Archival Listing and Description

Name of Record	Archival Collecting & Acquisition Policy
Author	Senior Information and Improvement Officer
Owner	Chief Executive's Business Manager
Status	Live
Approved by	Chief Executive's Business Manager
Date of Publication	25/2/21
Review Date	25/2/23

Version:	Date:	Summary of Changes:	Name:
0.1	*4/10/06*	*Based on ISAD(G), CG's NLC manual, and SRO's "Techniques of Archival Description"*	*CMG*
1.0	*29/11/06*	*Checked through, numerous minor amendments*	*CMG*
1.1	*30/9/11*	*Included example boxes, minor amendments*	*CMG*
2.0	*17/12/15*	*Re-write, inc. accurate examples. Included section 5 on the operation of the database and finding aids*	*CMG*
2.1	*8/1/15*	*Included scans of numbering examples*	*CMG*
2.2	*8/1/15*	*Checked and slight amendments*	*AJC*
2.3	*11/02/15*	*Approved*	*GM*
2.4	*5/10/15*	*Changed to 12pt text, 1.1: amended ref. to database; 1.2: added ref. to Trust, changed definition of archives; 2.2: amended intro. to hierarchical arrangement and minor text changes; 3.1, 3.2, 3.3: minor typos. 3.2. removed preference for "muniments"; minor typos in 4; amended the plan/map description. Throughout: centred example boxes. Removed footer.*	*RM*
2.4.1	*18/04/16*	*Amended publication date of 2.4*	*RM*
2.5	*14/8/18*	*Included new examples; added para in intro re. applicability to electronic archives; removed section on "breaking individual items"; removal of draft section on place and proper names; minor text amendments*	*RM*
2.6	*25/2/21*	*Changed owner and author*	*SIIO*

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Why have a manual of archival listing and description?

The adoption of a manual of archival listing and description is a central part of the proper management and control of the Council's unique archival resources.

A consistent approach to the organisation and description of archives, combined with objectivity, clarity, accuracy and an adherence to archival standards will enable proper organisation and access.

This manual covers:

- **Arrangement.** This section looks at defining an archive, and considers its internal arrangement
- **Descriptive elements**. This section covers the elements required to describe all aspects of the archival object, and describes the information which should be recorded at both fonds and at item level.
- **Technique, rules and styles**. This section further considers the mechanics of sorting and listing, as well as the terminology, phraseology, etc., to be used in describing archives.
- **Operation of the database**. This section covers the technical aspects of the operation of the archives database used to describe and control archival material.
- **Finding aids**. This section describes the production and dissemination of finding aids to be generated.

Other procedures relating to the management of archival material, such as accession, storage and retrieval, are not covered in this manual, and are detailed elsewhere. Likewise, the procedures governing all aspects of the management of material in the records management process are outwith the scope of this document.

Processes and procedures for the proper management of electronic archives are yet to be fully developed. Although the procedures in this manual refer mostly to archives in conventional form, the archival principles of using appropriate descriptive elements and of maintaining the hierarchical arrangement of the archives should be maintained whatever the format.

1.2 What are “archives?”

Before considering the arrangement of an archive, it has to first be defined as such and its parameters set. This raises two significant questions:

- what are “archives”, that is what material should be managed as described in this document; and
- how should the individual archives (or “fonds”) be delineated?

The second question will be considered under “arrangement” below, but the first - what should be considered as “archives”? - is more difficult than it first appears. Clearly, old records, created organically as part of the operation of an organisation or an individual, and now of historical value, and in some kind of coherent order clearly fall into the scope of archival management. Less clear are records from a variety of sources or whose provenance has been lost.

Often such material is stored in archival repositories, but in East Renfrewshire the Local Studies service in the East Renfrewshire Leisure and Culture Trust's Libraries Section maintains the responsibility for the management and storage of these records, and of providing access thereto.

For the purposes of this document, and to establish distinction between the responsibility of the Local Studies Librarian and the Council Records Manager, "archives" could be defined as:

> *Those records - in any medium - of historical importance forming part of an organic unit.*

Local Studies resources, on the other hand, include:

- collections of photographs from various and undocumented sources;
- collections of maps and plans from various and undocumented sources;
- bound collections of newspapers or periodicals of local interest;
- bibliographical material;
- collections of miscellaneous records from miscellaneous or undocumented sources.

While the definition of local studies resources is by its nature rather vague, that is not to downplay the value or historical importance of that body of material. It will often include some of the most interesting and accessible items. Archives, on the other hand, require to be managed separately because it is in their provenance, internal relationships and associations that much of their historical value is derived.

Clearly, there is considerable overlap between these areas: publications of the old County of Renfrew, for example, are clearly both archives of the County AND "bibliographical material", so agreement between the relevant officers will be required on an ad hoc basis.

Indeed, the division between "local studies resources" and "archives" is somewhat artificial. Nonetheless, it is expedient at the present time so that proper management can be developed for the latter; and to maintain the high standards of access provided within libraries for the former.

