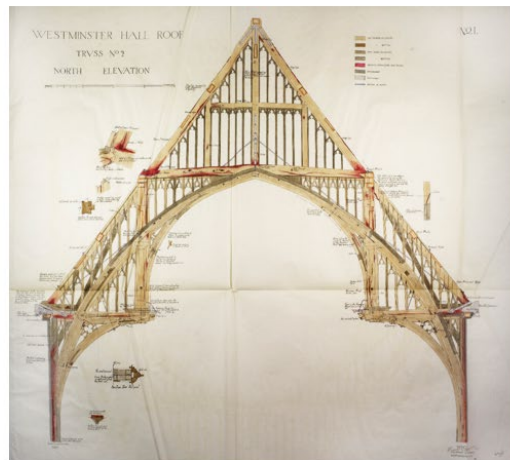
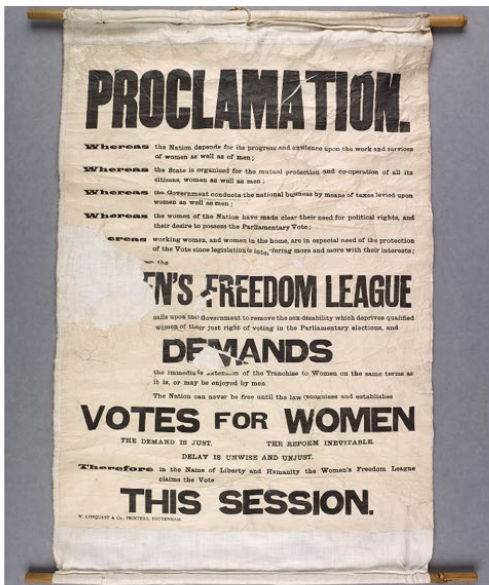


# Collections

# Development Policy

October 2020



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Policy owner: Head of Collections Development & Access

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Archives of Parliament are a rich and exciting resource for exploring local, national and international history from the fifteenth century to the present day. The collections provide an unparalleled window into Parliament itself, including its functions, administration and architecture. They are managed for Parliament by the Parliamentary Knowledge and Information team (PKI). Open records in the collections are cared for by The National Archives, which also provides public access.

1.2 The Archives of Parliament enable current and future generations to access unique documentary evidence and research its history by collecting, preserving and making accessible relevant digital and physical records of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and Joint Departments. By maintaining a record of past actions and decisions we also support the wider openness and transparency agenda, and act as Parliament's long-term memory.

1.3 This document is part of a suite of policies which direct and inform the growth of our collections, including:

- Information Management Policy
- Authorised Retention and Disposal Policy
- The policy also supports the implementation of Parliament's Information and Digital Strategy.

## 2. Purpose

2.1 Parliament creates a lot of material in the course of its business, not all of which has permanent historical value. This policy provides the framework for the collection and development of Parliament's archives. It ensures material is acquired and selected according to a recognised strategy and that these curatorial decisions are guided by recognised standards and correspond with strategic, organisational priorities and wider public expectations.

2.2 Whilst the policy provides a flexible framework, collecting priorities can vary over time in response to internal and external changes. This policy will be regularly reviewed to maintain its currency and ensure new developments are not overlooked.

2.3 It also cannot cover all eventualities. The Director of Parliamentary Knowledge and Information retains the discretion to exercise judgement on the significance to Parliament of collections offered to, or available for, acquisition by the archives which do not fall within the scope of this policy.

2.4 Parliament is committed to ensuring that its collections are representative, accessible, welcoming and meaningful to all - this policy is an essential tool for realising that commitment through developing more inclusive and diverse collections.

