

East Riding Archives

Collections Access and Engagement Policy

East Riding Archives collect the archives and written heritage of the East Riding, its communities and its people. We preserve this unique collective memory for present and future generations. We encourage and support the use of our collections by everyone for research, learning and enjoyment.

1. Introduction

The ERA exists to collect, preserve and make available the archive and local studies collections in the custody of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council. We serve all those individuals and communities interested in the history and culture of the East Riding of Yorkshire. The ERA is based in the Treasure House building in Beverley, which opened as a new purpose built facility in January 2007.

This policy applies to the catalogued collections held by East Riding Archives & Local Studies Service.

The purpose of this policy is to define the collections access and engagement methods of ERA. The policy covers the legislative and general principles of access and details the methods available for everyone to access our collections. It outlines restrictions on access and how we communicate these to our community and stakeholders. It details our commitment to customer care, community engagement and equality of access.

2. Legislation, standards and guidance

This policy has been drawn up to comply with the *Archives Accreditation Standard* (2014, TNA) and the *Standard for Access to Archives*, (Public Services Quality Group for Archives, 2008).

Access to the collections operates within a legislative framework which includes:

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Representation of the People Act 2002
Data Protection Act 2018

These Acts apply to the collections we hold and will place restrictions and requirements on the access we can provide. We operate within the Council's policies and procedures for Data Protection and Freedom of Information enquiries. We also seek advice from experts in our sector, particularly The National Archives, where necessary.

Professional staff are members of their relevant professional body, principally, the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) and undertake to abide by their *Code of Ethics* (2016).

3. General principles

Our collections are unique and inspiring records of the past and evidence of the lives of our ancestors. They offer a window into history to help us to understand the present. Our archives and documentary heritage are a gift given from one generation to the next. Our responsibility is to enable access both for our current communities and those in the decades and centuries to come. Our security and preservation measures help to preserve and enable access to researchers in the future.

We are committed to providing and encouraging access to our collections by everyone who wishes to use or engage with them. The communities that we serve include everyone interested in the history and culture of the East Riding as well as depositors, volunteers and local stakeholders. We aim to serve our customers as efficiently as possible and develop services and access methods to meet their needs and those of the future researcher. Good customer care is at the heart of our service and we want everyone to feel welcome at the Treasure House and able to use our collections. We are committed to removing barriers so that everyone can gain learning or enjoyment from the archives and local studies books in our care.

4. How you can access collections in our care

This section of the policy provides information on the ways in which we provide access to the collections we hold. This includes how to find out more about the collections and all the ways in which we provide access to the documents and books in our care.

Intellectual access and information

In order for our researchers to access the collections, it is vital that everyone can find information about the contents and context of the archives and local history books. Cataloguing our collections is essential so that we can provide public access and manage efficiently the information they contain. We catalogue our collections according to current professional standards onto a CALM database which is available on our website as our Online Catalogue. More details on our cataloguing is available in our Collections Information Policy.

We submit summary information of newly deposited or donated collections each year for the annual Accessional to Repositories Survey, organised by The National Archives. We also ensure we have an up to date entry of our contact details, location and facilities on their Discovery Catalogue (formerly ARCHON).



Access in the research room

The ERA is open for use by everyone and we welcome visitors with diverse enquiries and research needs. We provide access to our collections free of charge in our research room at the Treasure House. Up to date details of our opening hours, location and access facilities are available on our website at www.eastriding.gov.uk/archives.

Our research room is divided into two areas. The initial area is for the consultation of books, microform sources and computers. Access to our reference collections and microform sources in this area is unrestricted. Computers are available to provide internet access to local and family history websites.

At the rear of the research room is an area for the consultation of original archives and rare and valuable local studies books. Entry and exit of this area is controlled by the research room staff and is subject to registration (see below). In this area researchers use archives and local studies books produced for them from our repositories. They can also browse the printed books on our shelves and use the computers provided. There is a large table available for the consultation of maps, a camera stand, a public book scanner, as well as an electronic magnifier. We have a dedicated Digital Archives PC for public access, where researchers can view and listen to digitised audiovisual archives and read digital documents from our collections.

