Richard Burton Archives

Collections Development Policy

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**1. Mission Statement**

The Richard Burton Archives is the corporate memory and archive repository of Swansea University and holds material of local, regional and national significance. The Archives selects, preserves and makes accessible to all the records of historical value created or acquired by the University. Through its holdings and the expertise of its staff the Archives actively supports the mission of the University to provide an environment of research excellence, to deliver an outstanding student experience with teaching of the highest quality, and to enrich the community and cultural life of Wales and beyond.

**2. Introduction**

The purpose of this Collections Development Policy is to provide a framework for the maintenance and development of the Richard Burton Archives collections, to agree priorities and to promote consistency in future decisions. It is noted that all collection management issues will be subject to external constraints of funding and accommodation.

**3. Purpose and Aims of the Archives**

The Archives is recognised, nationally and internationally, as a resource and source of associated expertise and aims to preserve Swansea University’s archive collections and make them accessible for current and future generations.

The Archives has strengths in the following areas:

* [South Wales Coalfield](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4720594) and trade union records
* [Local archives - records of businesses, religious denominations, and notable families](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4720595)
* [Archives relating to the metallurgical industries (e.g. copper, tinplate and steel)](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4891186)
* [The actor Richard Burton](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4720598)
* [Literary collections, particularly Welsh writing in English](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4720596)
* [Swansea University](https://libguides.swansea.ac.uk/c.php?g=666151&p=4720597)

The Archives policy is to collect material which directly relates to existing collections as well as the records of the University, prominent figures associated with it, or material relevant to research in the University. The archives will complement the library holdings.

The aims of the Archives are:

* to provide resources which support the teaching, learning and research activities of the University
* to provide resources for research by both the higher education community and the wider community
* to advise the University on record keeping issues and related information policy matters

The Archives will achieve these aims by:

* collecting material which relates to existing collections as well as the records of the University, prominent figures associated with it, or material relevant to research in the University
* ensuring that the collections are properly conserved and maintained in suitable accommodation
* providing reliable finding aids to enable all users to access the Archives collections
* assisting users in selecting the material required and interpreting resources
* answering enquiries from researchers unable to physically access the Archives collections
* creating standards of service and adhering to them through monitoring and evaluation

The Archives seeks to provide the highest possible standards of professional stewardship and so will seek guidance as appropriate from professional bodies such as The National Archives (TNA) and the Welsh Government’s Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD).

The Archives will therefore:

* provide a secure environment for all archive collections
* maintain the best environmental conditions possible
* meet the different conservation needs of each section of the collection and identify priorities for preservation

Reference will be made to relevant standards and guidelines produced by external bodies. It is acknowledged that all such work will be affected by external factors of accommodation and funding.

**4. Context and Co-operation**

**4.1 Historical Background**

The Archives form part of the Library, which was established as part of the University at its foundation in 1920. The Archives hold the charters of the University and minutes of Court, Council, Senate and all established committees.

Arrangements are also in place for the selection and transfer of the University’s current business records.

Archives were first held by the University in the 1950s and the material related to Swansea and the local area. The Local Archive Collection includes the records of local businesses, particularly the metallurgical industries, the records of families and individuals, as well as collections relating to the Roman Catholic church of St David’s Priory, Swansea, and the Methodist circuit of Swansea and Gower.

The South Wales Coalfield Collection was established in 1969 as an attempt to preserve the documentary heritage of the mining community of South Wales. The officers of the National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area) were aware of the risk to the documentary heritage of the mining community and began the transfer of their non-current records to the Library at University College Swansea while encouraging their constituent lodges to do the same. In 1971 the South Wales Coalfield History Project was set up, funded by the Social Science Research Council, to locate and collect manuscript and printed material of archival significance. This lasted until 1974. The success of the South Wales Coalfield History Project lead to a second project from 1979 to 1982. The University was able to take a lead in the acquisition of large collections of important high quality material, including major archive holdings, resulting in the most extensive and comprehensive collections of their type in the country. The Archives maintains good relations with the principal depositors - the National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area) and the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. Material continues to be deposited from these depositors as well as individuals.

Other collections have been acquired and developed by the University in relation to research being undertaken, such as Welsh writing in English. In 2005, the papers of Richard Burton were deposited in the Archives by Sally Burton. Recent notable acquisitions include the purchase of a Dylan Thomas notebook and drafts of other poetic works, and the Jeff Towns Dylan Thomas collection.

The Archives now contains over 1722 linear metres of archives, which consist of trade union records, business records, local organisation archives, personal records, and a significant collection of photographs.