2 Arrangement

2.1 Defining the “Fonds”

As detailed below, key to managing archival material is the establishment of a hierarchical structure based on describing the “fonds” (or “archive group”) in its entirety.

Often this is straight-forward: it is obvious what should be included in an archive of an organisation and what is extraneous to it.

On some occasions, however, it is not clear where the fonds should be established.

This is especially true where the provenance of material has been lost: for example where material was deposited with the Council or with another body some time ago; and since then information about the origin of the records has been lost, and its original order broken through lack of management or to impose an alternative arrangement - perhaps a classification by subject or by document type.

Frequently, material becomes alienated from its fonds, ending up being stored and managed separately.

Nonetheless, in most cases the fonds will be apparent: for example “Burgh of Barrhead” or “Whitecraigs Hockey Club”.

There can be difficulties with small groupings associated with very large and diverse archive groups, such as local authorities records, and in each case consideration will need to be given as to whether the smaller groups of records from “within” that fonds ought to be listed as part of it, or whether it ought to be defined as a separate fonds.

For example:

> The “McFarlane Albums (09) were generated by the Sir James MacFarlane, Convenor of the County Council of Renfrewshire. However, these records were not included within the fonds of the County (R) and were allocated separate fonds as they were not held by or created by the County in its own right, and they were sufficiently distinct to demand separate attention.

2.2. Arranging the Archive

The proper arrangement of the archive is another key task in managing the records and developing proper finding aids. Where appropriate the records should be arranged to reflect the original order of the hierarchy within which they were created.

It is important that an archival list is structured hierarchically throughout to emphasise how each of the records relates to each other. This should be reflected in the internal numbering of the items.

For example:

B	…is the archive of the Burgh of Barrhead
B 1	…are the records of the Town Clerk of the Burgh
B 1/11	…are the records of the Police Court
B 1/11/09	…is a file of Court Complaints and correspondence.

This hierarchical numbering provides a structure to the description of the document which reflects the context in which the records sit. Each item's number indicates the place that that item has within the fonds, the series, the sub-series, etc.

That said, proper consideration should be given to the order of the archives as it stands at the time of its transmittal. Old estate papers, for example, are often sorted into apparently haphazard bundles with only the vaguest structure apparent. There would need to be a very good reason, however, to break these bundles up, even if they appear to be in an order which tells us little of value about the material.

On occasion, it may be appropriate to limit the detail of the hierarchical description. Although a six part (3/1/4/1/5/2, for example) reference number describes perfectly the hierarchy of the body which created it, and the place of the document in that hierarchy, reference numbers this size become unwieldy and increases the chance of administrative error at the keying, retrieval or re-filing stages.

For example:

F 3/1/1 is a sub-series containing both minutes and letter books. These could have been further divided but this would have resulted in an excessively long reference number, so they were simply listed chronologically as F 3/1/1/1, F 3/1/1/2, etc.

Excessively long reference numbers lose their usefulness to researchers if they become so cumbersome as to disguise rather than reveal the position of the item within the archive.

2.3 The Item

The item is key to the archival description. It is at this level that the description seeks to convey the detail of the contents of the material. Properly defining the item is central to being able to access the information from an archive.

The definition of the item is often straightforward, and it is the smallest indivisible unit within the archive:

For example:

13 2/4/1	Cross Arthurlie Chartulary
12 2/1	Busby School Log Book
E 2/1/06	Eastwood District Guide

On occasion, however, it is not possible or it is not appropriate, to list to such a high granularity and it is better to define the item at a higher level. A file of unbound papers would normally be considered "the item", for example - rather than each individual piece of paper within it. Other examples of "items" for listing purposes could include:

E 2/01/7	Bundle of correspondence relating to leases in Eaglesham
13 1/1/05	Loose bundle of vouchers relating to repairs…

In most cases the definition of the item will be self-evident. If it is unclear, however, consider:

- The homogeneity of the larger option;
- Whether the larger option is an organic creation of the original records process, or whether it was constituted at a later date;
- The possible interest to later researchers of the individual smaller options;
- The time available to prepare the list

3 Descriptive elements

3.1 Descriptive elements and hierarchical listing

"Descriptive elements" is simply a way of objectively deciding how the records are described.

Archival material should be described at the most appropriate level. For practical purposes, that means that material in East Renfrewshire's archives should be fully described, as detailed below, at *both* the level of the fonds (that is the archival group or collection as a whole, such as "Burgh of Barrhead" or "Mearns Agricultural Society"), and at the item level, that is the lowest level of production (for example "Minute Book No.3" or "Members' Roll 1972").

This hierarchical description provides several benefits.

- It means that the duplication of descriptive information is minimised. Contextual information about the provenance or archival history of the archive as a whole is recorded only at the higher level, removing the need to replicate the details at the description of every item within it.
- A basic split level description will better allow refinements into descriptions at intermediate levels (if this is required at a later date) than would a flat description. It also allows for the easier transfer of the data about the archives to a broader range of finding aids.

