the records and any conditions attached to them (for instance, they may not want external visitors and researchers to access them without being asked permission first). This is a matter of archive ethics. You must preserve the integrity of the archive, the information it contains and the context of the records. This information will be crucial to maintaining these ethics. You must also respect the wishes of those people who own the records. We'll come back to these issues in Step 2.

Examples of general records to look out for include:

For an Organisation	For a Person	For a Building
Letters and emails	Photographs	Deeds
Annual and project reports	School records	Visitor books
Leaflets and posters	Letters	Building plans
Newspaper clippings	Personal diaries	Photographs
Newsletters	Work and hobby records	Records of the owners
Meeting minutes	Home videos	Records of the building's uses



## Planning your search

There are many more kinds of records that can be in an archive. Therefore, it is useful to have a rough idea of what you are looking for before you start. Take some time to figure out what kinds of records you expect to find. Map out the activities of your archive's subject and think about what records it or they would have created whilst performing those activities. This will make it easier for you to spot potentially important records as you search.

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## CASE STUDY

The archive of Delia Derbyshire (composer of early electronic music) contains her school records, exercise books, cards, notebooks, photographs, drawings, news cuttings, music sketches, compositions, personal notes, cassette tapes and audio reels of music, concert programmes and objects from her personal life.

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### Archivist's top tip

Make a locations chart of all the places you think there could be records and tick off each one as they are investigated. Create a similar chart for the subject's activities. This is a useful way to track your progress.



## The three kinds of records and what to do with them

During your search, you may find three different categories of records. It is important to know what to do with them.

### Category 1: Archive records

These are the records that make up your archive. You will learn what to do with these through this toolkit.

### Category 2: Live records

These are records that are important to keep as they are very useful to you now but are not (yet) archive records. We can call these “live records”. These are records that you are still using today to manage an organisation, your life, certain activities etc., such as bills, passports, reports and other useful records that you still need to keep with you.

You may need to keep some records for a set period of time, particularly if you are creating records of a registered organisation such as a charity. Financial records, legal and personnel records and more are covered by very specific legislation as to when you no longer have to keep them. Charities can have different legislation than companies and schools etc. Contact your sector leader for information on the most up to date legislation.

You should store live records separately and keep them for as long as they are needed. Once a live record is not needed it either becomes an archive record because it helps to tell the story or it becomes a dead record.

### Category 3: Dead records

Dead records are not important and are not archive records. Examples of dead records include receipts from years ago which you no longer need, drafts of letters and leaflets that do not tell you anything different from the final version, duplicates of any document and records of other organisations. We can call these “dead records”.

For duplicate records, it is best to archive whichever one is in the best condition (a better print quality, higher digital resolution, and not scratched, bent, torn or dirtied) and consider the rest dead records. It can sometimes be nice to have more than one copy of a photograph or a document. Remember, however, that you must then look after it which requires resources you may not be able to spare such as space (physical or digital), time and boxes.

It can also be tempting to keep documents from other organisations that you have worked with in the past or that you were interested in. Remember to focus on your own archive project’s remit and do not stray from your core objective. These other organisations should have their own records which they keep themselves.



A dead record can happily be destroyed or deleted. It also makes it a lot easier to manage and use “the good stuff”.

If you are unsure then get a second or third opinion, and if there is still no consensus - keep it. You may even wish to call in a professional archivist for their opinion.

Remember it is the content of the record that matters not the format. The idea of live and dead records applies even if the records are digital. You should therefore delete digital records you have decided are “dead” just like you would destroy physical dead records.

A record will go through the following stages:

1. Record is created.
2. Record is used for the reason it is created (live record).
3. If record is no longer needed, but it has archival value (archive record), it can be archived.
4. If record is no longer needed, and does not have archival value (dead record), it can be destroyed.

There may be many records to go through, both physical and digital. If this is the case, you may want to consider recruiting a professional archivist to help with this work.

