

Standard for access to archives - a working document

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Status	Final PSQG edition, for endorsement
Process	For circulation to representative archival bodies for endorsement as a new NCA-PSQG standard.
Comments	<p>This is the final edition, based on the text agreed in principle at PSQG Quality Forum November 1999, on correspondents' comments since then, and on comments subsequently received following voluntary pilot testing in a number of UK archive services. This final version also takes into account comments received during extensive consultation in Spring 2003, which indicated that the then current version required only minor text amendments.</p> <p>The document has been drafted broadly as a formal standard, in so far as we understand the guidance from the British Standards Institute (BSI, A standard for standards¹).</p>

Editorial control

The PSQG had stated its desire to hand control of the Standard to a broadly constituted group set up to pursue the BSI option. Ultimately, the PSQG decided against the pursuit of the BSI route of approval for the foreseeable future, and instead resolved to seek the endorsement of the Standard by leading UK archival bodies. Editorial control of the Standard now lies with Dr Elizabeth Hallam Smith, as convenor of the PSQG Access Standard Working Group, though all correspondence relating to editorial issues should initially be made via the Head of Archive Inspection Services at The National Archives.

Review

Comments received during consultation have confirmed the PSQG view that the Standard will need to be continuously reviewed and, where necessary, updated. The implementation, in January 2005, of the full access provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 will be an important driver for review of the Standard, as might the publication of a new complementary standard for records repositories by The National Archives in 2004.

The PSQG assumes that the 'guidance' sections of the standard will also require frequent updating as practice develops: as and when future revisions of the Standard are published it may be more appropriate to include them as a separate appendix. Respondents to the Spring 2003 consultation exercise also indicated a demand for additional appendices to be added to the Standard, such as a model access policy. All such suggestions for review and addition will be considered by the PSQG at

¹ As downloaded from BSI web-site June 1999.

future Steering Group and Access Standard Working Group meetings, details of which will be publicised via the PSQG pages of The National Archives' web site.

Introductory sections

The Introduction provides an overview of some key sources used in drafting the standard. This is to aid understanding of the draft and final edition.

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Foreword

The standard is intended to guide archive services in the management of access. It may also be used by archive services, users and third parties as a means of assessing the quality of the service.

In particular, the standard is expected to be useful to those with responsibility for the inspection of archive services (The National Archives), to the administrators of schemes for the improvement of public services (e.g. Service First and Best Value) and to organisations providing financial assistance to improve access to the archival heritage (e.g. the Heritage Lottery Fund and grant-making charities).

Implementation of the Access Standard should not be at the expense of other standards designed to promote the permanent preservation of archival material without which future access to archives might be impossible. Nor should implementation of the Access Standard fail to recognise the vital role and foundation which intellectual control, through cataloguing and other traditional descriptive skills, bring to the field of archival access. Rather a balance between these priorities, appropriate to each Archive's own circumstances, should be sought.

0. Introduction

0.1 Archive services are resourced by a range of organisations to meet a range of purposes. It is understood that those services must be assessed in relation to their success in fulfilling those purposes rather than some absolute form or standard of service. There will be some commonality in forms of service and, with publicly funded archive services in particular, some commonality of purpose. It would be an error, however, to seek to define for all archive services what their purpose should be in providing access and how that purpose is fulfilled. Archive services will vary in their stakeholders, their aims and the kinds of service which are successful in their context. A standard must work with this diversity. The aim is successful - not homogeneous - services. It would be particularly unwise to seek to impose a specific form of service at this time when technological and other changes are transforming service delivery options on an almost daily basis.

0.2 The standard therefore is intended to focus on systems to achieve quality and broad outcomes for users which are assumed to have common validity and also durability. It has been suggested that more specific good practice guides to apply to particular types of archive could be developed on the basis of this framework.

0.3 The standard will be based on the practical experience of members of the Public Services Quality Group in providing archive access services, on consultation exercises with both stakeholders and front-line staff, and the quality management literature.

0.4 Quality management sources include:

0.4.1 The International Standards Organisation's quality management principles².

Principle 1 — Customer-Focused Organisation

Organisations depend on their customers and therefore should understand current and future customer needs, meet customer requirements and strive to exceed customer expectations.

Principle 2 — Leadership

Leaders establish unity of purpose and direction of the organisation. They should create and maintain the internal environment in which people can become fully involved in achieving the organisation's objectives.

Principle 3 — Involvement of People

People at all levels are the essence of an organisation and their full involvement enables their abilities to be used for the organisation's benefit.

Principle 4 — Process Approach

A desired result is achieved more efficiently when related resources and activities are managed as a process.

² Document downloaded from BSI web site.
<http://www.bsi.org.uk/bsi/products/standards/development/>

Principle 5 — System Approach to Management

Identifying, understanding and managing a system of interrelated processes for a given objective improves the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency.

Principle 6 — Continual Improvement

Continual improvement should be a permanent objective of the organisation.

Principle 7 — Factual approach to decision making

Effective decisions are based on the analysis of data and information.

Principle 8 — Mutually beneficial supplier relationships

An organisation and its suppliers are interdependent, and a mutually beneficial relationship enhances the ability of both to create value.

0.4.2 There are also sources which relate to the particular aspects of public sector service quality. This has relevance to archive services although it is limited for those in the private and voluntary sectors. The first two - Maxwell and the National Consumer Council - date from the 1980's and although still relevant may have been superseded by more sophisticated approaches.

0.4.3 Maxwell's six dimensions of quality of health care³ are relevant, with adaptation, to any public sector service:

- access to services
- relevance to need [for the whole community]
- effectiveness [for the individual user]
- equity [fairness]
- social acceptability [the service experience]
- efficiency and economy

0.4.4 Work associated with the National Consumer Council (NCC) which includes setting out of principles of responsiveness for public services:

- Access (right to know the criteria; accessibility)
- Choice (including partial substitutes such as complaints systems, inspections, published performance indicators, user advocates)
- Information (needed about: existence of the service, objectives of the service, standards, rights to use, rights to complain, how organised, how decisions are made, particular decisions being taken or already taken, reasons for decisions).
- Redress
- Representation⁴

The NCC also produced a set of consumer criteria for service evaluation - summarised in the ingenious form of a wheel which cannot be reproduced here. The top-level questions in this wheel are: What is [the service] supposed to do? Does it

³ Original source: Maxwell, RJ 'Quality assessment in health' *British Medical Journal*, vol. 288, 12 May 1984, pp. 1470-1472, but widely cited throughout quality management literature.

⁴ Original source: Potter, J 'Consumerism and the public sector' *Public Administration*, vol. 66, no. 1, pp 149-164, 1988.

do what its supposed to do? What is it like to use? What does it cost [users and taxpayers]? Does it do what it is not supposed to do? [e.g. environmental impact, safety, complaint processes]⁵.

0.4.5 The 'Service First' principles of public service delivery are more recent and set out in straightforward language very similar requirements to those of the NCC:

- Set standards of service
- Be open and provide full information
- Consult and involve
- Encourage access and the promotion of choice
- Treat all fairly
- Put things right when they go wrong
- Use resources effectively
- Innovate and improve
- Work with other providers⁶

0.4.6 In local government, the 'Best Value'⁷ programme is indicating one route to continuous improvement and the achievement of a "combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness"⁸.

0.5 The emphasis in this standard on outcomes for users follows the lead given by the quality management literature. It is in distinction to some more traditional approaches to quality which focus on inputs and/or outputs. An input is a resource or action used to deliver the service (e.g. the number of staff on duty); an output is a product of the service (e.g. document deliveries) while an outcome is a result arising from the service (e.g. receipt of the desired information). It should be noted that outcomes are more difficult to define and measure.

