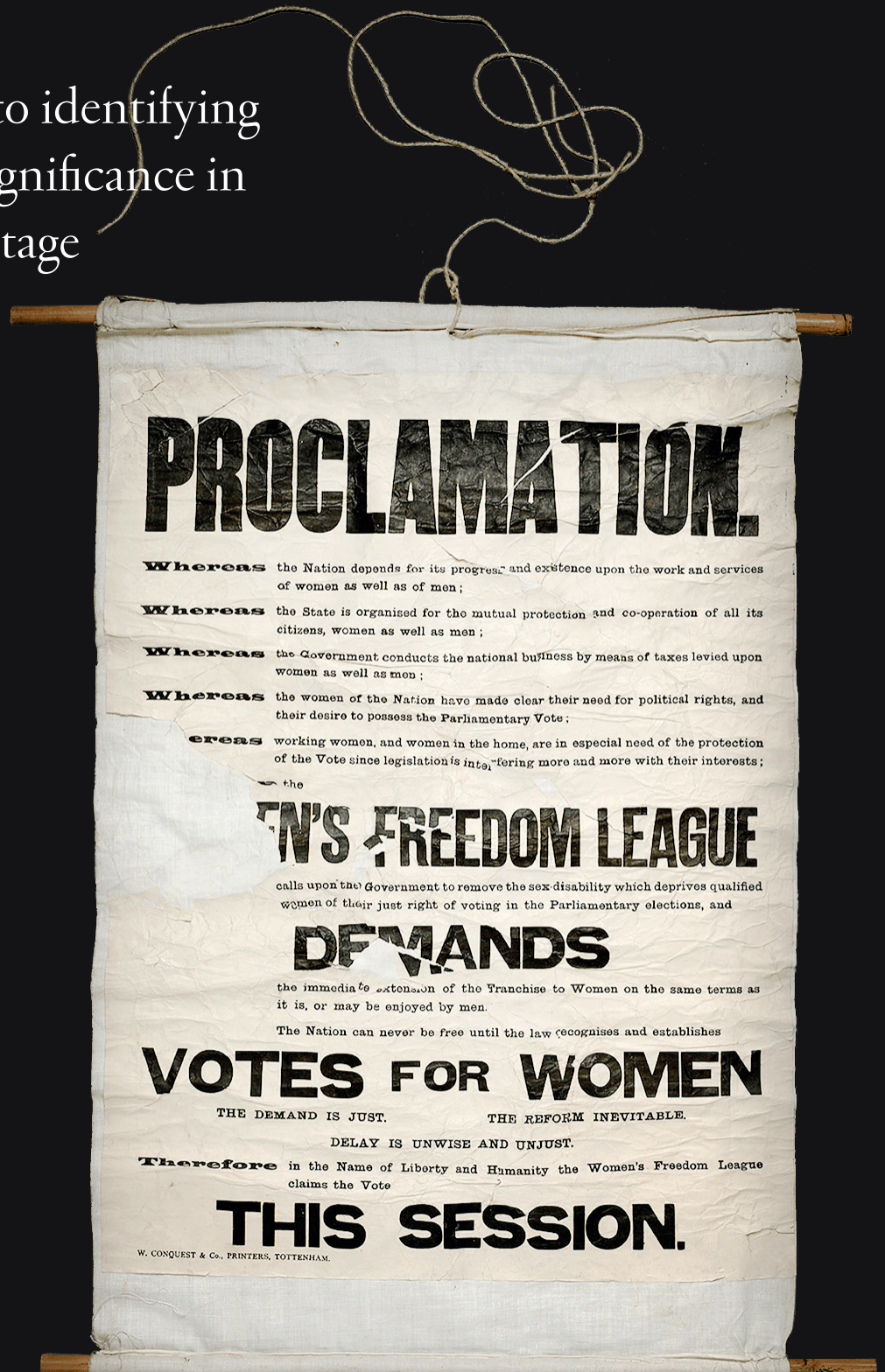


# Seeking significance

A practical guide to identifying  
and articulating significance in  
documentary heritage



Front Image:

Documentary Heritage Of The Women's Suffrage Movement In  
Britain, 1865-1928

A collection telling the extraordinary struggle of the women's suffrage movement in Britain from the 1860s to all women gaining the vote in 1928. It includes the 1866 Petition which enabled John Stuart Mill to be the first person in Parliament to call for women's suffrage; and ends with the success of the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act of 1928.

This guidance is published by the UK UNESCO Memory of  
the World Committee.

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## 1. Introduction and methodology

This is the first guide written specifically for assessing significance in documentary heritage and which provides practical guidance for assessment within specific contexts. It is written for anyone who is seeking to express the significance of documentary heritage. Whilst it is expected to be used by professional archivists, it will be useful for anyone who wants to consider the significance of specific documentary heritage. Much of the content will also be of value for describing significance in other forms of heritage.

This is a practical guide that is intended to be used to help assess significance. It does not seek to be a philosophical consideration of significance, which is considered elsewhere in professional literature. Rather it seeks to provide a wide range of clearly articulated determinants of significance that can be chosen and applied according to the desired outcome required and the audience(s) to which the explanation of significance is being addressed. This guide seeks to enable anyone responsible for documentary heritage to create a persuasive and relevant case for significance. As such it goes beyond the traditional focus on 'heritage' values to wider issues such as investment costs and information assets.

The Guide was written by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, Chair of the UK Committee of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme 2014 to 2018. Other UK Committee members provided expert advice on the drafting including:

- Anne Barrett, College Archivist & Corporate Records Manager, Imperial College London
- Dr Justin Clegg, Special Collections Reference Manager, The British Library
- Bryony Dixon, Curator of Silent Film, BFI National Archive
- Sophie Gibbs,
- Ramona Riedzewski, Victoria and Albert Museum
- Dr Paul Sillitoe, Archives and Records Consultant
- Cathy Williams, Head of Collections & Audience Insight, The National Archives
- Rachel Hosker, Deputy Head of Special Collections and Archives Manager, University of Edinburgh
- Matthew MacMurray, Archivist, Royal Voluntary Services

It has also been peer reviewed by professional archivists from a range of archive services including local government, film, business and charity archives.

## 2. Defining documentary heritage and significance

### 2.1 Defining documentary heritage

Documentary heritage is defined by UNESCO as that which ‘comprises those single documents – or groups of documents – of significant and enduring value to a community, a culture, a country or to humanity generally, and whose deterioration or loss would be a harmful impoverishment. Significance of this heritage may become clear only with the passage of time.’<sup>1</sup> It can also be referred to as ‘archives’. Documentary heritage comes in many formats including textual, audio-visual, analogue and digital.

### 2.2. Defining significance for cultural and heritage material

Significance is an important concept within cultural and heritage collections. It helps us decide what to collect, how to assess different material, where to focus resources, how to manage access, how to engage audiences, how to influence and communicate with other stakeholders.

Significance is defined by the Oxford Living Dictionary as ‘The quality of being worthy of attention; importance’. Within the cultural and heritage professions significance is recognised as the value and interpretation placed upon material. It is understood that cultural and heritage significance is not an absolute construct nor is it fixed. It is a relative concept specific to the individual perceiving the significance. This perception is driven by a myriad of factors including age, gender, ethnicity, life experience, and community membership.

In the cultural and heritage professions it is also appreciated that significance is time-relative. The significance in material shifts with time. Future generations may accept, re-interpret, reject or forget the significance interpretation of generations that go before them. The understanding of context of the item and how it is viewed within society and at particular periods of time is vital, particularly when community and different stakeholders viewpoints differ.

The role of the cultural and heritage professional is to seek to understand, capture and articulate these different significances then employ them in the collection, care and use of collections. They must to understand how a specific community or individual perceives the significance of the documentary heritage and then develop that understanding.