- Multi-level description is in keeping with recommended international standards on archival description and it facilitates a broader use of the descriptive data, allowing for interoperability and data exchange with national repositories of archival information such as the National Register of Archives and the Scottish Archive Network.

This section, then, is in two main parts. The first describes the information required for the fonds level description, the second for the item level description.

3.2 Fonds level description

The development of the fonds level information is an iterative process: the information available at the start of the listing process should be included prior to listing, and as the detailed item-level list is developed, the fonds-level information should be amended and developed as it becomes available.

These fields are based on the elements prescribed in the International Standard of Archival Description. A list of the elements is given here, and, below, further details of what should be entered in each.

Identity	Reference code
	Title
	Date(s)
	Level of description
	Extent and medium
Context	Name of creator
	Administrative/biographical history
	Archival history
	Immediate source of acquisition
Content and Structure	Scope and content
	Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information
	Accruals
	System of arrangement
Access and Use	Conditions governing access
	Conditions governing reproduction
	Language of material
	Physical characteristics and technical requirements
	Finding Aids
Allied Materials	Allied materials
Description Control	Archivist’s note
	Rules or conventions
	Date(s) of descriptions

Notes on the above:

The Reference Code is in two parts. The first is a standard reference, devised by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, for all bodies who hold archives. The Code for East Renfrewshire's archives is GB 3143.

The second part is the fonds reference number. Allocating these numbers is detailed in the section on "techniques, rules and styles" below, and a fonds reference number control sheet has been established to ensure that no number is duplicated.

These two elements of the reference number will allow for the accurate referencing of the archive wherever it appears: a published reference to "11 2/2" could relate to a huge range of quite separate documents, whereas "GB 3143 11 2/2" could only ever be the Plan of land at Waukmill Glen from the Pollok Estate Papers. For this reason, this full data element is required in the list, even though for most purposes (for example in requesting a document from the archive, or for in-house conservation surveys, etc.) only the second part would in fact be used.

Title. This element can cause some difficulties. While bibliographical material of whatever provenance comes with a title, archival records generally have to be given one. This can be especially difficult if the provenance is unclear or the archive is a collection which has been artificially brought together.

Normally, the title would incorporate the creating body and a single word content description.

- Business papers should normally be styled "[business name] records". Likewise, those of clubs or societies should be "[club/society] records".

- The archive of a landed estate can be titled "[estate] muniments" although this term is somewhat archaic. More often "[estate] papers", especially where there are other more significant parts of that archive extant elsewhere or where the location of most of the records is unknown, is more appropriate.

- The records of an individual or family should normally be styled "[individual or family name] papers"

Titles should be given in full, even where an acronym is widely known (for example use "Football Club" rather than F.C.).

Dates(s). At the fonds level, these are simply expressed in years, and are the covering dates (first and last dates) of the material within the fonds, expressed in the format “YYYY – YYYY” (although see the more detailed notes on use of dates in the section on item level description below).

If the fonds consists of only one item which was created wholly within one calendar year, or if all the items within in it were created in the same calendar year, the “covering dates” are simply given as that one year in the format YYYY.

This data element should describe the actual date or dates of the material itself. Existence of copies of older material should be described at the item level: the date to be used here is the date(s) of the physical creation of the document.

Level of Description is a mandatory data element under ISAD(G). For fonds level data it will, of course, always be “fonds”.

Extent and Medium. This is both a narrative description of the extent of the fonds, and an objective measurement of the shelf space it occupies.

For example:

> **Extent and Medium**:
>
> 3 boxes and 6 loose volumes; 2.5 linear metres.

Details of calculating linear meterage of shelf space are given under separate records management guidance.

Name of creator. This will often be the same as the identification element in the title, but should be entered in a standardised form in accordance with the National Council on Archives’ “Rules”.

Artificial collections, rather than fonds which have grown organically, should have the name of the person who brought the papers together recorded here. If even that is unknown, the institution which brought the collection together, or at least the institution from where it was acquired, should be noted.

For example:

> **Name of creator**:
>
> Eastwood District Libraries
>
> [or]
>
> Geddes, Craig M.

Biographical/biographical history. This data element should contain a free text description detailing the history of the creating individual or organisation. Information which gives context to the records and which allows their better understanding should be included here, aiming always at a balance between brevity and the utility of the detail.

Descriptive information about individual items should normally be avoided, as this is better included at the item level.

Information included here derived from outwith the archive itself should be referenced, or inserted within square brackets (see the description field under item level description below for further details of how such information should be presented).

Archival history. This section should record the physical and intellectual control of the records in the period from creation until deposit. This section is vital to demonstrate the authenticity of the archive, and should include details of transfer of custodianship or ownership, history of the arrangement or development of finding aids (although without drifting into what should instead be covered in this area under "Scope and Content" below).

Immediate source of acquisition. This gives the name, and other details, of the immediate source of the fonds. It should also detail the accession number(s) and dates of transfer.