0.6 The framework is intended as a set of principles on which individual archive services can build statements of service quality. This approach should provide a flexible and durable system capable of dealing with diversity and change. While the framework as a set of basic principles may be relatively abstract and skeletal the statements of quality should be meaningful in the context of the archive service and be capable of being assessed in detail. To aid the process of building on the framework it has been supplemented by some guidance which provides an indication of how systems and outcomes can be delivered in practice. This guidance is not intended to be a surrogate for the standard. It is open to rejection by archive services who may seek their own methods. The guidance will need to be developed over time, according to the rich variety of solutions to service problems in the world of archive services.

0.7 Each element of the standard is defined initially as an outcome for users. This element may be extracted to form the basis of a charter-type statement for archive service users. The outcome is then translated into professional and business

⁵ National Consumer Council, p. v, *Measuring up*, London, n.d. (1986?).

⁶ As downloaded from the Service First web site <http://www.servicefirst.gov.uk>.

⁷ DETR Circular 10/99 (<http://www.press.detr.gov.uk/9912/downloads/1208/bv.pdf>)

⁸ *ibid.* p.3

requirements.

0.8 The standard is not intended to create new rights of access. Instead it emphasises the conditions and services which are necessary to ensure that rights of access are meaningful in practical terms. It should help users to claim existing rights and it may encourage archive services to remove barriers or obstacles to access that may exist at present.

0.9 Adoption of the standard or any part of it is intended to be voluntary. Audit against the standard and certification as a service operating to the standard is not a requirement of the standard. ("As a matter of public policy, the wording of any specification should enable conformity to its requirements to be verified equally by first party (supplier), second party (purchaser) or an independent third party. Third party attestation of conformity to a standard is an optional service available in the market place, but it should not in any way be imposed through the application of a voluntary standard. This means, for example, that a standard should not require a product to bear a certification mark."⁹)

⁹ BSI 0-1:1997 p. 3

1. Scope of the standard¹⁰

- 1.1 The standard defines quality in archive access services. Access services are the means by which records are offered for use either directly or indirectly through mediation. Legal rights to access records are not within the scope of this standard.
- 1.2 The standard is intended to be applicable in all kinds of archive service in the UK.

2. Normative references

General

Historical Manuscripts Commission, *A Standard for Record Repositories* 3rd edition, 2001.

Public Record Office, *Beyond the PRO: Public Records in Places of Deposit* (1994).

Records Management

Public Record Office, *Standards for the Management of Government records* (Introduction, File Creation, Tracking Records, Disposal Scheduling, Guidelines on the Planning of Records Appraisal, Retention, Storage of semi-Current Records), 1998-99.

British Standards Institute, 'Records Management - A Code of Practice' (work in progress).

Electronic Records

Public Record Office, *Management, appraisal and preservation of electronic records* (Vol.1 Principles; Vol.2 Procedures), 2nd edition 1999.

BS 4783 *Storage, transportation and maintenance of magnetic media in data processing and information storage* (Parts 1-8, 1988-94).

Records Storage

BS 5454 *Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents* (3rd edition forthcoming).

Conservation

BS 4971 *Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents* (1980-88, currently being revised).

¹⁰ Please note that this follows BSI style for statements of 'Scope' (p. 1, BSI 0-3:1997)

Cataloguing

International Council on Archives, *General International Standard of Archival Description* [ISAD (G)], 1994.

International Council on Archives, *International Standard Archival Authority for Corporate Bodies, Persons and Families*, [ISAAR (CPF)], 1996.

National Council on Archives, *National Name Authority Files* [NNAF]. 1997.

National Council on Archives, *Proposed Cataloguing Standards for the National Archives Network*, 1999.

Data Structure

Encoded Archival Description:

Society of American Archivists, *Encoded Archival Description Tag Library*, version 1.0, 1998.

Society of American Archivists, *Encoded Archival Description Application Guidelines*, version 1.0, 1999.

3. Terms and definitions

3.1 Meaning of defined terms

The following "*defined terms*" are used with specific meaning throughout the text. In every use in this context, the word(s) will be italicised. The same words may be used in other contexts without their specific meaning as defined terms, in which case they appear in ordinary type.

3.2 General concepts and terms

3.2.1 '*Quality*' is defined as per BS 4778 "The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs"¹¹.

3.2.2 An *input* is a resource or action used to deliver the *service* (e.g. the number of staff on duty); an *output* is a product of the *service* (e.g. document deliveries) while an *outcome* is a result arising from the *service* (e.g. receipt of the desired information).

3.2.3 The terminology indicates the strength of requirement posed by the standard, as follows:

¹¹ BS 4778, 1987 (ISO 8402, 1986) *Quality Vocabulary: Part 1, International Terms* - as cited by Oakland, p.5, *Total Quality Management*, second edition, London 1993. The definition for archives is complex as a number of *stakeholders* (including funders, office-holders, potential *users* and future *users*) have 'needs'.

- 'Shall' indicates a requirement.
- 'Should' indicates a recommendation.
- 'May' indicates permissibility, within the limits of the standard.
- 'Can' indicates possibility if the capability exists.

3.3 Stakeholders

3.3.1 '*Community*' - the standard is based on the concept of a community which the *archive service* is constituted to serve. In its specific sense as a *defined term* the word 'community' does not necessarily refer simply to the population of a political unit or physical area (e.g. a local authority or town). For many *archive services* the community will extend beyond the formal boundaries of its *responsible body* (government, educational institution, private or voluntary organisation). The archive will probably serve multiple communities: local, national and international; different communities of *researchers* and of other types of direct and indirect users and of non-users. Different elements of the community may attract different priorities, types and levels of service. The 'community' to be served is defined through the stated purpose of the *archive service*.

3.3.2 '*User*' – an actual or potential *user* of any kind of *service* (see below).

3.3.3 '*Researcher*' - a *user* of *services* related to research.

3.3.4 '*Responsible body*' - the primary body representative of the *community* to which the *archive service* is accountable.

3.3.5 '*Stakeholders*' are persons, corporate bodies or defined groups with an interest in the present and future activities of the *archive service*. Stakeholders include those with a financial interest (including tax payers in relation to a public service), office holders (e.g. politicians, committee members), executives, employees, suppliers, customers and the local community. In *archive services* there are two important additional groups:

- depositors - the donors or lenders of records.
- future *users*, the purpose of the preservation of records.

3.4 Archives

3.4.1 '*Archive*' [the collection] From BS 5454 : '*archives*' "Documents preserved permanently by the persons responsible for the transactions of which such documents are the records, or by their successors or appointees, in their own custody, and normally in the arrangement in which the documents were created"¹²

¹² BS 5454:1989 p. 2. A definition attributed to the ICA has been suggested as an alternative "documents...of the same provenance...accumulated by an organization or person in the course of the conduct of affairs, and preserved because of their continuing value". However, if the present document is to become a British Standard it may have to adopt existing BSI definitions.

- 3.4.2 '*Content*' can range from original documents and whole-class surrogates (e.g. the census microfilms) through copies of selected documents, material derived or selected from the original records, to animation (exhibitions, events, experiences, publications) based on the records and their context.

[From BS5454 '*document*' "A combination of a medium and the information recorded on or in it, e.g. single leaves of paper, membranes, maps, plans, working drawings, bound volumes, files, rolls, punched cards, punched tape, magnetic tape, photographic negatives and prints, cinematograph film, microfilm, microfiche, and gramophone and phonograph recordings."]

3.5 Services

- 3.5.1 '*Archive service*' [i.e. the organisation as opposed to the collection]

- 3.5.2 '*Service(s)*' include dissemination of information about the service and other marketing activities, the various activities required to deliver '*content*', the physical context of the service in so far as it is important to the *archive service's community*,

- 3.5.3 '*Interface*' is any service delivery *interface* - a physical location, written communication, point of contact with a ICT-based service, or physical product (e.g. publication) of the *archive service*.

- 3.5.4 '*Access service(s)*' are defined as the means by which an *archive service* can deliver *content* from its collection to those in its *community* who have a stated or implied need of it.