## Step two checklist

Before moving on to Step three, check you have done the following activities:

- Created a plan of what records you expect to find based on the activities of the archive's subject.
- Listed where you expect to find the records.
- Contacted any individuals and organisations for any relevant records they may have.
- If someone gives you their records, kept their information.
- Identified and separated archive, live and dead records.
- Stored live and archive records separately.
- Destroyed dead records.





## CASE STUDY

Kiran is creating the archive of a health and wellbeing charity for homeless youth. A mentoring project ran from 2013-2014, and he has come across the following records relating to it.

### Archive records:

The project delivered monthly reports to the charity's Management Committee. Kiran finds a report from April 2013 and goes through the following process:

**Stage 1:** Monthly project report created (April 2013).

**Stage 2:** Report is seen by the committee (May 2013).

**Stage 3:** Project is finished and the report is no longer needed, but it is evidence of important work done.

**Stage 4:** Report is archived.

### Dead records:

To help recruit for and advertise the mentoring project, 100 posters were created. Kiran finds some that were never distributed and goes through the following process:

**Stage 1:** 100 posters created for the project (August 2012).

**Stage 2:** 90 posters distributed to advertise the project (August 2012).

**Stage 3:** Project is finished. 10 posters were not distributed (April 2014).

**Stage 4:** 1 poster is archived (the one in the best condition). 9 posters are destroyed.

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## Step three: List what you have

One of the most satisfying things about having an archive sorted is having the control over what you have. The easiest way to do that is to list what you have. This section gives you instructions for an effective way to do that. It also covers the important topics of archive security, ethics, data protection and copyright.

### The list

Once you have located the records that you want to archive, you need to list what you have. There is no ideal level of detail so do not worry about a comprehensive itinerary of everything. The point of a list is simply that you can see what you have and where you have it.



### Archivist's top tip

You do not have to have all your files alphabetised or all your photographs in chronological order before you begin to list it.

### The headings

Once you have located the records that you want to archive, you need to list what you have. There is no ideal level of detail so do not worry about a comprehensive itinerary of everything. The point of a list is simply that you can see what you have and where you have it.

For each record or group of records, you should record the following information:

**Location:** This can be the room where the records are kept or the name of whoever has the material. It also includes the shelf or cabinet number, box number or digital file path.

**Title:** This is title of the records such as “Annual reports”, “Steering committee minutes”, “Video of protest campaign event”, “Travel journal”.



**Dates:** List the dates that the records were created. This could simply be 1998, or 2 Feb 1998, or 1998-2009. If you are unsure of the date but know it must be around 1998 record c.1998, this means it was within a handful of years either side of 1998. If you are almost sure that it is 1998 but you have no proof of it on the record then use square brackets around the date [1998]. If you do not know the date at all which is quite common in many archives, then put “nd” for “no date”.

**Extent:** Here you should list how much of something there is, such as 1 file, 1 box, 20 items or 7 files of 30MB.

**Content:** This is where you describe the records. Include the format (is it a leaflet, a document, a .jpeg etc.) and an overview of the information it contains if necessary. It is also useful to mark down if the records are originals or photocopies. You do not always need to fill in this part of the list. For instance, the content of an annual report is self-explanatory.

**Notes:** This heading is useful if you need to make any remarks about something’s physical condition, for instance if it is torn or mouldy. (Refer to Step 3 for information on how to care for damaged records.) Use this part of your list to note down any issues with data protection or the copyright of the record. These subjects are explained later in this section.

Remember that if you are listing records that are held by someone else, you need to keep a note of who the person is, what records they have, why they have the records and their contact details. This information should be kept separately from the list and kept securely.

Similarly, if someone gives you their own records to keep in your archive, you need to keep the following information about them: who they are, their contact details, what they gave you, when they gave it to you, why they had it. This information should be kept separately from the list and kept securely.

Security, ethics, data protection and copyright are covered later in this section.

## How much detail to list

You do not have to list every single record in your archive. Going into so much detail takes up a lot of time and is usually unnecessary. However, there may be some instances where detail is useful, such as highlighting the content of letters about important events or by notable people, or details of photographs that tell a particular story. Add this information under the “Content” heading of your list.





