

1. Introduction

The British Library Corporate Archive (BLCA) is one of several Places of Deposit for public records at the British Library, as defined by the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. In accordance with its status as a Place of Deposit, the British Library Corporate Archive (BLCA) seeks to: collect, describe, preserve and make accessible the corporate records of the British Library and its predecessor and constituent bodies. The BLCA does this in support of the Library's mission and strategic aims and in support of research into the history of the Library and its collections.

This policy demonstrates how the BLCA meets access requirements for its stakeholders, specifically:

- The aims and objectives of access
- The methods of access and engagement
- The restrictions on access

Access to the BLCA collections is provided in accordance with the following legislation and regulations:

- Public Records Act, 1958 as amended 1967
- Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- General Data Protection Regulations, 2016 & Data Protection Act, 2018
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

And the following British Library Policies:

- Collection Security Policy
- Staff Use of Collections Policy
- Conditions of Use of the British Library's Reading Rooms
- Copyright Policy

2. Scope

This policy covers access to physical and digital BLCA collections by its users. It also covers access to records held by the BLCA that are not yet formally accessioned into its collections.

This policy excludes:

- Access to current or semi current records, documents and data held by the Library for business purposes
- Access to Library Collections held outside the BLCA

3. Definitions

Access - The ability and permissions to locate and retrieve information held within an archive for use

Archive - the part of an organisation responsible for appraising, acquiring, preserving and making available archival material.

Archives - an accumulation of records from an organisation or individual which are no longer needed to conduct current business and which are selected for preservation because of their continuing legal, evidential administrative or historical value.

Collection item - the physical unit containing information and records that is available for access

Record - A collection of information, in any format or medium, created or received by the Library at designated points in specific business processes, and assembled or retained for one or more of the following purposes:

- Proper recording of activities undertaken by the Library
- Evidence of a transaction and its terms in the event of a dispute
- Audit
- Provision of intellectual input into future business decision making processes.
- Compliance with legislative, regulatory or professional requirements

Users - Those who access an archive service and its collections for research purposes

4. Aims and Objectives

This policy, along with its associated procedures and guidance, is in place to:

- Support free, equal and fair access for all to the BLCA collections, without discrimination.
- Ensure that the collections and information about them are accessible to users.
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, regulations, standards and policies on access.
- Ensure that suitable access restrictions to the collections are in place to prevent loss, misuse, unauthorised access and damage.
- Promote a positive culture of helpful and effective customer service

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Corporate Information Management Unit has, as part of its remit, the management of the BLCA in accordance with the BLCA's mission. Responsibility for this lies specifically with the Records and Archives Manager.

The BLCA is responsible for communicating access policies and conditions to its users.

Archive users are responsible for compliance with access policies and conditions stipulated by the BLCA and other Library staff facilitating access on their behalf.

This policy is subject to review and authorisation by the Corporate Information Governance Group (CIGG) and the Chief Librarian.

6. Methods of access & engagement

The users of the BLCA include registered Library readers, members of the public, internal staff members, other members of the Library's workforce and other stakeholders with an interest in the history of the Library and its collections

Access to the BLCA collections is provided to its users, as follows:

- Information from within the collections is provided in response to research enquires (by phone, post, email). This does not include conducting detailed research on behalf of users which is beyond the scope of the archive service provided.
- Onsite access to physical collection items is provided for registered Library readers in the Library's Rare Books Reading Room by prior appointment, within Library opening hours.
- Single copies of records (in physical and digital format) can be taken by or supplied to members of the public on the basis that they are for private study or research for a non-commercial purpose only.
- Access to the collections is provided to Library staff through the loaning of physical items or the provision of copies of digital items.

Access to information about the collections is provided to users, as follows:

- Some information about the collections is directly accessible through catalogues published online. Information held in unpublished catalogues and inventories is accessible via enquiries to BLCA staff.
- Information about the archive service is published on the Library's website and internally via the staff intranet.
- Information about the service and its collections may, from time to time, be provided in exhibitions, displays, blogs, social media posts and talks.

In future, access to BLCA collections may include direct access to born-digital and digitised records through onsite access to, or online publication of, collection items and their metadata.

7. Access restrictions

The BLCA will provide access to its collections, and the information contained within them, unless access compromises:

- The physical condition or security of collection items holding information or records
- Compliance with information legislation and policies (in particular Freedom of Information and Data Protection) relevant to the records or information held within collection items.

Access restrictions are in place to ensure that access will not compromise the above and in doing so prevent loss, misuse, unauthorised access and damage and ensure that the collections can continue to remain accessible for future research.

There are two types of access restrictions:

- general restrictions applying to all collection items
- specific restrictions applying to particular items

General access restrictions are in place for Library readers and staff. For readers, these are documented in the *Conditions of Use of the British Library's Reading Rooms* available on the British Library website and onsite in Reading Rooms. For staff, these are documented in the *Staff Use of Collections Policy* and the *Staff Loan Conditions for British Library Corporate Archive*.

Specific access restrictions will be documented as part of an item's descriptive metadata in the BLCA's catalogues and inventories. Metadata detailing specific access restrictions will be publically available unless publication would compromise collection security or compliance with information legislation and policies. For un-catalogued items, the application of access restrictions will be assessed at the point that an item is requested and the restrictions documented thereafter. Any specific access restrictions will be clearly explained directly to the user requesting access.

Surrogates of collection items will be provided where possible and appropriate to do so in order to reduce risk of damage to original items. Every effort will be made to provide access via alternative methods (such as, the provision of surrogates) where the primary method of access will breach access restrictions.

In cases where records or information are held in a format which is not readily accessible, reasonable attempts will be made to facilitate access but this cannot be guaranteed.

Access to unaccessioned and unprocessed items should be facilitated where possible in order to ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

8. Use and Reuse

Archive users are responsible for complying with copyright legislation in the use of copies they have taken or have been supplied to them by the BLCA and are liable for any copies they make which infringe copyright, intellectual property or other proprietary rights.

Any further initiatives undertaken by the Library to use or reuse images of or information sourced from BLCA collections will comply with:

- The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, 2015

And the following British Library policies:

- Access and Reuse Policy
- Copyright Policy