Managing Europe´s Archaeological heritage

# Guidance on selection in archaeological archiving

EAC GUIDELINES 3

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EAC Working Group for Archaeological Archives
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# Foreword

by Barney Sloane
President of the EAC

Archaeological archives have too often been considered as afterthoughts – the collections of objects and documents which are left after the intellectual process of excavation, investigation, analysis and interpretation is finished and the book or article written and published. Nothing could be further from the truth. An archive is the lasting legacy of an unrepeatable event and represents – or at least should represent – much of the significance of the site or monument studied. An archive should be seen as a powerful resource to test and re-test theories, to advance knowledge and to create opportunities for access for everyone.

Numerous proofs exist of the huge potential in this resource but one in particular comes to mind. An article in Gene reviewed the contributions made by the investigation of palaeopathology and genetics (https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23792062/), using samples from curated specimens in archives and collections. It concluded that 'extraction and identification of pathogen DNA from archaeological specimens allows a much deeper understanding of the evolutionary history and phylogeny of important human pathogens, as it demonstrates evolution in progress. This information may be key to predicting progressive genetic change in the future, and so have major implications for our ability to control or eradicate these diseases'. As I write, in the time of Covid-19, it is very hard to challenge this as an argument for taking care of our shared legacy.

At the same time, the space for storing archaeological archives and collections is not, and cannot be, infinite. The more we excavate, the greater the pressure on available capacity to store for the long term. As archaeological heritage managers, it is vital that we ensure that how we practice is sustainable in the long term. For practical and financial reasons, we must therefore make the best choices we can about what to keep.

This excellent guidance is the result of many years of hard work in many countries, by many experts in the field. By offering guidance on intelligent selection, it will help to balance these two equally important issues, to make the case for continued support for our shared archaeological legacy, and to ensure that future generations, with future technology and capabilities, can continue to generate real public benefit from our work and that of those who have come before us.

# 1. Introduction

Inherent to the role of an archaeologist is collection; they collect material from the ground, they gather data. Paradoxical to that is the act of deselecting or disposing of what has been collected or observed. However, archaeologists make choices, explicitly or not, from defining what an archaeological site is, what parts will be researched, what methodologies/techniques will be used, whether identified material will be collected or recorded *in situ*, what will be archived for permanent storage. Making choices is thus an integral part of any archaeological project.

In a world where there is an increasing expectation of transparency it is important these choices are explicit, conscious, open and documented. They should result from a clearly formulated selection strategy, because, as the *Amersfoort Agenda* puts it, "if archaeologists do not make choices, choices will be made for them" (*Amersfoort Agenda* 2015, 20).

The engagement of the archaeological community in selection results from its responsibility for the material and documentary evidence that it brings to light through research. In order to approach the subject in the most constructive manner, we should, first, overcome certain prejudices towards selection of archaeological archives, because the term often seems to be identified with throwing away archaeological artefacts. It should be strongly emphasised that for the authors of this guidance this is not the case. Clear formulation of strategies, explaining what is going to be kept in perpetuity and why, will allow archaeologists, curators and heritage managers to justify archaeology-related expenditure to developers, authorities and the wider public. Transparent, explicit and well-founded arguments for preserving certain elements of archaeological heritage for the future will contribute to strengthening archaeology as a science and translating the value of archaeological heritage to non-archaeologists. Disposal of finds is not obligatory, but it is obligatory to consider selection in every archaeological project.

Selecting for archaeological archives has been much discussed in recent years, mainly due to the pressure on storage space at archive repositories that has arisen from increasing archaeological activity. That problem has been well researched in England, where successive

surveys have concluded that, due to a lack of storage space, within ten years 112 out of 154 local institutions that currently collect archaeological archives will be unable to accept more material (Boyle et al. 2016, 2017, and 2018). Although this problem is more to do with economics and infrastructure than archaeology, it is very real and must be considered in terms of how archaeology is practiced. It is important that archaeologists focus on establishing an archaeological approach to alleviate this problem (Brown 2019, 3), and emphasise the advantages of optimising the potential of archaeological collections through carefully considered selection strategies.

Transferring the archive to permanent storage may conclude one archaeological project but does not end the lifecycle of the collection; it may be used for the benefit of all of society through education, entertainment, outreach activities and further research. Archaeological objects and documentary records are the sources of our common past, which is why their permanent curation should be perceived as the responsibility of society as a whole.

