



PUBLIC SERVICES QUALITY GROUP

A STANDARD FOR ACCESS FOR ARCHIVES

2008

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The *Standard for Access to Archives* was first published in 1999 as a consultation document. The second version went through seven editorial stages before being published on The National Archives web site in 2003, subsequently transferred to the PSQG pages of the National Council on Archives web site.

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INTRODUCTION

GENESIS OF THE STANDARD

The need for a National Standard for Access to Archives was identified in the discussions at the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) 1998 Quality Forum. Access was and still does lie at the heart of government policy and the standard was conceived as a working tool to help repositories provide evidence of their performance for public service initiatives, which at the time included "Best Value" and "Charter Mark" schemes. It was also seen as supporting archive services in their applications for external funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other government funding strands.

The Group decided to take the matter forward by establishing a working party and, just twelve months later, a draft standard was approved in November 1999. Although issued as a draft, this document rapidly took its place among the standards available to the profession, and was subsequently included in lists issued by the Historical Manuscripts Commission and the Public Record Office, going on to form one of the benchmark documents for The National Archives Self Assessment scheme, introduced in 2006.

Initially housed on the National Archives website, and latterly on the web site of the National Council on Archives, host body to PSQG, it has been available in its original form for nine years for use where it is needed. The Group intended the period after the release of the Standard to be a period of consultation to obtain further feedback from all who have interests in it. At the time of the release of the Standard, guidelines to the concept of Access were covered in part in the HMC *Standard for Record Repositories* and the revision issued by the National Archives in 2004 continues the summary of provision, though recognising the more comprehensive work undertaken by PSQG. There were also been a number of attempts at preparing statements on access for specific user groups (e.g. family historians) or repositories. However, previous standards of this sort have tended to be either too general or too specific to provide a yardstick against which performance can be measured, while others have been unduly weighted in favour of a particular constituency or sectional interest.

In undertaking to produce a Standard for Access, the PSQG Working Party attempted to address these problems by compiling a document aimed at custodians and users alike. The Standard also took into account of the views and needs of the broad spectrum of stakeholders with an interest in archives services.

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. It provides those who run archive services – large or small – with the means to examine how they manage, run and make their services accessible, and to help introduce changes and improvements to access for users. Even for those services who have used it as a tool to shape their service provision, it should remain as a benchmark indicator when provision is changed.

The first edition of the Standard went on to become a highly useful tool for to those with responsibility for the inspection of archive services (The National Archives), to the administrators of schemes for the improvement of public services and to organisations providing financial assistance to improve access to the archival heritage including the

Heritage Lottery Fund and grant-making charities. It was widely cited in the years following its initial release, though it remained nominally a document in consultation stage.

Following the issue of the original Standard in February 2000, it was formally endorsed by the Inter-Departmental Archives Committee, the National Council on Archives and the Society of Archivists, and was welcomed by a number of other bodies, including the Historic Manuscripts Commission (now part of the National Archives), the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government and the British Genealogical Records Users Group. Wider consultation by PSQG followed on the perceived need for the Standard, its use and how it could be applied. Discussion also took place with the British Standards Institute on the potential for the Standard being adopted as a British Standard, but not pursued as the Group felt that the processes would impede access. Options for the next stages were presented by Chris Pickford in his report to PSQG *The PSQG Standard for Access to Archives: the next steps* in June 2003, which formed the basis of interim publication on the National Council on Archives web site.

Revision of the Standard for this edition has compacted down the introductory material of the 1999 edition, to ensure that the elements that make up the Standard are clearly defined. Changes to layout and numbering should make the Standard to use. No changes have been made to the elements themselves, but the supporting material has been revised to take account of changes in the world of archives, especially the greatly increased resources that archives services make available on-line. Dated references to initiatives current in the late 1990s have been edited wherever possible to retain the principles they were cited to support, but not to replace the references with ones that will similarly date in coming years. The revision has also taken account of equality and physical access issues, though there is scope for a wider revision of the Standard in these areas in future years. A future revision is also likely to take on any recommendations of the work of PSQG's Security and Access working party, formed in 2007, and could at the same time incorporate new elements, for example in lifting the newly incorporated references to audience development planning into a new element recommending that archive services must plan to bring in new audiences to use their services.

