

DENBIGHSHIRE ARCHIVE SERVICE

ACCESS AND OUTREACH POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Denbighshire County Council is a local government authority which administers an area consisting of parts of the former counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Merioneth and which came into being on 1 April 1996. As a consequence of their former collecting policies, some records relating to the present county are lodged with neighbouring archive services.
- 1.2 According to the scheme for the provision of the Denbighshire Archives Service under the requirements of Section 60 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, Denbighshire County Council agrees to administer Denbighshire Archives and be responsible for the custody of its existing collections. Denbighshire Archives (previously known as Denbighshire Record Office) has been in existence since 1972.
- 1.3 Denbighshire Archives Service is appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a repository for locally deposited public records under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958. It is recognised by the Representative Body of the Church in Wales as a repository for parochial records within the area defined by its agreement with the Denbighshire Archive Service.
- 1.4 Denbighshire Archives Service abides by current archives legislation including;
 - Public Records Act 1958
 - Local Government Records Act, 1962
 - Local Government Act (Wales) 1994
 - Data Protection Act, 1998
 - Freedom of Information Act, 2000.
 - Environmental Information Regulations, 2004

2. Mission statement or Our Aims

- 2.1 The principal duty of Denbighshire Archive Service is to preserve the documentary heritage of the County for future generations whilst enabling and promoting access by the public.
- 2.2 In pursuing this end our main objectives are;
 - A. To collect archive collections.
Locating and accruing archives which are of historical significance to Denbighshire.
 - B. To preserve and store archive collections.
Safeguarding unique and irreplaceable collections by providing suitable storage and professional management.
 - C. To catalogue and index collections to make content accessible.
Organising and arranging collections into a way which enables researchers to find what they are looking for with ease.

D. To provide and promote access to archive collections.

Supervising and encouraging the use of a free to use public search room whilst providing alternative services to remote researchers

3. Access Policy Aims

3.1 The objective of the policy is to outline how we aim to ensure that we meet our overarching service aims, specifically;

D. To provide and promote access to archive collections.

3.2 This policy demonstrates how access is provided to archives both on-site and remotely and any restrictions that affect access to archive material.

3.3 Denbighshire Archive Service also complies with the Customer Service Strategy for Denbighshire County Council (hereafter DCC) Customer Service Strategy: *The Denbighshire Way*¹ and Welsh Language Standards².

3.4 This policy supports our mission statement as set out above and should be used in conjunction with the DAS Forward Plan which documents plans for the years ahead and previous key achievements.

4. Onsite Access at Denbighshire Archives

4.1 Access to collections is available to all stakeholders and wider community³ in our search room which is supervised by archives staff. The search room is free to use but charges apply for some additional services.⁴

4.2 Booking and arrival

Prior booking to use the search room is preferred but not essential. Booking can be made online or by email or phone by contacting the office staff.

The office is signposted from the street with onsite signage on arrival to guide researchers to the appropriate section of the building and to the search room. Researchers are asked to sign in on arrival and are made aware of the searchroom rules.⁵

Researchers are required to produce proof of identification to use the search room and access original documents. DAS is a member of the County Archive Research Network (CARN) and researchers are required to sign up to the scheme during their first visit and produced the ticket on arrival thereafter. A single initial visit is permitted without relevant identification where the researcher is required to complete a temporary visitor's ticket.

¹ <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/corporate-strategies/customer-service-strategy.aspx> [last accessed July 2016]

² <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/strategies-plans-and-policies/welsh-language-standards.aspx> [last accessed July 2016]

³ See Appendix 1: Stakeholders and Community

⁴ See current charges at <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/about-us/services/>

⁵ See searchroom rules at <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/about-us/searchroom-rules/>

4.3 Security

In order to protect our collections and historic building various security measures are in place. This includes;

- Supervised search room at all times
- CCTV monitoring of the search room and other public areas of the building
- Limiting number of documents issued to researchers
- Handling Guidelines
- Searchroom Rules

4.4 Research facilities

The search room contains hard copies of all catalogues and alternative finding aids (including subject, place and person index, wills index and parish register finding aid). These help researchers identify documents which may be of interest to their research.

A search room reference library is also available on open shelves which consists of secondary material such as reference books, local studies publications and pamphlets

Printed research guides are available which have been developed by staff to explain the various collections held by DAS. These are arranged by subject i.e. crime, education and health.

Computers are available to use with access to internet, family history websites and recent Microsoft Office package. Microfilm and microfiche readers are available to view sources available on film or fiche.

4.5 Archive staff

The search room is supervised at all times by knowledgeable and experienced staff. Staff deal with researchers in accordance with the DCC policy *The Denbighshire Way*. Staff are polite, professional and always try to help the researcher, treating them fairly and with respect.

Staff are available to guide researchers to relevant collections, instruct them on how the collections are arranged and listed and how to use equipment.

4.6 Handling of documents

Researchers must adhere to guidance on Handling Documents⁶ which is available prior to visit online or on arrival in the search room.

Staff are available at all times to advise on correct document handling and offer the use of weights and book supports.

In some cases, a surrogate copy of certain document types is available. Catalogues and finding aids specify if this is the case.

⁶ See *Handling Documents*

4.7 Copying documents

Copies of documents can be provided by photocopying, scanning or photography.

Copying (except photography) can only be completed by a member of staff. When supplying copies DAS take into consideration the following factors;

- Copyright and other intellectual property rights
- Conditions stipulated by the donor or depositor
- Data Protection and personal information contained within the document
- Nature and condition of the document

A charge is made for copying and a copyright declaration form must be completed by the researcher before copies can be issued.⁷

We encourage the use of cameras in the search room. Researchers are required to read a statement about fair dealing and copyright and are asked to complete a digital camera permission form.⁸ There is a charge for a photography permit.