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form, 17 November 2015 [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=49358&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=49358&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### **2.3. Defining significance for documentary heritage**

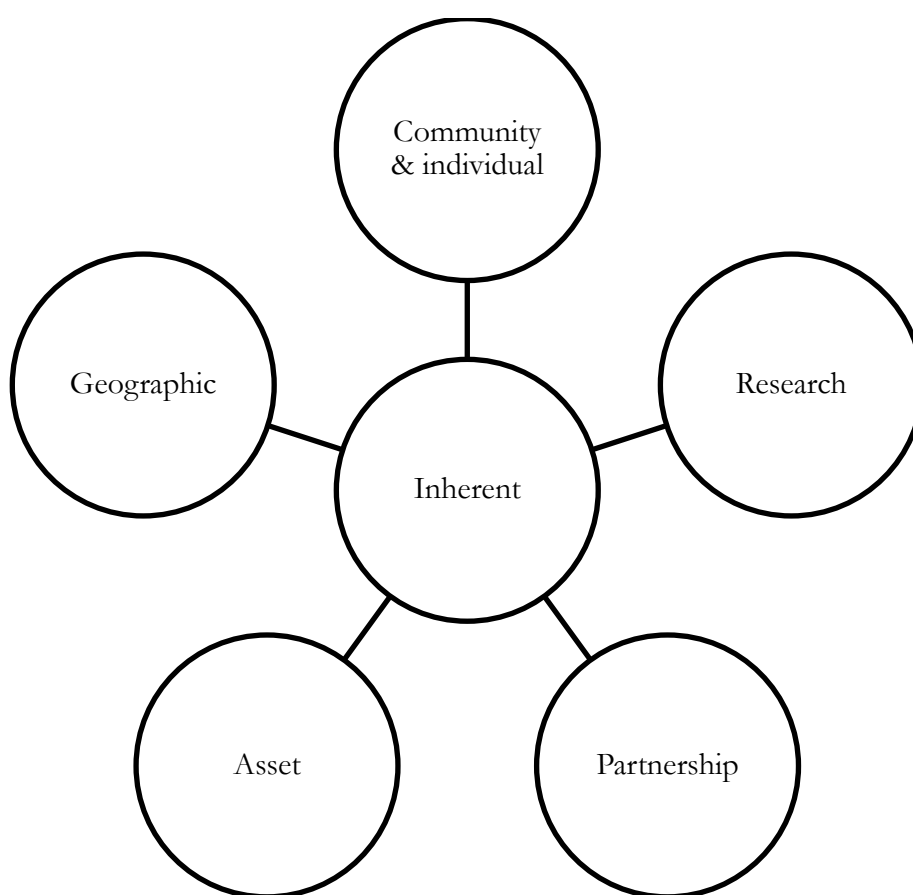
Documentary heritage brings an additional dimension to significance assessment because of its dual quality of being both information and evidence. As with any cultural or heritage material, documentary heritage points to a particular point in time when a confluence of events brought about its creation. It tells us of the past. However, it is not just about the past. Documentary heritage provides data for analysis, information for consideration, evidence for decisions - today. The rise of the digital record has radically advanced this dual role. Relevance does not remain fixed but shifts as society changes and as new uses are found for old records e.g. the use of ships' logs in tracking the history the earth's climate.

With this fluid identity documentary heritage requires a defined criteria and structure to assessing significance. There need to be criteria which look beyond the cultural and heritage values to its role as an information asset. This Guide seeks to provide that dedicated approach.

### 3. Categorising significance in documentary heritage

This chapter identifies different categories and individual criteria within those categories for describing significance. For each criterion an explanation is provided along with prompts to help you think about how you would describe each category of documentary heritage in terms of those criteria. Remember that a good explanation of significance will include a number of different explanations of significance that are then woven together to create a coherent narrative.

#### 3.1 Categories and definitions



For the purposes of this Guide significance criteria have been split into a number of categories:

- Inherent –qualities that are intrinsic to the collection e.g. size, age, media
- Community - aspects that make the documents meaningful to particular communities
- Research – the strengths of the documents as a resource for research
- Partnership – the value of the documents in nurturing relationships and enabling collaboration
- Asset – attributing financial or economic value to the documents

- Geographic – attributing locational scale to the significance of the document

Each of these categories has a series of criteria that relate to the qualities of that category. Each criterion is defined and accompanied by ‘prompts’ for consideration. Please note that the prompts are not exhaustive and you do not have to cover them all if describing that category. They are simply there to give you ways of thinking about how you could describe significance.

Thinking about significance can be complex. There may be so many ways in which you can explain the value of the documentary heritage. It can be useful to have a structure within which to think about significance. These six categories can help you approach that analysis and identify the criteria that are relevant to the stakeholders to whom you want to explain the significance.

### 3.2 Inherent

These criteria are inherent to the nature of the material and as such remain the same regardless of the context.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Provenance	The origin of the documentary heritage and how it came to its current situation	Who created/used it and their relevance to the heritage Why it was created Its experience since creation
Authenticity	The record is genuine and is what it purports to be	Evidence of authenticity Impact of authenticity e.g. held to be iconic, underpins key decisions, benchmark for other heritage



Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Size	The physical measurement of the heritage. Can be described in: Linear metres Cubic metres Number of items Duration (for audio visual material)	Comparison to other similar? Largest or smallest created/extant/known
Age	The measure of time since the heritage was created. This may be a range if the heritage was created over a period.	Oldest/earliest example created Last example created Fine exemplar of a point in time
Chronology	The period covered by the heritage	Long period covered by the records Snapshot of a particular point in time Covers the time of a particular historical period/event
Completeness	How the surviving record compares with the totality of what was originally created	Only part of the original record that survives A complete record Most comprehensive extant examples
Media	The physical format onto which the heritage is recorded	Earliest or latest example of that use of the medium Unusual or very early usage of a medium Diverse range of media used An unusual concentration of that type of medium A rare example of a format Exemplary of a format that had a significant role in/impact on society

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Condition	The physical state of the heritage	In very good condition In very poor condition and therefore at risk In comparatively good condition when compared with similar material Impact of its provenance on its condition e.g. smoke damage, folding, water stains
Rarity or commonality	Whether there are similar examples elsewhere or whether this is a rare or unique record	Unique or unusual Comparison with similar records held elsewhere Rare within a particular location or community A typical example that serves as a useful exemplar A very high-quality example
Accessibility both physical and intellectual	The ease with which a user can come into contact with and then use the heritage	Language Physical condition Format Location
Threats	Risks that challenge the heritage's future survival	Level of usage Location Undervalued or unrecognised

### 3.3. Community & individuals

This area of significance is highly subjective. It is the value of the documentary heritage to a specific group or groups of people or single individuals and is derived from their own experiences and sense of self, their concerns and aspirations, and their cultural behaviours. Community significance can be a complex assessment that requires engagement with that community or individual to fully understand the nature of the significance.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Cultural markers or recording	The heritage acts as a definitive record of an important cultural landmark	In reference to your locality, organisation, individual, community
Criteria	Definition	Prompts

Landmark dates	A key moment in a community's history or experience	A pivotal moment A date that is still actively commemorated A forgotten date of which the community would benefit from being more aware
Personalities	Individuals who were/are central to the community's experience or identity	The first or last person A creator or leader of a community Influenced the culture or philosophy One who discovered/ invented/ solved Widely known/ figurehead
Group memory	Shared knowledge	In reference to an event or impact on a geographical area, a group or organisation
Current usage (including accrual)	How the community currently uses/ interprets the heritage	Totemic value Practical application e.g. evidence The key repository for the community's experience
Sensory impact	Physical interaction with the heritage triggers physical reactions	Touch Smell Sight Sound
Emotional impact	Interaction with the heritage triggers emotive responses	Sadness Delight Disgust Surprise Belonging

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Aesthetic	The heritage is perceived to have artistic merit	Style Appearance Format (e.g. painted) Workmanship Reflects a particular creative, period or movement
Spiritual	The heritage is perceived to have divine, holy or transcendent qualities	Key texts/writings Philosophical content Symbolic meaning
Myth and legend	Contributes to a community's narrative of its creation, development or key events	A widely recognised event, personality or story 'Retold' in other sources Remembered through community events
Civic role	Contributes towards the operational activities of the community	Evidence of discussions, decisions and/or actions Explains organisational development
Historic meaning	Encompasses the factual history of the community	Events People
Current relevance	Heritage is germane to current circumstances	News story Cultural trend Social issue

### 3.4 Research

Research is a core use of documentary heritage.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Quantity	A statistically significant volume of data can be derived from the documents	Longitudinal studies Comparative studies
Criteria	Definition	Prompts

Depth	Has a significant amount of detail Comparable or complementary content across a wide range or volume or records.	Numerous series and/or items Extensive types of detail e.g. names, numbers, Comprises a lot of detailed format types e.g. personal correspondence, reports, maps
Rarity	Availability of similar resource elsewhere	Only such heritage available Whilst other resources existing it has individual characteristics that would be valued in a particular area of research e.g. oldest, greatest date coverage, multi-media
Relativity to other collections	Content complements material found elsewhere	Different perspectives Extends the coverage e.g. date, geography, individuals Confirms details found in other resources Adds to the body of valuable research material e.g. corpus of ancient languages
Relevance to current issues or practice	Content that chimes with or informs with contemporary topics	Professional matters, community relations, legislation Past governmental / societal / professional practice e.g. local taxation (Poll Tax); children in care;
A key resource for a particular area of study	A fundamental source of information and evidence for understanding a research speciality	A unique source of content