4. General principles

- 4.1 The *archive service* shall subscribe to the aims and spirit of the standard. In implementing the standard the *archive service* shall in its interpretation be guided by the aims and spirit rather than a narrow interpretation of the text.
- 4.2 The *archive service* shall aim to serve its *community* as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- 4.3 The *archive service* shall seek to serve **all** of its *community*, devising a range of *services* appropriate to the community's stated or implied needs.
- 4.4 The *archive service* shall aim to encourage as much access by *users* to primary source material as is compatible with the permanent preservation of unique and irreplaceable material. There should be a presumption of openness and any restrictions should conform to tightly defined criteria.
- 4.5 The *archive service* shall define the objectives it is seeking to achieve, and consult with *stakeholders* to develop and review that definition. The satisfaction of *users* shall be amongst the primary objectives.

- 4.6 The *archive service* shall explicitly plan to achieve those objectives and consult with *stakeholders* in developing that plan.
- 4.7 The *archive service* shall have systems to measure its performance against its plans. These may include recording systems, logs and paper-trails as well as numerical performance data.
- 4.8 The *archive service* shall have *user* feedback mechanisms and complaints procedures, and clear channels of communication to and from other *stakeholders*.
- 4.9 The *archive service* shall explicitly respond in its plans to over- and under-performance and to *stakeholder* feedback to maintain an appropriate balance of resources over the full range of objectives.
- 4.10 The *archive service* shall communicate to *stakeholders* its definition of *stakeholders*, its objectives, its plans, its performance, the means of communicating with it, and its response to feedback.
- 4.11 *Access services* function through processes in which the *user* is an active participant and in which the *user* has responsibilities as well as rights. The *archive service* shall communicate and if necessary enforce these responsibilities.
- 4.12 The *archive service* shall ensure that all requirements of the standard are auditable¹³.

5. Structure of the main provisions

- 5.1 For each element of the standard there may be up to five pieces of information:
1. **the desired *outcome*** (a user-focused expression of purpose)
 2. **specific requirements to be met** (the formal statement of what the standard requires or recommends, expressed in varying strength through 'shall', 'should' 'may' or 'can').
 3. **notes on interpretation** (provides further explanation of the requirements where necessary)
 4. **guidance on practical implementation** (not requirements but good practice examples and ideas current at the time of writing)
 5. **how performance against that element of the standard can be audited.** (not a requirement to audit but an explanation of how that particular requirement could be audited if the supplier or customer wished to, or if a third party was invited to).

¹³ 'Auditable' means capable of being audited, not a requirement to audit.

6. Access aims and objectives

6.1 It is clear who the *archive service* is intended to serve.

- 6.1.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* shall have documentation setting out its aims in relation to access, including a definition of the *community* served. This statement shall be approved by the *responsible body* and that approval renewed on a regular basis.
- 6.1.2 *Notes:* Access should be set in the context of the other aims of the *archive service*. For many *archive services* there will be (irreconcilable) tensions between the needs of different groups in the *community*: the duty in such cases is to recognise the tension and seek a balance which meets the approval of the *responsible body*. (See s.3 for definition of 'community'). Private *archives* may not be as accessible to the wider research community as they are to the *archives'* owner: restriction in accordance with the wishes of an owner should not constitute unfair discrimination.
- 6.1.3 *Guidance:* Elements of this statement may take the form of a more or less permanent constitutional documentation setting up the *archive service* or of policy documents which are reviewed on a regular basis - every 5-10 years or at points of major change in the *archive service* or the *community*. The statement of aims could be the subject of a pro-forma drafted by a professional group.
- 6.1.4 *Audit methods:* Check that documentation exists, has appropriate *content* and has recent approval of the *responsible body*.

6.2 It is clear what the *archive service* is intending to achieve in providing access to its collections.

- 6.2.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall have a clear statement of its objectives in relation to access, drawn up following consultation with *stakeholders* and explicitly balancing their disparate interests. The statement shall be reviewed with consultation of *stakeholders* at moments of significant change, and at least once every five years.
- 6.2.1 *Notes:* The definition of '*stakeholder*' is important: see s.3.
- 6.2.3 *Guidance:* The statement could be expressed through a *user* charter, service information leaflet etc., and/or a policy document. A pro-forma statement could be a product of a professional working group.
- 6.2.4 *Audit methods:* Check that document exists, has appropriate content and has approval of the *responsible body*. Verify consultation process has been comprehensive, has been documented and that the results are reflected in the final document. Check that objectives (including that relating to *user* satisfaction) are measurable. Check with sample of *stakeholders*.

7. Key principles: equity

7.1 The archive service is aiming to satisfy users throughout its community.

7.1.1 *Requirements:* The archive shall aim to meet the stated and implied needs of all community members for its *services*. It shall have a published policy addressing equality of opportunity in relation to its *services*. The archive shall have a published policy relating to diversity in its community and how it addresses that diversity in relation to collections, services and service delivery channels. The archive should benchmark best practice in dealing with diversity and equality of opportunity as a continuing process. Equal opportunity and diversity policies shall be reviewed for effectiveness and content at least once in five years.

7.1.2 *Notes:* The Archive obviously must comply with relevant legislation on access and personnel policies - such legislation includes that on discrimination on grounds of sex, race or disability. Equity is a key and integral element of access policies and the requirements of this section are an expansion on some of the generic requirements. It is noted that private owners of archives may choose not to allow access to all potential *users*, and that this does not constitute unfair discrimination. Many *responsible bodies* will have policies applying to all parts of their organisation which are intended to increase equality of opportunity and social inclusion beyond the legal minimum requirements. As this standard must be capable of application to all archives then the definition of 'community' must be for the *responsible body*; the requirement here is not for equity for all people (beyond that legally required) but equity within the community served. The requirement to possess published policies in this area may be met by generic policies of the responsible body, but care should be taken that they cover all of the issues relevant to the *archive service*.

7.1.3 *Guidance:* This links to the current government's 'social inclusion' agenda. While local conditions will vary this appears an area where archives can co-operate with each other and with other agencies to both identify needs and develop policy responses. There is a general need for creativity to reach a wider population - new approaches to *service* may be required.

7.1.4 *Audit methods:* Check awareness of relevant legislation. Documentary evidence of policies and of review. Evidence of benchmarking and adoption of best practice in terms of equality of opportunity and dealing with diversity. Evidence of analysis of the *Community* and of service take-up, with appropriate action plans and implementation.

7.2 The archive service does not discriminate against any member of its community.

7.2.1 *Requirements:* The archive service shall not seek to discriminate against any member of the community. It shall seek to eliminate unconscious discrimination.

- 7.2.2 *Notes:* Unconscious discrimination can be a product of the legacy of service infrastructure, location, appearance, staffing, collection, finding aids, service delivery options, opening hours, rules, reader facilities etc.
- 7.2.3 *Guidance:* See previous section. Eliminating discrimination can be a long-term project, especially if physical infrastructure is an issue. The archive service needs to be able to demonstrate that it has analysed the situation, identified any issues, and made realistic plans to deal with them. There are also positive steps that the archive service can take to promote use by, and demonstrate interest in and respect for, groups previously under-represented in its *user* base. These steps can include the use of publicity materials and internal displays with images of members of the group, ensuring that outreach and events are relevant to the group, preparing relevant interpretative and guidance materials, staff training in appropriate service delivery and developing contextual knowledge e.g. in black history.
- 7.2.4 *Audit methods:* Check for obvious/unconscious discrimination. Check archive service documentation on this issue.

8. Key principles: communication and openness

8.1 The *archive service* has open, effective two-way communications with its *community*.

8.1.1 *Requirements:* The *community* shall have ready access to communications to the *archive service*. The *archive service* shall seek the views of its *community* on its *services*, policies and plans. The *archive service* shall communicate to its *community* its policies, plans, service standards, how its resources are allocated and how it performs against its plans and standards. The *archive service* shall respond meaningfully to communications from its *community*.