Scope and content. Another key data element, this field should describe the contents of the archive and allow users to judge its relevance to them.

It should include time periods, types of documents, subject matter, geographical areas covered, etc., as well as picking up any particular themes which might be of interest.

Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information. Here any information on the processes for selection, etc., of the archive would be recorded.

Accruals. This field notes the existence of any other material which might later be added to the fonds.

Systems of arrangement. This describes how the internal structure of the fonds has been arranged. While there may be an unavoidable cross-over between the elements of this descriptive element and that at "Scope and content", especially while describing at only fonds and item level, this should be resisted: information about how the fonds has been arranged should be entered here, information about its content should be recorded at "Scope and content".

Conditions governing access. This element should note any restrictions on access to the material, and the timescale on which such restrictions have been applied.

Conditions governing reproduction. This element should record any restrictions on the creation of copies, including details of copyright holder(s) and for how long this applies.

Language of material. This is simply a case of noting the language in which the content is written. This will generally be English, but in some cases may be Latin, Scots or other languages.

Physical characteristics and technical requirements. This element should record information about significant physical characteristics or technical requirements. For example, while conservation requirements would normally be noted at the item level, significant physical characterisations affecting the fonds overall should be noted here.

For electronic media, this field should detail the file type, storage media details and other technical data which will assist in retrieval at a later date.

Finding aids. Recorded here are details about what finding aids exist or are planned, and where these can be accessed, including hyper-text links where appropriate. Finding aids are covered in a later section of this document.

Allied materials. This data element should contain all the data required under the "Allied Materials Area" of ISAD. This comprises:

- *Existence and location of originals* where the material being described comprises or contains copies held elsewhere
- *Existence and location of copies* where copies of original material has been made elsewhere
- *Related units of description* where similar or related archives, either within East Renfrewshire or further afield, can be noted. Association can be by provenance or by a subjective association of geographic or topical similarity.
- *Publication note.* Here should be recorded details of where the material has been published either in conventional form or electronically, including ISBNs or URLs.

No note need be recorded if there is no relevant information for any of these elements.

Archivist's note. This data element should state by whom the archive was sorted, listed, and the description prepared. This field should also note the authorship of any significant revisions to the description.

For example:

Description prepared by Craig Geddes, Council Records Manager

Rules or conventions. As all fonds level descriptions are to be based on the rules laid down here, the standard entry here should read "This description was based on the General International Standard for Archival Description and East Renfrewshire Council's Manual of Listing and Archival Description".

Date of Description. This data element should detail the date of the preparation of this description in a set format (YYYY/MM/DD). Although it may take many months to list an archive, the date of the entry of the entry of this data should be inserted. Any subsequent significant alterations or amendments should also be noted here.

3.3 Item level description

The descriptive elements to be used to describe every item are given in the "Mandatory elements" table, and those to be noted when appropriate are given in the "Optional elements" table. All are detailed below:

Mandatory elements:

Reference Code
Description
Date(s)
Number of pieces
Description by
Description date

Optional elements:

Prior reference no(s).
Conservation Notes
Exhibition Notes
Security
Closure Period

Reference code. The full reference code consists of two elements, the fonds reference number, and the item reference number. The full reference code MUST be unique, referring to only 1 item within the repository.

Further details on the construction, use and presentation of item reference numbers is given in "Techniques, Rules and Styles" below.

Description. This data element is analogous to "title" at the fonds level description. While archival fonds often have, or may readily be given, "titles", this is rarely the case for an individual item. Instead, the item is given a "description".

It is most important to accurately and succinctly describe the archival object. As well as distilling the factual content of the document (saying what it is, to whom the letter was sent, or what the map is of, for example), it may be appropriate to give contextual information where this is not evident from the simple objective description of the content.

This is particularly true when describing very general items such as bundles of letters of correspondence.

For example:

> A description stating "letters from x and y to z, with some copy correspondence…"
> is of little value without
> "…re. a proposed excambion of land at Clarkston".

Often the addition of a simple adjective such as “political”, “domestic”, “estate”, “legal” or “business” before “correspondence” can greatly increase the value of the description.

Where the item is a map, a photograph, a drawing, or a published work the details of publisher, scale, author, photographer, etc., should be included in the description where this is known.

For example:

> Bundle of personal and family papers of Kitty [Catherine] Traynor
> INC.: (1) Photograph by JM Alston of Kitty and Raymond Traynor at Kingussie Sanatorium, 1949
> (3) Ordnance Survey map (6” to the mile) detailing Kittochside and surrounding area, 1933.

Item level description is perhaps the most important element of the whole archival process, and is covered in some detail under “Techniques, Rules and Styles” below.

Date(s). This data element details the date of the item.

For items consisting of a single piece, this is usually straightforward: enter the date in the format YYYY/MM/DD. To assist with electronic sorting, such a date must ALWAYS be entered in that format, and trailing zeros should always be included.

Where the single piece spans a range of dates within one year, enter the year in the format YYYY. Likewise, where the item consists of a number of pieces, all of which fall into the same year, enter this information in the format YYYY.