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 service's own circumstances, should be sought.

The Access Standard is a practical tool, against which the practices of archive services can be assessed by custodians and users alike. To support the use of the 2008 edition, PSQG have also released a simple checklist document, incorporating the elements and the suggested audit methodology for use in individual services.

By 2007, 79 services had produced access policies, a tribute to the influence of the Standard. PSQG welcomes feed back from all who use the new edition, and would like record instances of how it is used, and where possible how it has shaped the thinking of

archive services in meeting aspirations to best practice in access to their collections, information and services.

SCOPE OF THE STANDARD

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.

The standard is intended to be applicable in all kinds of archive service in the UK and was produced not as a prescriptive rule book, but as a model intended to encourage innovation be sustainable in conditions of continual change. Accordingly, the Standard is based on outcomes with explanatory paragraphs on

a) what each outcome means ,including any conflicts of interest, and why it matters,
b) alternative means of achieving the outcome, and
c) suggested audit methods. In other words, the standard is intended to reflect the needs of users and paymasters ,tempered where appropriate by professional concerns, and to offer a means of auditing performance against published targets.

The resulting Standard:

- Covers all aspects of access, including advance information, on-site access, and remote access services
- Has been designed by professionals but it is intended, subject to validation, to reflect the principal concerns of all stakeholders including users, front-line staff, depositors and paymasters.
- Is aimed at all archives - not just public-sector services - and institutions of all sizes
- Is intended to assist in raising standards rather than merely summarising current universal practice – often the lowest common denominator
- Is not prescriptive, rather setting the framework within which repositories should define their aims and set standards for their services. Self determination is the key (within a recommended framework)
- Does not specify absolute standards or recommended minima - but the Standard may be supplemented by best practice guidelines and checklists for particular types of service
- Focuses on desired outcomes - subtly different from inputs and outputs

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

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 and appear in red font. The same words may be used in other contexts without their specific meaning as defined terms, in which case they appear in ordinary type.

General concepts and terms

'Quality': The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. (As defined in BS 4778: 1987 (ISO 8402, 1986) *Quality Vocabulary: Part 1, International Terms*

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).

'Auditable' means being capable of being audited, rather than a requirement to audit.

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

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

Stakeholders

'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*.

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

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

‘*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.

‘*User*’ – an actual or potential *user* of any kind of *service*

Archives

‘*Archive*’ - 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.

‘*Content*’ can range from original documents and whole-class surrogates, for example parish register 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.

‘*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.

Services

‘*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.

‘*Archive service*’ - the organisation as opposed to the collection.

‘*Interface*’ is any service delivery *interface* - a physical location, written communication, point of contact with an ICT-based service, or physical product, for example a publication, of the *archive service*.

‘*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*.

STRUCTURE OF THE MAIN PROVISIONS

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).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 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.
- 2 The *archive service* shall aim to serve its *community* as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- 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 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.
- 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.
- 6 The *archive service* shall explicitly plan to achieve those objectives and consult with *stakeholders* in developing that plan.
- 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.
- 8 The *archive service* shall have *user* feedback mechanisms and complaints procedures, and clear channels of communication to and from other *stakeholders*.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 12 The *archive service* shall ensure that all requirements of the standard are *auditable*.

ELEMENTS OF THE STANDARD FOR ACCESS TO ARCHIVES

1. Access aims and objectives

<p>1.1 It is clear who the <i>archive service</i> is intended to serve.</p>

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.

Notes: Access should be set in the context of the other aims of the *archive service*. For many *archive services* there will be potentially 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*. 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.

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*.

Audit methods: Check that documentation exists, has appropriate *content* and has recent approval of the *responsible body*.

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

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.

Notes: The definition of '*stakeholder*' is important and the *archive service* must establish who its *stakeholders* are.

Guidance: The statement could be expressed through a *user* charter, service information leaflet or a policy document. Stakeholders can also be defined as part of business planning or audience development work.

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*.

2. Equity

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

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.

Notes: The archive must comply with relevant legislation on access and personnel policies - such legislation includes that on discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief. The archive should also consider the languages of the **community** and comply with any translation requirements laid down by home countries. 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**.