### 3. What we collect

- 3.1 The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen Parliament transition from a primarily paper-based environment to a digital one. This policy lays the foundations on which information and evidence worthy of permanent preservation is collected, regardless of its format.
- 3.2 The bulk of Parliament's Archives are acquired directly from the offices and departments of the House of Commons, House of Lords and Joint Departments. This includes the key records which provide evidence of the deliberations, decisions and actions of Parliament in carrying out their legislative and scrutiny functions, as well as those relating to their management and administrative functions, and to the physical environment in which Parliament works. Where these records have strayed from official custody, the Archives will look to acquire those too.
- 3.3 Whilst the majority of our collections are documentary in nature, Parliamentary Knowledge and Information will acquire visual materials, textiles, objects and other formats where these enhance or complement our documentary collections. This includes taking into our collection any 'time capsules' and associated contents uncovered on the Parliamentary Estate.
- 3.4 The Archives of Parliament will be the long-term home for the historic records relating to the Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster, originating from the Client Team
- 3.5 Parliamentary Knowledge and Information may also acquire other collections originating from outside Parliament which complement our current holdings, such as:
  - 3.5.1 Selected records of other bodies which are Parliamentary in nature, but which have not been created by Parliament.
  - 3.5.2 Records of Parliamentary officials and staff, or Members who held Parliamentary Offices such as Speakers of each House, which document their Parliamentary experience or activities.
  - 3.5.3 Records with the same provenance as existing non-Parliamentary collections i.e. strayed records which fill gaps in existing collections.
  - 3.5.4 Ephemera reflecting contemporary socio-political movements, developments and events which directly relate to Parliament or supplement existing collections in our custody.

## 4. Records we do not collect

4.1 The Archives is a repository for records of Parliamentary provenance and relevance and is not a reference collection relating to all aspects of Parliamentary and political history.

4.2 We do not collect official, organisational or administrative records originating from:

- MPs' and Peers' office and constituency activities.
- Government.
- The Scottish Parliament and devolved assemblies of Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Political parties.
- All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs).
- Political pressure groups.

4.3 Although our historic collections include personal, private papers of political figures (e.g. MPs, Peers, political journalists etc) we no longer collect these.

## 5. Related Parliamentary Collections

5.1 The Archives of Parliament contain the documentary heritage of the UK Parliament. Other Parliamentary heritage collections are:

- Parliamentary Art Collection
- Historic Furniture and Decorative Art Collection
- (detached) Architectural Fabric collection
- House of Lords Library
- House of Commons Library

5.2 Parliamentary Knowledge and Information work closely with the custodians of these collections to share expertise and knowledge, and to collaborate on joint projects affecting Parliament's historic collections. Where potential acquisitions would fit more appropriately within another Parliamentary collection, we will work with that team to agree custody.

## 6. Collecting methods and approach

6.1 The majority of acquisitions are via internal transfer from the House Administrations and Joint Departments offices and departments, in line with Parliament's retention policy, the Authorised Retention and Disposal Policy (ARDP). Instructions in the ARDP work alongside and should reflect the selection criteria set out in this document. However, it cannot cover all circumstances and Parliamentary Knowledge and Information will appraise and sample records against the criteria in this policy where deemed appropriate. We work proactively and collaboratively with staff to ensure identification of landmark moments, events or Parliament's responses to them and enable the timely transfer of material whether that be in hard copy or digital format.

6.2 We also acquire web and other published digital content through a programme of digital acquisition and web archiving activities and act as the custodian of the record copies of digital original publications on behalf of the House of Lords and House of Commons Libraries.

## 7. External acquisitions

7.1 Parliamentary Knowledge and Information will acquire items through donation, bequest or purchase. Budget is limited, so any purchase must be supported by strong provenance and custodial history, and the records must clearly meet the criteria outlined in this policy.

7.2 In making a decision about whether to acquire items externally, the following factors will be taken into account:

- Cost of acquiring the collection (where applicable).
- Staff, financial and physical resources required to catalogue, conserve, preserve and store the items.
- Physical condition and accessibility.
- Restrictions related to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 2018 which would inhibit public access.
- Rights issues that could affect the ability of the Archives to provide copies, use the material in exhibitions, publications etc.
- Whereabouts of similar or related collections.

7.3 For donations, gifts and bequests, the Donor or Executor will need to provide evidence regarding the provenance and custodial history of the records, and their right of ownership. They will also be required to transfer physical ownership and all intellectual property rights to Parliament. We reserve the right to review these against collecting criteria and dispose of records that do not meet this. Any records not retained will be offered back to the Donor or Executor.

