

# SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

## COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW

### 1. Introduction and Background

Surrey History Centre cares for and makes publicly accessible the historic archive and local studies collections relating to the County of Surrey. The Centre was established in 1998 by Surrey County Council to hold and develop the collections formerly housed in Surrey Record Office, Kingston, Guildford Muniment Room and Surrey Local Studies Library. In 2006 it became part of Surrey Heritage.

The Centre is recognised as a place of deposit for public records relating to the County of Surrey and is appointed the diocesan record office for the diocese of Guildford and much of the diocese of Southwark.

Millions of documents dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are stored in our strongrooms. They are appraised, sorted, catalogued and indexed to facilitate access, given conservation treatment where necessary and stored in the optimum environment for their long term preservation.

The archival holdings are unique and irreplaceable, generally being the original and only record in existence and their value lies in their being retained in their original form as far as possible. They are primary source material and maintaining their integrity is vital to their legal evidential and historical value.

### 2. Purpose and Scope of this Document

This document outlines the Centre's integrated approach to the management of its collections and the framework of standards and code of ethics within which it operates, and sets out in broad terms how the Centre's collections are acquired, documented and preserved.

It should be read in conjunction with the more detailed policies covering particular areas of collections activity which are cited below.

### 3. Collecting

The legal and statutory framework under which Surrey History Centre collects public records under the terms of the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967, along with records of historic significance generated by Surrey County Council and other organisations and individuals within the county is set out in the Centre's **Archives and Local Studies Collecting Policy**. The policy provides further information on the geographical scope within which the service operates, the types of records it seeks to collect and criteria for selection, reinforced by the Centre's **Appraisal Policy**.

The policy and associated **Collections Development section** of our **Collections Management Plan** aim to ensure that Surrey History Centre's archive and local studies holdings represent all aspects of the county's social, political, economic, religious and cultural life. They also inform and drive our work in identifying, preserving and celebrating Surrey's dynamic and multi-faceted cultural heritage which in turn will promote community identity, cohesion and well-being.

#### 4. Collections Information

Maintaining and publishing accurate documentation of the collections of archival and local studies holdings is central to the purpose of Surrey History Centre. Good documentation of its collections, through accessioning and cataloguing, is fundamental to collection management and to the provision of public access.

Surrey History Centre is committed to ensuring that full information is collected, maintained, and where appropriate published, regarding ownership, provenance, access restrictions and contents of all the collections within its care. How Surrey History Centre implements this responsibility within the resources available to the service is set out in detail in its **Collections Information Policy** and the Centre's current priorities and areas of activity are set out in the **Collections Information section** of its **Collections Management Plan**.

#### 5. Collections Preservation

Surrey History Centre is committed to ensuring its unique and irreplaceable archival holdings are cared for and preserved in accordance with best practice as contained in the relevant national and international standards.

The principles and practices in force to ensure the collections are maintained in the best possible conditions, balancing long term care against continued public access, are set out in the Centre's **Preservation Policy**.

The Preservation Policy establishes the underpinning principles governing all actions undertaken for the preservation and conservation of the collections and provides a framework for maintaining the collections to ensure their long term permanent preservation.

The challenge of selecting and preserving born-digital records so that they remain accessible into the future is a critical issue for the service, as it is for all archive services. Our current approach is set out in our **Digital Preservation Strategy** which is under regular review.

Current priorities and areas of activity in preservation and conservation are set out in the **Collections Care section** of the **Collections Management Plan**.

Surrey History Centre has a robust **Disaster Plan**. This is divided into three main sections: **Disaster Reaction**, which documents the immediate response to an emergency situation; **Control, Salvage and Recovery** which outlines the measures to be taken to minimise damage to its holdings and restore the service; and **Prevention** which outlines the systems, equipment and procedures in place to maintain security and the safety of the Centre's staff and holdings.

#### 6. Collections Access and Engagement

Our holdings are generally available for all to use and enjoy and are at the centre of our mission to engage people of all ages and communities in Surrey's rich and diverse heritage.

Our **Access and Engagement Policy** describes how we make our holdings accessible both within the Centre and more widely, and seek to use them to enhance knowledge and understanding, community cohesion and wellbeing.

Most of our collections can be freely consulted. However some records are subject to finite accession restrictions because the information they contain remains sensitive for a time, generally because it falls within the scope of the Data Protection Act 1998 or is subject to exemptions contained in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Further information can be found in our **Access to Records Policy**.

#### 7. Date of Publication and Review

This overview was approved and published in March 2017. It will be reviewed every five years.