

**Why and how did we publish our archive?  
Learning from The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund's  
archive project.**

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## Introduction

In the final year of The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund ('the Fund') a project was undertaken to donate the Fund's files into an accessible archive at the British Library. The archive project was conceived of as a key part of the Fund's legacy; a way of sharing the learning that the Fund had acquired over its fifteen years as a grant-maker. Foundations are important stewards of social history and the Fund's Board felt strongly that the learning acquired through the work of our grantees and partners should be shared for researchers to learn from long after we have closed.

The project involved identifying all existing records held by the Fund, deciding which should be included in the archive, reviewing these files in order to recommend closure periods for sensitive files, and transferring the files to the British Library. The project was managed by the Fund's Research Manager with the assistance of two archivists who helped to plan and practically implement the project. The project took place over a two year period, with a six month intensive period of work for two archivists. The archive donated to the British Library eventually consisted of about 200 boxes containing 1,300 files.

The Fund's archive is an enormously rich and varied resource, documenting both the history of the Fund and the activities of the organisations supported by the Fund. The archive allows unique insights into the ways in which non-profit organisations have contributed to social change over the past 15 years. For example, the archive documents the ways in which voluntary sector organisations have advocated for palliative care in sub-Saharan Africa, campaigned for a worldwide ban on cluster munitions, provided support to children and young people seeking asylum, and have worked to reduce the number of children and young people in prison.

The Fund's Board considered that donating these papers into an archive would demonstrate an ongoing commitment to transparency and accountability. During the life of the Fund, many different evaluations and research reports were published and learning shared through a variety of events. The Fund's archive will provide a wide ranging resource for researchers to explore how our partners have approached complex issues of social change.

Sharing information through an archive also entails risks, such as the possibility that the reputation of partners and grantees might be affected. The Fund approached these risks carefully, obtaining specialist advice from the Rockefeller Archive Centre. Ultimately, any organisation has a large degree of control over their own archive, for example decisions about what information goes in and how long files might be closed for can be made by the donor. The Fund's was reassured by the high level of control that it had over its own archive and would strongly encourage other foundations and organisations involved in social change to share learning in this way.

This report has been written by one of the archivists involved in the Fund's archive project. The first section of the report contains a summary of the archive project,

explaining how the Fund practically went about building an archive and donating it to an archival repository. It is hoped that other voluntary sector organisations which are considering creating an archive will find that this report on the Fund's experiences contains useful and practical suggestions.

The second section of this report draws out some of the key learning points from the archive project. These are:

1. Building and managing an archive will take time and needs resources.
2. Good records management is key.
3. The choice of archival repository is significant.
4. It is useful to decide upon criteria for what should be included in the archive at an early stage in the project.
5. Staff, Board members and third party organisations will have concerns. It is important that these are addressed.
6. The process of building and managing an archive will differ for organisations that are closing down and for organisations that are remaining operational.
7. It is important to think ahead about how the archive is going to be used.

## What did the archive project involve?

The Fund was established in order to administer the donations that were given by the public and organisations following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997. As part of the Fund's 5 year strategic plan, published in 2007, it was decided that the Fund would spend out its remaining capital by the end of 2012. In this period the Fund looked for ways that it could spread the knowledge that it had gained over its 15 years as a funder so that important learning would not be lost upon its closure. The creation of an archive, to be made publicly available through an archival repository, was seen as central to this process of disseminating learning.

The archive project was also born out of the Fund's involvement in the Campaign for Voluntary Sector Archives, a campaign encouraging charities, voluntary organisations, trusts and foundations to take responsibility for their archives by providing for their management, preservation, use and promotion. In early 2011 a research visit to the Rockefeller Archive Centre in the US was undertaken, during which their helpful staff provided useful guidance on how the Fund could deal with its archive effectively.

At the September 2011 Board meeting, the Fund's Directors agreed that the Fund's archive should be donated to the British Library and approved a grant for the Library to catalogue the archive and promote its use. In 2012 the Fund hired two trained archivists to plan and carry out the practical process of building the Fund's archive and transferring it to the Library.

First we **identified all records** held by the Fund. This involved having discussions with staff across the organisation about what records they held and used. We explored filing cabinets and cupboards in the office, called back boxes of older files from storage, and compiled several spreadsheets in order to list all of the files in a useful manner. We also discussed electronic records and emails with staff and explored the Fund's server in order to identify important electronic records that needed printing.