8.1.2 *Notes:*

8.1.3 *Guidance:* User communications can be established through comments forms, surveys, open meetings, user groups, meetings with user organisations, focus groups, newsletters, feedback from front-line staff, walking about etc. Communication with the wider *community* is more problematic and potentially expensive. Communication with the wider *community* can be improved through activities to raise the profile of the archive service (e.g. events to catch media interest; general interest publications/products). *Responsible bodies* may have channels of communication which can be exploited e.g. local authority free newspapers. Responding effectively to inward communication can be an uncomfortable process. The differing views and interests of *stakeholders* need to be reconciled and some *stakeholders* will be silent, but failure to respond to expressed views will lead to a collapse in confidence in the communication process. The web site: <http://www.servicefirst.gov.uk> contains useful guidance on consultation.

8.1.4 *Audit methods:* Check existence, currency, variety of *user* communications. Check evidence of communication to wider *community*. Check evidence of recent inward communication from *users* and wider *community*.

8.2 The *archive service's* access service policies are available for scrutiny and comment.

8.2.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall provide full information on its policies in relation to access services, which policies are currently under consideration, how decisions are made in relation to access services and how *stakeholders* can contribute to the decision-making process.

8.2.2 *Notes:* This is subject to any relevant legal consideration or explicit policy of the *archive service's* parent body. If such considerations are in force then this should be made clear to *stakeholders*. All *archive services* will, from time to time, have policy matters which are at a stage of consideration where publicity would be premature, or where commercial or political requirements forbid their publication. This general exclusion also needs to be made clear to *stakeholders*.

8.2.3 *Guidance:* This element is subject to existing or new legislation providing for access to official information. Access policies can be communicated through formal statements or in summary through publicity materials which refer to formal statements. Discussion can be facilitated through feedback systems including written comments and consultative groups.

8.2.4 *Audit methods:* Check information on the access policy under which *archive service* operates. Check communication to *stakeholders*.

9. Key principles: responsiveness

9.1 The *archive service* responds effectively to comments and complaints from *users*.

9.1.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall have a published policy on comments and complaints. It shall have an effective procedure for comments and complaints which facilitates *user* contributions and which satisfies the majority of *users* making a comment or complaint. The procedure shall include provision for independent review of individual complaints. The subject of complaints and responses shall be published to users, omitting information which would identify individual *users* or staff other than senior office-holders, or which is confidential, or which might otherwise cause distress.

9.1.2 *Notes:* In publishing comments/complaints/responses it is acceptable to summarise broad subject areas provided that this does not obscure significant content.

9.1.3 *Guidance:* The website <http://www.servicefirst.gov.uk> provides guidance on handling complaints. There is also a report on that website of a new British Standard - BS 8600:99 - dealing with the effective management and handling

of complaints. Checking satisfaction with comments/complaints processes can be done by surveying participants once their comment/complaint has reached the end of the process. Sample size may be a difficulty. Independent review is often available through ombudsmen but it is potentially useful to have an external reviewer as an intermediate stage before the ombudsman. It is possible that professional peers could act as reviewers although this does not seem to have aided public confidence in the police. The publication of comments/complaints and responses can be achieved through e.g. summaries on notice boards; folders with edited copies of the correspondence etc.; annual reports; newsletters.

9.1.4 *Audit methods:* Check existence of policy and procedure. Check publication/promotion of process. Check take-up and sample comments/complaints.

9.2 The *archive service* regularly reviews *Stakeholders'* assessments of its performance and makes improvements where possible.

9.2.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall formally seek the views of *Stakeholders* regarding its performance on an at least annual basis. The results of such consultation shall be part of published plans and reviews.

9.2.2 *Notes:* As *Stakeholders* will be diverse the methods of communication are likely to be diverse in form and frequency. 'Formally' is significant as it means that the process should be explicit consultation with as representative a body of stakeholders as can be achieved. 'Performance' is also significant - while the form of an archive's services may be wholly correct and all targets met, how the service actually feels to a *user* may be less satisfactory. This requirement differs from routine soliciting of comment, complaint and other feedback in that such feedback tends to concern the everyday delivery of service. This exercise is intended to increase the possibility of other more strategic issues being raised, where they exist.

9.2.3 *Guidance:* Surveys and consultative bodies are obvious routes to reach *Users*. Funding bodies may be consulted through an annual reporting/planning process. Irregular users and non-users are more difficult to reach but may be addressed through e.g. open meetings, newspaper articles/adverts, leafleting etc. There may be scope for *archive services* to combine in running such consultation exercises.

9.2.4 *Audit methods:* Check documentation of consultative processes. Check with sample of stakeholders.

9.3 The policies of the *archive service* reflect the views and interests of its *stakeholders*.

9.3.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall inform its work by active engagement with *stakeholders* and encouraging their feedback and involvement with the *archive service*. The *archive service* shall have a strategy and implementation plan for identifying and engaging with *stakeholder* groups. The *archive service*

shall have identified the requirements of *stakeholders* and can demonstrate that action has been taken following engagement. The *archive service* shall also seek to define and act on the interests of absent *stakeholders* including future *users*.

9.3.2 *Notes:* While the consultation on top-level objectives can be as infrequent as once every five years, this element is concerned with involvement at the day to day level. *Archive services* will vary in the extent to which their parent bodies will permit involvement by other *stakeholders* and in the level of involvement desired by *stakeholders*.

9.3.3 *Guidance:* Consultation can be achieved through e.g. focus groups, regular *user* groups, open meetings, *user* and wider citizen surveys, and liaison with depositors and paymasters. The point is to ensure consultation as a continuing process from diverse sources. Evidence of action taken in response to consultation and feedback should be recorded in minutes of meetings and staff briefing notes. The use of logs and paper-trails to provide evidence is also recommended

9.3.4 *Audit methods:* Evidence of identification of *stakeholder* groups - staff, *users*, potential *users*, funders, local *community*, other *archive services* and information providers etc. Evidence of engagement with *stakeholders* and understanding of their requirements e.g. minutes of meetings. Evidence of action.

10. Key principles: effectiveness and efficiency

10.1 The *archive service* is managed so as to provide best value for money for its *stakeholders*.

10.1.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall manage access to meet its aims effectively and efficiently.

10.1.2 *Notes:* 'Effective' is the achievement of desired *outputs/outcomes*. 'Efficient' is the full achievement of desired *outputs/outcomes* while using the minimum resources to do so. There has sometimes been confusion that 'efficiency' is simply cost-cutting. If costs are minimal but the *outcome* not achieved then that is not efficiency; it may even be waste. 'Best value' emphasises the twin approach of achieving *outcomes* while at the same time minimising the resources needed to achieve them.

10.1.3 *Guidance:* Effectiveness can be demonstrated by stating agreed aims in advance and providing evidence that they have been achieved. *Outcomes* are more useful than *outputs* but more difficult to establish. Efficiency is more difficult to demonstrate when the industry is so varied - industry-standard costs do not exist. Methods which can be used include comparison with previous performance and with suitable benchmark services. Evidence of resource allocation to achieve the various aims is important as a means of demonstrating that the stated aims are the real aims.

10.1.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence from annual reports and accounts, business plans, evidence of benchmarking and trend measurement.

10.2 The *archive service* innovates to deliver better services and achieve best value. It actively manages risk when doing so.

10.2.1 *Requirements*: The *archive service* should maintain an awareness of the external environment, identifying needs for change and opportunities from change. It should seek effective new methods and technologies from within the profession and other sectors. It should demonstrate openness to innovation from stakeholder suggestions including from staff. The *archive service* should manage the risks associated with innovation.

10.2.2 *Notes*: This is a problematic area. There is no doubt that change is almost certain to be necessary if a service is to continue to be regarded as high quality. Innovation may not always be successful but it does allow learning which can have value elsewhere. On the other hand, the standard should not force change for the sake of it.