7.4 Parliament no longer accepts archival records on long-term loan or deposit.

## 8. Appraisal and disposal

8.1 Items are accepted into the Archives of Parliament on the understanding that they are a permanent addition to the collection. For external records offered to the archives, and where internal records are not covered by the ARDP, they will be assessed against the criteria in this policy. Records which do not meet the selection criteria will not be accepted. All potential acquisitions will be dealt with on an individual basis and Parliamentary Knowledge and Information reserve the right to use discretion and go beyond the scope of criteria in exceptional circumstances.

8.2 There is a presumption against later disposal or deaccessioning of material that has been accepted into the collections. However, we hold a number of legacy collections which were not subject to current selection criteria and processes. Parliamentary Knowledge and Information reserve the right to conduct retrospective appraisal exercises on existing holdings, and where appropriate will explore disposal or deaccessioning options, consulting with third parties where appropriate. All appraisal and deaccessioning decisions will be documented and kept in perpetuity.

## 9. Selection Criteria

<b>9.1 Legislative and scrutiny functions</b>
9.1.1 The development and passage of legislation through the Houses.
9.1.2 The impact of significant procedural changes on the workings of either House.
9.1.3 The development of parliamentary procedure and precedent.
9.1.4 Unpublished information which adds significant value to the understanding of Parliament's scrutiny function.
9.1.5 New technology which significantly changes established parliamentary procedure, tools and working practices.
<b>9.2 How Parliament Works</b>
9.2.1 The management of governing and executive bodies.
9.2.2 The development of corporate policy, ways of working and organisational culture which governs how Parliament operates.
9.2.3 Internal responses to controversies, scandal, or external inquiries which had a significant impact on policy or process.
9.2.4 Major organisational changes or developments including where a body or function was made independent of the Administrations.
9.2.5 The impact of legislation which directly affects the Administrations and Joint Departments.
9.2.6 Evidence of former working practices and conditions that have changed or evolved substantially.
<b>9.3 Parliamentary relationships</b>
9.3.1 The impact of government reform on the House of Lords or the House of Commons.
9.3.2 How the Houses and Joint Departments exchange support and advice with other parliamentary legislatures, both domestic and overseas.
9.3.3 The impact on Parliament of changes in the relationship between the UK and Europe.
9.3.4 The operation of constitutional relationships between Parliament and other legislatures, the UK government, courts or the monarch.
<b>9.4 State and Ceremonial activities</b>
9.4.1 Arrangements for state occasions, such as coronations, lyings-in-state and visits by world leaders.
9.4.2 Significant changes in ceremonial ritual, convention or protocols.

<b>9.5 Parliament's physical environment</b>
9.5.1 Significant developments in the Parliamentary Estate such as new building acquisition, major restoration or change of use projects
9.5.2 Measures to protect Parliament and its people from natural disasters and human threats.
9.5.3 Evolution of, and changes to, interior fabric and furnishings and the internal physical environment.
9.5.4 The protection and preservation of the Palace of Westminster as a World Heritage site.
9.5.5 Architectural, photographic and digital building records.

<b>9.6 Public engagement</b>
9.6.1 Major outreach, engagement, communications and education activities which significantly promote and enhance public understanding of Parliament.
9.6.2 Public engagement with, response to and perceptions of Parliament, its activities and events and the Estate
9.6.3 The first use of new technologies to increase Parliament's reach and engagement with the public.

<b>9.7 Parliament as a Community</b>
9.7.1 Implementing new measures to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in Parliament.
9.7.2 Evidence of the social and cultural aspect of working in and for Parliament.
9.7.3 Developments reflecting Parliament's response to wider societal and cultural changes.
9.7.4 Evidence of the experiences of underrepresented groups in Parliament
9.7.5 Photographic records documenting staff, members, ceremonies and events

## 10. Access to Collections

- 10.1 The Archives of Parliament are accessed via The National Archives, either in their reading rooms at Kew or through their [website](#). Copies of records can be supplied. There is a charge for this service.
- 10.2 Where possible, we provide open access to our holdings. However, some records are subject to restrictions, for example due to security or sensitivity reasons. Restrictions and conditions for access are noted on The National Archives catalogue.
- 10.3 The Archives of Parliament are regularly used in outreach activities such as displays, exhibitions, loans to other institutions, talks and community partnership activities.