## Archivist's top tip

Listing takes time. Depending on how many records you have and how much detail you write down, it can take many days or even weeks. You may have a group of people listing records to save time. If you do, make sure everyone is listing the records in the same way and to the same agreed level of detail. It makes for a messy list when one person is listing leaflets individually and another is listing them as a group. It is important to make sure that your list is consistent.

### Digital file names

Often digital file names can be messy, particularly photographs and drafts. It may be a good idea to rename digital files with more useful titles. There is not a perfect way to do this but if you choose to rename digital files, keep it clear, simple and consistent. It is best to use whatever you have called the record in the "Title" field of your archive list.



## CASE STUDY

Here is an example list for the archive of a community centre. Have a look at the information they have put under the headings described above. This level of detail is fine for a beginner's archive project.

Location	Title	Dates	Extent	Content	Notes
Heidi Boucher	Photographs from the opening of the community centre	2 February 1998	1 File	Photographs by Heidi Boucher of the event including the building, the speakers and the street party.	Copyright for photographs
Basement, Box 1	Annual report and financial statement	1 April 2001	1 item		
Basement, Box 1	Community workshop signing in sheets	August 1998– July 2001	4 files	Signing in sheets for various community workshops held at the centre. Includes contact information of attendees.	Data protection
Basement, Box 2	Minutes of the management committee	January 1997– December 2010	1 box	Includes progress reports and meeting papers such as correspondence and agendas.	
Hard drive 1. C:\Users\Admin\Pictures\Archive\Building restoration	Photographs and video of building restoration works	1996–1997	180MB	Jpeg photographs of the building at various stages at restoration. .mov video files of site visits during the restoration.	



## Catalogues

You may have come across archive catalogues. This is a more advanced type of archive listing technique. A catalogue is a very detailed and structured list, organised in a specific way which gives records unique codes. It also involves reorganising the physical and digital records into a specific structure.

Have a look at Greater Manchester Lives (<http://gmlives.org.uk/>) for examples of archive catalogues. If you want to try cataloguing your collection, there are guidelines on the Community Archive and Heritage Group website (see the Further Resources section).

If you are planning on depositing your archive in a professional archive space such as your local authority archive, talk with the archivist first before you start to catalogue your collection. The archive might need you to use a specific archiving template.

## Storing your archive

It is useful to repackage records as you list them.

### Physical records

For physical archives, invest in simple but strong filing boxes. Having records in strong cardboard boxes makes them easier to store, easier to transport and easier to list. Give each box a unique number so you can keep track of it easily. Archive-quality boxes can be expensive but you are welcome to invest in them.



### Archivist's top tip

Do not fill the boxes too much as they become dangerous to move and it puts too much weight on the records inside.



## Digital records

For digital archives, invest in an external hard drive to transfer all the archive records on to. The hard drive should be stored carefully and only used for archive records. If possible, invest in two external hard drives so that you have two copies of everything. Another option to consider is internet-accessed storage or Cloud storage. There are many free options such as Google Drive and Dropbox.

However you must be careful. Although you are storing your records on the Cloud, they are actually being sent to large servers which are owned by a company. These servers can be damaged by flood, fire, vandalism and poor maintenance just as easily as your own external hard drive. The companies who own these servers can disappear (however unlikely that may seem today) and your records will then be lost. If you are using online cloud storage, have a back up of your digital archive on an external hard drive for safety.

## Dealing with gaps in your archive

There may be things that you know happened in the past but you cannot find any records about them. This is quite common. There are steps you can take to address this.

## Oral histories

Oral histories are recorded conversations where someone is prompted to talk about their memories of a specific thing. Perhaps you can find someone who knows the story and have them tell it.

Have a look at the Doing Your Oral History Project toolkit for more information and guidance.

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## CASE STUDY

Many community archive projects include oral histories. The Manchester Chinese Archive (<http://manchesterchinesearchive.org.uk/>) has physical papers of different Chinese organisations in Manchester, physical papers of key community members, over fifty oral histories, digital scans of photographs, digital videos of events as well as larger cultural objects.