Where either one piece covers more than one year, or where there are a number of pieces within the item which range over more than one year, enter them in the format YYYY-YYYY.

Difficulties can arise when the date(s) of the item are not known with certainty. In such cases, the data element should consist of both an estimate of the date and an indication of the accuracy of that estimate, or of a qualifier giving a “date after” or “date before”.

If the date is known with some certainty to be within a range of +/- 5 years, the best estimate should be entered and “c.” (an abbreviation for the Latin “circa”, or approximately) should be entered after the date.

If the date can not be estimated to be within such a range, the best guess should be given and a “?” entered after that date.

If it is impossible to make even an estimate of a date, but we have an indication of a *terminus post quem* or *terminus ante quem*, that is a date before or after which the documents must have been created, a “p.” (for “*post*” the Latin for “after”) or an “a.” (for “*ante*”, the Latin for “before”) can be written after the date.

“c.” or even “?” are normally preferable to “a.” or “p.”

Each of these qualifiers can be used in single dates or in date ranges, and each should be written immediately after the year, without a space.

On no account should this data element be left blank or have “unknown” or “not dated” entered.

NO other date formats should be used.

In summary, the following are examples of the acceptable date formats to be used:

1962/08/03	The item was created on the 3rd August 1962
1975	The item was created in 1975
1975-1977	The item covers the period 1975-1977, OR the item consists of a number of pieces from that range of dates.
1886c.	The item dates from around 1886, and there is a reasonable certainty that it is from between 1881 and 1891.
1920?	The item is likely to date from sometime around 1920
1832a.	The item can not be dated, but is certainly before 1832
1951p.	The item can not be dated, but is certainly after 1951

Note that it is the date of the creation of the document itself that is recorded, not the date of the information recorded within it.

For example:

> A bundle of correspondence from 1949 which includes a contemporary copy - or a facsimile - of a title deed from 1782 would be dated as “1949”. The existence of the copy/facsimile and the date of the original from which it is copied would be given in the “description” field.

On occasion, giving a date range can “skew” an interpretation of an item, in particular where it consists of a bundle of pieces which almost all date from either the beginning or the end of the range. The range should nonetheless be given as described above, but this can be further detailed in the description data element.

For example:

A bundle of accounts from 1899 have been bundled with an inventory of goods from 1932.

The date element of the description would read “1899-1932”, but the description would read “Bundle of accounts re… from 1899, with an inventory of… from 1932.”

Normally, the repetition of date information should be avoided, but in cases such as this it would be appropriate.

A particular problem can arise when published items are reused at a later date. On occasion, several years could elapse between the publication and sending of a postcard. More significantly, published ordnance survey maps may be annotated even decades after their publication. On such occasions, again a range of dates should be given, with clarification in the “description” field.

For example:

A local authority in 1912 uses an 1899 Ordnance Survey map to indicate the line of a proposed amendment to a ward boundary. The date range here would be given as “1899-1912”, and this would be explained in the description field.

This practice need NOT be followed if it is felt in any particular instance that such a dating could cause a level of confusion which outweighs the benefits that such a procedure provides, such as if:

- the annotations are very minor – in which case the date of the original could be entered and “with minor later alterations regarding… “ could be entered in the description, or if
- the amendments almost completely erase or cover the original – in which case the later date should be entered, and “based on an original from YYYY” entered in the description.

Number of pieces. This data element, somewhat analogous to “Extent and medium” at the fonds level description, is used to state how many pieces there are within the item. Often, this will be “1”, but there are times when the item description is at a higher level and there could be multiple “pieces within it.

For example:

12 4/3 Class and teacher group photographs 59 pieces

Description by and Description date. These fields are simply to record the name of the officer who wrote the description and/or entered the data. Two digit initials are used for each member of staff.

Prior reference no(s). These should always be recorded, even if the system that generated them is unclear or incomplete, as it is possible that a reference to a document will have been made, or may yet be made, using the prior reference number. *Both* reference numbers used by the creating body *and* any reference number used by a previous later custodian should be recorded.

Conservation notes. It is a useful exercise at the cataloguing stage to identify material which might benefit from conservation treatment. This field should be used to identify material which could be considered a conservation priority.

The conservation priorities are:

P1	High Priority	This item requires conservation as soon as possible
P2	Medium Priority	This item should be conserved when resources become available
P3	Low Priority	This item could benefit from conservation work at a later date

The priority should factor in:
- The physical condition of the item
- Its rate of deterioration
- What practical benefit conservation work might be to the item
- Whether the damage could cause collateral problems for other items
- How historically significant the item is
- What the likely future demand for use of the item might be

As with “security”, below, this field relates to pieces, the smallest physically distinct units within the item. Where an item consists of more than one piece, the “conservation note” field should specify which piece is being referred to. An example of an entry under “conservation notes” for a multiple-piece item might be:

(3) P3; Seal detached
(4) P2; Seal detached and brittle
(8) P1; Map of major historical significance; very brittle.
(9) P2; Binding not extant, pages coming loose.