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Quality of content	There is some measure of excellence with the heritage	Reliable Accurate Expansive
Actual and Potential uses	How the heritage can or could be used	Relevance to existing areas of research Open up new areas of research by the nature of the content Open up new areas of research through external factors e.g. trends towards particular research topics Using 'Revisiting Collections' <sup>2</sup> methodology to identify new uses or audiences
Exploitability	The ease with which research data can be extracted	Digital formats either within the heritage or via heritage being digitised enable digital discovery Standard type of format encourages automated analysis Few barriers to interpretation e.g. modern language, simple diplomatic structure
External recognition e.g. on UNESCO Memory of the World Register	Independent verification of the quality of the collection	Nature of recognition Credentials of accrediting body Rarity of a particular award of recognition Comparison of recognition with that achieved by other collections

<sup>2</sup> <https://collectiontrust.org.uk/resource/revisiting-archives-collections-toolkit/>

### 3.5 Partnership

These criteria consider current or potential drivers for the holder of the documentary heritage to collaborate with others or the benefits of using the documentary heritage for collaborative working.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Relevance to other heritage	The documentary heritage complements other heritage or culture e.g. museum objects, built environment, art works	All the types of heritage incorporate the same or complementary date, time period, event, location, community
Valued profile	Others want to be associated with the reputation of the heritage	Focus for a community Confers prestige Enables commemoration Relevance to a corporate brand or strategic goal
Potential opportunities	Possible collaborative opportunities that have yet to be taken up	Approaches by other organisations/ individuals Examples from other archive services
Capacity to attract additional resources	Working with others pulls in resources that could not be done alone	Access via other bodies to grants e.g. charitable, arts-based Accessing the expertise of partner organisations/ individuals Creating a critical mass of workforce to achieve a particular goal

### 3.6 Asset

In certain scenarios it is necessary to demonstrate that the documentary heritage is of financial or economic worth. This does not have to be at odds with the other types of criteria and may well be engendered by the other types of significance within the heritage e.g. the research potential could lead to income generation. For some stakeholders defining significance in terms of a valuable asset that faces risks and identifying what those risks are or the impact on business continuity can be a persuasive message.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Investment to date (impact of non-investment)	Financial cost real or estimated for managing the collection	Financial cost of systems such as cataloguing software Financial cost of creating metadata – staff, systems, training
Insurance value	Financial value of collection provided for insurance	Figure supplied to insurers Estimates based on other collections or auctions of similar material
Marketing/promotional value – brand, product inspiration	The estimated value of the heritage in supporting the identity and service/product development and delivery of the owning body	Cost of marketing campaigns based on the heritage Sales value of products/services inspired by the heritage Availability of similar material from elsewhere Licence costs of using similar material supplied externally Licensing revenue



Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Reputation impact – GDPR, loss of a ‘national treasure’	The estimated financial impact on an organisation if the heritage was no longer available	Information Commissioner fines Comparative analysis of organisations that have actually suffered such loss
Opportunity cost of non-investment	The costs that would be incurred if suitable resources are not given for the management of the heritage.  This is closely linked to the reputation factor	Loss of reputation (see above) Price inflation if investment is delayed Increasing inaccessibility of skills e.g. loss of analogue TV skills as old TV technicians retire
Relevance to organisation’s stakeholders	The relevance or resonance of the heritage key parties with an interest in the organisation	Need to maintain stakeholder relationships e.g. for fundraising from alumni Stakeholders’ contribution to creating the heritage Legal requirements to make material available to stakeholder Desire of stakeholder to be engaged with heritage e.g. offering material
Capacity to attract additional resources	How the heritage can be used to attract additional finance, staff, knowledge or other resources	Potential grant funding available Tool for engaging alumni/former members or employees

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Open up new markets	Capacity of the heritage to be of interest to new audiences or uses	New uses for a collection e.g. dementia treatment Emergence of new user types Emergence of new disciplines e.g. digital humanities Emergence of new technologies Previously unknown content i.e. new offer
Rarity	The heritage has a USP (unique selling point) that marks it out	Some sort of 'first' e.g. oldest, longest, latest Content not found anywhere else High financial value
Externally recognised	Independent recognition of the value or importance of a collection	Attract more attention Provide the basis for fundraising
Informing new service or product development	Providing inspiration for the development of new services to organisation's customers	Past experience of the organisation Analysis of the heritage market Examples of product/service development by other organisations
Capacity to attract new, prestigious or relevant collections	Presence of existing material in the collections encourages donations of new material	Patterns in recent donations Depositors expressing interest Experience of other archive services Past experience of own archive service

### 3.7 Geographic

This category covers the significance of the documentary heritage to different geographical scale.

Criteria	Definition	Prompts
Local	Of relevance to a particular geographical location up to and including the administrative unit of a British county	For what area is this geographically relevant? Is the geographical relevance of meaningful significance or an irrelevant characteristic?
Regional	Of relevance to a contiguous geographical location beyond the administrative unit of a UK county but smaller than a nation	For what area is this geographically relevant? Is the geographical relevance of meaningful significance or an irrelevant characteristic?
National	Of relevance to a geographical location defined as a country either in administrative terms or recognised as such culturally.	For what area is this geographically relevant? Is the geographical relevance of meaningful significance or an irrelevant characteristic?
International	Of relevance to a geographical location larger than a single country.	Can interest/relevance to other countries be demonstrated?

### 3.8 Summary of categories and their related criteria

Inherent	Partnership
Provenance	Relevance to other heritage
Authenticity	Valued profile
Size	Potential opportunities
Age	Capacity to attract additional resources
Chronology	
Completeness	<b>Asset</b>
Media	Investment to date (impact of non-investment)
Condition	Insurance value
Rarity or commonality	Marketing/promotional value – brand, product inspiration
Accessibility both physical and intellectual	Reputation impact – GDPR, loss of a 'national treasure'
Threats	Opportunity cost of non-investment
	Relevance to organisation's stakeholders
<b>Community &amp; individuals</b>	Capacity to attract additional resources
Cultural markers or recording	Open up new 'markets'
Landmark dates	Rarity
Personalities	Externally recognised
Group memory	Informing new service or product development
Current usage (including accrual)	Capacity to attract new, prestigious or relevant collections
Sensory impact	
Emotional impact	<b>Geographic</b>
Aesthetic	Local
Spiritual	Regional
Myth and legend	National
Civic role	International
Historic meaning	
Current relevance	
<b>Research</b>	
Quantity	
Depth	
Rarity	
Relativity to other collections	
Relevance to current issues or practice	
A key resource for a particular area of study	
Quality of content	
Actual and Potential uses	
Exploitability	
External recognition	

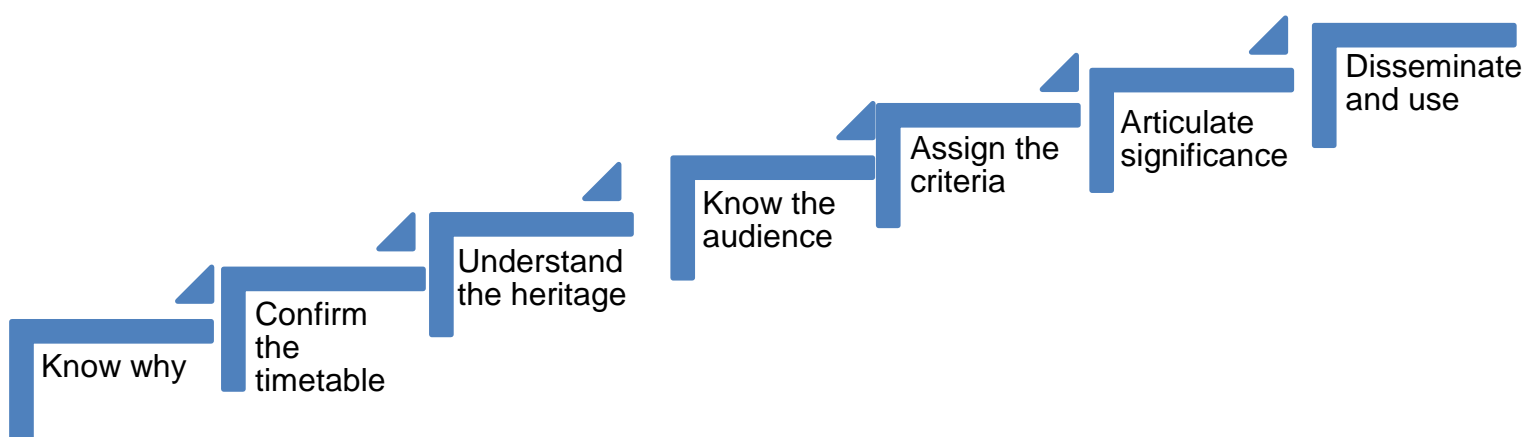
## 4. Methodology for assessing archival significance

Delivering a persuasive significance assessment requires a strong understanding of the context within which you are making the assessment. The significance of documentary heritage can never be developed in a vacuum. It is always relative. This chapter recommends a methodology for developing the significance that ensures that contextual element is fully understood.