This guidance results from the "Making Choices" initiative of the Europae Archaeologiae Consilium, taken up after the formulation of its new strategy in 2015 (*Amersfoort Agenda* 2015). It is to be considered ancillary to *A Standard and Guide to Best Practice in Archaeological Archiving in Europe* (Perrin *et al.* 2014). It is founded on the premises stated above and also on *A Standard and Guide...* and its predecessors, as well as the *Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives* produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and funded by Historic England (http://cifa.heritech.net/selection-toolkit), which was launched in 2019. This is the next step in standardising the approach to archaeological archiving. The thematic scope of this guidance has also been shaped by results of the survey on archive selection practice, carried out by the EAC Working Group for Archaeological Archives in 2018 (Brown 2019, Oniszczuk 2019).

It should also be noted that this document does not address the issues of selecting archaeological archives or collections in long-term curation, classed as rationalisation. Selection should be considered and carried out during an ongoing archaeological project, before the archive is transferred to a long-term repository. The project team's current knowledge of the archive in active use makes all decisions simpler and efficient. The prospect of repositories rationalising their existing collections remains, but the necessity of such an in-depth return to closed projects archives makes it much more difficult and laborious, up to the point when it becomes substantially and economically unfeasible.[1]

[1] See examples in: Baxter, Boyle & Creighton 2018.

## 1.1. Main definitions

**Selection** is the procedure for selecting archive components for inclusion in an archaeological archive intended for long term storage (Perrin et al. 2014, 53). More precisely, it is the process of applying a selection strategy to a project archive in active use to determine which archive components, including documents, digital files and material objects, should be included in the archaeological archive. The aim of selection is to ensure that the archaeological archive contains everything required to establish the significance of the project and support future research, outreach, engagement, display and learning activities (CIfA 2019, Glossary).

A **selection strategy** is defined as the methodology detailing the project-specific selection process, agreed by all stakeholders, which will be applied to the archive in active use in order to create an archive intended for long term preservation, defined in the guidance as the archaeological archive (CIfA 2019, Glossary).

## 1.2. Rationale for selection[2]

The definition of an archaeological archive, adopted both in the EAC Guidelines 1 (Perrin et al. 2014, 20), and the CIfA selection toolkit (CIfA 2019, Glossary), reflects the acknowledgment of selection as an intrinsic element of its creation:

An **archaeological archive** comprises all records and objects recovered during an archaeological project and identified for long term preservation, including artefacts, ecofacts and other environmental remains, waste products, scientific samples and also written and visual documentation in paper, film and digital form.

The **preserved archive** is the finalised version of the archaeological archive, intended for transfer to permanent storage.

As stated in the introduction, rising debates around systematic selection in archaeological archiving result from economic and infrastructure issues, however, the selection process itself should be oriented towards archaeological and more broadly, scientific considerations. Archaeologists should concentrate on academic and ethical aspects, such as the general purpose of archaeological research and social responsibilities inherent in caring for archaeological remains. Let us remember that those involved in archaeology are not only trusted to make decisions on behalf of the communities they represent, but also have a duty towards future generations, and that is what should steer discussions over selection and storage. Therefore, selection criteria must be based on the potential of an individual archive to inform future research and be

[2] Based on: Brown 2015, CIfA 2019, Perrin et al. 2014, SMA 1993.

used in further analysis, education and outreach activities. Also, the significance of the context or associated finds and the need to preserve these intact, must be accommodated.

To this end, the purpose of selection should be:

- to enable the finds and data to be quantified and interrogated more effectively;
- to remove material of no perceivable information value and/or any national, regional or local significance however those may be defined;
- to distil the information, research and utility values of an archive into a manageable and cost-efficient archive, without compromising its scientific integrity.

A selection strategy should take into account the information, records and other objects necessary to fulfil the archive's potential (for research, education, outreach, etc.) and to maintain possible public benefit, considering the limitations of secondary documentation as a substitute for the primary evidence. A selection strategy must always be compliant with binding legal regulations and national, regional or local standards and guidelines.

With this in mind, the implementation of the project-specific selection strategy will:

- Ensure that the archaeological archive fulfils the project's objectives.
- Result in well organised records and materials with potential for re-use via further research, education, public outreach and/or other curatorial use, that will add to our knowledge and cultural values.
- Facilitate better understanding of the contents of the archaeological archive.
- Establish the relevance of the archaeological archive, increasing the opportunities for promotion of, and engagement with the archive.
- Enable full and equitable consideration of the importance and potential of all archaeological materials.
- Allow a detailed understanding of, and preparation for, the preservation requirements of the archive in active use prior to transfer to a repository.
- Help ensure that all relevant research frameworks, procedures and guidance have been considered and followed at all stages of a project.