Guidance: This links to the 'social inclusion' agenda developed by Government in the 1990s. While local conditions will vary, this appears an area where archives can cooperate 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. The principle of equity must be carried into all **service** areas affected by access.

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.

<p>2.2 The <i>archive service</i> does not discriminate against any member of its <i>community</i>.</p>
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Requirements: The *archive service* shall not seek to discriminate against any member of the *community*. It shall seek to eliminate unconscious discrimination, that occurs when people are treated differently without the *archive service* or *responsible body* being aware that the policies or actions constitute discrimination.

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.

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. The archive service must comply with legislation that promotes equality on grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief. 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, including community archive groups. These steps can include consultation with representative groups, 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 of the history of minority ethnic communities.

Audit methods: Check for obvious/unconscious discrimination. Check current legislation. Check archive service documentation on this issue. Conduct or commission disability discrimination audits.

3. Communication and openness

3.1 The <i>archive service</i> has open, effective two-way communications with its <i>community</i>.

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*.

Notes: The definition of *community* is important here. The *archive service* must provide information on its activities, services and policies in places and in formats readily accessible to all. There should be clarity in setting timescales for *community* responses, where these are sought and in responding meaningfully.

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. The archive service web pages can provide current news of activities as well as service plans and policies. Specialist advice should be sought on appropriate formats to make information accessible to all. Communication with the wider *community* can be improved through activities to raise the profile of the archive service, including events to catch media interest; general interest publications/products. *Responsible bodies* may have channels of communication which can be exploited for example local authority free newspapers and the front page of the *responsible body's* web site for high profile events. 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.

Audit methods: Check existence, currency, variety of *user* communications. Check that user communications are in appropriate formats, or that alternative forms are provided to meet the requirements of people with disabilities. Check evidence of communication to wider *community*. Check evidence of recent inward communication from *users* and wider *community*.

<p>3.2 The <i>archive service's</i> access service policies are available for scrutiny and comment.</p>
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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.

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*.

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. Publication should include use of the *archive service's* web pages, or those web pages should include a link to other pages within the web site of the *responsible body*. Discussion can be facilitated through feedback systems including written comments and consultative groups.

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

4. Responsiveness

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

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.

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

Guidance: BS ISO 10002:2004 Quality management, customer satisfaction. Guidelines for complaint handling in organisations provides additional guidance on handling 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; web pages.

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

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

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.

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.

Guidance: Surveys and consultative bodies are obvious routes to reach *Users*, including participating in the Public Services Quality Group Survey of Visitors to British Archives, held at approximately eighteen month intervals. 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.

Audit methods: Check documentation of consultative processes. Check with sample of stakeholders. Registration with PSQG and CIPFA to participate in user surveys.

<p>4.3 The policies of the <i>archive service</i> reflect the views and interests of its <i>stakeholders</i>.</p>
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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*.

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*.

Guidance: Consultation can be achieved through e.g. focus groups, regular *user* groups, open meetings, *user* and wider citizen surveys, work with specialist interest groups, for example people with disabilities and liaison with depositors and funders from the *responsible body*. 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.

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.

5. Effectiveness and efficiency

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

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

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. The best value process emphasises the twin approach of achieving **outcomes** while at the same time minimising the resources needed to achieve them.

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.

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

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

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.

Notes: 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.

Guidance: Chartermark applicants are required to demonstrate innovation. Audience development plans will require innovation to extend the range of *archive service use*. 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 has moved from risk aversion to risk management. Standard project management techniques include provision for risk management, for example the running of 'risk registers'. Principles of risk management are set out in *A Standard for Risk Management* (2002)

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.

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

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.

Notes: 'Publish' in this context means make publicly available whether in hard copy or through the *archive service's*, or *responsible body's* web pages; some degree of promotion is necessary.

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

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.

6. Service management

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

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.

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.

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

7. Staff participation and responsibilities

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

Requirements: The *archive service* shall seek to involve its entire 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.

Notes: The staff are *stakeholders* so their involvement is covered in relation to planning (Section 1). 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*.

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 and documentation from one to one staff management meetings. 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.

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

7.2 The staff are guided by clear standards of *service*

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

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

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 cooperate in the creation of pro-formas for local service standards.

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

7.3 All staff providing *services* are individually identifiable.

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*.