10.2.3 *Guidance*: Chartermark applicants are required to demonstrate innovation. Annual planning exercises can include an element of benchmarking and environmental scanning to seek needs/opportunities for change. Good communications with stakeholders in general will create opportunities for suggestions leading to change. Risk management in the public sector is a major theme of current government thinking - a change is sought from risk aversion to risk management.. Standard project management techniques include provision for risk management e.g. the running of 'risk registers'.

10.2.4 *Audit methods*: Seek examples of innovation since the previous audit. Check evidence of environmental awareness and external contacts. Check evidence of stakeholder communication for examples of innovation from suggestions. Check risk management documentation associated with innovation projects. Check comments/complaints associated with innovation.

10.3 The *archive service* regularly reviews the effectiveness of its actions in achieving its aims, and makes improvements where possible.

10.3.1 *Requirements*: The *archive service* shall publish plans for the achievement of its aims, with performance measures and targets which are capable of audit. It shall publish reviews at least annually of how it has performed against these plans and how it has met its aims. Plans for the following period should refer to such reviews and indicate where improvements in approach have been made.

10.3.2 *Notes*: 'Publish' in this context means make publicly available; some degree of promotion is necessary.

10.3.3 *Guidance*: This reflects common business planning processes and should not necessarily involve the creation of specific documentation for the purposes of meeting the Standard.

10.3.4 *Audit methods:* Check documentation of aims, plans, performance measures, targets, reviews. Check collection systems for data related to targets and measures. Seek signs of change in response to evidence of review.

11. Service management

11.1 It is clear who is responsible for the service and how they can be contacted.

11.1.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall have a manager identified as responsible for its *access services*. The *archive service* shall make it clear at all *interfaces* who is responsible for the service and how they can be contacted.

11.1.2 *Notes:* This may be a statement of two or more tiers ranging from a specific service section or period of service delivery to the *archive service* as a whole.

11.1.3 *Guidance:* It is expected that the head of the *archive service* will be identified e.g. in publicity and information leaflets, signage etc. In addition there may also be a notice giving the duty officer in charge that day or the name of the person responsible for a particular site or aspect of the service.

11.1.4 *Audit methods:* Check *interfaces* for clear communication of who is responsible.

12. Staff participation and responsibilities

12.1 Everyone at the *archive service* is involved in delivering the right service to users

12.1.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall seek to involve all its staff in the development of *access services*. The *archive service* shall have documented methods of facilitating the involvement of all levels of staff in planning *services*, improvement of *service* delivery and innovation.

12.1.2 *Notes:* The staff are *stakeholders* so their involvement is covered in relation to planning (Section 6). It is important that staff convey the right image in their dealings with *users* and that a *user-friendly* culture is the hallmark of the *archive service*.

12.1.3 *Guidance:* This does not necessarily involve documented *systems* but documented *practice*, which can be ad hoc. The documentation need not be specifically for the standard but can be parts of annual reports, individual performance assessments etc. Systems which can be used include the approaches to be found in quality management - quality circles, quality improvement teams - and older ideas such as staff suggestion schemes.

12.1.4 *Audit methods*: Check that documentation exists and has appropriate content. Check with sample of staff and managers.

12.2 The staff are guided by clear standards of service

12.2.1 *Requirements*: The *archive service* shall set standards for *services* and ensure that staff are guided in delivering to them.

12.2.2 *Notes*: The setting of standards can, if they are made explicit, help manage the expectations of *users* and so their eventual satisfaction.

12.2.3 *Guidance*: It may not be practical to set out and communicate comprehensive service standards. Standards for particular areas of service can be developed incrementally and may be easier to communicate to staff and *users* in a format which focuses on a specific aspect of service. Some standards may not be readily communicated to *users* but clearly all need to be understood by staff responsible for delivering them. Staff participation in the creation of standards will assist their adoption. Archives can readily co-operate in the creation of pro-formas for local service standards.

12.2.4 *Audit methods*: Check complaints records and other *user* feedback. Check understanding of standards with a sample of staff.

12.3 All staff providing services are individually identifiable.

12.3.1 *Requirements*: The *archive service* shall ensure that *users* can identify the staff who are providing the *service*. The staff of the *archive service* who deal directly with *users* shall be individually identifiable by means appropriate to the *service interface*.

12.3.2 *Notes*: For most on-site *services* this might mean name badges but there are circumstances where a name badge is not appropriate¹⁴. The real requirement is that *users* can say, if they wish to make a complaint or compliment, who actually dealt with them in terms which allow the *archive service* to make the identification. The requirement also applies to telephone, letter, e-mail and other remote *services*.

12.3.3 *Guidance*: Methods used include the use of full names, first names, individual pseudonyms, pay numbers. These should be applied consistently in all forms of contact, including telephone and e-mail *interfaces*.

12.3.4 *Audit methods*: Check that means of identification are in use. Check complaints records.

¹⁴ For example, where there are genuine concerns for individual safety.

12.4 The service is provided by staff who have been fully trained for their jobs, or who are supervised trainees.

12.4.1 *Requirements:* The *archive service* shall ensure that the staff providing access have the appropriate skills and knowledge. The *archive service* shall define its specific requirements for skills and knowledge to achieve its various access objectives. The *archive service* shall deploy staff to meet those requirements, and where necessary ensure that staff are given the opportunity to undertake appropriate training to support this. Trainee staff shall be adequately supervised.

12.4.2 *Notes:* In general, a proportion of staff will be undergoing training. Provided there is adequate supervision and the trainee is confident about referring to supervisors, then this is not an issue.

12.4.3 *Guidance:* The *archive service* should ensure that its objectives are realistic in terms of existing staff expertise, the rate at which expertise can be acquired and the impact of likely staff turnover. The implication of the requirement is the setting of standards for expertise against the various objectives and the development of training or recruitment programmes to achieve them. Some thought will need to be given to aligning staff expertise and the analysis of specific *community* requirements. It is expected that customer care and information skills (e.g. reference enquiry techniques) will form part of the training for most if not all staff. Archives should consider badging of trainees as such in order to manage the expectations of *users* and provide some protection for the trainees themselves.

12.4.4 *Audit methods:* Check expertise levels/training records of staff on duty. Check measures of achieving objectives. Check alignment of *community* needs/wants with staff expertise.

12.5 Most service delivery problems are resolved by staff at the *interfaces*

12.5.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should maximise discretion to satisfy *users* at the *service interface* and support staff in the exercise of that discretion. The *archive service* shall ensure that staff at *service interfaces* have sufficient guidance, authority and resources to act to satisfy *users*.

12.5.2 *Notes:* It is understood that this is within the constraints of the policies and resources of the *archive service*. The extent to which this element is applied will vary according to local context and judgement. At one extreme there are quality systems which determine precisely what will be delivered and deviation is regarded as failure, at the other there is the wholly customised *service*. *Archive services* will generally fall in between and the purpose of this element of the standard is (a) to engage staff in delivering a *service* which satisfies as without that engagement it may fail and (b) to reduce the frustration felt by *users* when either they are refused flexibility of *service* or when decisions are delayed by referral up the line.

12.5.3 *Guidance*: Support to staff includes training in the limits of discretion and in decision-making.

12.5.4 *Audit methods*: Check complaints records and other *user* feedback. Check with a sample of staff.

13. User responsibilities

13.1 Users are aware of their responsibilities in helping to ensure the preservation of archival materials

13.1.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall ensure that the responsibilities of *users* are made clear, that the *service* is designed to facilitate the discharge of those responsibilities by the *user* and that steps are taken to ensure compliance

13.1.2 *Notes*: Access to unique archival material, however important, is ultimately secondary to its long-term preservation. The *archive service* has an over-riding duty to prevent theft, damage and loss. A partnership approach in which *users* are encouraged to share with the *archive service* in securing the long-term preservation of the material is to be recommended as it helps to get round problems that arise if the *archive service* is seen to be unduly restrictive or concerned with “petty rules”. Statements on *user* responsibilities should explain the *archive service*’s preservation role and state how *users* can help. Security requirements (e.g. use of lockers for personal belonging) and protective measures should be explained. Guidance should be offered on proper handling techniques. The *archive service* shall provide equipment (e.g. book rests and protective sleeves) to enable *users* to follow guidance, and it should be made clear that staff will offer advice and support.