- Promote better collaboration between archaeological contractors, collecting institutions, specialists, researchers, planning archaeologists, heritage services and other stakeholders.
- Optimize the management of the archive in active use, including onsite collection, and the disposal of deselected material.
- Support the adequate allocation of funds and staffing from the outset of a project.
- Improve the efficient use of available storage space and resources.
- Facilitate the telling of the full story of the site to the general public in ways that are most easy to understand.

# 2. Principles and procedures

## 2.1. General principles for selection strategies[3]

It is recognised that not all records or materials collected or produced during an archaeological project will be worthy of preservation in perpetuity. Obvious examples include duplicate photographs or specific types of finds (e.g. some classes of building materials or industrial waste) but it is important to consider all the products of a project for retention or disposal before commencing the archive compilation process. The entire project archive should therefore be subject to a selection procedure to determine which elements are to be retained from the documentary (including digital) and material archives.

The aim of any selection process is to ensure that what is retained will ensure the continuing significance of the project in contributing to known research aims. The procedure is therefore based on selecting what is to be retained, rather than selecting what can be disposed of.

It is not possible to predict universal selection priorities; however, it is important to recognise that each archaeological project will have different research aims and conditions that will affect selection and retention. This section therefore sets out a decision-making procedure and the considerations that should be taken into account in every archaeological project:

- The aim of the selection process should be to produce a project archive that allows a full re-examination and interpretation of all

3 Based on: Brown 2011, 23-24.

the results of the project whilst avoiding replication, repetition or the retention of materials not germane to future use. What is transferred to the archive repository must be what is agreed to be worthy of preservation in perpetuity.

- Decisions on the selection and retention of archaeological archives must be compliant with binding legal regulations, including ownership and copyright issues.
- Decisions on the selection and retention of archaeological archives should take into account the stated research aims and objectives of the project, existing local, regional and national research strategies and museum / repository collecting policies.
- All decisions on selection and retention must be substantially justified.
- Deciding what is selected for archive should not be the sole responsibility of the project team. The project executive (project initiator or project manager, see Annexes II and III) should facilitate a decision-making process for the project team and the repository curator, so that selection is carried out in accordance with the aims of the project and the requirements of the archive repository.
- The initial selection strategy has to be accepted by relevant stakeholders (e.g. state heritage services, landowner, specialists, repository curators etc.) before the beginning of the data gathering stage.
- Selection criteria and procedures must be fully documented and included in the project archive.
- The selection strategy should be flexible and open to amendment. For example, the discovery of unexpected finds or stratigraphy may affect the decision about what was initially identified for disposal.

## 2.2. Procedures for disposal of deselected material

**Disposal** is the process of determining both how to deal with collected object(s) or records which have not been selected, and the most appropriate methods for implementing this. Solutions range from complete destruction to data or material remaining in existence but converted to a new function. Three imperatives underpin any discard strategy: that it is legally possible; that the process is fully documented; that any dispersed material does not risk contamination of the archaeological record now or in the future.

Strategies for disposal are not required for uncollected material, which is never removed from the site of recovery.

The potential range of uses for deselected archaeological data and material offer various levels of accessibility. The highest level of accessibility being that it is preserved in another archive and the lowest being that the material is discarded.

Types of disposal are listed below in order of decreasing levels of final accessibility:

### 1) *Transfer*

Transfer to another archive. Examples of this may include inclusion in a reference collection or inclusion of site staff photographs in an institution's own archive. This represents the transfer of information or material to another archive with the intention that it will be preserved for the long term under another role. Transfer should not be confused with depositing archaeological archive at multiple repositories in relation to their specialist character, where the intention is to preserve the material or the functionality of the data.

### 2) *Returning*

Returning deselected material to the site of recovery; this will often involve reburial, effectively making it inaccessible unless the site is re-excavated. This risks the continuing decay of the material and a low likelihood of retrieval due to the costs involved, and this may not be an option if loss or destruction of the site is likely. This does not relate to the documentary archive (physical or digital). If any finds have been returned and reburied, then their reburial location should be recorded.

### 3) *Re-use*

The material is retained by a cultural institution but with the intention of care and use that differs from how those are managed for the archaeological archive. This will not preserve its original substance for the long term and will risk damage or loss. Examples of this are handling collections and similar outreach and education activities.

### 4) *Repurposing*

The use of deselected archaeological material that will effectively make it inaccessible in or changed from its original form. Examples of this include the use of archaeological materials in artwork.

### *5) Discard*

The controlled abandonment or destruction of the data/material (often supported by the retaining of a representative sample). Discard of the material should not risk the return to or pollution of the archaeological record. For physical material, destruction – such as crushing – is recommended.

