



Collections Access Policy

Produced: May 2024

Adopted: June 2024

Date of Review: June 2029



Collections Access Policy, The Chapter of York

This Collections Access Policy is for the museum, library and archive & manuscript collections of the Chapter of York, the governing body of York Minster. It includes collections material on the Inventory of the Chapter of York, which is subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020.

Name of service: York Minster Undercroft and Treasury (Museum Accreditation No. 293); York Minster Library; and York Minster Archives (ARCHON code: 195).

Name of governing body: The Chapter of York, Registered Charity Number 1201499, of 8-10 Minster Yard, York, YO1 7HH

Date on which this policy was approved by the governing body: June 2024

Policy review procedure: The Collections Access Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time by the Chapter of York, at least once every five years.

Date at which this policy is due for review: June 2029

Dissemination: collections staff and volunteers, Senior Executive Team (SET), Works Department, Learning & Participation team, and other relevant staff, consultants, conservators and contractors working with the collections or on the associated buildings, exhibition and storage areas. The Policy will be made publicly available via the York Minster website.

1. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the Collections Access Policy is to set a framework, within the limits of the institution's resources, for enabling and managing access to and engagement with the Chapter of York's collections. The Policy sets out Chapter's commitment to offering the widest possible access whilst managing associated risks, in line with professional standards.

Access Principles

- i. To offer the widest and most appropriate forms of access possible to collections, facilities and services.
- ii. To provide high quality programmes, resources and services.
- iii. To enrich people's lives through enabling participation, learning, understanding, inspiration and enjoyment.
- iv. To actively identify and strive to overcome physical, sensory, intellectual, cultural, social, attitudinal, geographical, technological and financial barriers to access, integrating equality and diversity into everything that we do.
- v. To manage collections access whilst maintaining long-term collection care, minimising the risk of damage and deterioration to the collections, in accordance with the Collections Care and Conservation Policy.
- vi. To sustain a culture of customer care, providing all users with excellent service in person and remotely.
- vii. To provide access opportunities that take account of visitor evaluation and audience data, including developing programmes that encourage low / non-users to engage with the collections and services.
- viii. To develop and expand digital and remote access opportunities.
- ix. To communicate effectively with all our audiences and promote the collections and services available.

2. Context and Legal Framework

2.1 The Charitable Purpose of the Chapter of York

The charitable purpose of the Chapter of York is—

- (a) to advance the Christian religion in accordance with the faith and practice of the Church of England, in particular by furthering the mission of the Church of England;
- (b) to care for and conserve the fabric and structure of the Cathedral Church building;
- (c) to advance any other charitable purposes which are ancillary to the furtherance of the purpose referred to in sub-paragraph (a) or (b).

Extracted from Constitution of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.1, Article 3(1)

2.2 Statement of Purpose for the Collections

The museum, library and archive services seek to preserve, develop, interpret and make accessible to all the collections of the Chapter of York, supporting Chapter's mission and charitable purposes, and enriching people's lives through enabling participation, learning, understanding, inspiration and enjoyment.

2.3 Statutes of York Minster

The Collections are referred to in the *Statutes of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.17, Article 40 (1)-(4)*

- 40.** (1) The Chapter shall maintain a Library and Archives whose purpose shall include the promotion of sacred learning.
- (2) The Chapter shall make appropriate provision for the direction and oversight of the Library and Archives and for the care and conservation of the historic and working collections of the Cathedral.
- (3) Where it may in the opinion of the Chapter assist the Chapter in fulfilling requirements imposed upon it by the Measure or by the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 or where it may otherwise further the Chapter's charitable objects as set out in the Constitution, the Chapter may at its discretion operate an Accredited Museum, as defined by the applicable Arts Council England national quality standards, within the Cathedral or within such other precinct property of the Cathedral as the Chapter may from time to time determine.
- (4) The Chapter may enter into agreements with the University of York ... or any other institution of Higher Education concerning the management and administration of the Library and Archives and concerning the care and use of the historic collections of the Cathedral.

2.4 Legislative Framework

As a cathedral collection, the Collections are subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020. Objects (including library and archive material) deemed by the cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee to be of 'architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest' must be recorded on the cathedral's Inventory. Material works relating to care, conservation, repair or development of the cathedral fabric or collections are subject to advice and consent from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) (in the case of collections, for items designated of 'outstanding interest' on the Cathedral Inventory) or the cathedral's Fabric Advisory Committee (FAC) (for all other collections items on the Cathedral Inventory).

