



## **Archives and Research Collections**

### **Volunteering Policy**

This policy draws on the guidelines and recommendations of [The National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) and on the National Council on Archives report, [Volunteering in Archives](#) (2014).

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 We have welcomed volunteers for many years and recognise that volunteers bring added value to our work, tackling tasks and achieving results that our staff could not tackle or achieve.

1.2 This policy explains the working of the volunteer programme for staff, volunteers and prospective volunteers. Work experience placements for University of York students are covered in a separate policy.

1.3 Volunteering must support the work of Archives and Research Collections in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the University of York. It embraces all aspects of Archives and Research Collections' work.

1.4 Each volunteer project will have a named Volunteer Coordinator responsible for implementing this policy concerning each project they are responsible for.

1.5 Volunteer projects are generally defined as group projects, although individual projects may also be available. In this way, the projects should ensure continuity and sustainability and engage volunteers in teamwork, social interaction and mutual support. It is intended that projects will be largely self-managing, with the support of the named Volunteer Coordinator.

1.6 Opportunities may also arise for individuals to volunteer to assist with specific collections-based tasks under the management of a named staff member. Applications are welcomed from candidates who are affiliated with recognised courses and schemes, as well as from interested members of the public. All applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, considering whether we have a suitable project and capacity and the suitability of a particular individual to a given project.

## **2. Purpose of the Policy**

To:

- enable volunteers and prospective volunteers to understand how volunteering works, and give them guidance and support if problems arise;
- provide a framework for all staff when involving volunteers in their work;
- provide a foundation on which our involvement of volunteers will be based;
- give a cohesive and consistent approach to ensure that volunteers are fully supported during their volunteering role;
- help ensure fairness and consistency when working with a diverse group of people.

## **3. Vision for Volunteering**

- Staff will consider involving volunteers in all projects.
- Involving volunteers will become an integral part of our culture.
- Volunteering will become key in delivering access and conservation projects and public engagement.
- Volunteers will work in groups or individually, as appropriate.
- Existing or prospective volunteers may propose projects and submit them to us for consideration.
- Volunteering projects will also be offered remotely where appropriate.

## **4. Definition of a volunteer**

4.1 A volunteer freely commits time and energy to benefit others through personal choice, without expectation of financial reward and outside of any university course-specific requirements.

4.2. A volunteer commits to support our work to enhance access to, or the preservation of, our collections. Volunteers may work in volunteer project groups or individually, onsite or remotely. When a project ends, volunteers may ask to be included in our volunteer register to be contacted when new volunteer projects arise.

## **5. Benefits to Archives and Research Collections**

- Volunteers bring a different perspective to our work.
- Volunteers freely give up their time and demonstrate that our work is valuable beyond the higher education community.
- Volunteers can complete tasks, sometimes over many years, that our staff could not hope to complete. Volunteers may bring specialist skills and experience to a project.

## **6. Benefits to volunteers of volunteering with us**

- Volunteering provides new challenges and enables people to learn new skills.

- Volunteering can be a stepping stone into employment or training.
- Volunteering can provide opportunities to meet like-minded people.
- Volunteering can provide an opportunity to be involved with something interesting, absorbing and rewarding for its own sake.
- Volunteering can improve health and well-being and sustain mental agility.
- Volunteering enables volunteers to work directly with unique and distinctive collections and produce work of long-lasting value to a wide range of people in the UK and abroad, both now and in the future.

## **7. Opportunities for volunteers**

7.1 A range of onsite and remote volunteering opportunities will be available. Each will have a Role Description that includes a section about personal qualities.

7.2 Volunteers may join a group or propose forming a new group of volunteers, where appropriate. In this way, the social value of volunteering will be maximised.

7.3 Volunteers may also work independently on remote projects, where appropriate, so that access to opportunities is not limited to those who can work onsite.

7.4. There will also be opportunities for individuals to volunteer from time to time across our work's access and preservation strands.