## 2.3. Documentary archive in active use in terms of selection

The majority of what is discussed above relates to archaeological materials. This is because the documentary archive is normally purposely created and if well managed, is unlikely to contain superfluous information. However, digital data in particular can be duplicated in many ways, ranging from the production of complete copies of the same data to the retention of the same information in different formats. The result is that multiple versions of the same data may be included in the archive.

Conversion of data to different formats, although not fully classified as deselection, can have implications such as the loss of function and quality. Because of the nature of digital information, good data management, e.g. organisation of storage, folder structure and the use of file naming conventions, is imperative to ensure that any disposal decision can be implemented effectively.

The key tool for this is a digital data management plan, which includes a preservation plan for each data type so that the implications of conversion can be understood by stakeholders.

The data management plan should cover the following topics:[4]

- data collection;
- documentation and metadata;
- ethics and legal compliance;
- storage and backup;
- selection and preservation;
- data sharing;
- responsibilities and resources.

Poor digital data management, such as not considering copyright or other legal issues, or ignoring the recommended file formats of the intended digital repository, can lead to records being deselected not by value, but because it is not possible to include them within the archive.[5]

The same principles can be applied to physical documentation. Recording media (e.g. paper, film) suitable for long-term storage should be used for documentary records and their safe storage should be ensured during the project. Where there are multiple copies (e.g. photocopies) the original document, or an exact reproduction of it, should always have priority in preservation.

[4] This is based on DCC 2013. Further advice and guidance can be found under this link: http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/data-management-plans

[5] For further information on appraising and selecting research data please see Whyte & Wilson 2010.

Deselected parts of documentation should be recorded in relevant lists that include the justification (e.g. replacement with copies due to damage).

The purpose of selecting the documentary archive is to produce a succinct, comprehensive archive that is representative of the knowledge gained during research, provides the evidence the research is based on and enables reuse.

# 3. Selection strategy[6]

## 3.1. Stages and scope of the selection process

A selection strategy facilitates data management during the project and aids understanding and interrogation of the archive once the project is complete. Once the selection strategy has been determined, all components of the documentary record and the material assemblage will be subject to selection for the archive at any time during the project lifecycle. Selection and disposal should not lead to any substantial loss of information which detracts from the project objectives. A selection strategy should be kept under regular and transparent review according to the current circumstances and project research or management objectives. Any changes to the selection strategy must be recorded and agreed by all stakeholders, including the recipient repository.

Stages of creation and implementation of a selection strategy:

**Planning stage**

A selection strategy should be:

- Initially agreed at the project planning stage.
- Drawn up with input from all relevant members of the project team, including specialists and the curator of the repository or repositories into which the final archive will be received.
- Devised in accordance with the binding law, the project research aims or management questions, any national, regional or local research frameworks and also with the collecting policies of the recipient repository.
- Compliant with the project data management plan, should this be formulated.

[6] Based on: Perrin et al. 2014; Collections Trust 2017.

A selection strategy should set out:

- The criteria for selecting records, documents, data files and materials (finds and samples) for inclusion in the preserved archive.
- How the deselected material will be documented.
- What material will not be collected on site (or will only partially be collected).
- How the uncollected material will be dispersed.
- Resources required to carry out the selection strategy.

**Data gathering stage**

A selection strategy should be:

- Included in the project documentation.
- Both understood and implemented by the project team.
- Put into practice and monitored by the project manager.
- Reviewed based on any unexpected discoveries and situations that emerge during the research and processing of finds, which may affect the decision about what was previously identified for deselection and disposal.

**Analysis, reporting and archive transfer stage**

- The strategy should be reviewed after finds assemblages have been assessed for their potential for analysis and again during analytical investigation.
- A secondary selection process may be undertaken after assessment or analysis.
- It should be ensured that all material deselected following assessment or analysis is recorded to the appropriate levels of characterisation and quantification prior to disposal.
- Materials subject to disposal should be fully documented together with a record of when and why this happened.
- During archive compilation, it should be ensured that the updated selection strategy and related records of disposal procedures are included in the archive.

## 3.2. Documentation of the selection process

Documenting the selection process is imperative. It is a useful part of records/data management for both physical and digital documentary material. It is also important for finds assemblages because information collected from deselected finds will enhance the value of the assemblage overall, even if it has not been fully analysed.

The levels of recorded detail appropriate for different types of deselected finds should be agreed by relevant stakeholders (e.g. qualified specialists). Written records can be enhanced with photographs, drawings, other visualisations or the collection of representative samples.

Documentation of deselected material should preserve a connection between the material to be deselected and the context of its discovery, as well as relationships with the selected material and records.

### Planning

A selection strategy should be created and agreed upon at the start of a project.