**4.2 Purpose**

The Archives will contribute to mission of Swansea University, which is to:

* Provide an environment of research excellence, with research that is world-leading, globally collaborative and internationally recognised;
* Deliver an outstanding student experience, with research-led and practice-driven teaching of the highest quality that produces global graduates educated and equipped for distinguished personal and professional achievement;
* Use its research strength, collaboration with industry and global reach, to drive economic growth, foster prosperity, enrich the community and cultural life of Wales and, contribute to the health, leisure and wellbeing of its citizens.

The Archives will contribute to the vision and purpose of Swansea University[[1]](#footnote-1) which is to balance excellent teaching with world-leading research and innovation in an open environment, and is underpinned by five key pillars:

* Civic Mission: the University is proud to belong to the City of Swansea and the wider Swansea Bay City Region, and celebrates that heritage. With campuses in three local authority areas, the University recognises that it is the region’s university.
* Student Experience: students are at the heart of the University and it takes pride in its consistently strong reputation for the quality of the student experience, the strength of student support services, and its commitment to student mental health and wellbeing.
* Learning and Teaching: the sharing of knowledge to nurture independent, critical thinking is fundamental to the University’s purpose. It enables the students to be resilient in the face of global challenges and to adapt to the changing world of work. It celebrates its Welsh heritage and is proud to be part of a bilingual nation.
* Research: the University’s research changes lives, drives innovation and regional growth, and is aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It impacts on culture and society as well as on health and wellbeing, the economy and the planet.
* Enterprise: the University is an exceptionally collaborative and entrepreneurial university. It was founded by industry, for industry, and remains true to the ambitions of its founders in that work with industrial, commercial and public sector partners for the benefit of the region and nation.

It will also contribute to the strategy of Information Services and Systems:

* Enable our students to achieve academic, professional and personal success
* Provide effective information resources and services to students, researchers, academics, administrators and all our users
* Review, improve and reconfigure our services and systems
* Engage effectively with all our users and stakeholders
* Develop collective team-working, cross-functional collaboration, staff development and related activities

The Archives will participate fully in professional networks, such as Archives and Records Council Wales, as well as other initiatives and partnerships designed to enhance co-operation between those responsible for preserving the heritage of South Wales. The Archives will also seek to maintain close contacts with groups of users in the research and higher education community, such as the Society for the Study of Labour History, and with the wider research community, represented by groups such as local history societies and organisations of enthusiasts.

**5. Users of the Archives**

The Archives contributes to the successful delivery of the teaching, research and outreach mission of Swansea University, through the delivery of services to the widest possible range of users. These include:

* Academic researchers
* Undergraduate and postgraduate students
* Members of the public engaged in private research or with a general interest
* Commercial researchers and media companies

Academic and student researchers come both from within Swansea University and from other institutions.

‘Use’ of the Archives includes study of its collections in the reading room, access to online catalogues, finding aids and digital resources, and telephone/letter/email enquiries sent by remote users.

**6. Scope of the Collections Development Policy**

The Archives main collecting interests are of archival material relating to the industrial, cultural, social, political and educational heritage of South Wales. The geographical focus is South Wales, however, archives which also include information relating to other areas will be considered if they form an integral part of a collection.

The Archives collects material which directly relates to one or more of the following criteria:

* The University and its predecessor organisations, including official records of the University and student body.
* Organisations and individuals connected with the South Wales Coalfield, including trade unions, miners’ institutes, workers’ associations, political parties and co-operative societies.
* Business archives which are complementary to the established collections. These include metallurgical and engineering industries as well as transport.
* Records of industrial trade unions, including the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation.
* Religious archives which are additional to the established collections of the Methodist circuit of Swansea and Gower and the Roman Catholic church of St David’s Priory, Swansea.
* Family and personal papers which are complementary to the established collections. These include the Vivian, Dillwyn and Morris families as well as Richard Burton.
* Archives of Welsh writers in English and literary figures.
* Archives of academics research with relevance to established collections.
* Archives relevant to research in the University.

The Archives is able to develop its collections by long term deposit, donation, bequest, internal transfer and, in exceptional circumstances, purchase.

The Archives will continue to accept deposits that add to the existing collections but does not normally seek to acquire archives in fields which fall outside the existing strengths of its holdings unless they relate to the research interests of the University.

Records are accepted in a variety of formats. These include, but are not restricted to, paper and parchment, photographs and other image formats, sound and moving image recordings, as well as machine-readable and digital media, or any other formats that form an archive or an integral part of an archive.