Notes: For most on-site *services* this might mean name badges but there are circumstances where a name badge is not appropriate, for example where there are genuine concerns for individual safety. 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*.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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*.

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.

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

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

8. **User** responsibilities

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

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.

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, for example the use of lockers for personal belonging and other protective measures should be explained. Guidance should be offered on proper handling techniques. The **archive service** shall provide equipment, which might include book rests and protective sleeves, to enable **users** to follow guidance and it should be made clear that staff will offer advice and support.

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 on 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. All such advice to **users** should be placed on the **archive service’s** web site.

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

8.2 <i>Users</i> treat staff courteously and respect conditions regarding the use and acknowledgement of information from the <i>archive service</i>
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Requirement: The *archive service* should make clear its requirements so that *users* know what is expected of them.

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.

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. All such advice to *users* should be placed on the *archive service's* web site.

Audit methods: Evidence of existence of guidelines.

8.3 *Users* show respect for other *users*

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

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*.

Guidance: Policy statements on *user* behaviour and facilities for equipment. Codes of conduct. Publication of advice to *users* on the *archive service's* web site. 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.

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.

9. Service information

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

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*). The *archive service* should take active steps to ensure it can define the constituents of the *community*, assess under-representation from its *community* among *users*, and plan appropriately to improve knowledge of the *archive service* among under represented groups.

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*. Defining who the *users* of the *service* are should take place on a regular basis, as the *community* the *archive service* exists to serve may change, and the responsible body may set targets for the archive service to reach parts of the community who are under-represented among current *users*.

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 guides for *researchers*. *Service* information should be provided through the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web site, and in hard copy publicity materials. This might include a statement of collecting policy as well as guides to holdings. *User* surveys will help define groups who are under-represented among *users* and the findings can inform audience development work.

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 reorientation of promotion, where necessary, in the light of feedback and findings. Audience development and business plans. Targets to bring in groups under-represented among existing *users*.

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

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

Notes: A prerequisite 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.

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 guides to the collection available on the *archive service's* web site. 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. The *archive service* should clearly indicate the location of its own on-line catalogues within its web pages, and provide links to holdings in the web site of third parties, for example The National Archives Access to Archives and those annual returns to the National Register of Archives available on-line. Other third party holdings of the *archive service's* catalogues and surrogates should be actively encouraged and suitably publicised. The *archive service* should actively promote the creation of links to its web pages from the web sites of related services, for example libraries and museums.

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.

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

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

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, including through the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web pages. These rights 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, for example 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 and they 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, data protection, or because of the physical condition of material.

Guidance: This information may be made available through publicity materials, leaflets and guides to the *archive service*, all of which should be published on the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web site. If formal application procedures are involved, then forms specifying the information required to secure admission, for example proof of identity, should be available.

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

10. Access to **services**

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

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

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, for example instructions on how to operate microfilm readers)
- special requirements, for example use of pencils and laptops
- copying **services** and prices
- refreshment and comfort facilities for **users**
- the name(s) of responsible person(s)
- how to make a comment or complaint

Guidance: This information should be carefully set out in leaflets, publicity materials and on the **archive service's** or **responsible body's** web site - and regularly updated.

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

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

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

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, or provide a direct link to the web pages giving location information.

Guidance: Information on the physical location can be communicated through maps, written instructions and signposts, all of which should be available on the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web site and regularly updated as necessary. Remote access points should be easy to find in directories appropriate to the medium.

Audit methods: Customer feedback on signposting and access instructions.

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

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.

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** – for example 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, where available, enables 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**.

Guidance: Communication of opening hours to on-site and remote visitors. Changes in opening hours should be made via the update on The National Archives ARCHON Directory web pages and on the web site of the **archive service** or **responsible body**.

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

11. Access to *content*

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

Requirement: Finding aids should be created and maintained so as to achieve, among other purposes, the defined aims relating to access.

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.

Guidance: Finding aids created in manual or electronic formats other than dedicated archive databases should conform to current archival standards and should be suitable for automation and networking. Archive services should seek to create new finding aids in an appropriate archive cataloguing software programme which meets current archival standards and is capable of being made accessible on-line. In addition to lists based on archival grouping, topic-based finding aids should be created to meet the needs of the *community*, and be made available on the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web pages. 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.