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## Explore other archives

The part of the story you are missing may be in another archive. Newspaper archives are great for local news. Other organisations and people involved in the history you are archiving may have their own records which can fill in some of the gaps.

Take a look at our Doing Your Historical Research Project toolkit for more information on researching in existing archives.

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## CASE STUDY

The archive of the Bridgewater Canal is held in different places. Some of it is held in the archive of the Bridgewater Estates at Salford University. Photographs of the canal are held in Archives+ at Manchester Central Library. Some records are held in Cheshire Archives and Local Studies' collections. The Ministry of Transport's archive at The National Archives have records on the canal as well.

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## Create your own retrospective or 'artificial' records

We are not suggesting you forge archive records as that would be against archive ethics. What we mean by an artificial record is something which is clearly created after the event but which nevertheless tells its story in some way, like an oral history recording. This could be a visual timeline, or perhaps a retrospective written account. If you choose this option, make sure that it is noted on your list that this is not an original archive record.





## CASE STUDY

Natasha is creating an archive for a community dance group, and wants to include a record for the show “Youth and Truth”, but no archive records of the show can be found. Natasha decides to create and add the following record to the archive:

Location	Title	Dates	Extent	Content	Notes
Hard drive 1 C:\Users\Admin\ Venue\Events\ 2007Shows\Youth AndTruth	Edyta Kowalczyk's account of “Youth and Truth” show, April-August 2007	December 2016	1 document 35KB	Written from an attendee, Edyta Kowalczyk, describing the performance, the audience and her thoughts on the show.	Retrospective account. Copyright of document.

Note that the date for the record is the date it was created, not the date of the show. This is again a matter of archive ethics. You do not want to have an inaccurate list which can deceive people.



## Security, ethics, data protection and copyright

You may have come across these terms before. Archivists are no strangers to them. These terms tell you what you are morally and legally expected to do with archive records.

### Security

Archive security is concerned with how you keep the archive records as well as who gets access to them and how. Records must be kept in a controlled space and accessed in a controlled way. This means that the physical space is locked with strict access, or a digital hard drive is password protected with strict access.

It also refers to information held about the archive, for example the records about individuals who have given you their own archives. This will contain personal information such as contact details which fall under the Data Protection Act 1998. More information on data protection is given below.

There can be some records that no one is allowed to access. These records are called “Closed”. This means that you or whoever gave the records to you, have decided not to let people access them for a set period of time because of sensitive information contained in them about individuals or organisations. This ‘closed’ period can extend over months, years or decades. So you don’t mistakenly grant access to closed records, store them separately and make it clear on the list that these records are closed. Use the notes field for this or you can add a new “Access” field to the list if you wish.

### Ethics

Keeping archives comes with some moral responsibility. If you are gathering and collecting records to tell a story, you cannot use the records and the information you create about records (such as the list) to intentionally mislead people in what the records are about.

This also means that you cannot alter any information on archive records, from spelling mistakes to false or outdated information. The only time you should change an archive record is when you must change its physical condition to preserve it. This also applied to digital and closed records.

If you are collecting archive records and certainly if you are accepting archive records from other people, then you must ensure that you are able to store them in a secure and safe environment. This means controlled access to the records as well as dry, cool conditions so not to cause damage to the records, and having back-up copies for digital records.

The International Council on Archives has a Code of Ethics for archivists and those who keep archives (see Further Resources).



## Data protection

Records that hold information about living individuals are covered under the Data Protection Act 1998. If you keep records with information about living people such as their contact information, you must keep it securely. This applies to records you are keeping about people who have given you their own archives, as well as information about people in the archive itself. This information cannot be shared with just anyone so you need to note down on your list which records contain this kind of information.

Keeping records securely means having strict access rules and processes. If someone wants to use these records there must be paperwork which they sign, stating that they will not use the information on the records unethically or illegally.

The Community Archives and Heritage Group have useful information on their website about managing archives with data protection issues. The Information Commissioner's Office has more detailed information about the relevant legislation. See Further Resources for links to both organisations.