At the same time we **developed criteria for deciding which records should be included in the archive**. The Fund had originally decided that the archive should primarily contain information about the work that the Fund and its partners had done in trying to affect social change, and that the archive should not contain detailed information about the organisation's financial, commercial or legal activities. Once we had identified all of the records held by the Fund, we could then make the criteria for inclusion in the archive more specific.

Through discussions with Fund staff and by beginning to analyse the files, we were able to identify which types of files contained important information about, and evidence of, the Fund's work in supporting social change. A table was drawn up with criteria for inclusion in the archive (see Appendix 2). We then went through our lists of files and, on the basis of these criteria, identified exactly which individual files would be included in the archive and which would be excluded.

We **printed all electronic records** that fitted the criteria for inclusion in the archive, where they had not already been printed and filed. It had been agreed with the British Library that the archive would be paper based only, and that any relevant emails and electronic documents should be printed and added to the relevant paper files. For some teams at the Fund, this was an easy process, as they were in the habit of regularly printing important emails and electronic documents and adding them to paper files themselves. For others, where they were much less reliant on paper files and rarely printed emails, this process took longer.

We then **reviewed the files that were being included in the archive**. We read each file, looking to identify any material that might be sensitive. We looked for sensitive personal data and material that might cause legal problems or reputational damage to an individual or organisation if released immediately.

Within the first tranche of files donated to the British Library, which consisted of 508 files, 10 files were closed until 2015 and 5 files until 2030. These files mostly contain information about ongoing work which could be sensitive for our partners if released immediately, hence the longer closure periods. The rest of the files will be available to the public as soon as they have been organised and catalogued by the British Library. Information was redacted or removed from around 80 of these files. Most of these redactions were of personal data, where the beneficiaries of the Fund's grants had been identified along with sensitive information about their health or personal life. In order to be as transparent as possible in this process, we have recorded all of our redactions and removals of material in a document which has been included in the archive.

We **transferred the files to the British Library** in several stages. Around half of the files were transferred in early October 2012. This tranche mostly consisted of the grant files from the first 10 years of the Fund's history, which were no longer being used and could therefore be transferred well before the Fund closed. The rest of the files were transferred in December 2012. Many files were needed by staff for operational purposes right up until the Fund's closure at the end of the year.

We gave a unique reference number to each box and each file being sent to the British Library so that both organisations could keep track of exactly what was being transferred at each stage. We completed acquisition forms which formally donated the archive to the British Library. We also completed a copyright agreement which transferred copyright for all of the Fund's unpublished works in the archive to the British Library and identified material where we knew that copyright was held by other organisations.

## **Key learning points from the Fund's archive project**

### **1. Building and managing an archive will take time and needs resources.**

The Fund hired two archivists for an initial period of three months to practically implement the Fund's plans to build an archive and donate it to the British Library. The project actually took closer to six months to complete. It would have taken less time if the Fund had not wished for all the files to be reviewed before transfer to the British Library, but it was considered important that this was done in-house so that the Fund could have a greater degree of control over the contents of the archive and over any closure periods for files.

The review of files (reading the files to check for information that might be problematic for legal, reputational, or data protection reasons) was by far the most time consuming stage of the project. If an organisation had less time and resources to devote to donating an archive to an archival repository, they could complete the project more quickly if they left the task of reviewing the files to the archival repository. However, this would come at the cost of having less control over the archive.

The time and resources needed to build and manage an archive will depend upon the size of the organisation and the volume of its records. The Fund was a relatively small organisation, employing up to 18 staff, which existed for a relatively short period of time, 15 years. Larger organisations which have existed for longer will need to dedicate more time and resources to managing an archive. For organisations wishing to maintain an archive in-house rather than donating material to an archival repository, the necessary time and resources could be considerably different.

Given that building and managing an archive will require the commitment of significant resources, it is important that organisations have an advocate for archives at a sufficiently senior level who can successfully justify the expenditure.

### **2. Good records management is key.**

Information is a major asset to charities, voluntary organisations, trusts and foundations. Good records management means that:

- Staff are able to access the information they need easily and quickly.
- Information can be shared across the organisation, helping to move away from silos of information and reducing the frequency with which staff need to redo work which has already been done by others.
- When people leave the organisation their electronic and paper records can still be found and used by their colleagues.
- Policy formation and decision making will be better supported by the availability of complete, up to date, reliable information.