13.1.3 *Guidance*: Responsibilities can be communicated to *users* in a number of ways, e.g. by information leaflets, notices, rules, guidance from staff and through general publicity materials which place emphasis in preservation. It might be appropriate to include a section on *user* responsibilities – as part of the contract between the *archive service* and its *users* – in a *service* charter.

13.1.4 *Audit methods*: Existence of statements explaining *user* responsibilities. Interviews with staff and sample *users* to establish levels of understanding.

13.2 Users treat staff courteously and respect conditions regarding the use and acknowledgement of information from the archive service

13.2.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* should make clear its requirements so that *users* know what is expected of them

13.2.2 *Notes*: Staff are entitled to courtesy from *users* and those who obtain information from the *archive service* are expected to abide by the terms and conditions on which it has been made available. Courtesy to staff includes

acknowledgement of assistance as well as common civility in the nature of address and conversation. Discrimination against staff by *users* should not be tolerated.

13.2.3 *Guidance*: Advice to *users* might take the form of a leaflet setting out what is expected of them and suggesting appropriate forms of acknowledgement to staff, to the *archive service*, and to the donors and depositors of material

13.2.3 *Audit methods*: Evidence of existence of guidelines.

13.3 Users show respect for other users

13.3.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* should state its policy on the use of its facilities and encourage *users* to respect other *users*.

13.3.2 *Notes*: Apart from common courtesy and understanding, there are matters affecting the use of facilities where *users* may be required to conform to accepted or stated norms of behaviour to other *users*. Conversation between *users* (and between *users* and staff) can be disruptive, as can laptop computers and mobile phones. Small children and unaccompanied minors can also cause difficulties for other *users*. It is helpful for the *archive service* to have a policy on such matters and to make its requirements clear to *users*.

13.3.3 *Guidance*: Policy statements on *user* behaviour and facilities for equipment. Codes of conduct. Provision of special facilities such as sockets for portable equipment, places where mobile phones may be used, public areas for private conversations and supervised areas for children to play.

13.3.4 *Audit methods*: Existence of policies. Evidence of special provision made to meet *user* needs and thereby reduce the likelihood of conflict. Feedback on noise levels and study environment in reading rooms.

14. Service information

14.1 The *archive service* is known by the *community* it exists to serve

14.1.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall have a communications strategy and implementation plan to ensure that information about its holdings and *services* is readily available to its target *user* population (its *community*).

14.1.2 *Notes*: Publicity about the existence of the *archive service* as a place where information is available will help to encourage use by all sections of its *community* including people with only a faint idea of the information they require as well as those with advanced research needs. A range of strategies will be needed to ensure that information about the *service* reaches the full range of *users* and potential *users*.

14.1.3 *Guidance*: The *archive service* should be easily found in directories likely to be used by its target *user* population. This might include general telephone

directories and Yellow Pages as well as e.g. guides for *researchers*. *Service* information should be provided through publicity materials and on the Internet. This might include a statement of collecting policy as well as guides to holdings.

14.1.4 *Audit methods*: Existence of material to publicise and promote the *archive service* and its holdings to a diverse *community*. Evidence of evaluation of publicity methods and re-orientation of promotion, where necessary, in the light of feedback and findings.

14.2 Anyone with a potential interest in the *archive* can easily find out about it

14.2.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall ensure that general descriptions of its entire holdings are readily accessible to potential *users*

14.2.2 *Notes*: A pre-requisite of access is that *users* can find out what the *archive service* holds and then seek to identify material of specific relevance to their studies.

14.2.3 *Guidance*: Good, up-to-date, general guidance is required. It should be available to remote *users* and also on-site. Information can be made available in a range of forms, such as leaflets, lists, publications and Internet guides to the collection. There should be sufficient guidance to enable those with specific queries to make further enquiries with reasonable certainty that the *archive service* holds the source material they require. Consideration should be given to clarifying areas which the archive does not cover and which are the subject of frequent abortive visits. *Users* should have access to information and advice from staff by e-mail, telephone and post as well as by personal visit. *Users* should have unrestricted access to catalogue information on-site and/or at other places with free public access. Third party holdings of the archive service's catalogues and surrogates should be actively encouraged and suitably publicised. Key locations include the National Register of Archives and, for many services, the public library network.

14.2.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of existence of handlists and means of access to it in a variety of forms (including remote access). Assessment of availability and quality of catalogues. Checks to ensure that the information is regularly updated. Feedback on the usefulness of general descriptions of holdings. *User* validation of advice and information from staff.

14.3 Users understand their rights of access to the services of the *archive service*

14.3.1 *Requirement*: The terms and conditions of access to the *archive service* (including warnings of restrictions) shall be communicated to *users*.

14.3.2 *Notes*: Having established that the *archive* holds material relevant to their interests, *users* will need to know how to gain access to it. They will need information about their rights of access and these should be publicised and

disseminated. This should include the eligibility criteria for membership and admission, reader registration procedures, and practical access arrangements (see below). Any restrictions or exclusions should be carefully specified, including those resulting from limits of capacity. The basis on which material is available for study (e.g. for consultation only) should be explained and attention should be drawn to issues of ownership and copyright. *Users* need to be made aware that access is subject to responsible use they and should understand that the *archive service's* primary duty is to ensure the safe preservation of the material on behalf of the donors and depositors as well as the *community* at large. In addition to statutory closure periods, restrictions on access may be imposed for reasons of confidentiality or because of the physical condition of material.

14.3.3 *Guidance*: This information may be made available through publicity materials, leaflets and Internet guides to the *archive service*. If formal application procedures are involved, then forms specifying the information required to secure admission (e.g. proof of identity) should be available.

14.3.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of information in publicity materials. Feedback on *user-friendliness* and accuracy of published information.

15. Access to services

15.1 Information on the practical arrangements for access to services is made available to users

15.1.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall provide information on access to the *archive service* and its *services*

15.1.2 *Notes*: The arrangements for access to the *archive service* are complex and cover a wide range of aspects including on-site and remote *services*. Where relevant, the information available to *users* should specify conditions of access (see above), address and contact details, opening hours, how to find the *archive service* (with information on car parking and transport links), access for *users* with disabilities, reading room facilities and *services* for *users*, *service* standards, booking arrangements for seats and equipment, document ordering and delivery arrangements (including advance ordering), use of equipment (e.g. instructions on how to operate readers), special requirements (e.g. use of pencils and laptop computers etc.), copying *services* and prices, refreshment and comfort facilities for *users*, the name(s) of responsible person(s), and how to make a comment or complaint

15.1.3 *Guidance*: This information should be carefully set out in leaflets, publicity materials and Internet guides - and regularly updated.

15.1.4 *Audit methods*: Documented information. Evidence of *user* satisfaction with advance information and improvement resulting from customer feedback

15.2 Users are easily able to find the *archive service*

15.2.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should be conveniently located and accessible to *users* from its *community*

15.2.2 *Notes:* The location of an *archive services service* will depend on a number of factors, but the importance of convenience for *users* should not be overlooked. An *archive service* serving a geographical area should be sited centrally in a place with good public transport services and links. On-site access points should be properly signposted so that they are easily located by persons using any common means of transport. Remote and on-site *service* 'gateways' should state the name of the *archive service*, its purpose and the name of the responsible person.

15.2.3 *Guidance:* Information on the physical location can be communicated through maps, written instructions and signposts - regularly updated as necessary. Remote access points should be easy to find in directories appropriate to the medium.

15.2.4 *Audit methods:* Customer feedback on signposting and access instructions.

