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National Meteorological Archive Collections Information Policy

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Introduction

Maintaining accurate documentation of our archive and library collections is an underpinning activity and central to the aims and purpose of the National Meteorological Library and Archive (NMLA). For the archive this information forms two parts: accessioning information and cataloguing information.

Accessioning information is held in database format whilst catalogue records are stored on a combined library and archive cataloguing system EOS.Web which holds both the archive catalogue and the library catalogue in a seamless searchable environment. EOS.Web is primarily a library cataloguing software to which has been attached a 'Knowledge Builder' module capable of enabling cataloguing to ISAD-Standard. Thus the system is capable of handling both library records in MARC format and archive records in ISAD-G format

The NMLA recognises that good documentation of its collections, through accessioning and cataloguing, is fundamental to both collection management and to effective public access. A work instruction covering cataloguing to ISAD-G standard on the current software solution is available to all staff working on archival records and this is supported by training and ongoing support from the archivist.

The nature of record creation has undergone a fundamental change in recent years and the NMLA is working to ensure the best possible procedures are in place for storing, cataloguing and providing access to both digitised and born digital materials. To this end we are working closely with the National

Archive and have adopted systems which are compatible with the recommended standards; ISO 16363 and OAIS.

Accessioning

Recording the provenance of material within the custody of the NMLA is a crucial part of preserving the integrity of the records themselves. In order to achieve this the National Meteorological Archive therefore accessions all new transfers, gifts, purchases and bequests (loans are not accepted). The accession process ensures that the condition of all new items is assessed, and appropriate preservation/conservation information recorded. It also provides a preliminary record for each new item or collection giving an accession reference, date of accession, source, accession type, notes on any accompanying correspondence and a brief indication of scope and content and any known copyright or access issues such as closure periods. The accessions register also has columns to indicate the cataloguing status of each collection and its cataloguing priority level. This enables staff to make informed judgements when deciding which collections to catalogue next from the accessions area.

The accessions database contains details of all accessions since July 2009. In the case of transfers from Met Office stations to the archive formal receipts are not completed but for new accessions gifted or bequeathed from any other source a formal donation form will be completed requiring the countersignature of the depositor, donor or executor/administrator of the estate. The form, which includes a copy of the NMLA 'Terms of Deposit', has been approved by the Met Office legal department and is considered legally binding.

The accessions reference number assigned to each accession is subsequently linked to the catalogue record using the archivists note field. Details of the depositor and any contact information will not be made available to the public and will be retained only on the accessions register and deed of gift documentation.

We plan to promote new accessions via our Library and Archive web pages in the future.

Cataloguing

Cataloguing is an integral part of the work of both the National Meteorological Library and the National Meteorological Archive and the searchable database provides seamless access to both collections.

Archive Cataloguing:

Cataloguing the materials held in the National Meteorological Archive is essential in enabling staff to effectively manage the materials and in providing public access.

There are three types of cataloguing task to be undertaken within the physical archive (1) new accessions (2) re-cataloguing and (3) cataloguing previously un- catalogued material) and the strategic aim, managed through staff cataloguing objectives, is to ensure that progress is made in all areas. All objectives are flexible to allow for changing priorities.

1.   New collections

All new collections are catalogued according to current professional standards, namely the principles and mandatory elements of the General International Standard of Archival Description (ISAD-G). Entries created in EOS software are capable of being exported and should be capable of ingest into other archival software types, should the decision be taken to change service provision in the future.
All catalogue entries include the six essential ISAD-G elements:

•   Reference number(s)
•   Title
•   Creator
•   Covering dates
•   Extent
•   Level of description

In order to make catalogue entries as useful as possible to both staff and customers the archive also records location, more detailed description information, language, any restrictions governing access or copying and whether digitised copies are available with links to online content where relevant. Because the Met Office archive holds and administers the archive collections of both the Met Office and the Royal Meteorological Society this information is also noted for clarity of ownership.

Scottish archival records, held at Saughton House, Edinburgh, are being catalogued for transfer to NRS in line with NRS cataloguing requirements. The NMLA will provide a portal to NRS online catalogues via our webpages once transfer is complete.

New accessions will also include digitised and born digital collections. All electronic resources will be catalogued according to archive standards. The ISAD-G elements of reference number, title, creator and covering dates are included within each catalogue entry along with the HTML link extent and series level.

The electronic archive itself collects all required file metadata to ensure ongoing preservation as advised in ISO 16363 and OAIS standards during the ingest process. This process is still relatively new and is under constant review with changes communicated to all staff and incorporated into the Electronic Archive cataloguing guidance notes.

2.   Pre-existing archival holdings

The current archive collections fall into two groups with regard to catalogue status:

1. Collections which have never been fully catalogued and for which a single high level, and often poorly detailed, catalogue entry exists (referred to here as un-catalogued collections)
2. Collections for which lower-level entries exist but not in an appropriate format and without key ISAD-G fields and other important information which would make them much more useful to both staff and customers.

Historically all records, whether archival or library were catalogued in MARC format. The archive is now beginning the major process of re-cataloguing those records held in MARC format to ISAD-G standard and cataloguing previously un-catalogued materials alongside the ongoing cataloguing of new accessions.

Cataloguing of previously un-catalogued materials and re-cataloguing of other holdings is dictated by a priority list which feeds into our forward plan. The priority list has been agreed via consultation with the archive staff and is regularly reviewed. The overall strategy is to re-catalogue those collections which are considered to be most useful and least well catalogued.

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With regard to previously un-catalogued collections the approach taken has been to prioritise:

1. Collections which are most regularly requested in order to provide more detailed information
2. Collections which are considered to be of greatest potential interest but the significance of which is not recognised because the existing catalogue reference is too vague

Loans from the Archive

The NMA occasionally allows loans of items from the collection to other recognised institutions. Loans must be agreed by the archivist and Library and Archive Manager and are dependent on both the condition of the requested material and suitable evidence for security and insurance from the loaning institution. Approval is always sought form the RMetS for any item requested form their collection. A loans policy and appropriate documentation are in place.

Materials owned by the RMetS can be borrowed by the Society on their request. Should there be condition or security concerns the MoU between the NMLA and RMetS allows the NMA Archivist discretion on whether to loan original materials. Where the archivist deems loan of original materials is not appropriate the RMetS will be strongly encouraged to accept digital copies rather than originals. A shortened loan form is in place for these loans.

Deaccessioning

Archive Deaccessioning:

At present this is not a regular practice of the NMA. It has only been applied to duplicated materials and during specific projects managed by the Archivist. This position will be regularly reviewed.

Related documentation:

1. National Meteorological Archive Acquisitions Policy

Review Period: 5 years

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Document Control		
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