Good records management also means that an organisation will be in a much better position to begin building and managing an archive. In the Fund's grant files there was a clear and consistent format for storing information, which enabled the archivists to review the material prior to donation relatively easily, although this was often time consuming due to the volume of material in each file. For the remaining files, staff teams had developed a variety of records management practices. The records which were created by the teams with better records management practices at the Fund were more comprehensive, better organised, and were easier for the archivists to find.

As a result, researchers are likely to find this section of the archive the most complete and easy to use. The files that came from teams with less consistent records management practices are less complete and will be more difficult for researchers to navigate and interpret. 'Records management' and 'archives management' are therefore very much part of the same process, and it is crucial for any organisation to implement good records management practices, whether or not they are considering putting any information into an archive.

### **3. The choice of archival repository is significant.**

Archival repositories have collection policies that specify what type of archival collections they will acquire. Each archival repository offers a unique service and it is important to consider which will be the most appropriate for your organisation's archives. Some institutions might have a higher profile and a larger number of users, meaning that the archive will be used more often. Other institutions might offer to digitise the collection and make it available online, or offer better conditions for preservation and conservation.

It was helpful for the Fund to decide at an early stage in the archive project where we wanted our archive to be housed. This was very important in helping us to plan and progress the archive project. It also meant that we were able to ask the British Library any questions we might have during the process of building the archive, and they were very helpful in providing help and guidance to assist with the project.

Whilst it was necessary for the Fund as a spend-out organisation to donate its archive to an external organisation, one option for active organisations is to develop the archive in-house. The 'Don't Throw It Away' project has published a helpful guide for organisations who are considering whether to develop an archive in-house or to donate to an archival repository (please see Appendix 1 for a link to this report and other sources of helpful information).

#### **4. It is useful to decide upon criteria for what should be included in the archive at an early stage in the project.**

In any organisation only a small proportion of the records that it creates will usually be kept permanently as archives. In the Fund's experience, it was useful to develop criteria for which types of records would be included in the archive at an early stage in the project. This enabled a consistency in dealing with records from different years and from different teams and areas of work.

By having set criteria through which to judge whether files should be included in the archive, the process of including or excluding files in the archive was more transparent and, because the criteria was agreed through discussions with staff and the British Library, less subjective.

Including electronic files in an archive will create an additional set of issues to deal with. For example, it would be important to have a consistent approach across the paper and electronic aspects of the archive. As the Fund decided on a paper based archive, the electronic files were reviewed, printed and added to the files where appropriate. It was decided that general emails would not be included in the archive due to their complexity and the sheer volume of them, but in other organisations (and depending on the records management procedures) it may be appropriate to include some or all emails. Digital archives are becoming increasingly popular, not least because of the possibilities for online access that they can provide for researchers.

#### **5. Staff, Board members and third party organisations will have concerns. It is important that these are addressed.**

Any organisation which is considering building an archive will have to address the concerns of a variety of stakeholders. For the Fund, it was important to address any potential concerns of our Board of Directors, whose duty it was to manage the reputational risk and any legal issues arising from placing our files into an archive. It was also important to address the issues raised by the Fund's staff and grantees, including concerns that the release of information might damage the work of some of the Fund's grantees or make it difficult for them to secure future funding.

The issues raised by the Fund's Board were addressed in a number of ways. Firstly, it was decided that the archive should focus on the work that the Fund had done alongside its partners in attempting to affect social change, and that files not directly related to this work – such as the legal, commercial and financial files – would not be included in the archive. Secondly, the British Library allowed the Fund to suggest closure periods for particularly sensitive files so that they would only be available to the public after a period of time. The Fund also contacted all past grantees to let them know that their grant files would be placed in the archive so that they could discuss the project if they had any concerns.



Ultimately, the archive project was able to proceed because it had champion in the Fund's Research Manager, CEO and a Board member who were able to successfully argue the case for the archive. Openness and transparency can be frightening for an organisation, which is why it is important that the benefits of an archive are championed by someone at a sufficiently senior level in the organisation to be able to counter any potential concerns.

## **6. The process of building and managing an archive will differ for organisations that are closing down and for organisations that are remaining operational.**

The Fund's archive project was very specifically related to its situation as a spend-out foundation that was in the process of closing down. The archive project was intended to be a major part of the Fund's legacy, enabling other foundations and trusts to learn from our work and providing scholars with a body of evidence from which to evaluate the Fund's 15 years of work after its closure. The imminent closure of the Fund gave the archive project a sense of urgency.