The assessment of significance should always be taken carefully with due consideration of all relevant information by a range of people who bring adequate skills, knowledge and/or experience to be able to make a well-considered assessment. Recognise that it is not only records professionals such as archivists, conservators and records managers who can understand significance. A good assessment draws in others such as those linked to the creation of the record, the community to which the documentary heritage relates, those who could benefit from using the documentary heritage. Good significance assessment requires time, consultation and broad perspectives.

### 4.1 Methodology summary

This guide suggests a seven-stage process as summarised below:



It is recommended that you take time to understand the environment in which the significance assessment is required before undertaking the actual assessment. In that way you will create an assessment that is 'fit for purpose', focusing on elements that will be meaningful and persuasive for the audience to which the significance is being presented.

### 4.2 Know why you are undertaking this significance assessment

There will be a reason or set of reasons why you are undertaking this significance assessment. Ensure that you clearly understand the drivers or opportunities that are causing you make this case (e.g.

emergence of a funding stream, part of larger project, making the most of a new partnership, celebration of a key anniversary, contributing to a key strategic goal within your organisation). Articulate what success will be and what is required to be done to achieve success.

### **4.3 Know your timetable**

Timing can be critical in presenting your case. If you miss a key deadline you may lose your opportunity to communicate what you want to say. Work out by what date you need to have your significance statement ready for your audience. This could be a deadline for getting papers in ahead of a key meeting, filing an application before a deadline, or capturing the attention of a key individual whilst they are available. By having a deadline, you can then decide how much time you have to work on the significance assessment and thus what is practical and where you should focus your resources.

### **4.4 Understand the documentary heritage under assessment**

You should work to understand:

- How and why the documentary heritage came together
- The nature of its content both intellectually and physically
- The context or contexts of the documentary heritage
- Any sensitivities to particular cultures, communities or parts of society
- How the documentary heritage compares with other related documentary heritage

Research your documentary heritage to build up an evidence-based profile:

- Read the accessions information
- Read correspondence either around deposit or user enquiries
- Read the catalogue entries even if these are very sparse
- Research the provenance of the documentary heritage - how it was created and used by the record creator
- Consult creators, depositors, staff, conservators, volunteers, other organisations and researchers who work with the heritage to get their insight. Don't forget to make a note of their specific comments as this will be useful in drawing up the significance
- If possible look at how the documentary heritage has been used for research, exhibitions and engagement
- Read publications that mention the documentary heritage where these exist

This stage demonstrates the importance of keeping a good record about the heritage in terms of its cataloguing, provenance, resources required, usage and reactions to it. You also need to collate and retain your research into its significance which may even be used to improve other resources such as the catalogue. By having a record of this information, you are then in a position to seize

opportunities for your collections as they appear by having a foundation of information that demonstrates the worth of the documentary heritage and its potential. This will be of value both to you and to those who will come after you in caring for the heritage.

#### **4.5 Know your audience**

To decide on what aspects of the documentary heritage's significance you wish to draw out you must understand to whom you are communicating this significance and why – whether directly or indirectly. Are you communicating significance directly to a final audience, or will the approach be made through other people? Different parties may have their own interests which they may layer into the message or who may not understand or have much involvement with the heritage and concepts of significance.

For example, in large organisations you may make your pitch for the significance of your collections to your manager but they will then pass the information on to a more senior manager who is the decision maker. Likewise, some grant funding bodies assign an officer to receive and review the grant application to then present it to the committee that actually makes the grant funding decisions. In such cases you need to present a very clear case that someone who is not familiar with your collections can clearly articulate their significance to others who are also unfamiliar.

Once you have identified your audience you need to decide what are the parameters that guide their reaction to your argument for significance. Sometimes this will be formally laid out e.g. requirements of a specific grant programme, the mission and objectives of grant giving trusts, the strategic objectives of your parent body. But if possible, also try to understand the position of the individual(s) involved in the decision e.g. seek out biographical information such as research interests, area of work, where they lived or grew up, publications, their role in the relevant organization or community

#### **4.6 Assign the relevant criteria**

Decide on the criteria that you will use to describe significance. The criteria you use will be driven by the requirements of the audience that needs to understand the significance. You can use the criteria in Chapter 3 as a prompt. Do not be too prescriptive and recognise that your ideas will develop as you research your collection.

#### **4.7 Articulate the significance assessment**

This is where you present your researched assessment of the significance, often in a document referred to as a 'Statement of Significance'. In Appendix 1 and 2 there is a prompt sheet and a template to help you write your Statement.

There are a number of universal factors to consider:

- Understand the parameters of the decision making process e.g. terms of a grant application, then explicitly connect the significance into those parameters. Use the same terms or language, reflect the spirit or essence of the parameters, clearly align with individual parameters even if you cannot meet them all.
- The method of communication - is it to be a written piece or verbally presented and if so in person or remotely e.g. via a webinar?
- How long - is there a word limit (often required in grant applications) or a time limit (e.g. a 15-minute presentation)?
- The existing knowledge of the intended audience – will technical archival language demonstrate professional competence or confuse? Is the audience already conversant with the heritage or does it need a basic introduction?
- Contextualise the documentary heritage to show its relationship to people, place, events and place in society.
- Illustration – would the use of images, sound clips, examples of content help understanding and create a more succinct presentation?
- Evidence your comments – often explaining significance involves making a claim for significance and then illustrating the claim with specific evidence. That evidence can come from many sources e.g. comments accompanying an external accreditation award, opinions of users, impact statements resulting from outreach work, citations in publications, conservation reports, conference papers, statistical and arithmetic measures and analyses of the heritage.
- What language to use – seek to be active and dynamic in your communication. Whilst you do not want to be unconvincing by being over-enthusiastic use dynamic language that seeks to persuade. In Appendix 3 there is a word list to help you think about language.
- What 'geographic scalability' should you communicate – is it relevant to discuss whether the heritage has local, regional, national and/or international significance?
- Is the significance you are discussing longstanding or newly emerging (as captured in The Collections Trust's 'Revisiting collections' methodology<sup>3</sup>)
- Can the significance be summarized in a single phrase that can be used to introduce or define the collection?

#### 4.8 Disseminating and using the significance assessment

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<sup>3</sup> <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/revisiting-museum-collections/>



A significance assessment takes time to develop but then provides a valuable resource. Clearly it will be used for the primary purpose for which it was developed. However, it can then provide a foundation of information that can be reused including applying for additional resources, upgrading catalogue and other finding aids, collections development, promoting the documentary heritage or the wider service, creating exhibition material, informing public engagement.

## 5. Defining significance within different contexts

Determining significance is a fundamental way to effectively communicate the value of the documentary heritage and its collections to its key stakeholders and users. It also enhances the repository's ability to simply and clearly identify and communicate its funding requirements.

A significance assessment provides a framework for archive staff to reflect on their knowledge of their own collections in a structured way, and to translate this expert knowledge into a form that is easy to communicate to relevant stakeholders such as researchers, current and potential audiences, related communities, managers, funding bodies, the media, the local government, educators, current and potential depositors and other collecting organisations and individuals.