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.

11.2 There is reasonable access for anyone to consult finding aids

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.

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.

Guidance: Catalogues, whether on paper or in electronic form, should be available on site and to remote *users* through the *archive service's* or the *responsible body's* web site.

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*.

11.3 *Users* have choices in the means of access to *content*

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.

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.

Guidance: The choice of access provided by different means should be appropriate to the levels of demand - actual and potential. The *archive service* should actively seek to create and enhance access to *content* through its web site or the web site of the *responsible body* to meet different *user* needs.

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.

11.4 Restrictions on access to *content* are clearly communicated to *users*

Requirement: The *archive service* shall have a policy on restrictions on access, and this shall be clearly communicated to *users*.

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*.

Guidance: The *archive service* should prepare policy statements on closure periods based on access to information legislation and standard practice specified in the professional literature on retention schedules and closure periods for particular types of material. These policy statements should be published on the *archive service's* or the *responsible body's* web site. 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*.

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

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

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

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.

Guidance: The policy and standards should be available to *users* in the form of leaflets or on the *archive service's* or *responsible body's* web site. Performance against standards should be reported.

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

11.7 Where enquiries cannot be answered at the <i>archive service</i>, staff do their best to refer them accurately to an appropriate source

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

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.

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.

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

12. *Services* for new researchers

12.1 *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

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

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*.

Guidance: Special provision for new *researchers* might include the provision of introductory materials, welcoming procedures, video or DVD presentations, induction events and access to specialist advisers 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, including 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.

Audit methods: Evidence of *service* processes designed 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.

13. On-site service delivery

13.1 *Researchers* are able to get access to *services*

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

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 for example limiting registration in *services* which combine *archives* and local studies to people using *archives* or other protected source material.

Guidance: The existence of the County Archive Research Network (CARN) readers' ticket system has helped to improve access to those *archive services* which consider that such admission requirements are necessary.

Audit methods: Feedback on access formalities and registration systems.

13.2 *Researchers* are accommodated appropriately when they visit the *archive service*

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

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 - visits and productions
- speed - rates of production and transaction processing and

- time - 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*.

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.

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*.

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

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.

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, for example microform or digitised images. There should be sufficient space for large format items, and suitable rests and protective materials should be available, for example 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, for example different types of microfilm reader may be required for newspapers on roll film or computer output on fiche. Specific regulations may apply to certain types of equipment, for example electrical testing of equipment where no circuit breakers are supplied. Additionally 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 to meet the requirements of special viewing equipment.

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.

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

13.4 <i>Service</i> processes and standards are clearly explained and readily intelligible to the <i>user</i>
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Requirement: The *archive service* should have simple processes for access and these should be explained to *users* along with any relevant standards.

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.

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 help in outstores should be suitably publicised. Instructions should be provided on how to use equipment for example on the loading and unloading of microfilms and on access to computer terminals intended for public use.

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

14. Remote service delivery

14.1 *Users* can find out about *content* without visiting

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

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 fee-based commissioned 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.

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.

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

14.2 Remote *access services* are being maintained and developed to open up the *content* to a wider range of *users*

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

Notes: *Archive services* should seek to digitise parts of their holdings either in whole where demand is high, or in part to support school or lifelong learning objectives, or to engage with new audiences. Access to some parts of the collection through the archive service's web site, for example images, may be highly beneficial for service delivery and through removing the need in most cases to consult the original document. 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.

Guidance: Participation in national, regional or local projects to create digital surrogates and supporting interpretative material. Imaginative use of resources to attract funding for retro-conversion and digitisation projects. Development of automated e-mail responses to queries.

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

APPENDICES

A 1. Quality Management sources and background principles

The Standard was based on a range of quality management sources which included:

A1.1 The International Standards Organisation's quality management principles¹:

- **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.
- **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.

¹For the 1999 edition the Quality management principles were downloaded from BSI web site. Access in 2008 was at http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_catalogue/management_standards/iso_9000_iso_14000/qmp/qmp-1.htm

The principles were incorporated into ISO 9004:2000 Quality management systems – Guidelines for performance improvements.

- **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.

A1.2 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.