## Copyright

You need to be aware of any copyright issues in your archive. If you, or anyone, create a record such as a document, a photograph, a piece of art, a video etc., it automatically becomes your copyright. That means that only you have the right to give permission for that record to be copied.

This applies to archives as well. In your archive, you may come across newspaper clippings, photographs, letters, video footage etc. that you didn't create but that you may want to reproduce, upload to the internet or use on leaflets. You can only do this if you have permission from the copyright holder. If you do this without permission, your copying is illegal.

Different kinds of records have different copyright laws applying to them. It can get a little complicated. Look to the Further Resources section for more guidance.



### Step three checklist

Before moving on to Step three, check you have done the following activities:

- Put physical records in boxes and give each box a unique number.
- Transfer digital records onto an external hard drive.
- List each record or group of records that you have in your archive.
- Identify any gaps in the archive and have a plan for how to fill them.
- Store and manage the archives, both physical and digital, securely and ethically.
- Understand how data protection and copyright concerns your archive records.



## Step four: Care for what you have

At this point in your project, you have found out which records exist about the part of history you are hoping to preserve for the future. You have also listed them so you know exactly what you have. You do not want all of your hard work to go to waste. There are many threats to your archive's physical safety and integrity but they are easily protected against.

### Preservation: Threats and solutions

Here are some of the main threats to your hard work and some simple techniques to help prevent them.

#### Water

Water damage can be extensive and severely threatening. Storing your archive near places which are susceptible to flooding or leaking should be avoided. Store your archive off the floor. Invest in some shelves to store your archive on. You should especially avoid storing your archive near water pipes, kitchens, toilets, windows and outside doors as these are all high risk areas.

#### Fire

Fire damage is dangerous not just for the records but for you. Do not store your archive near fire risk areas such as concentrations of wires or near kitchens and never work with the archive when smoking.

#### Mould

Mould can be serious for an archive and your lungs. It is easily detectable due to the smell and the white and green-black spots that develop on records. It grows best in humid conditions so keep your archive material away from outside walls, and never in damp or humid rooms. Regularly check your archive records and the archive space for signs of mould.

If you notice mould growing on your papers, take those papers away from everything else and store them separately in another room. Do not try and remove mould yourself as this may only spread it. Contact a professional conservator for advice. If your storage area is particularly damp, you should invest in a dehumidifier for that space.



## Handling

Tearing, dropping, spilling cups of coffee and any food stains all increase the rate at which your archive will degrade. Handle records with care and do not put any stress on them when storing them. Do not eat or drink near your archive, as this will increase the likelihood of an insect infestation.

## Insects

Insects can destroy an archive without you knowing it. Many insects will happily eat your archive papers. Insects are attracted by food so do not eat or drink when working with the archive and make sure your hands are clean. Many also prefer a dusty environment. If you do suspect them, then put insect traps down. Do not use insect sprays as these chemicals can harm your records. Keep your archive space clean and dust free.

## Theft

Archives are at risk from being stolen. To avoid this, keep them in a locked space with strict access to the key and have any external hard drives locked in drawers and also password protected. Do not let people outside your project group use the archives unsupervised and never let anyone take anything away with them.

Have a look at the Further Resources section of this toolkit for more information on all of the above preservation and conservation topics.

## Essential protection for physical records: Boxes

The simplest way to protect your archive is to keep your records in boxes. They provide an initial barrier between the records and water, fire and mould. They make handling a lot easier as you can relocate materials without having to touch them. Any strong standard office boxes will work.

If you want to invest in your collection, have a look at archive-quality packaging. This packaging is designed to protect your records for long term preservation. However, they are expensive and will not make much of a difference if your space is humid, damp and mouldy. Keep your archive areas clean and dust free. If you choose to buy archive-quality packaging, it is best to ask an archivist to consult with you and help you decide what you will need as there are specific products for specific records.