This field is not to provide full conservation details of the item; rather it should simply assign a rough priority to any items which might be considered for future conservation, and to include a brief description of the relevant issues. This can then be considered when resources are available.

Items in such a physically deteriorated - or deteriorating - state as to have to be withheld from public access should have a note to that effect in the “description” field.

Exhibition. This data element is entirely subjective, but can be used to flag up any material which might be worth identifying as having potential as being used (either in its original form or in facsimile) for broader use, such as in an exhibition or promotional material or on a web-based resource.

This is used for material which is:
- particularly historically significant; and/or
- has a high visual impact

Security. This field is used to identify any items which might be particularly vulnerable to theft. Information as to the existence of medieval seals or Victorian stamps, for example, should be recorded here. In theory, this information is a subset of the "description" field, but by keeping it separate – and not visible through publicly available finding aids – it can be useful tool in helping to monitor and control items which might be particularly vulnerable

As with "conservation" above, this field is often most useful if relating to the piece, rather than the item. Again, where an issue relates to a particular piece, this should be detailed.

For example, an entry under "security" for a multiple-piece item might be:

(1) Medieval Lead Seal
(5) square of 1d black stamps

Closure Periods. Some material in an archival collection has to be closed to the public (as per the guidelines issued by the Archivists of Scottish Local Authorities Working Group). this should be noted in the description field, with further details where appropriate in a separate field.

The date should be entered in a standard date format. Again, see the "Operation of the Database" section of this guidance for further details.

4 Technique, Rules and Styles

Style. While noting all the conventions detailed throughout this document, normal English usage should be adopted at all elements of the descriptive process. In particular, while fonds titles should have each of their initial letters capitalised, item level descriptions should only be capitalised where appropriate (unlike with bibliographic material). Additionally, the narrative data elements should always be concluded with a full stop.

For example:

[fonds]	Burgh of Barrhead Alexander Crum Memorial Library
[item]	File on road safety titled “Health and Transport”. File of correspondence and notes on the reception to mark the success of the Barrhead Players' Club. Includes a list of the club members.

Allocating fonds numbers. For official records, that is the records of the local authority and its predecessor bodies, a single letter mnemonic code is used: for example “B” for the Burgh of Barrhead.

For “private records” - that is the wide range of gifts and deposits of the archives of estates, private individuals, clubs, societies, etc. - a consecutive number is allocated on first sorting the collection after it has been accessioned. For example “14” for the Capelrig Estate Papers.

A fonds numbers control sheet has been established to ensure that no numbers are used more than once.

“Floating zeroes” in reference numbers should be used to aid electronic ordering when the relevant number of series, sub series or items is greater than 9. They should NOT be used in fonds or piece numbers: the former need not be ordered, and the later receive no individual entries on the database.

For example:

> There are 3 items which have been designated the 6th series (out of 12) within the fonds “B”, the archive of the Burgh of Barrhead. The 2nd item in this series is numbered “B 1/06/2”. The number is NOT “B 1/6/02” because:
> - there are more than 9 series so a zero is inserted prior to “6”
> - there are less than 10 items, so no zero is required prior to “2”

Form of numbering. In ALL cases there should be a single space between the fonds number and the item number, and each element of the hierarchical item number should be separated with a "/".

Sorting pieces within an item. As noted above, an archival item can contain numerous pieces. These would normally simply be sorted chronologically. If another arrangement is to be used (or if an alternative arrangement is already apparent) that should be noted at the item level description.

In the following example, item C 1/058 has been arranged chronologically; whereas the original ordering of E6/11 has been retained to keep related pieces together even though that results in the item not being sorted chronologically.

C 1/058	Box of records on the Holocaust Memorial Day 2004 41 pieces	2012
E 6/11	Folder of papers on "Housing in Giffnock"… INC: …(6)-(9) copies of articles on the development of MacTaggart and Mickel's Orchard Park Estate;… 31 pieces	1936 - 1996

Noting individual pieces. Listing at the item level can on occasion mean that relevant details about individual pieces could be missed. This should be addressed by identifying individual pieces of importance within the item by the use of "INC.:" and formatting as shown in the following example:

> **06 3/5**
>
> Letters from subscribers to the Alexander Crum Memorial. Also includes some statements of the collections of funds.
> INC.: (52) Note of estimates received for construction work, 1894
>
> 1894 - 1899   56 pieces

Note that all pieces so identified should be dated in the simple format YYYY.

This process should be followed where there are pieces within the item which are

- of particular interest; or
- are not in keeping with the remainder and are not therefore adequately described in the item-level description.