A1.3 Maxwell's six dimensions of quality of health care² 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

A1.4 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
- Representation³

The NCC also produced a set of consumer criteria for service evaluation - summarised in the ingenious form of a wheel which

² 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.

³ Original source: Potter, J 'Consumerism and the public sector' *Public Administration*, vol. 66, no. 1, pp 149-164, 1988.

cannot be reproduced here. The top-level questions in this wheel are:
What is [the service] supposed to do?

Does it do what it's 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]⁴.

A1.5 The 'Service First' principles of public service delivery were current at the time the Standard was compiled in 1998-99 although the web site that hosted them has now (2008) been archived . The Principles were 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 providers⁵

A1.6 In local government the 'Best Value'⁶ programme was indicative of contemporary thinking on the route to continuous improvement and the achievement of a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness⁷

A1.7 The emphasis in this standard on outcomes for users follows the lead given by the quality management literature. It is in distinction to some

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

5 As downloaded from the Service First web site. With the completion of the Service First programme, the web site has now been archived and in 2008 could be found at <http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/servicefirst/index.htm>

6 DETR Circular 10/99. This is no longer available from the web sites of the successive ministries but a copy can be found as part of the Newcastle City Council web site [http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/bval.nsf/f476f2ef841c85d480256658004ec6b6/fea8c6298dbd593c802568f8003efabd/\\$FILE/a5%20Man2%20Appendix%202.doc](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/bval.nsf/f476f2ef841c85d480256658004ec6b6/fea8c6298dbd593c802568f8003efabd/$FILE/a5%20Man2%20Appendix%202.doc). Guidelines for best value authorities in England on meeting the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 were revised in ODPM Circular 02/2004: Addendum to 03/2003 – Local Government Act 1999 Part 1, and can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/odpmcircularaddendum>

Information on the policy aspects of Best Value in England formed part of the DCLG Local Government Performance web site in 2008 (<http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/index.asp>)

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.

- A1.8 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.
- A1.9 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 requirements.
- A1.10 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.
- A1.11 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 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.”⁸

⁸ BSI 0-1:1997 p. 3. Now replaced by BS 0-1:2005. *A standard for standards. Development of standards. Specification.* 2005

A 2 Normative References

A 2.1 General

The National Archives. *Standard for record repositories*. 1st edition, 2004

A Standard for Risk Management. The Institute of Risk Management, The Association of Insurance and Risk Managers and ALARM (the National Forum for Risk Management in the Public Sector). 2002. Available from the web site of the Institute of Risk Management www.thiirm.org

A 2.2 Records Management

Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records. Issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. November 2002. This can be downloaded from:

<http://www.dca.gov.uk/foi/reference/impreg/codemanrec.htm>

BS ISO 15489:2001 Information and documentation: records management. General. 2001

BIP 0025-3:2003 *Effective records management. Performance management for BS ISO 15489-1*. 2003

BIP 0025-4:2007 *Effective records management. How to comply with BS ISO 15489-1*. 2007

BIP 0025-1:2002 *Effective records management. A management guide to the value of BS ISO 15489-1*. 2002

A 2.3 Electronic Records

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

The National Archives. Generic requirements to sustain electronic information over time. Generic requirements developed by the National Archives from 2002-2006 to define what functionality is required to satisfy BS ISO 15489. The five sections issued up to April 2008 are:

- Defining the characteristics for authentic records
- Sustaining authentic and reliable records: management requirements
- Sustaining authentic and reliable records: technical requirements
- Guidance for categorising records to identify sustainable requirements
- Functional requirements for the sustainability of electronic records. (2006)

Available as downloads from:

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/reqs_sustain.htm

The National Archives. *Digital continuity project. Standards and requirements for Digital Continuity in UK Government*. 2008.

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<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/services/publications/standards-for-digital-continuity.pdf>

A 2.4 Records Storage

BS 5454: 2000. *Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents* (3rd edition, BSI, 2000)

A 2.5 Conservation

BS 4971: 2002 *Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents. Recommendations*. 2002

A 2.6 Cataloguing

International Council on Archives, *General International Standard of Archival Description* [ISAD (G)], 2nd edition 1999.

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

National Council on Archives. Rules for the construction of personal, place and corporate names, 1997

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

A 2.7 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.