Acquisitions outside the stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Archives, having regard to the interests of other repositories.

The Archives will appraise collections and dispose of material which does not meet its criteria for permanent preservation.

The acquisition of duplicate material will be avoided.

The Archives will not normally acquire three-dimensional objects or artefacts; collections wholly of printed, published material; collections wholly of film, video or similar material more appropriately held by repositories offering specialist storage and consultation facilities; records whose ownership cannot be reasonably established (unless specifically anonymously donated) or is disputed; records whose significance is outweighed by serious physical defects, deterioration or other damage; copies of archival records held in other publicly accessible collections.

The Archives will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire any item unless it can be satisfactorily agreed that it can acquire a valid title to the item in question, and to adhere to archival or other relevant legislation and guidelines.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**7. Selection Procedures and Responsibility**

The Archives will adhere to its collections development policy in the matter of the acquisition of archival material.

Responsibility for the selection of items recommended for acquisition will be with the University Archivist. Where appropriate, advice and recommendations will be sought and taken into account from University staff and other interested parties. The Archives will work in co-operation with TNA, MALD and other archive institutions and will consider legal and ethical considerations. When advising prospective depositors, the Archives will draw attention to the existence of other repositories with similar or overlapping interests, to ensure the material is offered to the most appropriate institution while respecting the depositor’s own wishes.

**8. Methods of Acquisition**

The Archives collects archives by internal transfer through arrangements that are in place for the selection and transfer of the University’s current business records or by direct contact with departments in Swansea University, gift, bequest, long-term

deposit or purchase. These deposits will be made according to standard terms and conditions of deposit at the time of acquisition and as agreed by the Archives, and if necessary other appropriate University authority. When appropriate, legal advice will be sought.

In exceptional circumstances the Archives may acquire copies of records held in private hands, by purchase or other arrangement, where they are judged to be unlikely to be available for acquisition in the original format or that they are of significant interest or value to users.

The Archives aims to process new acquisitions in a timely manner.

**9. Deaccessioning, Disposal and Transfer**

Records are acquired with the intention that they shall be preserved permanently but the Archives reserves the right to retrospectively review its holdings against relevant selection procedures and dispose of any archives not deemed to be worthy of permanent preservation at the time of deposit or later. Such material may be returned to the depositor, transferred elsewhere or destroyed confidentially dependent upon the agreement made at the time of deposit.

The Archives accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal by sale of any materials in its ownership.

The Archives aims to maintain the archival integrity of collections. Where it is considered appropriate to split a collection and transfer part to another repository permission of the depositor will be sought.

The Archives will consider the transfer of archives to a more suitable repository if it is felt that the documents and the users of those documents would benefit from their relocation.

The Archives follows professional guidance and ethical standards in relation to deaccessioning, disposal, transfer and the decolonisation of collections.

**10. Collection Development Priorities**

The collecting priorities have been identified as:

* Records of Swansea University together with the records of the student body.
* Archives of organisations and individuals connected with the south Wales coalfield. These include trade unions, miners’ institutes, welfare associations, political parties and co-operative societies.
* Archives relating to the steel industry, in particular the trade union Community and its predecessors.
* Business archives which are complementary to the established collections. These include metallurgical and engineering industries as well as transport.
* Family and personal papers which are complementary to the established collections. These include the Vivian, Dillwyn and Morris families as well as Richard Burton.
* Archives of Welsh writers in English and literary figures.
* Records of the Swansea and Gower Methodist Circuit and the Roman Catholic Church, St David’s Priory.

The geographical focus is south Wales. However, archives which also include information relating to other areas will be considered if they form an integral part of a collection.

**11. Funding**

The funding of the Archives, in common with other UK university archives, is derived from a combination of core support from its host institution and grant funding from external sources.

The Archives has demonstrated consistently high levels of success in attracting additional funding for project activity. The Archives will seek to identify potential sources of additional funding as appropriate.

**12. Policy Context and Links**

This collections development policy is part of a comprehensive collections management strategy for the Richard Burton Archives. Other relevant policies include:

* Collections Information
* Collections Access
* Collections Care and Conservation
* Collections Management
* Digital Preservation

**13. Review**

This policy was approved in September 2021. It will be reviewed in September 2024 or earlier if circumstances dictate.

1. <https://www.swansea.ac.uk/the-university/strategy/vision/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Conventions, declarations, acts and other legal frameworks to be considered include but are not restricted to UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, ratified by UK with effect from 1 November 2002; Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003. In addition guidance will be taken from professional bodies, e.g. Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)