15.3 Services are available at the times when the *community* requires them

15.3.1 *Requirement:* The opening hours of the *archive service* and the times at which remote *services* are available should be appropriate to the effective and efficient achievement of its access aims and should be clearly communicated.

15.3.2 *Notes:* Because of resource constraints and conflicting demands from *stakeholders* and *users*, it is important that the *archive service* should endeavour to provide a range of *services* available at times to suit its *community*. There will be different times for different *services* (e.g. the times for document production and copying *services* may not be the same as searchroom opening hours). The use of e-mail will enable *users* to log their enquiries at times which are convenient for them but when other *services* are not available. Electronic document delivery will soon enable the range of out-of-hours *services* to be expanded. The *archive service* should match its *service* times to patterns of use in order to make the most efficient and effective use of resources for maximum *user* benefit. The need to offer appropriate opening hours applies equally to on-site and remote (e.g. on-line) *services*.

15.3.3 *Guidance:* Communication of opening hours to on-site and remote visitors. Opening hours should be notified to the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and (for appointed places of deposit for public records) the Public Record Office.

15.3.4 *Audit methods:* Evidence of opening hours being managed to meet aims. Evidence of consultation with target *user* groups in determining suitable opening hours.

16. Access to content

16.1 Users are able to find specific records and items of interest in the archive

16.1.1 *Requirement:* Finding aids should be created and maintained so as to achieve (among other purposes) the defined aims relating to access

16.1.2 *Notes:* The *archive service* should aim to provide collection-level descriptions of its entire holdings. More detailed descriptions should be created according to defined targets and standards. The programme of creating finding aids should be referenced to the access aims and there should be evidence of consultation with the *community* regarding priorities and formats. All *users* should receive courteous, timely and effective help on how to find the information they require.

16.1.3 *Guidance:* Finding aids should conform to current archival standards and should be suitable for automation and networking. In addition to lists based on archival grouping, topic-based finding aids should be created to meet the needs of the *community*. All lists and catalogues should be appropriately indexed. Expert advice from staff should be available to *users* who require specialist advice on their topic of research.

16.1.4 *Audit methods:* Testing of finding aids by trial queries. Evidence of *user* consultation. Customer feedback on the level of detail and accuracy of finding aids.

16.2 There is reasonable access for anyone to consult finding aids

16.2.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* shall endeavour to ensure that its holdings are catalogued and indexed to an appropriate level of detail and, where such descriptions exist, it shall make them readily available for public consultation in a range of media.

16.2.2 *Notes:* Finding aids should be compiled in order to identify items of potential interest and to give, where necessary, contextual and interpretative guidance. The views of *users* can be helpful in determining the level of detail appropriate for lists and indexes to particular types of material. The *archive service* should also have access to information on relevant material held in other repositories.

16.2.3 *Guidance:* Catalogues, whether on paper or in electronic form, should be available on site and to remote *users*. Access can also be provided through third parties (e.g. the National Register of Archives, branch libraries and local history societies).

16.2.4 *Audit methods:* *User* feedback on the finding aids. Information on proportions of catalogued and unlisted material, and evidence of steps taken to open up collections in response to priorities drawing on the views of *users*

16.3 Users have choices in the means of access to content

16.3.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* shall provide its *community* with choices in the means of access to *content*, or shall be actively developing a range of *services* to meet the needs of its diverse *user* population

16.3.2 *Notes:* Choice is fundamental to successful *service* delivery. The *archive service* should recognise that different *users* have distinct and diverse needs, and should cater for them in a variety of ways as best the available resources allow. Personal visits to the *archive service* will suit some but other *users* will prefer remote access, using on-line *services* or commissioning research. Exhibitions, publications, media coverage and websites allow those with general interest to have access to archives.

16.3.3 *Guidance:* The choice of access provided by different means should be appropriate to the levels of demand - actual and potential - and the *archive service* should be aware of the ways in which developing new means of access can help to relieve pressure on existing *services*.

16.3.4 *Audit methods:* Evidence of assessment of *user* requirements and *community* needs in the development of *services*. Availability of choices. Minutes of internal meetings recording discussions and decisions on access issues.

16.4 Restrictions on access to content are clearly communicated to users

16.4.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* shall have a policy on closure periods, and this shall be clearly communicated to *users*

16.4.2 *Notes:* In any *archive service*, access to particular items will be limited by statutory or other closure period and by restrictions applied on account of the physical condition of the material and the associated risk of damage through handling. It is important that policies are clearly stated and consistently applied, and they should therefore be understood by staff and known to *users*. Closure periods should also be marked in finding aids and on document wrappers. Locally determined closure periods (i.e. those set by the *archive service*) should reflect the access aims of the *archive service*.

16.4.3 *Guidance:* The *archive service* should prepare policy statements on closure periods based on statutory requirements (e.g. as prescribed for Public Records) and standard practice (e.g. as specified in the professional literature on retention schedules and closure periods for particular types of material). Restrictions on access imposed by donors and depositors should also be clearly indicated. Statements on the criteria for designating material as “unfit for production” should also be drawn up and made available to *users*.

16.4.4 *Audit methods:* Existence of policy statements and evidence of compliance with statutory requirements and best practice. Clear marking on finding aids.

16.5 Users are able to obtain copies of relevant materials or are given clear reasons where restrictions are imposed

16.5.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should have a published policy on copying and standards for its copying *services*

16.5.2 *Notes:* A copying policy is necessary to ensure equity in dealing with requests from *users* for copies. The availability of copies may be limited for a number of reasons, such as copyright, owner-imposed restrictions and physical condition. The policy should state the terms on which copies can be provided and provide information on formats and prices. The delivery times on orders should be stated.

16.5.3 *Guidance:* The policy and standards should be available to *users* in the form of leaflets or on-line information. Performance against standards should be reported.

16.5.4 *Audit methods:* Existence of published policy etc. Evidence of *user* satisfaction with copying quality and delivery times

16.6 The *community* benefits from the *content* in ways other than direct access

16.6.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should make provision for meeting the needs of the *community* through the media and through educational and outreach programmes

16.6.2 *Notes:* While direct access and information *services* tailored to specific enquiries are likely to be the main *interfaces*, the *archive service* can maintain its public image and promote its *services* through indirect contact with its *community*. This may take the form of outreach activities, publications programmes, educational work and publicity in the media.

16.6.3 *Guidance:* The *archive service* can keep abreast of best practice in these areas through benchmarking and professional literature. Analysis of the needs and wants of the *community* can also guide work in this area.

16.6.4 *Audit methods:* Evidence of activities undertaken in response to *community* needs

16.7 Where enquiries cannot be answered at the *archive service*, staff do their best to refer them accurately to an appropriate source

16.7.1 *Requirement:* Staff should have access to information that will enable them to redirect enquiries to other *archive services* or to sources of expert advice

16.7.2 *Notes:* While dealing with enquiries relating to material outside the *archive service* is strictly outside the limits of responsibility, it is in the interests of good customer care to attempt to refer them to an appropriate source. This can help to create trust and respect for the *archive service* among *users*. A “one stop” approach to all enquiries is to be recommended. This is especially important in

archive services where important material relating to an area may be held elsewhere. To refer people carelessly or inaccurately to other sources of information causes frustration for *users* and, ultimately, harms the reputation of the service. Front-line staff should be offered training to enable them to refer enquiries correctly and should be encouraged to develop a broad knowledge not only of sources relevant to the *community* but also other commonly misplaced queries.

16.7.3 *Guidance*: There should be a programme of staff training to ensure that front-line staff are aware of common enquiries and know about material available elsewhere. Standard directories should be available at enquiry desks and staff should have access to relevant on-line information services. The *archive service* could prepare local information sheets or databases available to the public or used by staff in answering enquiries relating to material available elsewhere.

16.7.4 *Audit methods*: Feedback from *users* on referrals. Existence of sources to facilitate referrals and evidence of staff training in enquiry handling techniques.