However, that significance must be developed to be relevant to the designated audience. This chapter considers various scenarios in which archive services typically have to demonstrate the importance of the collections, the nature of the audience and their level of understanding of documentary heritage and the issues that can surround making the case for significance. It then suggests possible significance criteria that would be suitable in such a scenario based on the criteria described in Chapter 3. However, it is strongly advised that you consider all the criteria to ensure that you maximise the quality of your statement of significance for your specific scenario. Also, consider that by using a good mix of criteria you might make your target audience aware of interesting facts about your collections which whilst not relevant to their key strategic goals can appeal to personal interest e.g. demonstrating to a senior manager that a collection is a useful asset but also making them aware that it is unusually rare or beautiful.

The scenarios considered in this guidance are:

- 5.1 Making the case to line managers
- 5.2 Co-locating local authority archives services with museum or library services
- 5.3 Developing funding bids
- 5.4 Setting budgets
- 5.5 Applying for a designation
- 5.6 Developing the profile of the archive service and collection within a larger heritage or cultural organisation
- 5.7 Private collectors

### 5.1 Making the case to line managers

#### *5.1.1 Scenario*

The line manager is a key influencer in the experience of the archive service and the documentary heritage. The line manager will either set or feed into the strategic direction, action planning and resourcing within the organisation on behalf of the service. The line manager has direct responsibility for overseeing the archive service on behalf of the organisation. The line manager is the link between the operations of the archive service and the strategic management of the parent organisation.

### ***5.1.2. Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues***

Line managers will have varying degrees of understanding of the use, and usefulness, and purpose of documentary heritage, both in general, and to the organisation. Their understanding will range from no knowledge and even disinterest through some understanding to a detailed appreciation of the needs of documentary heritage and their value.

The issues in communicating the significance of the documentary heritage will vary with the individual line manager and the operational context but they can include:

- Avoiding the use of technical language whilst still explaining the importance of the documentary heritage in a substantial manner
- Struggling to understand the link between the documentary heritage and wider organisational goals
- Articulating significance meaningfully in terms of risk and risk avoidance
- Finding time with the line manager to put across a coherent message if the line manager has a wide portfolio of responsibilities of which the archive is only a small portion
- Advocating for the needs of documentary heritage which may be very different from the needs of the line manager's other responsibilities.

### ***5.1.3. The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment***

The purpose of the assessment is to

- Demonstrate the usefulness or significance of records with the aim of justifying their continued preservation and enabling their access to relevant audiences. This could be based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, promotional or historical information they contain.
- Enable the manager to understand how the documentary heritage can contribute towards the parent body's goals and in turn enable the line manager to achieve their own targets
- Enable the manager to advocate on behalf of the documentary heritage within the wider organisation.
- Help inform operational planning and resource allocation.

The intended outcome is to enable the line manager to make effective decisions that support the continued preservation, development and use of the documentary heritage by encouraging in the manager an understanding of and pride in the value of the documentary heritage(s).

#### ***5.1.4 Potential significance criteria***

The specific criteria will depend on the reason you are making the case to your line manager. However particularly pertinent criteria will include those coming under:

- Community
- Asset

## 5.2. Co-locating local authority archives services with museum or library services

### 5.2.1 *The Scenario*

*In local authorities where services are being brought together how do you give documentary heritage the capacity to compete with museum collections that are much more accessible and visible?*

Over the past decade, local authorities have been re-evaluating how services are delivered against the backdrop of austerity measures and shrinking budgets. From 2010-2015, local authorities reduced spending on Arts and Culture by 16.6%, with libraries being the most affected service<sup>4</sup>. Local authority archive services have responded to this environment in innovative ways, adapting the way they deliver services and engaging with the community while also reducing costs. One key way they have done this is by partnering or co-locating with other council services, such as libraries and museums<sup>5</sup>.

This amalgamation, or co-location, of services decreases the cost of running two geographically separate institutions. It also allows for greater collaboration between the joint services, leading to increased opportunities for outreach and community engagement for all services involved. Nevertheless, it is also a potential cause for competition between services to secure their required share of limited funding opportunities.

Such competition may particularly affect archive services, as museums and galleries are often considered more accessible and visible to the public, or at least have a greater degree of recognition within the contemporary public consciousness. Museums and galleries have permanent exhibition spaces and are designed to handle a greater number of visitors than a typical archive repository. Visitors also often visit a museum space without the expectation of interacting with a curator or requesting any specific material. Archival items are often seen exhibited within museum or gallery exhibition spaces but are consequently often not recognised by visitors as non-museum items. Traditionally, this has made documentary heritage less immediately visible within the public domain.

Given this profile issue, local archive services partnered with these services will need to effectively communicate the value and requirements of their service to a number of key stakeholders and users in order to compete with museums and galleries within this environment.

### 5.2.2 *Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues*

There are a range of audiences in this scenario

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<sup>4</sup> Adrian Harvey, *Funding arts and cultural in a time of austerity*, New Local Government Network (NLGN), April 2016, p.9

<sup>5</sup> The National Archives, *Transforming local archives services: A new collection of 13 case studies*, Local Government Association, April 2015

### *The Local Government and Local Council Members*

Awareness will vary from nothing to a strong personal interest.

Communication issues:

- Local government and local council member view of documentary heritage may be influenced by the value the local community place on local documentary heritage
- Documentary heritage may be seen primarily in terms of the council's own documentary heritage and the potential for seeing their contribution to the development of a local identity not immediately recognised

### *Members of the Community*

Awareness will vary from nothing to a strong personal interest.

Communication issues:

- Often not being exposed directly to documentary heritage
- When exposed to documentary heritage within a Museum or Gallery setting, not realising they differ from museum or gallery objects

### *Historians, researchers and genealogists*

Awareness will be high as they work with collections, understand content and experience the systems managing and providing access to the documentary heritage.

Communication issues:

- Historians should hopefully have a well-developed understanding of documentary heritage. However, due to the type of research they have focused on, they may not be aware of the breadth of material that may count as archival, or the large range of material relevant to their research that is available within a local repository.

### *Teachers, Lecturers, University Course Co-ordinators*

Awareness will vary from nothing to a strong personal and/or professional interest.

Communication issues:

- Teachers and lectures with a basic understanding of documentary heritage may not fully understand how documentary heritage complement, but differ from, museums objects and have a different purpose within the research environment
- Reaching out to teachers and lecturers who may not realise how documentary heritage is relevant to their field of study
- Specific research interests exclude significance of particular theories and evidence

### *School and university students*

Awareness will vary from nothing to a strong, active interest.

Communication issues:

- The depth of understanding students have about documentary heritage depends on their exposure to them often through their parents, community programs, the media and education. School and university programs can be used to expose students to local archives services through school trips, as well as references to documentary heritage in the media, such as television programs such as *Who do you think you are?* and articles in the local newspaper.

#### *Other local council cultural and heritage services*

Awareness will range from a general understanding to considerable personal experience of working with documentary heritage.

Communication issues:

- These organisations may have a limited understanding of how documentary heritage may complement and strengthen their activities, rather than simply being a competitor.

### *5.2.3 The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment*

For a local archive service, conducting a significance assessment is a primary way to communicate effectively the value of the documentary heritage to its key stakeholders and users. Applying a significance assessment can substantially aid a local archive service to:

*Increase Outreach and Community Engagement* - By allowing a repository to identify the value of particular collections to particular groups of people, a significance assessment can identify what key collections and messages would apply to certain groups and communities, and how best to communicate these. The 'significant' collections held by the local council could provide focal points through which to direct outreach campaigns. These include

- Holding exhibitions and community evenings focusing around a significant collection. Exhibitions timed to coincide and complement events of local or national interest e.g. the century of female suffrage in the UK, can also be featured in the local newspaper and media.
- Highlighting areas of research at the local archive service that may be of interest historians and students.
- Providing access programs with schools, universities and other community groups focused around significant collections.
- Fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing with other local government services, by identifying the overlap with other collections, and curating joint outreach activities.

In some cases, conducting a significance assessment may in itself prove a way to engage the local community. While the local archive staff may be experts on certain topics, often it is the community itself that can provide vital information on certain collections, and it may be this community-provided information that demonstrates the significance of the collection. Thus, conducting a significance assessment provides an excellent opportunity to engage members of the community with the documentary heritage, raising awareness of the archive service, the documentary heritage it holds, and its role within a local community.

#### *Implement more effective resource management*

A significance assessment allows an archive service to make better decisions about the conservation and management of its collections. By conducting an assessment and identifying collections of particular significance, it is possible to prioritise limited financial resources towards collections with greatest significance (however that is defined). It can also focus the collecting activities of the local authority, and thus ensure the resources the archive service receives are used as efficiently as possible.