7.4 Potential volunteers will also be signposted to other appropriate organisations if suitable opportunities are not currently available with us.

## **8. Procedure**

### 8.1 Recruitment

Various approaches will be used to recruit volunteers, including those from communities that are seldom heard. We will:

- Raise awareness of volunteering opportunities amongst local voluntary, community and faith groups.
- Display volunteer opportunities online and via social media.
- Use word-of-mouth.
- Use the University's existing links.
- Where organisations wish to propose a project, recruitment of volunteers will be in partnership with the proposing organisation. Our staff have the final say on the appointment of volunteers and volunteer numbers.

Prospective volunteers will be asked to complete an application form, provide emergency contact information and provide contact details for two people who can provide short references (one in a professional capacity and one character reference) before they undertake inductions and training.

## 8.2 Induction and Training for Volunteers

8.2.1 For remote volunteering opportunities, volunteers will be given a copy of this policy and have an initial induction conversation with the named Volunteer Coordinator (either in-person or on Zoom). The induction meeting will cover the points detailed in 8.2.2 below as they apply to the project concerned. The volunteers will then be sent full instructions for the project they will work on. Volunteers can contact the named volunteer coordinator anytime with questions and comments, and check-in meetings to monitor progress will be scheduled as required (at least annually).

8.2.2 For onsite volunteering, the Volunteer Coordinator will organise a mandatory induction before the placement begins. This will include:

- A brief overview of Archives and Research Collections and their place within Library, Archives and Learning services, the University, and the wider world
- Introduction to volunteering
- Volunteer responsibilities, including Health and Safety
- Collections handling training (with regular refresher sessions throughout the volunteering period)
- The importance of confidentiality and Data Protection (see Appendix 2)
- Equal opportunities
- Contact names and phone numbers for relevant staff members

8.2.3 During the induction, the Volunteer Coordinator will clarify individual training needs and how they will be met.

8.2.4 The Volunteer Coordinator will provide volunteers with an induction timetable.

8.2.5 Volunteers must adhere to relevant policies and procedures.

8.2.6 Volunteers must sign an agreement that they understand that their volunteering opportunity may be withdrawn by us at any time.

## **9. Responsibilities of our staff**

9.1 If a staff member is interested in developing a volunteering opportunity, they should contact their line manager in the first instance, who will put the proposal to the Collections Development Group.

9.2 Volunteer Coordinators will meet their volunteer groups on each occasion they attend the Borthwick or provide an alternative contact on occasions when they are absent. For remote volunteers, coordinators will be available by email, with an alternative contact available when absent. Sometimes, setting up a Zoom call with individual volunteers may be necessary.

9.3 Volunteer Coordinators will provide reports on the work of their groups to the Archives and Research Collections Team Meeting.

9.4 Volunteer Coordinators will support their groups and individual volunteers, providing advice and guidance, helping to solve problems, and listening and responding to proposals and ideas.

## **10. Risk Management**

Every person has the right to work in a safe environment. To enable this to happen, volunteers are covered in the following ways:

- Risk assessments will be carried out by the Volunteer Coordinator during the planning phase of the volunteer role.
- Volunteers are covered by the University's insurance policy (in the Public and Employees Liability Cover) for their agreed role.
- Volunteers have the same responsibilities and guarantees as employees regarding health and safety.

## **11. Data Protection and confidentiality**

11.1 Volunteers can be reassured that we only ask for information that we need and will keep the information securely, limit access to it and not pass their details on without consent unless legally obliged.

11.2 It is not expected that volunteers will come into contact with sensitive or confidential data in the archives, but from time to time, and for particular projects, it may be necessary to require volunteers to sign our usual Data Protection disclaimer.

11.3 Volunteers are not expected to come into contact with confidential or sensitive information about us, Library, Archives and Learning Services or the University. If this should happen, volunteers are expected to respect the confidentiality of the information, act as if they were employees of the University, and not disclose the information to third parties.

## **12. Problem Solving Procedure**

It is not expected that difficulties will arise, but should they do so, this procedure describes the process for their resolution.