It is also of use where the description is vague, perhaps because the original title was retained, for example:

> **B 1/12/04**
>
> Box file of maps and plans titled "miscellaneous", INC.:

(1) Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan of Barrhead (with later unidentified shadings of streets. On the reverse, in pencil, there is a reference to "used in Bus [company?] appli[cati]on", 1913;
(2) - (4) Area Maps and detailed plans of the Main Street redevelopment plans, 1958?;
(5) Plan, elevations and location plan of a proposed community centre for Auchenback, 1959;
(6) 3 sheets of detailed plans, elevations and a location plan of the proposed Cleansing Depot at Glen Street, 1960;
(7) Map of the Burgh of Paisley detailing local bus routes, 1961c.
(8) Map of central Renfrewshire issued by the Burgh of Paisley showing routes of buses to replace trams, 1961c.

1913 - 1961c. 8 pieces

Including information from another source should only be done in a data element if it significantly enhances the description. Where this is to be done:

- information from another source should be included in square brackets, and
- information from another source which can not be regarded as definite should be included in square brackets with a question mark

Examples:

Draft letter from Helen Broadbent to Bethanie Anderson, M.P., with response, re. the proposed closure of the "Kyle line" [Fort William to Kyle of Lochalsh Railway]

Volume listing titles of [Burgh?] files

Square brackets can also be used to expand unusual abbreviations within quoted text - see the example at B 1/12/04 (1) above.

Alternative names and spellings. Where alternative names of persons, places or other objects are used in a record, these should be referenced in the description by the use of “al. xxx” within parenthesis; where alternative names which might help a reader access information which would otherwise be missed are known but which are NOT stated on the face of the document, this should be noted in the description by the use of “al. xxx” within square brackets. Finally, where the same situation applies, but there is uncertainty as to the accuracy of the alternative, this should be indicated by “?” after the name.

Examples:

Progress of titles to Windyedge (al. Mount Vernon) in Old Monkland par., Lanarkshire.

Copy letter from Gibson to Kenneth Boswell re. the development of a “fashion for playin at the kerts [cards]” since “the conclusion of late war”. Photograph of “the Laird” [Joseph Crum ?].

Abbreviations. Abbreviations should be avoided in all elements of the archival description, with the following exceptions:

al.	alias
et al.	“et alii” or “et alia”, and others
etc.	“et cetera”, and the rest (or) and so on
ibid.	“ibidem”, the same (or) as above
par(s).	parish, parishes
re.	regarding, in relation to
sic.	“sicut”, just as
sp.	spelt, spelling
a., c., p.	see dating abbreviations above

The ampersand (&) can be used when describing dates within item or piece descriptions, or where it is commonly used in business names. Other than that it is only used to link individuals within one party to avoid either confusing the matter or forcing the description to use unwieldy phrases like “…on the one hand” or “on the second part”.

In the following example, the ampersand makes clear the parties in the arrangement without using more cumbersome phrasing:

Folder re. the agreement between Eastwood District Council and Edgerton Homes & John Dickie…

Finally, if a lengthy name is given once within an element of a description, it can be abbreviated to an acronym if repeated within the same element.

For example:

Bundle of correspondence between David Robert Carrick Buchanan and James Charnley, John Workman, Robert Law et al., re. the establishment of a football club. INC.: (3) Letter from DRCB. to Gerald Collins re. the use of his cricket ground.

In every occasion in which an abbreviation is used it should always be concluded by “.” The only exceptions to this rule are after acronyms or where it is normal to omit the punctuation mark in normal English usage (for example after “Mr” or “Ms”)

Maps and plans: the words “map” and “plan” are often almost synonyms. It may make the finding aid more useful, however, to generally use “map” for cartographic representations at perhaps 1:10,000 or smaller and “plan” for documents drawn to a larger scale. The exception to this is Ordnance Survey maps, which are almost always described as “maps” whatever scale they are drawn to.

“Wanting”. If it is apparent that an item is missing at the time that the archive is being listed, the reference number may be allocated, a description and other details entered, and “WANTING” entered at the start of the description. This should only be done if each of the following three conditions are met:

- the archive list is strictly structured;
- It is certain that such an item did indeed exist;
- It is considered that there is a reasonable chance that the item is extant and that it may be transmitted to the archive at a later date.

“Not allocated” can be occasionally and sparingly used in a long series where there is a likelihood that some re-ordering will be required and that items will later be added which would otherwise be out of sequence our which would require the entire series to be renumbered.

Numbering documents. For management and security purposes, every physically distinct object within the archives should be numbered and physically marked with that number.

> ***Items*** should be numbered with their unique fonds and item reference number. Note that there is ALWAYS a space left between the fonds and item elements of the number.
>
> For example:
>
> B 2/04
> 12 01/5/1
> 3 725
>
> ***Pieces*** within an item need not repeat the fonds reference number, but each of these should be marked with the item number and consecutive Arabic numerals (without trailing zeroes).
>
> For example:
>
> 01/5/1 (1)
> 01/5/1 (15)
> 2/04 (3)
>
> ***Sub-pieces***. Occasionally, items contain pieces which in turn contain physically distinct sub-pieces. An example might be the sketch plan described below:

Level	*Reference as marked*	*Description*

item	12 01/5/1	Bundle of farm leases and associated correspondence….
piece	01/5/1 (13)	Letter…, with sketch plan, re. a lease of Eastwood Mains farm
sub-piece	(13) ii	Sketch plan of Eastwood Mains farm.