Moreover, if a significance assessment results in increased collaboration in outreach activities with other local services, it spreads the cost of the activities out across the services, more effectively using the limited resources.

#### *Increase funding opportunities and funding bid success rate*

The significance assessment outlines the key arguments to be used in a bid for resources, whether to the local council, funding bodies (such as the Heritage Lottery Fund), or members of the public or organisations. It does this by explaining how the collection is of value, and why funds should be allocated to its care, and how the funds would be used (e.g. what exact conservation is required, the employment of staff to catalogue the collection, etc).

If a significance assessment is used to its full potential, and is used in outreach and community engagement, the raised profile of the collection could well increase the local authority's support for future funding bids. The local authority would have greater understanding of the value of the documentary heritage to the local community and its sense of identity, and from pressure of the community to support the service due to the community's increased interaction with the collection.

#### ***5.2.5 Potential significance criteria***

In this scenario you are seeking to demonstrate the relevance of the documentary heritage collections to other collections and their managers. So the most relevant criteria will be:

- Inherent



- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Geographic

## 5.3 Developing funding bids

### *5.3.1 Scenario*

The archive service is seeking additional finance from either an internal or external source of funds. A funding bid involves requesting a stated amount of money in return for the delivery of a defined project within a stated time period using a specified profile of resources with the intention of achieving a stated outcome(s). Funding bids are invariably competitive and must be conducted within the parameters set by the funder (e.g. eligibility, amount, timetable, purpose and type of outcome).

### *5.3.2 Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues*

The audience and its understanding of the value of documentary heritage will vary enormously and is dependent on the context, the decision-making processes and purpose of the dispensing organisation.

#### *Internal funding bid*

An internal funding bid may be assessed by a combination of personnel from the finance department and members of management team. The finance department staff may have a low awareness of the archive service and will be focused on how to derive maximum return on investment. Other managers' understanding of the service may reduce the further away from the archive service they are positioned within the organisation. However, in this scenario the understanding of the service and the value of its collections will also be determined by the profile of the archive service within the wider organisation and its level of interaction with other departments. Finally, the size of the organisation can also affect understanding as within a larger organisation the archive service may be only a small element. However, again this can be countered by the work the archive service undertakes to promote its presence.

In this scenario it is necessary to clearly explain how the documentary heritage contribute to the goals of the parental body and the wider impact for the organisation of resourcing the documentary heritage.

#### *External funding bids*

With external funding bodies the level of understanding is entirely dependent on the nature of the body. For organisations explicitly dedicated to supporting documentary heritage (e.g. The National Archives, The Pilgrim Trust or the Wellcome Trust) there will be a high level of understanding. They can entertain applications that assume a sophisticated understanding of documentary heritage. In such a case the challenge is to explain the specific merits of the collection(s) and service against the already understood backdrop of the wider archival sector and with clear regard to good practice. Nonetheless, regard should be paid to articulating significance in a clear and straightforward

manner, avoiding jargon and including explanation for specialist types of documentary heritage (e.g. digital formats, audio-visual material).

Then there are organisations that fund a mix of cultural or heritage bodies (e.g. The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Arts Council in England). Their understanding will be dependent on the experience of individual staff members backed up by organisational goals and practices. So, the audience will have a strong understanding of cultural and heritage values, good practice and ethics but may not understand documentary heritage specifically. Here the challenge is to ensure understanding about documentary heritage generally as a cultural or heritage asset and then to clearly bring out the value of the specific documentary heritage under consideration.

Finally, there will be those organisations that provide funding for activities that archive services can support but which are not about documentary heritage or culture *per se* e.g. funding for social improvement or health projects, trade associations or sports governing bodies. Such organisations will probably have no understanding of documentary heritage and their potential. However, in such situations presenting an archival bid can have an element of novelty and provide a new way of fulfilling their criteria.

### ***5.3.3 The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment***

The purpose is to enable the funder to:

- Understand the nature and potential of documentary heritage where the funder is unlikely to be aware of the relevance of documentary heritage to their i.e. educate and assure the funder that this unusual resource can be an effective tool.
- Understand the content of the documentary heritage
- Understand how investment in the documentary heritage will contribute to, promote or fulfil the objectives of the funder
- Compare the merits of the collections against other competing demands for the funding by considering the opportunity cost of the alternative investments
- Decide to invest funds in the documentary heritage collections

### ***5.3.4 Potential significance criteria***

The criteria will depend on the purpose of the funding but may well include:

- Inherent
- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Geographic



## 5.4. Setting budgets

### *5.4.1 Scenario*

This is an annual internal process whereby an organisation decides how much of its resources it will direct to each of its operations and allocates resources accordingly. Each operation must provide a clear explanation of the funds it needs, for what purpose and demonstrate how this will contribute to the organisation's goals, possibly accompanied by comparison with performance against budget for the previous year. It is essentially a competitive process that will be influenced by the ability of each operation to promote itself to its key decision-makers, demonstrate its capacity to fulfil organisational goals, be seen as an important function within the organisation and deliver value for money.

### *5.4.2 Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues*

In budget setting the audience will be managers within the organisation who will have very varying levels of understanding of documentary heritage so there will be several issues.

Firstly, communicating across a wide spectrum of understanding about documentary heritage. Those with primarily financial and resource management roles (e.g. The Chief Finance Officer) may have little or no understanding. However, managers with operational responsibilities may have none to a strong understanding partly driven by their proximity to the archive operations.

Secondly, the relevance of the documentary heritage to the organisation has to be communicated across differing perspectives, many of which may not be the same as the perspective of the archive service. Thus, the financial managers will be interested in return on investment and efficiency whereas the marketing department, for example, will be interested in organisational brand and its communication.

Thirdly, the argument for the documentary heritage may be made by a manager who is not engaged in the daily operation of the service so may not be able to answer all the questions from stakeholders in an accurate and persuasive manner.

Fourthly, it can be very difficult to argue for financial resources for documentary heritage that tend to deliver non-financial benefits.

Finally, the funding decision may be taken by managers several levels up in the managerial hierarchy. This can mean that the arguments for funding put up by the archive service may be diluted, simplified or reduced as they move up the hierarchy and are integrated into a wider organisation-wide analysis by managers who are not involved in the archive operations.

### *5.4.3 The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment*

For budget setting the significance assessment is vital to enable those who decide on the distribution of budgets to:

- Understand how the documentary heritage contributes to the organisational goals
- Translate the essentially qualitative contribution of documentary heritage into financial and organisational impacts
- Persuade the budget setters to provide sufficient resources.

#### ***5.4.4 Potential significance criteria***

The criteria chosen will need to demonstrate how the documentary heritage contributes to the organisation's strategic goals. They could include:

- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Asset

## 5.5 Applying for a designation

### *5.5.1 Scenario*

There are several designations open to documentary heritage or in which documentary heritage play an important supporting role e.g. The Arts Council England Designation Scheme, UNESCO Memory of the World Registers and World Heritage Sites, Historic Building Listing, and Ancient Monument Scheduling. The purpose of these designations is to provide an independent and authoritative recognition of the heritage or cultural importance attached to the material submitted for the award. This recognition in turn provides the basis for advocacy, increased public awareness and requests for additional collection management resources.

Such processes tend not to be competitive *per se*. However, they inevitably require the applicant to explain how the heritage under consideration compares with similar examples elsewhere and where its unique value lies.

### *5.5.2 Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues*

Such designations are assessed by experts and thus the communication is with a highly sophisticated audience that will tend to have a long-term and operational understanding of documentary heritage and related heritage (where appropriate). The communication of significance has to have depth, demonstrate strong knowledge and understanding, and focus on the cultural or heritage value of the documentary heritage.

### *5.5.3 The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment*

The purpose is to persuade the awarding body of the cultural or heritage significance against parameters set by the awarding body, possibly against the merits of similar collections elsewhere. The outcome should be gaining an award for the documentary heritage or wider heritage under consideration.