## Essential protection for digital records: Back-ups

Remember that archives can be digital as well as physical. If they are digital it is best to make sure that you are backing up your records regularly. Accidents happen so easily and once gone, digital records are extremely difficult and expensive to recover. When sorting out your archive, the best thing to do is to store copies of your digital archives on two separate hard drives. That way, if one hard drive breaks or gets lost, you have everything already backed up on the other.

Similarly, you can back-up your digital records on hard drives as well as internet-based cloud storage. If something dreadful happens to one type of storage, at least you still have the other.

Ideally, the two hard drives should be made by different companies just in case one hard drive has faulty or insufficient hardware. Another thing to remember is to make sure that the hard drives have enough storage on them.

Digital records also have a shorter life than paper records. Digital hardware and software usually lasts about 5-10 years. Make sure that you are swapping the hardware and possibly updating the software every few years so that the digital records are still accessible.

## Professional conservation

You may need a professional conservator to look at your records if they are damaged and to give advice on how to preserve them. Conservators also carry out restorative work on records and may be able to repair damage. Ask at your local archive for recommendations on who to contact locally or browse some options on the Institute of Conservation's register of professionals (see Further Resources).

### Step four checklist

Before moving on to Step five, check you have done the following activities:

- Stored your archive away from sources of water and damp.
- Took precautions to reduce fire risk around your archive.
- Stored your archive in a dry cool area, free from mould.
- Made it clear to anyone working with the archives not to eat or drink when using them.
- Checked the archive for insects and kept the storage area dust free.
- Removed any mouldy or insect-infested records away from the archive.
- Contacted an archivist or conservator for help with heavily damaged records.
- Kept the archive and any hard drives securely to avoid theft.



## Step five: Share what you have

Now that you have created and preserved your archive, you may wish to share what you have uncovered with others. You can do this yourself or you can deposit your archive with a professional archive space.

### Depositing with a professional archive space: A repository

A repository is the name of a physical space which professionally stores archives. Local councils, museums and universities often have them. Within a repository, professional archivists store, monitor, preserve and provide safe access to the archives they hold.

There are many advantages to depositing your archive in a repository. They deal with preservation issues outlined above, they handle all the enquiries about the archive, they can display them securely for people to see in exhibitions and they can keep the archive safe for many decades, centuries and ideally forever.

### Finding the best repository for your archive: Collections remit

Repositories have what is called a “collections remit”. This means that each repository is only allowed to accept material about certain things. The National Co-operative Archive, for instance, collects only records about the national co-operative movement. The Oldham Archives and Local Studies service collects only archives about Oldham, its organisations, its local government, parish, and its people. The Royal Northern College of Music collects only archives about the Royal Northern College of Music and its heritage.

Ask your local archivist about your options. Archivists will want to know what the archive is about, how much of it there is, what types of records are in the archive, how complete it is, how it is stored and what condition it is in.

### Keeping the archive

Perhaps you have plans to use the archive for your own research, or you wish to use it for outreach events and have specific ideas for how to tell its story. Perhaps you wish to keep the archive so that it stays with its environmental history, such as in the organisation of which it is about. If you do remember that you must keep the archive in a secure, dry and cool space.

For example, both the Museum of Transport for Greater Manchester keeps an archive of Greater Manchester’s public transport on site in dedicated controlled rooms (<http://www.gmts.co.uk/>) and Victoria Baths in Manchester keeps the archive of the baths on site in a dedicated controlled space (<http://www.victoriabaths.org.uk/>).



## Sharing your list

To advertise your archive and what it contains, you can share the list you have made. This is the easiest way to share the information about your archive. If you have a dedicated website, you can either invite people to request the list from you or you can upload it onto the website for people to download themselves. If you choose the download option, it is best to have the list in a format which is not easily changed and is compatible with different types of computer software. A .pdf is usually the best format to use.

One of the best sites for sharing your work is the Community Archives and Heritage Group. The Group was set up by community and voluntary groups who ran their own archiving projects. Now, it is a vast network of community archive projects dedicated to supporting and promoting the work of its members. Membership is free and its resources are fantastic. See the Further Resources section of this toolkit for its website information.