We are a member of the County Archive Research Network (CARN) readers' ticket scheme. Researchers wishing to consult archives or rare local studies items will need a valid CARN ticket or provide proof of identification to sign up for the scheme. For first time visitors, without sufficient proof of identity, we will issue a one day pass for the research room. This registration process includes agreeing to abide by our research room Code of Conduct and handling guidelines.

Our research room Code of Conduct applies to all users of the research room. The archives we hold are unique and irreplaceable and we require all researchers to abide by the code to preserve the collections for the future. A Code of Conduct is displayed on each table in the research room and on our website. Each table also has a copy of our handling guidelines which enables researchers to assist in the preservation of the East Riding's written heritage. In order to protect original archives, we will issue surrogate copies of documents where available, on microfilm or as digitised images on the computers.

We want everyone who uses the research room to get the best from their visit. Our research room is supervised by expert staff who are able to provide guidance and support when using the collections.

Access via our copying service

The ERA provides a copying service for customers in our research room and remote researchers. We can provide photocopies, scans and photographs of archives and local studies books and print outs from microform sources. Staff are able to offer advice on the best copying methods and any legislation or preservation needs which can prevent the copying of records. Our charges are reviewed annually and are displayed in our research room and on our website.

Customers in our research room can order copies during their visit to be collected or posted once the order is complete. We allow the use of cameras, without flash, in the research room and supply a camera

stand for the use of customers. We have an A2 book scanner for public use, which scans to a USB memory stick. Using a camera or the book scanner requires the purchase of a license and is subject to signing an agreement to respect copyright. Guidance advice on good document handling when taking photographs or scanning is available on the research room tables.

Copyright legislation may prevent the copying of archives or books. Staff will be able to advise on any copyright restrictions. In all cases the preservation needs of the documents will determine the appropriate way in which copies can be taken. We will not make copies of any archive or book where there is a risk that the copying could damage it.

We can provide A3 and A4 black and colour photocopies, and digital scans on CD or by email. For some particularly large, old or fragile items we will take digital photographs which can be emailed or sent on a CD. Facilities are also available for customers to make copies from the microform resources. We provide official certificates of baptism and marriage from the Church of England parish registers in our care.

Researchers who are unable to visit the Treasure House may remotely request a copy of a document or part of a publication, by email, post or via our website form. They need to supply the finding number of the item(s) they wish to have copied. Staff will assess the items suitability for copying, suggest the best copying method and provide a quote for the cost of the copying.

We may be able to supply copies from our collections for publication. Customers should make a request in writing by post or email to archives.service@eastriding.gov.uk. Our collections may not be reproduced without permission and fees for publication may apply.

[Access via our enquiry service](#)

We encourage enquiries about our collections and services via email, telephone, post and our online enquiry form. We operate a free enquiry service to provide information on the collections we hold and on using our services. Our staff will provide accurate information from our catalogues, indexes and research guides and help to identify if we hold material relevant to the research query. We can also offer helpful advice on using our service, suggest possible archives and books to consult and will assist with the interpretation of documents.

We will respond to all telephone, email, website and postal enquiries within 10 working days. We may ask telephone enquirers to contact us in writing if their enquiry is complex. We are not able to provide legal advice on the contents of archive documents. Queries which require staff to search within archives and books are covered by our paid historical research service.

[Access via our historical research service](#)

We operate a fee paying research service for individuals or organisations who wish to commission private research. We will carry out specific searches in the archives and books in our collection. This is a limited service and is not intended for open ended or complex enquires. We will advise enquirers that, due to the nature of archive research, not all searches will provide results, and we do not refund the cost of a search once we have completed it. We reserve the right to decline any application to our historical



research service which we consider unlikely to succeed or which may be more successful in another institution. Applications for the historical research service can be made through our website, by post, email, phone or in person.

For more extensive or open ended queries, we advise customers to contact organisations representing professional genealogists and researchers.