12.1 All problems should be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:

- Protect our volunteers.
- Minimise any disruption to staff and other volunteers.
- Demonstrate that our organisation respects volunteers.
- Protect the reputation of the University.

12.2 A volunteer can complain if they feel they have been treated unfairly. If the complaint relates to a member of staff, their first point of contact should be their Volunteer Coordinator. If a volunteer has a complaint against their Volunteer Coordinator, their contact will be the line manager of their Volunteer Coordinator.

12.3 The aim should be to resolve the issue through informal discussion. If this is unsuccessful, the volunteer should write their concerns. This will be responded to within twenty working days. If the volunteer is unsatisfied with the outcome, the volunteer may appeal to the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections, whose decision will be final.

12.4 If a complaint is received about a volunteer, their Volunteer Coordinator will deal with it. The volunteer has the right to be told the complaint, state their case, and appeal to the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections. The person who made the complaint should be kept informed.

12.5 The aim should be to resolve the complaint informally through discussion. If the complaint cannot be resolved through discussion, the Volunteer Coordinator may issue the volunteer with a written account, including a clear description of how the complaint should be resolved over a defined time scale. If the volunteer declines or cannot resolve the complaint in the manner described in the time scale defined, the volunteer will be required to leave their volunteer group. The volunteer may appeal against the decision of their Volunteer Coordinator to the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections, whose decision will be final.

### **13. Scope**

13.1 This policy covers all our volunteering opportunities.

### **14. Oversight**

14.1 Overall responsibility for Access is with the Keeper of Archives and Research Collections

14.2 The Archives and Research Collections Leadership Team oversees policy implementation.

### **Document History and Status**

September 2011	Borthwick Senior Management Team	Approved
November 2017	Borthwick Senior Management Team	Updates agreed
January 2024	Archives and Research Collections Leadership Team	Updates agreed

Review cycle 5 years

Date of next review January 2029

# Appendix 1

## Recruitment of Volunteers: Method statement

After approval of a volunteering project, the Volunteer Coordinator will create publicity for the project and advertise the project as appropriate, along with information about accessing volunteer recruitment forms.

After receipt of completed forms, the Volunteer Coordinator will shortlist candidates, conduct informal interviews with prospective volunteers about their interests, experience, and expectations from the volunteering project, and obtain references from referees where appropriate.

Individual requests for volunteering opportunities can be made speculatively to Archives and Research Collections by candidates or their appointed representatives. Archives and Research Collections will consider all such applications on a case-by-case basis, considering whether we have a suitable project and capacity and the suitability of a particular individual to a given project. Candidates will be asked to submit an application form and details of two referees, and attend an informal interview in person or online to ascertain their suitability for the proposed task or project and their availability.

After acceptance of volunteers, the Volunteer Coordinator will arrange induction and set up for the project, when volunteers will complete the volunteering, confidentiality and equal opportunities agreements.

## Appendix 2

### Volunteer Agreement

I have received, read and understood Archives and Research Collections' Volunteering Policy, and I agree to abide by that policy and other relevant policies of Archives and Research Collections and the University. I understand that Archives and Research Collections can withdraw my volunteering opportunity.

Name .....

(Please print)

Signature .....

Date .....



# Appendix 3

## Confidentiality Agreement

During your volunteering activity, you may have access to see or hear information of a confidential or personal nature. You are required to maintain confidentiality about information relating to all aspects of your volunteering activity.

Disclosures of information relating to Archive and Research Collection users, members of staff, other volunteers or that you acquire through contact with individuals or records during your volunteering activity may only be disclosed with the prior agreement of your Volunteer Coordinator.

You are reminded that a breach of confidentiality will terminate your volunteering role. Moreover, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 can render an individual liable for prosecution for unauthorised disclosure of personal information or action for civil damages under the same Act.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

I have received, read and understood the Archives and Research Collections Statement of Confidentiality.

Name .....

(Please print)

Signature .....

Date .....