

IALS Archives



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Collections Development Policy

2022

Version 2.0

Revised 3rd August 2022

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1. Purpose

This policy explains why and how the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) Archives acquires, appraises and keeps the collections in its care.

All collection management decisions are subject to considerations of funding and accommodation.

The rules, statements, and processes set out in this document are applicable to records irrespective of format unless otherwise stated.

2. IALS Archives Mission Statement

The IALS was founded in 1947. It was conceived and is funded as a national academic institution, attached to the University of London (UOL), serving all universities through its national legal research library. Its function is to promote, facilitate and disseminate the results of advanced study and research in the discipline of law, for the benefit of persons and institutions in the UK and abroad.

Archives at IALS are collected and preserved to support this mission. As collections of records which have accumulated naturally in the course of the life and work of a body or individual, archives are generally categorised by their provenance or origin, and their significance lies in their preservation of the context in which a series of decisions or developments arose.

The IALS Archives also serves as the institutional memory of the organisation. The primary mission of the Archives is to collect, preserve and make accessible institutional records of enduring value that reflect the history and development of IALS. To this end, the Archives will:

- Manage appropriate storage facilities for the retention and preservation of its collections.
- Support research and teaching by making available and encouraging the use of its collections by the UOL community and the wider public.
- Provide information services which support IALS employees in performance of their duties.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the history, programmes and goals of the IALS.

3. Our collections

In keeping with the aims of the Institute, priority will be given to the collection and preservation of archival records which document:

- the history and development of the IALS itself;
- research carried out at the Institute;
- the dissemination of the results of advanced study and research in the discipline of law, through legal education;
- the management of information about legal studies through law librarianship.

Subject area

The IALS has two archive collections, held in the Library and administered by the IALS Archivist as follows:

- The IALS Archives, which comprises records of the Institute itself as well as various manuscripts held by the Institute.
- The Records of Legal Education Archives (RLEA), which was created in the 1990s as part of a broader project funded by the Leverhulme Trust to investigate and rescue records relating to legal education. The RLEA comprises the records of organisations and individuals connected with legal education which had no institutional home or were otherwise at risk. The RLEA has now been subsumed into the IALS Archives.

Media

We collect archives in all media. The bulk of the IALS archival holdings have so far been received in traditional formats, such as paper, photographic material and sound recordings. We now also expect to receive material in born digital formats. Ingest of digital material, and in particular file transfer procedures, will be negotiated with the depositor, but as a general rule we will accept documents in the following formats: .txt, .rtf, PDF, .jpeg, .giff, .tiff, Microsoft Word formats .msg, .doc and .docx, Microsoft Excel formats .xls and .xlsx, Microsoft PowerPoint formats .ppt and .pptx.

IALS websites are archived by the British Library's UK Web Archive.

Chronological period

We collect all archives within our collecting remit regardless of date.

Copy material

We generally only accept original material, but we may in certain circumstances acquire copies of archive material for consultation at IALS where an owner does not wish to part with original documents.

4. Acquisition

Records arrive at the IALS Archives by one of two processes:

1. The IALS Archivist, in consultation with the records creators and in compliance with UOL retention schedules, identifies and appraises institutional records of the IALS which are likely to be of long-term historical interest and ensures their preservation as part of the Institute's archival heritage.
2. Collections of external provenance, including those in the RLEA, which are deposited at IALS.

We will only accept material which upon appraisal has been deemed archival; we cannot act as a repository for semi-current records. The IALS Archivist is responsible for appraising all new accessions, from both internal and external sources, to ensure these a) fall within the Institute's collecting remit and b) are of research value. Where accessions of an external organisation's records are accepted, the organisation must nominate a single point of contact within an organisation, not necessarily the transferor, with whom all discussions concerning terms of deposit, closure periods, etc. will be held. On receipt of records we will establish with the point of contact whether we have permission to destroy, transfer or return them. Final decisions about retention will be taken during the more detailed cataloguing process.

We acquire external archive collections via a Deposit Agreement, which is a formal agreement between the owner and the IALS Archives setting out the obligations of each. Under this agreement we undertake, for an agreed fee, to store the records appropriately and carry out conservation work according to our resources and priorities; to make the records accessible through cataloguing and to make them available without charge to researchers, subject to the owner's right to restrict access to sensitive records or to any statutory restriction. We may request that donors or depositors make a contribution towards such processing and care.

5. Appraisal

We apply a range of principles for assessing the archival value of potential gifts or deposits as follows:

- checking whether this type of record meets the criteria of our collecting policy;
- establishing whether a record is original or unique;
- checking whether we already hold the same or similar records;
- judging, in so far as possible and with expert advice, the historical relevance of a collection and of which records are likely to be of interest to current and future generations;
- assessing whether records reveal a significant change in policy or the structure of a committee or organisation;
- assessing whether records give insights into the professional and personal contribution of an individual to the fields of legal education or legal information management;
- assessing whether records relate to a draft proposal or an actual project and whether the records are working papers or include final reports;
- disposing of duplicate or blank/unused records and ephemeral material such as routine accounts (although exceptions may be made e.g. to provide examples of the record-keeping methods of a particular organisation);
- not allowing personal bias to affect a decision to keep or destroy records.

Where accessions contain large amounts of printed papers we observe the following principles:

- Printed material and information copies of routine mailings will be kept only if they are significantly annotated.
- Unannotated secondary printed material which is clearly referenced in the retained primary material and which is readily available elsewhere will be discarded.
- Unannotated secondary printed papers which were aggregated in the course of preparing the primary material designated for retention and which are not directly referenced within that material, will be disposed of if they are readily available elsewhere. In such cases their original presence in the file, and subsequent disposal in the course of appraisal, will be noted in the catalogue.
- Promotional printed material will be discarded unless it bears a direct relevance to the subsequent development of the works, events or transactions whose records are being catalogued.

- Unannotated routine informational mailings will be discarded.

Any appraisal carried out on an accession will be recorded in the catalogue introduction. While we reserve the right to recommend the disposal of records deemed not to be worthy of permanent preservation, permission of the depositors will always be sought before the records are disposed of.

6. Retention and disposal

Once selected and accessioned, archives will normally be preserved permanently. The IALS Archivist, however, reserves the right to review all collections and, where strategically desirable, to recommend that items be transferred to a more appropriate repository or withdrawn, being subsequently securely destroyed. This may be because:

- The material comprises incomplete or partial collections which would be more appropriately housed with comparable or complementary material in another repository.
- The material is in a poor physical state or is inaccessible due to digital obsolescence and consequently unsuitable for permanent retention.
- The material poses a threat to other collections (e.g. nitrate film, mould contamination).
- The material comprises duplicate items.
- The material comprises items that have proved over time to not support the IALS' and the IALS Archives' learning, teaching and research interests and have no other long-term historical value.

7. Access

Unless otherwise stated, access to records over 20 years old is open. Exceptions include personal data, which is subject to up to 100 years closure and other records closed for a longer period at the request of the depositor due to the confidentiality or sensitivity of the material.

Catalogues of our holdings are made available via our [website](#). Access to our collections is by appointment with the Archivist. Notice of new acquisitions and of any restrictions on their use will be made available to researchers at the earliest opportunity.

8. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed every two years for minor amendments. The next full review is due in August 2024.