Not every item on the Inventory is necessarily part of the Museum, Archive & Manuscript or Library Collections, and vice versa. This is discussed in greater detail in the Collections Development Policies. However, there is much overlap, and the legal requirements of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020 must be taken into account. The CFCE guidance *Cathedral Inventories*, 2021, acknowledges Museum Accreditation and Archive Service Accreditation standards and is designed to intersect with these.

2.5 Related Organisational Policies

This policy has been written in accordance with the Statement of Purpose for the Collections and the Collections Care and Conservation Policy. It should be read in conjunction with the following policies and plans, and any other institutional policies and plans relating to the collections and associated services and facilities:

- *Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Plan*
- *Collections Development Policy for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections of the Chapter of York*
- *York Minster Library Collections Development Policy*
- *Collections Information Policy for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections*
- *York Minster Library Collections Information Policy*
- *Forward Plan for the Collections*
- *Strategic Plan of the Chapter of York*
- *Conservation Management Plan for York Minster*
- *Chapter of York Data Protection Policy and Privacy Standard*
- *Chapter of York Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*

Collections are insured in line with the Chapter of York's policy and procedures.

2.6 Legislative Context and Codes of Practice

The Collections Access Policy and the conduct of access and engagement activities are informed by relevant legislation, professional standards and codes of practice, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Charities Act 2011 and predecessors
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- Public Records Act 1958, as amended 1967; Freedom of Information Act 2000; and The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (to the extent that they apply to the public records held by York Minster Archives, none of which is later than 1838)
- The Manorial Documents Rules 1959, as amended 1963 and 1967
- Archive Service Accreditation
- Museum Accreditation
- Standard for Access for Archives, National Council on Archives
- The Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association
- Code of Ethics, Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)
- Ethical Framework, CILIP (the library and information association)

3. Users

3.1 In this Policy, **users and audiences** are defined as individuals and groups who engage with and make use of, or potentially might engage with and make use of, the museum, archive and library collections, and / or collections-related resources, services, facilities, activities, content and programmes, including on site, off site and online.

Internal users are defined as members, staff and volunteers of the Chapter of York.

Stakeholders are defined as individuals, groups or organisations, including users, with an interest or concern in the collections and / or York Minster, or with whom York Minster would like to develop and / or maintain a relationship for a specific purpose.

3.2 The museum, library and archive services have a large and diverse range of users and potential users, including:

Members, staff and volunteers of the Chapter of York; worshippers; pilgrims; tourists; our diverse local communities; families; schools; researchers; staff and students of the University of York and other further and higher education institutions; depositors, including York Minster's associated organisations (Friends of York Minster, York Minster Fabric Advisory Committee, York Minster Fund, York Minster Mystery Plays); specialist interest groups; faith, heritage and cultural organisations (including other museums, libraries and archives); and other visitors and service users.

3.3 The Chapter of York is committed to providing access opportunities that take account of visitor evaluation and audience data. There are ongoing programmes of user consultation, data gathering and analysis, to inform and improve access to collections and services. Relationships with groups, including low / non-users (our 'Seldom Heard' groups), may be developed through partnership working, for example with refugee and women's aid groups.

4. Services and Facilities

4.1 Collections services are delivered in two main locations in the York Minster Precinct:

- (i) within York Minster, the cathedral – the site of the Undercroft Museum and Treasury

The Undercroft Museum galleries explore the extensive collections, history and heritage of York Minster, including the remains of the Roman fortress below the cathedral. Temporary exhibitions take place in the Treasury, and often various other locations within the Minster. Learning and access programmes, events, workshops and other activities may take place in the cathedral, including school visits and other public engagement programmes. There is an entrance charge to the cathedral. Entrance is free for York residents and for religious services and worship. There are charges for school visits and there may be charges for other specific events and activities. Further information, including opening hours, is provided on the website: <https://yorkminster.org/>