### *5.5.4 Potential significance criteria*

Inevitably these will focus on the cultural value of the documentary heritage e.g.:

- Inherent
- Community and individuals
- Research
- Geographic

## 5.6. Developing the profile of the archive service and collection within a larger heritage or cultural organisation

### ***5.6.1 Scenario***

Surfacing within large heritage organisations which also hold other heritage collections the specific significance of documentary heritage with their own values against the backdrop of other components of value and differentiate the value of documentary heritage against other collections

### ***5.6.2 Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues***

The primary audiences are senior management and those responsible for other areas of collection management and access. The issues are:

- The differences between a “single object” vs. library vs. documentary heritage collection.
- Developing a clear understanding of ‘What is documentary heritage?’ And ‘What is an archivist?’
- Lack of understanding of research value and documentary evidence of archival material. Sometimes they are just seen as ‘stuff in boxes’ requiring too much space.
- Understanding the process of an archive service (e.g. acquisition, appraisal, archival quality housing and the related costs)
- Communicating statutory requirements such as Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Copyright
- The belief that volunteers are able and suitable for running the archive service in place of professional staff
- Making the case for a documentary heritage documentation system and ongoing support rather than simply applying systems and documentation standards used for objects, library books or art collections
- Documentary heritage perceived as taking up large amount of space, with little on display or instantly accessible
- Constant need for additional growth space.
- Lower visitor numbers than the displayed collections
- Considered resource heavy, especially in staffing terms.



### ***5.6.3. The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment***

To create a defined set of criteria that make the case for the relevance of the documentary heritage. Collections may vary significantly in size and content.

- Aim to have a strong supporting document that can be used internally to make a case for:
  - Funding/support, including when having to line up for funding support such as HLF, AHRC, etc. Within large museums and heritage organisations, there might be a long list of projects waiting for their funding submission being written/submitted/approved.
  - To strengthen the case for documentary heritage's continued care and use. Large heritage organisations may carry out high level reviews for a number of reasons, e.g. e.g. preparing for moves and what to keep in urban areas vs. what might be stored off-site but be far less physically accessible.
  - For documentary heritage in large national museums/galleries (funded by central government) to create wide understanding of the collections in such a way as to counteract the impact of not being able to apply for ACE Designation status.
- The significance assessment may also support the archivist/responsible team to critically look at the value of their collection and collecting policy and may result in a review/tightening of collecting policy to become a more defined collection.
- To align and benchmark individual institutional holdings against local and national collecting.

### ***5.6.4 Potential significance criteria***

The purpose will be to clearly demonstrate the specific importance of the documentary heritage collections against other collections but also how they can contribute to the wider collections and organisation.

- Inherent
- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Asset
- Geographic

## 5.7 Private collectors

### *5.7.1. Scenario*

Private collectors who want to work collaboratively with other organisations but because they are private how do they justify significance to external organisations or their owning bodies?

### *5.7.2. Awareness of documentary heritage and potential communication issues*

Private collectors will face a variety of audiences including funding bodies, such as HLF and publicly funded organisations, who may perceive privately held documentary heritage with some caution.

Issues are:

- There is no set of criteria for privately owned collections
- There may be no access to professional archival advice
- The documentary heritage is intimately connected to its owners, some of whom might be more committed and aware of good practice than others
- The documentary heritage may be relatively inaccessible and the case for public benefit thus harder to define

### *5.7.3 The purpose and intended outcome of applying a significance assessment*

- To help private collectors understand the individual qualities and non-financial value of their documentary heritage
- To demonstrate to external audiences the nature and quality of the documentary heritage possibly with a view to attracting funding and other resources
- To engage private collectors in one aspect of good professional practice in collection care

### *5.7.4 Potential significance criteria*

The purpose is either to help private collectors value what they own or to help them to demonstrate to third parties the value and understanding they place on their collections:

- Inherent
- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Geographic
- Asset

## 6. Existing significance schemes relevant to the UK

Within the UK there are a number of schemes that require an explanation of significance in return for a benefit such as a recognised award of significance, grant funding or tax relief. The details of these schemes are correct at the time of publication of this Guide.

This section also identifies other publications which provide guidance on considering significance in cultural and heritage collections.

### 6.1 UNESCO Memory of the World Registers

<https://en.unesco.org/programme/mow>

UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme recognises 'that the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance.' Its Mission has three key strands:

- To facilitate preservation, by the most appropriate techniques, of the world's documentary heritage.
- To assist universal access to documentary heritage
- To increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage.

As part of the work on increasing awareness the Programme has Registers onto which are accepted (or 'inscribed'), through an application process, items of 'outstanding importance'. There are three types of Register – international, regional and national and outstanding significance has to be proven for the type of register being applied for e.g. the UK programme recognises collections of outstanding significance to the UK.

Inscription requires applicants to demonstrate outstanding significance against one or more of six criteria:

1. Time
2. Place
3. People
4. Subject and theme
5. Form and style
6. Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

### 6.2 Archives Revealed, The National Archives

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/archives-revealed/cataloguing-grants/>

*Archives Revealed* is a new funding programme from The National Archives and The Pilgrim Trust that supports the cataloguing of documentary heritage collections. It is designed to transform access to documentary heritage for a wide range of users, enabling more people to engage with the UK's rich documentary heritage.

It funds archive services with documentary heritage collections that can show clear local, regional, national or international significance, or significance to a specific audience group, alongside a demonstration of a high level of potential to engage people and communities with documentary heritage and heritage.

Applicants are required to produce a statement of significance. Guidance to the scheme suggests areas of significance to consider that include:

- Provenance
- Rarity
- Condition/completeness
- Historical, Cultural or Scientific meaning
- Sensory and Emotional Impact
- Marketing/exploitability potential

The guidance also includes questions to ask around each of these themes to help develop the statement of significance as well as guidance on how to conduct an assessment of significance.

### **6.3 Acceptance in lieu, Arts Council on behalf of HMRC**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tax-relief-for-national-heritage-assets>

The Acceptance in lieu scheme enables taxpayers to transfer important works of art and other important heritage objects into public ownership while paying inheritance tax, or one of its earlier forms. The taxpayer is given the full open market value of the item, which then becomes the property of a public museum, archive service or library. Arts Council England manages the scheme and The National Archives provides expert advice on archival material.

'Pre-eminent' documentary heritage may be exempted from inheritance tax if certain conditions are met. The pre-eminence experts assess:

- association with our history and national life
- artistic or art-historical importance
- importance for the study of some particular branch of art, learning or history
- association with a particular historic setting

For manuscripts, allocation recommendations are made by the Historical Manuscripts Commissioner at The National Archives.

The owners must agree to:

- preserve the documentary heritage and keep them in the UK
- ensure that there is reasonable public access to them, either at home or by depositing them in a suitable record repository
- publicise the availability of such access

#### 6.4 Cultural Gifts Scheme (CGS)

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/tax-incentives/cultural-gifts-scheme>

This scheme<sup>6</sup> enables UK taxpayers to donate important works of art and other heritage objects to be held for the benefit of the public or the nation. In return, donors receive a tax reduction based on a set percentage of the value of the item they donate.

Applications under the Scheme may be made in respect of works of art, heritage objects, and documentary heritage, but only objects that are found to be pre-eminent by the *Acceptance in Lieu Panel (the Panel)* will be considered for acceptance. In other words, objects must be of particular historical, artistic, scientific or local significance, either individually or collectively, or associated with a building in public ownership, such as a National Trust property, which will be expected to have open public access for at least 100 days each year. Objects must be in an acceptable condition.

Applications are made to the Arts Council and will be considered by the Panel on a first come, first served, basis. The Panel consists of independent experts, who seek specialist advice - generally from museum curators, scholars and members of the art trade - on the object offered.

#### 6.5 Private treaty sales

[Private treaty sales](#) to specified public bodies also attract tax concessions where the vendor is liable to capital gains tax or inheritance tax. These tax charges are not incurred if the owner sells material that qualifies for conditional exemption by private treaty to one of the designated bodies listed in the Inheritance Tax Act 1984. This allows owners of heritage assets of suitable quality to transfer them to public bodies in a financially beneficial way and that prevents the dispersal of collections at auction

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Private\\_Treaty\\_Sales\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Private_Treaty_Sales_guidance.pdf)

#### 6.6 Export licensing

The [export licensing](#) unit issues licences, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture, to export cultural goods. Certain cultural objects more than 50 years old and valued above specified amounts need an individual licence for export out of the UK, whether on a permanent or temporary basis.

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<sup>6</sup> Copyright holder of this text: Arts Council England

Type of audience/readership and their level/lack of understanding of documentary heritage and issues around communicating what are documentary heritage

## 6.7 Designation Scheme, Arts Council England (ACE)

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Designation\\_Scheme\\_application\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Designation_Scheme_application_guidance.pdf)

<sup>7</sup>Designation identifies nationally significant collections in museums, libraries and documentary heritage of all types except national organisations funded directly by central government and organisations without charitable status. Its purpose is to:

- Build a strong understanding of England's shared heritage
- Reveal the strengths of England's leading collections, described by geographic area, subject and quality
- Guard against the neglect or disposal of the nation's treasures
- Help to ensure that funding is directed rationally

The Scheme describes a Designated collection as 'A nationally significant, coherent assemblage of items; held in trust in the long-term for public benefit. A Designated collection is an essential research resource for its subject.'