4.8 Restrictions on access

Certain document types have access restrictions. Restriction notes are displayed on hard copy and online catalogues. These restriction notes specify the reason for restriction and the date the document or collection is restricted until.

Restricted access to documents is applied in cases where

- a) the document is too fragile to view and further use would cause damage
- b) the document or collection is subject to legislative restrictions i.e. contains personal or sensitive information
- c) the collection is uncatalogued
- d) the depositor or creating body has specified or agreed a closure period

Further information about our access restrictions are available in the searchroom or online.⁹

For further information on DCC's Access to Information Policy see Access to Information webpage.¹⁰

4.9 Accessibility

Denbighshire County Council is committed to celebrating diversity and promoting equality to improve the quality of life for everyone living, working and visiting Denbighshire.

To ensure onsite access is available to researchers with physical disabilities, the following facilities are in place;

- Parking on site for blue badge holders
- Exterior ramps and ground level entry to building
- Interior lifts to all public areas

⁷ See *Photocopy order form*

⁸ See *Digital Camera Permission Form*

⁹ See Access restrictions at- <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/about-us/access/>

¹⁰ <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/access-to-information/Access-to-information.aspx>

- An induction loop is available for those with hearing difficulties.
- We encourage and support assisted visits.
- PCs and Microfilms can be adjusted
- Magnifying glasses are available for those with eyesight impairments.

DAS as a public service adheres to the Equalities Act (2010).¹¹

5. Remote access

5.1 In addition to onsite access DAS also provides access to catalogues and material online in a variety of ways.

5.2 Website

In order to develop and increase remote access to collections held by DAS, a new custom built service website was designed and launched during 2016.

Information about the service is kept current and made available on the web site. DAS aims to update the website pages as necessary adding new content and information about collections as it becomes available.

The website enables remote researchers to;

- View research guides arranged by subject which explains to researchers the types of sources which are available and what information they contain.
- Register for a researcher account
- View catalogue entries from the CALM database¹²
- Comment and tag items within the collection
- View digital images of collections where available or request a copy
- Save items of interest to a “wishlist” ready for a future visit
- Submit an online enquiry (see Remote enquiries below)
- Book a visit to the archives including specific equipment such as a microfilm reader, map table or computer
- Make a payment for copies and other services online

5.3 Remote enquiries

DAS offers advice and assistance to researchers who cannot visit the office in person. Enquiries can be made to DAS by email or online form, social media, telephone or post.

DAS responds to enquires in line with the DCC Customer Service Strategy: *The Denbighshire Way*. DAS will;

- Acknowledge an email or online enquiry as soon as possible and respond within ten working days.
- Answer your call as soon as possible and make sure your enquiry or request is directed to the right person first time.
- Write back as soon as possible or within 10 working days with an answer.

¹¹ <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/access-to-information/equality-diversity-and-human-rights.aspx>

¹² Note: A proportion of entire holdings is available. Currently 35% Dec 2016.

Advice and a single short research enquiry is offered free of charge. Additional short searches can be carried out for a small fee.¹³

If detailed or in depth research is required, in house paid research can be carried out by a member of staff as an alternative to visiting the office.¹⁴

5.4 Social Media

Social Media tools provide the service with an alternative way of communicating with existing and potential stakeholders. DAS uses the following social media channels with the intention of reaching a wider audience and promotion of the service;

- Facebook Service Page: as an alternative web presence for quick access to opening hours and location details. Used to share blog posts, volunteering opportunities and news stories. Also used to follow other institutions and engage with local history groups.
- Blog: as an online newsletter enabling researchers to follow the blog receiving an automated email when a new blog post is published.

DAS aims to update the social media pages as and when needed and publish news stories and other content as often as required.

5.5 Outreach and events

DAS aims to promote the use of the service by;

- Promoting and enabling the use of archives
- Informing people of the importance of documented heritage
- Telling our stakeholders about our collections and services
- Encouraging participation in national initiatives such as the Explore Your Archive Campaign
- Meeting the expectations of our customers
- Using the archive service to support DCCs priorities

Further information on outreach activities and events can be found on our website.

6. Feedback

Comments and complaints are recorded and responded to according to Denbighshire County Council's complaints procedure.

Formal assessment of the service is undertaken annually through application for Accreditation and the ARA Visitor Survey [formally PSQG Survey].

7. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, but at least every 5 years.

8. Next Review Date

March 2022

¹³ See current charges at <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/about-us/services/>

¹⁴ See research service form at <http://archives.denbighshire.gov.uk/about-us/professional-research/>

Access Policy: Appendix 1

Denbighshire Archives: Our Community and Stakeholders

Our Community

The community Denbighshire Archives serves includes the population of the County of Denbighshire and extends to anyone with an interest in the history of Denbighshire from Wales, the UK or internationally. This includes, but is not restricted to-

- existing users
- future/potential users
- students
- community groups and clubs and societies
- Denbighshire County Council (DCC) officers
- DCC councillors
- school groups
- depositors

The community we serve also extends beyond the county boundaries. Due to boundary changes in North Wales our collections represent Denbighshire's history prior to 1974 and the establishment of Clwyd County Council. Therefore researchers from areas now within the boundaries of Conwy CBC and Wrexham CBC also form part of our community.

Our Stakeholders

Our stakeholders include-

- community members (as defined above)
- taxpayers residing in Denbighshire
- county, town and community councillors
- DCC officers
- employees
- volunteers
- suppliers
- depositors
- the wider archives sector