



# Archive & Reference Library

## De-accessioning and Disposal Policy

### BACKGROUND

The Archive & Reference Library at Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre has suffered from a lack of professional archive and information management staff in the past. This has resulted in confused procedures for the accessioning of donated material and little to no appraisal being carried out on collections. Archive and library material has been mixed together, with Archive collections being dispersed throughout the Reference Library and Library material being kept in Archive collections, leading to a vast amount of duplicates of published material.

Work to re-unite collections given to us by the same donor and spread amongst the Reference Library in order to carry out re-appraisal or retroactive appraisal has been a focus of the work in the Archive & Reference Library for the past eight years. Re-uniting is complete and appraisal work continues as priorities allow. The creation of this policy and the implementation of appraisal procedures has meant that current and future collections acquired for the Archive & Reference Library will be treated appropriately on accessioning, and will not contribute to past problems.

Archive collections are unique and irreplaceable; library materials are generally not unique and can be replaced. However, some of the published material in the Reference Library is rare and could not be easily replaced, thus the collection also requires some form of protective management.

It is within this context that this policy will operate.

### 1. Purpose of the Policy

To define de-accessioning, disposal, and related terms and set out the principles governing future decisions.

### 2. Definition of Terms

- Appraisal – the process of deciding whether an item or group of items has continuing value in accordance with the collecting organisation’s mission statement.
- Deaccessioning – the formal, documented removal of a collection or item from the accession register or custody of the archive service.
- Reappraisal – a renewed process of appraisal for collections or items which have been previously appraised.

- Retrospective appraisal – appraisal of collections or items where evidence of previous appraisal to an approved standard is not apparent.
- Disposal – the physical act of transferring the collection or item from the archive service to another destination. This covers transfer to another repository, return to depositor or donor and as a last resort, destruction. Also called removal.

### 3. Rationale

Deaccessioning and disposal is a recognised part of collections management and development. However, it should not be frequently carried out and should follow defined and agreed policy and procedures. This policy protects against the disposal of significant archives, accusations of poor management, damage to reputation and damage to the trust of stakeholders. Policy and procedure also protect individual staff and the organisation, as well as ensuring consistency.

### 4. Principles of Deaccessioning and Disposal

4.1 The Collections Policy and its defined collecting area should be the primary reference points directing decision-making on reappraisal, retrospective appraisal and deaccessioning. If a collection or item sits within that policy and collecting area it should usually be retained.

4.2 Deaccessioning and disposal can lead to resource savings, but budget constraints or a lack of physical space should not be the main drivers for decision-making.

4.4 Deaccessioning should be the result of a documented and formal process and should always involve assessment by an archive professional, based upon archival principles and not driven solely by forces external to the archive service.

4.5 Disposal decisions should consider:

- Impact on the reputation of MKCDC.
- The Archive & Reference Library's responsibilities to MKCDC and its community.
- All ethical options for disposal.
- How to advise the community of the disposal decisions and manage any publicity.

4.6 If the acquisition, cataloguing or conservation of a collection or item was funded by external sources such as grant aid or a benefactor, the impact of this should be considered when making disposal decisions.

4.7 When considering the options for disposal, destruction and sale should be last resorts. The sale of archives is not considered ethical unless it is the decision of the depositor, or the items are classed as ephemera or are duplicates.

4.8 Generally, where records have been accessible to the public for research and use, disposal decisions should ensure the same or similar levels of public access.

4.9 All deaccessioning and disposals will be signed off by the Director or CEO, in consultation with the Archivist, taking into consideration the recommendations resulting from the aforementioned process and this policy.

## 5. Basic Assessment Criteria

5.1 Every item or group of items (where applicable) under review for appraisal, reappraisal or retrospective appraisal will be assessed against the Collections Policy and the criteria below, developed by the Charity. In summary the criteria cover:

- Uniqueness
- Significance (academic and archival)
- Associated information/provenance
- Display potential
- Completeness and condition
- Number of identical items held

5.2 Items or groups of items (where applicable) that do not fit within the scope of the Collections Policy will be assessed to determine the status of their context within the overall collection. If the item or group of items support the context of the remaining material and add information or significance to the parts of the collection within the remit of the Collections Policy, they will be retained.

## 6. Disposal Methods

6.1 Material meeting the criteria for disposal will be offered back to the depositor in the first instance.

6.1.2 If the depositor is not known, efforts to identify them will be undertaken, including, but not limited to, advertising in local newspapers. If identification efforts are unsuccessful, material will usually be retained unless its condition endangers other collections or it holds no archival value.

6.2 If the depositor does not wish for the material to be returned, other options will be considered and offered in the order they are set out here.

6.2.1 Transfer to another repository.

6.2.2 If the material is the same or similar to a publication on sale as part of MKCDC's book stock it will be transferred to book stock for sale.

6.2.3 Sale to the public or other interested parties.

## 7. Distribution of Policy

This policy will be available internally as a document that contributes to the repository's Collections Management Policy.

The policy will be available externally via the MKCDC web site in order to provide information about acquisition and management of materials.

## 8. Approval of Policy

- approved by Director, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022
- approved by Board of Trustees, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## 8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years. The date for the next review is January 2027.