Access online

Our online presence can help us to reach many more people, unlimited by geography or time and engage new audiences with our collections. Online access to archives is a growth area for our service, as we seek to both popularise and commercialise the archive resource for new audiences, exporting material outside the research room and into people's homes and their mobile devices. We provide collections access and information online through a number of methods.

Information about our service, facilities and the records we hold can be found on our website at www.eastriding.gov.uk/archives. This includes a link to our searchable online catalogue which contains detailed information about our collections.

We regularly participate in the Council's social media presence for Libraries, Museums and Archives through platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. We have a Flickr Commons account. We provide stories, images, films and quick news stories to inform and engage anyone, locally and anywhere in the world, who is interested in the history and culture of the East Riding. We also produce a monthly electronic newsletter for subscribers which includes our news, events and information about our collections. We strictly adhere to Council guidance and policy in relation to social media.

In order to increase access to our archives, we collaborate with partners to digitise our records, especially our major family history sources, and make them available online. Details are available on our website and from staff.

In 2017 we launched a new photo prints ordering website as part of our ongoing effort to provide e-commerce services to users. Details are available on our website.

Access via exhibitions

Exhibitions are an excellent way to engage new and existing customers with our collections. We believe they are a key form of access outside the Research Room and that Archives and Local studies can be showcased to tell fascinating, important and enjoyable stories. Exhibitions also promote wider awareness about the nature of our work and collections.

We host small regularly changing displays in our Research Room and in the 'Treasure of the East Riding' exhibition on the first floor of the Treasure House. We participate in joint exhibitions with the museums service in the larger temporary exhibitions space and we aim to hold a temporary exhibition dedicated to our collections every other year. We also hold one day exhibitions as part of events such as Heritage Open Days. We are interested in opportunities to organise or support exhibitions outside the Treasure House.



Archives and Local studies books are made available for exhibition in line with national and professional standards. Every item is consulted by the conservator prior to going on display and exhibition conditions are monitored regularly.

Depositors can withdraw their collections temporarily for use in external exhibitions. We can loan depositors portable exhibition cases and will provide guidance on the storage and display of the collections to ensure their safety and security.

Access via learning and outreach activities and events

We host a variety of learning opportunities and outreach events at the Treasure House throughout the year. These promote the service and the collections and raise service awareness within the community, which in turn encourages the preservation, deposit and use of the archives and local studies collections. Outreach events encourage new and existing customers to engage with the archives, and to understand their value and relevance.

The archives and local studies collections offer unique learning opportunities. We promote an awareness of our collections as a resource for research and both formal and informal learning and support the ongoing study of the East Riding, its culture and history. Through our classes and workshops we support customers to use the collections and service more fully and to develop new research skills.

Events in which we provide learning and outreach access include:

- Adult Education Classes

- Workshops on specific subjects or methods.

- Research training sessions for community groups or classes

- Visits, talks and tours for local groups and organisations

- Treasure House Talks programme of lectures (jointly with the Museums service)

- Heritage Open Days (jointly with other services in the Treasure House)

- Representing the archives at local events such as family history fairs

- Family learning events (jointly with the Museums service)

We may charge for some of these services. We are committed to continually developing a sustainable programme of outreach and learning activities to meet the needs of the community we serve.

Access for volunteers and depositors

Volunteers make an important and highly valued contribution to the work of the ERA. We provide a variety of opportunities for volunteers in line with the East Riding of Yorkshire Council Volunteers Policy. The nature or location of access to the collections by volunteers will be determined by the tasks they are carrying out. Research volunteers access collections under the same conditions as other customers in the research room. Volunteers who contribute by improving existing catalogue entries will access collections in the collections workroom under the supervision of trained staff.

Depositors, or authorised representatives of depositors, may access their collections in the research room. If depositors wish to consult a large number of their records, we request that 2 days' notice is given wherever possible to enable us to manage the space and staff time required.

Access for the media

The ERA welcomes interest from the media in its work and collections. Initial contact should be made via the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's press office. Requests for publication of archives are subject to copyright and may incur publication fees.