## Research visits to the archive

If you have ever been into a professional repository to view an archive you may have found it a little intimidating. It is a silent atmosphere with forms to sign, many rules and sometimes you are required to present identification. Whilst these processes have their place in a larger professional repository, you do not have to run your archive like that.

However, if you would like to welcome people to your archive, there are some resources that you will need and rules to follow.

## Space

Looking at archives takes up room. Have a clean and clear table ready for people to sit at and use.

## Supervision

Some people will happily sit for hours looking at your archives. Never leave a researcher alone with the archive records. This is a matter of archive ethics (they may mark, damage or steal records). Make sure that someone is with them whenever they are using the records. For digital records, give them access to a copy of the record so that they cannot change the digital archive copy.



## Time

Make it clear that you will need some forewarning before people can come to visit (e.g. a fortnight or even a month). Make sure that they tell you in advance exactly what they want to see. This is so you can get the records ready for them and inform them of any access issues such as confidential records or those covered by the Data Protection Act 1998. You may want to advertise strict opening hours during which time people can make an appointment to use it. This may be certain hours during the day or only certain days during the month, for example every third Thursday of the month from 10:00-14:00.

## Understanding of data protection and copyright

Visitors can only access records which are covered by data protection or copyright if they sign specific paperwork. Look to the Community Archives and Heritage Group website's resources for more guidance on this. It is your responsibility to make sure this paperwork is signed and then you must keep it safe.

## Rules

You do need some and you must ensure that they are followed, hence the need for supervision. The basics are to do with preservation. Visitors must not have any food or drink, not even water, in the room with the archives. If taking notes, visitors must only use pencil or a computer. Ink can spill and stain archive records which you have taken care to preserve. If you are allowing visitors to take photographs, they must not use their camera's flash as bright lights can permanently damage records. Have visitors sign some paperwork agreeing to all of this. Consult your local archivist for further advice.

## How to share stories

Remember that history is only a story, a narrative, and archives contain that story. As well as letting people see your archive, you can invite people to learn about the story in other ways.



## Physical exhibitions

One of the best ways to do that is through exhibitions. Have a think about what part of the story you want to tell. Is it all of it? Is there just a part of it that you really want to share?

Physical exhibitions are great for engaging people in a particular space so choose your space wisely. There are community gallery spaces and opportunities within Manchester or you may have access to a public space such as a community centre or hall.

Remember, your main focus should be on the story you are telling. Any labels should be clear and concise.

Advertise what you are doing. Just because you put on an exhibition, does not mean that anyone will visit it. Spread the word and share your passion.

Displaying original archive records can be difficult, especially if you are not completely confident in the security of your exhibition space or if some records are fragile. Using copies of archive records is a good method of display if these are your concerns.

## Digital exhibitions

If you are using copies of archives, why not also upload them online. If you have access to a website then you can use that site. There are also many free options you can use to create a dedicated website to telling the story, such as Wordpress and Blogger, as well as social media sites such as the very popular Instagram, Flickr and History Pin ([www.historypin.org/en/](http://www.historypin.org/en/)).

Images are a great way to tell a story online, but remember you must have permission to use any records covered by copyright and never use those covered by data protection.

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## CASE STUDY

An alternative way of using social media was employed by the National Co-operative Archive when they catalogued the letters of Robert Owen, a famous figure in the early co-operative movement. An account for Owen was created on the social media site Twitter and was operated as if Owen himself was posting on it, using the content of the letters to formulate the content of the posts. This is a great example of using archives to first and foremost tell a story. <https://twitter.com/RobertOwenCoop>



## Step five checklist

Perhaps you are going to put on an exhibition, or apply for funding to do a dedicated outreach initiative or try an oral history project. There are many options open to you. Before you do, make sure that you have completed the following activities.

- Decide if you will deposit your archive in a repository.
- Upload your archive list online, or give a description of your archive and information on who to contact for access.
- Have forms for visitors to sign agreeing to rules of use when consulting the archive.
- Have a careful plan for any engagement and outreach.