- (ii) within the Old Palace – the site of the Library and Archive services

The Old Palace is situated behind York Minster, across Dean's Park. Access to the Library and Archive collections is provided through the Reading Room. The lending and reference Library collections are browsable, and accessible during public opening hours without appointment: members of the Minster Library and members of the University of York's libraries are permitted to borrow items from the Library's

loan collection. Other Library (Special Collections) and Archives material is made available by appointment, and consulted in the Reading Room. Library and archive material may be consulted without charge. There is a programme of small-scale temporary exhibitions. Learning and access programmes, seminars, events, workshops and other activities may take place in the Old Palace, including school visits and other public engagement programmes: there may be charges for specific events and activities. Further information, including opening hours, is provided on the website: <https://yorkminster.org/discover/collections-archive-library/>

4.2 Library services are delivered through the Collaboration Agreement between the Chapter of York and the University of York, as described in the 'Collaboration Agreement relating to the provision of Library Services based at the Old Palace, Dean's Park, York' summarised in the *York Minster Library Collections Development Policy*, Section 4, Library Management Arrangements. The Library collection and the Old Palace building are owned and maintained by the Chapter of York.

4.3 Collections services and access opportunities may be delivered at other locations in and beyond the Minster Precinct, including by on-line access.

5. Access Provision

5.1 Types of provision

Public access provision includes:-

- Long-term and temporary exhibitions. Exhibition programmes incorporate museum, library and archive material. Displays may be supplemented by loans.
- Interpretation within the cathedral
- Guided tours
- Public programming, including talks, seminars, workshops, object handling, events and activities
- School visits and curriculum-based programmes, usually led by York Minster's Learning and Participation team
- Higher and further education programmes, including lectures and seminars
- Community engagement programmes, including for our 'Seldom Heard' groups
- Use of liturgical collections in worship and services
- Collections study and research access, with library and archive services largely delivered via the publicly accessible Reading Room (searchroom)
- Library lending service, from the Old Palace and also via delivery to University of York libraries
- Enquiry service
- Publications
- Digital and on-line access, including to the collections catalogues and other on-line resources
- Social media

5.2 Collections assessments

Collections material is assessed for suitability of use in different activities, for example exhibitions, handling sessions, in accordance with the Collections Care & Conservation Policy.

5.3 Collections study and research facilities

Collections items not on display and not forming part of the Library reference or loan collections can be accessed via appointment. Consultation of archive and manuscript material, Library special collections and reference material, and small, portable objects will normally take place in the Reading Room in the Old

Palace; or *in situ* in the cathedral, galleries or stores for larger or fixed objects, for example monuments. Collections appointments are supervised by trained, professional staff and researchers are advised on how to handle material they are consulting.

To protect original library, archive and manuscript material, physical or digital surrogates will be provided for consultation where available. Digital surrogates will be made available in the Reading Room, with some material also available on-line, where appropriate, and taking into account relevant legislation and any restrictions imposed by owners or copyright holders. Access to original material for which there is a surrogate may be permitted where the user can demonstrate that this is necessary for their research and where there is no overriding reason the original should not be produced (e.g. it would be damaged by handling).

5.4 Access to collections information

The electronic collections catalogues can be searched on-line, via the public interfaces, and are the principal finding aids to the collections. <https://yorkminster.org/discover/collections-archive-library/> The object, archive and manuscript catalogue is administered by the Chapter of York and the library catalogue of printed material by the University of York. Information contained in the catalogues that must not be made public for reasons of legislation, confidentiality or security is not available via the public interfaces.

Some legacy finding aids have yet to be input to the relevant electronic catalogues and cataloguing backlogs exist for museum, library and archive material. Online collections catalogues are updated regularly with new information as it becomes available. Collections information that is not in the electronic catalogues will be made available to enquirers to the extent that it does not include information that must not be disclosed for reasons of legislation, confidentiality, or security.

Audience reach is extended by contributing information about the collections to other published and / or online platforms as resources permit. York Minster Archives participates in The National Archives annual Accessions to Repositories survey, ensuring that the *Discovery* shared catalogue network includes at least a collection-level description of every archive in the Chapter's collections.

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Manorial documents held by YMA are included in the 'Manorial Documents Register,' which is incorporated to *Discovery*.

The Library catalogue is included in Library Hub Discover <https://discover.libraryhub.jisc.ac.uk/> and relevant items in the Library collection have been reported to the Incunabula Short Title Catalogue and the English Short Title Catalogue. Incunabula data is also reported to the database Material Evidence in Incunabula.