17. Services for new researchers

17.1 Service design allows new researchers (remote or on-site) to make full use of the *archive service* with confidence and with the minimum of delay

17.1.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall make suitable arrangements for the induction of first-time or occasional *researchers*.

17.1.2 *Notes*: The induction of new *researchers* can help to ensure that they gain maximum benefit from the *service*, with confidence and with the minimum of delay. At the same time, induction can reduce the amount of staff time needed to look after people who are unfamiliar with the *service*. Some of this, but not all, can be done through advance information made available to *users*.

17.1.3 *Guidance*: Special provision for new *researchers* might include the provision of introductory materials, welcoming procedures, video presentations, induction events and access to specialist advisors to advise on research methods and sources. Finding aids, document reference systems, correct handling techniques and production procedures should be explained. Physical layout of facilities, signage and the design of documentation (e.g. registration and ordering systems) should also be arranged with the new or occasional *researcher* in mind. The location of finding aids, advice desks, document ordering points, and copying *services* should all be clearly identified and signposted. A member of staff should be on hand to provide clarification.

17.1.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of *service* process design to facilitate self induction and self service. Assessment of signage and guidance material. Feedback from new *researchers* and the evidence of improvements based on their suggestions.

18. On-site service delivery

18.1 Researchers are able to get access to services

18.1.1 *Requirement:* Access formalities should be kept as simple as possible, and shall not discriminate against any group of *researchers*.

18.1.2 *Notes:* Registration and booking systems are generally in place as part of the *archive service's* security measures rather than as a means of restricting access. However, it should be appreciated that such measures can be seen as restrictive and may deter *users* from visiting the *archive service* as *researchers*. The provision of a proof of identity before a potential *user* is given physical access to original archival materials should be considered a minimum requirement; however, consideration should also be given to the levels of security required for access to particular *services* and to surrogate archival materials. Formalities should be appropriate to the level of risk and should be compatible with the *archive service's* aims on access (e.g. allowing access to finding aids without having to register or show proof of identity).

18.1.3 *Guidance:* The existence of a standard readers' ticket system (CARN) has helped to improve access to those *archive services* which consider that such admission requirements are necessary.

18.1.4 *Audit methods:* Feedback on access formalities and registration systems

18.2 Researchers are accommodated appropriately when they visit the archive service

18.2.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should provide sufficient capacity to effectively and efficiently meet its access aims

18.2.2 *Notes:* *Archive services* should provide a designated study area sufficient to satisfy normal demand for public access to the records and suitable for their inspection under constant invigilation. The requirements are set out in current standards for record repositories and archival buildings. Capacity relates to the provision of seats and *services* for on-site *researchers* which can be measured in terms of volume (e.g. visits and productions), speed (e.g. rates of production and transaction processing), and time (i.e. the number of days and hours the *service* is available). The aim should generally be to provide sufficient space to accommodate *researchers* without the need to book seats and readers in advance. Accurate statistics of the number of visitors should be maintained in order to help the *archive service* to optimise the use of space in a way which reflects the numerical importance of different categories of *researcher*.

18.2.3 *Guidance:* To cater for public access, the *archive service* should provide appropriate levels of seating capacity and desk space for *researchers*, microform reading equipment, lockers for personal belongings, electric sockets for laptop computers etc. This should include special facilities for maps and large volumes. If films, sound recordings and electronic records are held,

appropriate equipment should be available to allow *researchers* to have access. All equipment should be kept in good working order and any necessary maintenance should be carried out outside normal opening hours wherever possible.

18.2.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of monitoring of use to adjust capacity to meet fluctuations of demand for particular facilities and *services*. Evidence of views on quality of facilities, especially comparisons with other *archive services*.

18.3 The environment for consulting documents is appropriate to the nature of the material

18.3.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* should ensure that the physical and/or technical environment for consulting documents is appropriate to the medium of the records or surrogate copies made available for use

18.3.2 *Notes*: The reading room equipment and furnishings should be suitable both for the consultation of original archives in a range of formats and for access to surrogate copies (e.g. microform or digitised images). There should be sufficient space (e.g. for large format items), and suitable rests and protective materials should be available (e.g. book rests for large or tightly-bound volumes and weights for rolled maps). Equipment should be chosen on the basis of its suitability for the material (e.g. separate types of microfilm reader may be required for, say, newspapers on roll film or computer output on fiche). Specific regulations may apply to certain types of equipment (e.g. electrical testing of equipment may be required if circuit breakers are not supplied) and Health and Safety requirements should be met. The temperature and humidity in the reading rooms should be as suitable for documents produced from environmentally-controlled storage as workplace regulations allow. The area should benefit from at least some natural light, supplemented by artificial light if necessary, for *researchers* using original documents. Darkened areas should be provided for viewing equipment (e.g. microform readers).

18.3.3 *Guidance*: *Users* should be consulted for their views on equipment. Information on suitable equipment can often be obtained from other *archive services* where models have been tried and tested. Trade literature and consumer data will point to best practice and standards.

18.3.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of *user* views on the appropriateness of equipment and environment for document consultation.

18.4 Service processes and standards are clearly explained and readily intelligible to the user

18.4.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* should have simple processes for access and these should be explained to *users* along with any relevant standards

18.4.2 *Notes*: Processes might include systems for reader registration, seat reservations, ordering and returning documents, obtaining copies, special access to “closed” or “unfit” documents and remote access. These should be clearly explained, with any standards (e.g. target times for document delivery) that apply. *Users* should also be informed of the means of redress where standards and targets are not met. All processes should be as simple and *user-friendly* as is compatible with accuracy and security. *Users* should only be required to provide information required for the process, and flexibility (e.g. for ordering several consecutive items in a series in one order) should be built in to the processes where possible. The focus should be on access aims when designing processes and setting standards.

18.4.3 *Guidance*: Document production standards should indicate how long it takes from the time of ordering to delivery, and figures should be available to show performance in meeting published targets. Information on the length of notice needed if material is held in outstores should be suitably publicised. Instructions should be provided on how to use equipment (e.g. on the loading and unloading of microfilms)

18.4.4 *Audit methods*: Existence of processes for required transactions. Evidence of *user* views on processes and standards.

19. Remote service delivery

19.1 Users can find out about *content* without visiting

19.1.1 *Requirement*: The *archive service* shall define and publicise its *service* standard for remote access

19.1.2 *Notes*: Remote access offers *archive services* the means of extending the availability of *services*, reaching new audiences, increasing use, and making a greater impact on the *community*. The *archive service* should provide a range of enquiry *services* for *users* who wish to conduct their research by letter, fax, telephone or by e-mail. This should include scope for commissioned (i.e. paid) research. Response times should be stated along with the means of redress available to *users* where *services* fail to meet the published standards. Staff should be trained to provide appropriate levels of response to remote enquiries. Finding aids should be available on-line to facilitate remote access.

19.1.3 *Guidance*: The standard should identify the forms of remote access to be available, define volumes and response times, provide information on *content*, specify conditions and restrictions, and give details of prices. Reply systems should be developed to deal with frequently asked questions.

19.1.4 *Audit methods*: Evidence of consultation with the *community* on the standard. Proof of changing arising from consultation and feedback. Availability of statistical information on the level of use of forms of remote access

19.2 Remote access services are being developed to open up the *content* to

a wider range of users

19.2.1 *Requirement:* The *archive service* should recognise the potential impact of developing *remote access services* to open up the *content* to new audiences

19.2.2 *Notes:* Technological advances enable material to be made available in ways that were unimaginable even five to ten years ago. Resource requirements, however, may restrict what can be achieved without undermining essential preservation and access activities. Capacity should be appropriate to levels of demand, and should not be at the expense of essential preservation and access activities.

19.2.3 *Guidance:* Participation in the Access to Archives programme. Imaginative use of resources to attract funding for retro-conversion and digitisation projects. Development of automated e-mail responses to queries.

19.2.4 *Audit methods:* Evidence of positive involvement in opportunities to develop *remote access services*. *User feedback*