## Further resources

### General information

Manchester Histories is a charity whose main purpose is to transform people's lives from across Greater Manchester through histories and heritage. We work in partnership with a range of organisations, community and voluntary groups to encourage people to recognise, celebrate and value their own histories.

Our Hidden Histories Hidden Historians project aims to uncover histories of people, families, communities and places that are less well known and well recorded, by encouraging everyone to get involved in exploring their histories and sharing their stories about the past.

Manchester Histories has four free toolkits on other topics you can use to make the most of your project, these are:

- **Doing your historical research project**
- **Doing your oral history project**
- **Evaluating your project**
- **Creating your own archive**

You can find all our toolkits at [www.manchesterhistories.co.uk](http://www.manchesterhistories.co.uk)

### Community Archives and Heritage Group

The site boasts some fantastic free resources to help you make the most out of your project, including advice on digital archives.

[www.communityarchives.org.uk/](http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/)

### Finding Greater Manchester archive repositories and their archivists

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>

### Archives+ at Manchester Central Library, St. Peter's Square, Manchester City Centre

Contact the partners and archivists here for advice about local projects, resources and support.

[www.archivesplus.org/](http://www.archivesplus.org/)

[www.archivesplus.org/more/archives-blog/](http://www.archivesplus.org/more/archives-blog/)



### **The National Archives for the United Kingdom, Kew Gardens, Surrey**

The National Archives is the sector leader for archive development in the UK. It has a lot of advice and resources. “Discovery” is its search engine. From there you can search the contents of most of the public archive repositories in the UK.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)

<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/archive-principles-and-practice-an-introduction-to-archives-for-non-archivists.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/archive-principles-and-practice-an-introduction-to-archives-for-non-archivists.pdf)

## **Preservation and storage**

### **British Library basic preservation advice for keeping archives**

[www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/basic\\_preservation.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/basic_preservation.pdf)

### **The National Archives of Scotland basic preservation advice for keeping archives**

[www.nas.gov.uk/downloads/preservationguidelines.pdf](http://www.nas.gov.uk/downloads/preservationguidelines.pdf)

### **The Institute of Conservation has comprehensive advice on caring for your archive and a list of conservators**

[www.conservationregister.com](http://www.conservationregister.com)

### **Archive-quality preservation supplies.**

Most archives find supplies from Preservation Equipment Limited and Conservation By Design. However, there are many options to choose from.

[www.museumsassociation.org/find-a-supplier?CATEGORY=THES1048947](http://www.museumsassociation.org/find-a-supplier?CATEGORY=THES1048947)

### **Digital Preservation Coalition’s guide to looking after your digital archives**

[www.dpconline.org/docman/technology-watch-reports/1460-twr15-01/file](http://www.dpconline.org/docman/technology-watch-reports/1460-twr15-01/file)



## Networks and outreach

### Explore your Archive

“Explore Your Archive” annual outreach campaign

<http://exploreyourarchive.org/>

### Archives NRA Mailing List

The archivists’ free mailing list for advice and networking

[www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?AO=ARCHIVES-NRA](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?AO=ARCHIVES-NRA)

### Annual celebrations of history and heritage

As well as the Manchester Histories Festival, there are annual heritage celebrations such as LGBT+ History Month (February), Wonder Women (March), Black History Month (October). These can also be very useful for promoting your hard work if your archive references any of those histories. Social media is a great tool for finding out about any anniversaries and observances which you can contribute to and raise awareness of your archive in the process.

### TownsWeb Archiving blog

Great advice if you are planning to digitise any of your archives. It also contains advice for engagement, sharing your archives and funding.

[www.townswwebarchiving.com/blog/](http://www.townswwebarchiving.com/blog/)

## Ethics and legislation

Copyright basics

[www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/](http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/)

Data protection basics

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/>

International Council on Archives’ Code of Ethics for archivists other keepers of archives

[www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ICA\\_1996-09-06\\_code%20of%20ethics\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ICA_1996-09-06_code%20of%20ethics_EN.pdf)