The Fund's staff were aware that the organisation would close at the end of 2012 and if the archive project was not carried out then the files could be destroyed. On a practical level, the Fund was able to donate files to an external archive institution in a way that it would not have been able to do had it not been closing down. The last tranche of files, delivered to the British Library in December 2012, were being used by staff for operational purposes right up until that point.

Trusts and foundations should consider building and managing archives whether they are spending out or existing in perpetuity. However, for active organisations that are building and managing archives, the practical experience of building and managing an archive will be very different to the experience of an organisation that is closing down.

If the organisation chooses to donate an archive to an external archival institution then they can only donate older files which are no longer needed for operational purposes. It might be more appropriate for an active organisation to build and manage an archive in-house, enabling staff to consult the archive conveniently and maintaining control over access to the records by external researchers. In this case the management of the archive will need to be carefully thought through.

Any organisation can benefit in several ways from having an archive during its own lifetime. Firstly, they can learn from previous work in a systematic way by accessing the archive files at regular intervals. In addition, by being transparent, they can increase their accountability to the beneficiaries of the work. Lastly, they can still exert some control over how the archive is used, as they can make decisions as they go along about who can access the information and in what circumstances.

## **7. Think ahead about how the archive is going to be used.**

An archive should not be a dusty cupboard of files that is never accessed. It is a good idea to think ahead about how the archive might be accessed and used. In the Fund's case, our choice of archival institution was partly based on how the resource would be promoted and shared with researchers. We decided to award the British Library a grant for the promotion of our archive over the next few years. This will ensure that the materials within it are promoted across their various research events and that there are many different opportunities for social policy researchers to use the archive.

If you are going to keep your archive within your organisation it would be worth considering how any external researchers would find out about it and access the files. It may be time consuming to deal with requests for access unless you have an archivist working for you. There are plenty of websites and databases where you can list the contents of your archive so that researchers can find out that you have an archive and decide if the material within it would be of interest in their work (please see Appendix 1 for further details).

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, trusts and foundations hold a lot of information that is pertinent to our social history. Researchers will gain access to a very rich source of information about ongoing social issues through exploring your archive. Therefore, we would encourage trusts and foundations to share whatever records they can, both to increase transparency and to provide an accurate picture of social problems for generations to come.

## **Appendix 1: Where to go for further information**

In 2011 the Fund commissioned Raji Hunjan to write a report exploring existing trust and foundation strategies and approaches to the development of archives:

<http://www.vahs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/report.pdf>

The National Archives has published a variety of guidance for organisations looking to develop their archives:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/developing-your-archives.htm>

The National Archives have also published guidance on how to publicise your archive to potential users by uploading information about your archive to the National Register of Archives, Access to Archives (A2A) and other key online directories:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/networking-your-archives.htm>

The Rockefeller Archive Centre is an excellent institution and source of information on foundation archives:

<http://www.rockarch.org>

The Charity Archivists & Records Managers Group (CHARM) promote the importance of charity and voluntary sector archives and provide information and assistance to those working in this specialist field:

<http://www.charmonline.org.uk>

The Campaign for Voluntary Sector Archives was established in 2012 in order to raise awareness of the importance of voluntary sector archives:

<http://www.voluntarysectorarchives.org.uk>

The 'Don't Throw It Away' project has published a guide for organisations considering whether to develop an archive in-house or to donate to an archival repository:

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/specialcoll/services/dont/keepordonate.html>

It might be worth considering placing some electronic records into an online search collection, such as the Third Sector Research Centre's knowledge portal or the British Library's social welfare portal:

<http://www.tsrc.ac.uk/Research/KnowledgePortal/tabid/840/Default.aspx>

<http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/>

## Appendix 2: A summary of what the Fund included in its archive

Area of the Fund's work	Papers included in the archive	Papers excluded from the archive
Grants departments / Initiatives	Grant files Commission files Papers of grants committees Files on major pieces of non-grant work (advocacy, collaborations, etc.) Strategy and policy papers Evaluation papers	Rejected grant application files Administrative and staffing papers
Chief Executive's office	Files relating to grants strategy and relevant consultations	Correspondence Papers relating to finance, legal and commercial activities
Communications	Press releases, Q&As and other information for press, Fund publications, papers for Fund events	All other Communications papers
Finance	Copies of the Fund's annual accounts	All other Finance papers
Board of Directors	Board papers that relate to the social issues supported by the Fund	All Board minutes Legal, financial, commercial and staffing Board papers
Office management	Reports on the use of voluntary sector meeting rooms	All other office management papers
Legal	None	All legal papers
Commercial activities	None	All commercial files
Human resources	None	All personnel files