It is a two-stage application process. Applicants who get through to the second stage must demonstrate that the collection has national significance, outstanding quality and research value.

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<sup>7</sup> Copyright holder of this text: Arts Council England

## 6.8 Heritage Values, English Heritage

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-principles-sustainable-management-historic-environment/conservationprinciplespoliciesguidanceapr08web.pdf/>

These values are defined in English Heritage's (EH) 'Conservation Principles: policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment'. This guide lays out EH's conservation principles and identifies four values that can be ascribed to the historic environment namely:

- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

The guide also lays out a methodology for analysing and describing the 'heritage significance of a place'. There is also substantial consideration given to managing preservation and change in such places and the relevant English Heritage policies.

## 6.9 Revisiting Archive Collections

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/revisiting-archives-collections-toolkit/>

*Revisiting Collections* is a methodology developed by MLA and Collections Trust which aims to create new understanding around museum and documentary heritage collections. It encourages institutions to enable community groups and others to assess collections from their own perspectives to create new understanding and significance for those collections. There are toolkits for both museum and documentary heritage collections.

## **6.10 Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections, Collections Council of Australia**

This is a guide, rather than a purpose-led scheme, to assessing significance in cultural heritage with the aim of writing a statement of significance. It includes a general methodology, practical advice and philosophical considerations regarding assessment e.g. thinking about provenance in relation to different types of cultural heritage. It also has numerous worked examples.

The Guide focuses on the significance from the cultural heritage perspective. It seeks to bring a coherent practice and terminology across Australia for assessing significance and covers all type of cultural heritage including documentary heritage. However, because of its breadth it does not consider significance criteria that can be seen as specific to documentary heritage such as being an information or economic asset.

The Guide is part of a suite of training materials including a workbook and e-learning module.

## **6.11 Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage, The Getty Conservation Institute**

[https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications\\_resources/pdf\\_publications/pdf/assessing.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/assessing.pdf)

A collection of essays looking at developing methodologies for assessing significance or value in cultural heritage from a range of perspectives including conservation, economics and social.



## Appendix 1 - Significance assessment prompt sheet

Individual responsible for delivering the assessment

Documentary heritage under assessment

(e.g. name, broad description of content and date range, size, provenance, location)

Purpose of assessment

Timescale/deadlines

Other key factors affecting assessment

Understand the heritage

- Provenance
- Physical description
- Content
- Strengths and highlights
- Issues

Intended audience(s)

- Internal or external
- Individuals or organisations
- Any key post holders
- Area of influence in decision-making e.g. funding, collecting, partnerships
- Current level of understanding about the documentary heritage collection

Primary concerns of audience

(e.g. terms of grant application, making conservation decisions, creating access to the heritage, deciding on resource allocation)

Method of presentation

(e.g. written statement of significance, in-person presentation, briefing paper, promotional material, website or phone app content, presentation to be undertaken by someone not involved in creating the Statement of Significance)

Criteria	Elements of significance	Evidence available/required and source

### **Stakeholders to consult**

(e.g. documentary heritage and record professionals, conservators, academics, depositors, users, education and outreach specialists, asset managers, service managers, community representatives, interest groups, legal advisers)

### **Action plan**

## Appendix 2 Template for a statement of significance

### Summary

#### Methodology and purpose of the Statement

- Who has drawn it up and why
- Who was consulted
- What sources were consulted

#### Brief description

- Physical description – size, media, age, chronological coverage
- Intellectual description – contents, subjects, individuals, organisations, locations, events, movements

#### History and provenance

- How the heritage was created
- The care and ownership of the heritage since its creation

#### Significance

Identification and explanation of significance values demonstrated in the heritage. Can be considered using criteria under the following headings with supporting independent quotes and evidence:

- Inherent
- Community and individuals
- Research
- Partnership
- Asset
- Geographic

#### Comparison with similar material elsewhere (if appropriate)

#### Supporting evidence (if required)

#### References

Where they have been referred to in the text of the Statement of Significance.

#### Bibliography (if appropriate)

I.e. publications in which the documentary heritage has been cited

## Appendix 3 – Persuasive words

Absorbing	Clever	Enlarge	Great	Maximize	Respected	Unquestionably
Abundance	Colourful	Enormous	Guaranteed	Memorable	Rewarding	Unrivalled
Abundant	Competent	Enterprising	Handsome	Mighty	Rich	Unsurpassed
Accomplished	Confidence	Enthusiastic	Hardy	Miraculous	Robust	Valiant
Active	Confident	Enticing	Harmonious	Motivated	Secure	Valuable
Admirable	Connected	Erode	Healthy	Natural	Seductive	Valued
Admired	Connoisseur	Essence	Heavenly	Negate	Select	Versatile
Adorable	Conscious	Essential	Helpful	Noble	Sensational	Vibrant
Adore	Considerate	Evolve	Honest	Nurturing	Sensitive	Victorious
Adventurous	Contrast	Exceed	Humorous	Optimistic	Serene	Vigorous
Advocate	Convenient	Excellent	Hypothesize	Optimize	Sharing	Vintage
Affluent	Convert	Exceptional	Ideal	Opulent	Signify	Vital
Agreeable	Courageous	Exciting	Imaginative	Outrageous	Simple	Vivacious
Alert	Creative	Exclusive	Immaculate	Outstanding	Skilful	Vivid
Aligned	Daring	Exhilaration	Impact	Palatial	Smart	Wealthy
Alive	Dazzling	Exotic	Impressive	Passionate	Smashing	Wise
Amazing	Debonair	Expand	Incredible	Peaceful	Smooth	Wonderful
	Delicate	Experienced	Industrious	Peak	Sparkling	Worthy
Analyse	Delicious	Expert	Ingenious	Perfect	Spectacular	Young
Appealing	Delightful		Inhibit	Persevering	Speculate	Youthful
Appreciate	Deluxe	Exquisite	Innovative	Persistent	Spiritual	Zeal
Argue	Dependable	Eye-catching	Inspire	Playful	Splendid	Zest
Artistic	Desirable	Fabulous	Inspired	Pleasing	Stability	
Astounding	Desire	Famous	Intelligent	Plentiful	Stress	
Astute	Deteriorate	Fantastic	Intuitive	Popular	Strong	
Attentive	Determined	Far-Sighted	Inventive	Positive	Stunning	
Attraction	Deviate	Fascinating	Investigate	Powerful	Stylish	
Attractive	Diligent	Fine	Invigorating	Precious	Subtle	
Auspicious	Discerning	Finest	Invincible	Prestige	Successful	
Authentic	Discover	Flair	Inviting	Priceless	Superb	
Beaming	Dispute	Flattering	Irresistible	Pride	Sustain	
Beautiful	Distinctive	Flourishing	Joy	Productive	Swift	
Best	Distinguish	Forever	Joyous	Profound	Symbolize	
Blessed	Diverge	Fortunate	Judicious	Prohibit	Talented	
Bold	Divine	Free	Keen	Prosperous	Tempting	
Boost	Dynamic	Friendly	Kind	Proud	Tenacious	
Bounce	Eager	Fulfilled	Knowing	Pure	Terrific	
Brief	Easy	Fun	Legend	Qualified	Thankful	
Bright	Ecstatic	Galore	Limitless	Quick	Thoroughbred	
Brilliant	Effervescent	Generous	Lively	Radiant	Thrilling	
Brimming	Efficient	Genius	Lovely	Ravishing	Thriving	
Brisk	Effortless	Genuine	Loving	Refined	Timeless	
Buoyant	Eject	Gifted	Lucky	Refreshing	Timely	
Calm	Elegant	Glamorous	Luminous	Relaxing	Transformation	
Capable	Eloquent	Glorious	Luxurious	Reliable	Treasure	
Centred	Emphasise	Glowing	Magical	Remarkable	Trust	
Charming	Endless	Gorgeous	Magnificent	Renowned	Truthful	

Cheerful	Energetic	Graceful	Marvellous	Reputation	Ultimate
Chic	Engaging	Gracious	Masterful	Resolute	Undeniably
Clear	Enhance	Grand	Matchless	Resourceful	Unique

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