<https://www.cerl.org/resources/mei/main>

5.5 Photography, copying and rights and reproduction

Photography and copying of collections material, for personal or commercial use, is only permitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Chapter of York, and where this is carried out:

- within the terms of relevant legislation (e.g. Public Records Act 1958, Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988)
- without contravening any restrictions imposed by the owner or donor of the material or the owner of copyright in the material; and
- where photography or copying will not damage the material.

Where the Chapter of York considers it appropriate, users are required to complete a declaration that they will comply with copyright law. No photography or copying for commercial purposes, including for any form of publication, book, film or website, is permitted without specific application and consent. The collections service maintains a list of standard fees for photography, copying and reproduction of collections material: applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, and the Chapter of York reserves the right to decline any application.

5.6 Access Restrictions

The Chapter of York reserves the right to restrict access to the collections, items within them and to collections information, taking into account legal and ethical considerations and the Collections Care and Conservation Policy. Specific access restrictions may apply to items that are culturally sensitive, hazardous to health or subject to legislative requirements and / or conditions of deposit, or for considerations including security, confidentiality, conservation, and collections care and management.

The collections service will advise users on any restrictions, with reference to the reasons for these where appropriate.

Closed archival records

The need for access to archives must be balanced with the needs for confidentiality of persons and institutions whose activities are reflected in the materials. Consequently, access to some materials, especially those of recent date, are subject to restrictions.

Records of the Chapter of York other than those to which the public had access prior to their transfer to YMA are closed to public access for thirty years from the date of their creation and may be closed for a further period to protect the interests of the Chapter of York or to ensure compliance with statute or common law obligations. Records that contain 'personal data' as defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) are closed until the individuals about whom they contain data are or may be assumed to be deceased.

Internal users, including members of the Collections & Interpretation department, may be allowed access to closed records where needed for the performance of their official duties, subject to appropriate authorisation.

Information contained in closed records will be provided to external users where required by legislation, e.g. in response to requests from members of the public under the Charities Act 2011 or DPA. NB: data subject access requests made under DPA are managed by the Chapter of York's Data Protection Officer.

External users may also apply for special permission to access closed records. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account factors including the information contained in the records, the reason for the request, the person making the request, any individuals who might be affected by access, and the Chapter of York's legal obligations. Under DPA, access to records containing personal data may be permitted for historical or statistical research where this would be fair and lawful and would not be likely to cause substantial damage or distress to an individual. Where considered appropriate by the Chapter of York, successful applicants will be required to complete a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and/or an alternative declaration that they will comply with DPA, including that research will not be carried out for the purposes of measures or decisions with respect to a particular individual and that they will not make the results of research available in any form that identifies individuals.

Restrictions on access to records donated or loaned to the Chapter of York, and arrangements for the management of those restrictions, will be established by consultation with the donors and depositors.

5.7 Loans from the collections

Loans from the collections to public exhibitions in other accredited museums, libraries and archives or appropriate institutions support the objective of making items accessible to wider audiences. The condition of items and their importance to our own displays and visitor access requirements will be taken into account before agreeing to lend, as will display, security and environmental conditions provided by the borrowing institution, risks and other relevant factors. Loans are subject to approval by the Chapter of York, the Fabric Advisory Committee (for items 'of interest' on the Inventory) and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (for items of 'outstanding interest'). In all cases, loans must be covered either by the Government Indemnity Scheme or by equivalent levels of insurance cover.

5.8 Access Assessments

Our approach to access is informed by access audits and assessments, with the aim of identifying and removing barriers to access. In seeking to provide the widest possible access to all potential users, we consider the following forms of accessibility in our services and activities:

- **Physical** – equal access wherever possible, and within constraints including Listed Buildings status, will be provided to buildings, facilities and services.
- **Sensory** – to enable visitors with additional support needs, including impaired vision or hearing or neurodiversity, to access the collections.
- **Intellectual** – we recognise that people have different learning styles, and different knowledge and experience. Our interpretation methods and provision of opportunities for formal and informal learning will be designed to suit a range of learning styles and abilities.
- **Cultural** – routes of access for visitors who do not have English as a first language or whose knowledge of British and / or Christian heritage is limited.
- **Social and attitudinal** – staff and facilities will offer an inclusive welcome to all visitors. We aim to ensure that our users, stakeholders and local communities feel that the collections are of significance to them.
- **Geographical, financial and technological** – we recognise that some users may find it difficult or costly to travel to York. We will make use of IT, digital and on-line technology to make information on collections available, for example via our website, on-line collections catalogues and enquiries service.