5. Limitations on Access

We are committed to making the records in our care accessible to as wide an audience as possible. However, some records may be subject to restricted access for a variety of reasons, including legislation or their physical condition. Where a record is subject to access restrictions it is clearly stated on the online catalogue. Researchers interested in accessing a restricted record should contact us for further information and advice.

To ensure that the collections are available for future generations access needs to be provided in a sustainable way. We balance the needs of access against the needs of the preservation of the document. Archives or local studies items which are fragile and at immediate risk of damage or deterioration will not be made available in the research room. They will be closed for conservation reasons and this closure will be indicated on the online catalogue. We have an active conservation workshop and preservation programme and where possible we will refer a requested item for repair, as resources allow.

Access to the collections is also subject to certain statutory or legal requirements, notably the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 and copyright legislation. These items are clearly indicated on the online catalogue and staff will be able to explain the nature of the restriction.

Occasionally, the depositor or donor of an archive collection may request restrictions on public access to their documents. These restrictions will be clearly indicated on the online catalogue.

We do not usually allow access to uncatalogued collections. We have an active cataloguing programme and endeavor to make the collections accessible as soon as possible, within available resources. Researchers who believe the information they wish to access is held in an uncatalogued collection, should speak with staff and submit a request in writing with as much detail on the information requested as possible.

6. Customer care

Excellent customer care and service is essential to us. We strive to ensure that everyone in our communities, can access the collections we care for, and that their experience of the service is enjoyable and efficient.

Communicating with customers

We provide information for customers about our service and collections via our website, publications and enquiry service. We aim to explain our collections, services and procedures as clearly and as simply as

possible. We will endeavor to meet all requests for information in alternative accessible formats such as large print.

Our website includes information on our collections, location, contact details, facilities, services, procedures and events. It is updated regularly.

We produce the following publications in print:

- An information leaflet on the service and the facilities we provide at the Treasure House.

- An information sheet on our services to depositors

- An annual events and exhibitions brochure

- Research guides on aspects of the collections to help customers to understand our collection

- Occasional publications to purchase

Customer Charter

The ERA customer charter details the standard of customer service which researchers can expect from us. This charter is available in the research room and on our website. We aim to develop services that are friendly, accessible, meaningful and delivered to a high standard. Our customers include everyone who uses or participates in the archives service, and our future users on whose behalf we preserve the archives.

Feedback, complaints and auditing our service

We readily welcome feedback, comments and suggestions about our service. Customer comment cards are available in our research room and we actively seek to improve our service based on the comments we receive. We participate in the national *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives* that is held approximately every 2 years. We analyse these results and identify areas in which we can improve or develop the service.

We have set procedures in place for dealing with customer complaints. Any researcher who feels they have not received the expected level of service can contact us with the details of their complaint. Their comments will be logged, investigated and responded to by a senior manager within 10 days.

Access for people with additional needs

The Treasure House is a modern building and is accessible to people with additional needs. A wheelchair is available to borrow and there is a lift giving access to the coffee lounge, art gallery, exhibitions, education and meeting rooms, and viewing tower. There are accessible toilet facilities on the ground floor and we welcome assistance dogs throughout the building. There are six “Blue Badge” parking spaces outside the Treasure House. East Riding of Yorkshire Council is committed to providing accessible information via the website.

The research room has a hearing loop and staff can provide assistance for people with additional needs. This can include reading short documents on request, providing magnifiers or other assistance. Researchers with any concerns about being able to access the service can contact us for advice before their visit.



Access, equality and social inclusion

The Archives service is committed to the development of policies and activities which promote equal opportunities in the delivery of services regardless of race, ability, gender, religion, sexual orientation or age. We are committed to removing barriers and social exclusion and support the use of our collections by everyone for research, learning and enjoyment.

7. Links with other policies

This policy should be read with reference to the following:

- East Riding Archives Collections Information Policy
- East Riding Archives Collections Development Policy
- East Riding Archives Collections Care and Conservation Policy

The policy also links to the ERA Access Procedure Manual which details procedural arrangements for public access and services, reprographics, security, production and enquiries.

8. Evaluation

This policy was reviewed in 2017 and will be reviewed every year or earlier if necessary to take into account any changed circumstances.