In such cases, as can be seen from the example above, the sub pieces should each be marked. The top sub piece should have the full item reference number, with, in addition, “i” after it. Subsequent sub-pieces require only the piece number with consecutive, lower-case, Latin numerals thereafter.

For example:

01/5/1 (13)i
(13)ii
(13)iii
(13)iv

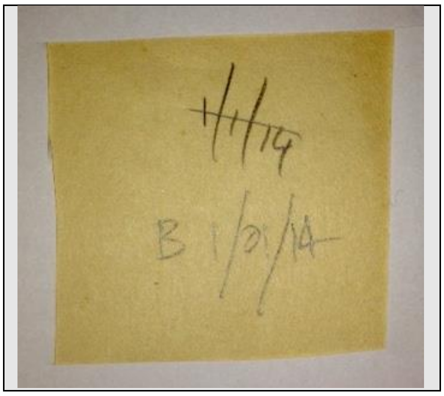
Physically marking documents.

Documents should be marked with a pencil. It should be hard enough, and be applied firmly enough, so as to make casual removal of the mark by anyone of wilful intent difficult; yet should not be applied so rigorously as to cause permanent damage to the document.

For most papers and parchments an H2 pencil may be appropriate, although for brittle documents (such as “onion skin” maps) or softer media (such as newspaper) HB will be less likely to damage the original.

Take care not to remove any prior reference numbers, where these are extant. As noted above where these are found they should be noted at the relevant data element in the item level list. If such prior ref. numbers could cause confusion with the new reference numbers, they should be carefully but clearly crossed out with a pencil.

For example:



Ensure that the “/” mark separating different elements of the reference number is clearly drawn and that it can not be confused with a “1”. Likewise, make sure that the space between the fonds number and the item number is large enough to clearly differentiate the two elements.

Otherwise, for example:

> U13 2/1/2
>
> could easily be misread as:
>
> U1 32/112

For most archival documents, the number is written in the top right corner of the front of the document as viewed from the reader’s perspective.

If the top right corner is not suitable, perhaps because

- it has already been written on; or
- it has a stamp affixed or has an illustration; or
- it is a medium which can not be readily physically marked; or
- it is of an artistic or visual value which would be impaired by marking (see below); or
- it is too dark, discoloured or fragile,

a more suitable place for marking can be found as appropriate, ideally as near to the top right as possible.

For maps and plans, where they are marked is dependent on how they are stored:

- *Folded maps* should be treated as above
- *Flat maps* should be numbered on both the top AND the bottom right corners
- *Rolled maps* should be numbered on the BACK of ALL four corners.

Photographs should never be marked on their image side, even if there is a border which would allow this. Instead, they should be carefully marked on the top right corner of their reverse. Particular care should be taken with unbacked prints to ensure that marking their back does not damage the image on their front.

Some photographic backing papers, particularly some modern ones, are shiny and can not be easily marked with pencil. In such cases ink may be used, but only after checking that the dye does not spread, and ensuring that the mark on each is completely dry before stacking or boxing.

Bound volumes should always be numbered on the top right of the first inside right-hand page (ignoring covers and endpapers). Unbound or disbound volumes should be marked on the front top right corner as described above. Sturdy items with appropriate covers may also have adhesive spine labels attached to the base of the spine and that can also be marked with the reference number. This is particularly advised if the volume is one of a series of any length or if it is not boxed on the shelf when in storage as this makes locating the item more easy and cuts down on unnecessary handling.

Oversized items, such as large framed photographs, can have adhesive labels attached where appropriate.

Visually sensitive items. Particular care should be taken when marking items when this would result in damage to their aesthetic value. Photographs were mentioned above, but care should also be taken with certificates, drawings and any other records the value of which is largely in its visual appeal. In such circumstances, mark the back of the document and not the front.

Covers, envelopes, melonex sleeves, etc. Labelled files or modern packaging material such as melonex sleeves for maps and photographs can have an adhesive label attached, although this should be done so as not to interfere with the visibility of the original material within or to obscure any previous numbering system.

For example:

5 Archives database & finding aids

5.1 Database

The archival database provides the central management tool for the arrangement, locating and retrieval of the Council's archives.

The database has two main tables, one for fonds level information and one for item level information.

These are populated by the fields corresponding to those outlined at Section 3.

The database is stored on the shared drive, and is regularly backed up both through corporate systems and on by the Council Records Manager.

5.2 Finding Aids

The database can produce lists of each completed fonds. These should be generated as soon as the data has all been entered or if significant amendments are made.

The lists are saved as pdf files and mounted on the archives website (http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/archives) where there is a global free-text search facility or they can be downloaded.

Hard-copy lists are also available at the local studies library and of course in the archives.

Subject- and location- guidance and a top level guide to the collections are in preparation.