A selection strategy should include:

- the legal framework for selection;
- ownership information relating to the archaeological assemblage;
- a description of the deselection process;
- the rationale for adopted measures;
- the methodology for documenting deselected materials (and documentation level);
- the methodology for disposal of deselected material.

### Data gathering

The rationale for selection, sampling and/or deselection should be recorded as a natural part of the data-gathering process. A template for recording selection can be found with the CIfA Selection Toolkit.

Any known derogations from the initial selection strategy arising during fieldwork should be justified and existing records updated accordingly.

### Assessment, analysis and reporting

At the end of data-gathering the materials collected will usually be assessed to determine the appropriate levels of analysis. This may prompt a review of the selection strategy that should include:

- Assessment of the working project archive/project as a whole (metalevel):
  - Are there data or records that are unclear and have a low potential for future use?
  - What is the general potential of the archive?
- Assessment of the separate components (material or object types) of the finds assemblage:
  - What is their research potential?
  - What allows for a complete re-examination of the project and furthers future knowledge?
- If available, the relevant standards or guidelines for assessing archaeological materials should be used.
- An evaluation of research potential that considers likely advances in scientific methods.
- Justification of all selection decisions; materials that are deselected need to be thoroughly studied and recorded.
- Documentation of all amendments to the original selection strategy, which must be included in the project archive.

Any revision to the original selection strategy should be agreed by all relevant project personnel, including the project initiator, specialists and the repository curator.

**Archive compilation and transfer**

Following final implementation of the selection strategy and prior to archive compilation, the repository curator should be invited to review the archive and agree its final composition.

Ensure that a final version of the selection strategy, with the methodology for deselection and disposal is included in the documentary archive.

- The final version of the selection strategy should contain:
  - a record of each step of the selection process within a project;
  - the rationale behind the selection decisions taken;
  - a full registration and record of all deselected elements of the archive;
  - detailed records of the chosen methods of disposal with reference to all the deselected archival elements and all stages of an archaeological project
  - a cross-reference to the data management plan.

## 3.3. Data crucial for documentation

The design of the selection strategy must allow for the recording of multiple selection decisions, which may be carried out on the same archive and may need to be recorded to different levels according to the type of material being selected. It should document who has responsibility, include relevant project information and inform management of the selection process.

The following categories of information should be included:

- **Version control, including**
  - Date
  - Version identifier
  - Summary of changes and personnel involved.
- **Project information**
  - Project name and identifier
  - Organisation
  - Project team (relevant personnel only: e.g. project manager, finds manager, digital information manager)
- **Stakeholders**
  - List parties as appropriate, such as heritage authorities, collecting institutions, project initiator, project manager, project monitors, landowners and developers or their agents.
- **Legal**
  - Include or cite the documentation that proves you have the right to carry out the selection strategy.
- **Context**
  - Describe the context of the selection strategy, such as local plans, project aim and objectives, research frameworks, relevant standards and guidance, as well as any specific risks, limiting costs or other relevant constraints.
- **Resources**
  - Describe the direct and indirect costs, such as staff time, so they can be planned for effectively.
- **Documentary archive (physical)**

  The selection record must include:
  - The names of the people responsible for the selection process;
  - A list of items or document types to be included in the preserved archive;

- Identification of planned selection review points during the project;
- References to standards, policies or guidelines and the rationale for any deviations from them, if applicable;
- A description of the deselection procedure, including any quality assurance processes and risk management (e.g. digitisation of unstable/damaged material);
- The dates, rationale and stakeholders involved in any amendments to the original strategy;
- Identification of deselected material;
- Dates of disposal;
- A description of disposal methods;
- A description of the rationale for disposal;
- The names and roles of personnel carrying out disposal;
- The name and roles of the person who authorised disposal.

Deselected material should also be recorded within the archive. Existing indexes and catalogues can be used where possible, or new supporting documents created. Recording of the deselection process should therefore be at 'Item' level of ISAD(G) General International Standard Archival Description (ICA 2000).

- **Documentary archive (digital)**

Although digital material should be recorded to similar levels of documentation as the physical documentary archive, the ability to duplicate, create multiple versions and transfer data between formats means selection can be more complex. Good data management is therefore essential and any selection strategy for digital material should be supported by and be referenced to a data management plan
(see section 2.3).

The selection record must include:

- The names of people responsible for the selection process;
- A list of items or file types to be included in the preserved archive;
- Identification of planned selection review points during the project;
- References to standards, policies or guidelines and the rationale for any deviations from them, if applicable;
- A description of the deselection procedure, including any quality assurance processes and risk management (e.g. arrangements for temporary preservation of files prior to final deletion at an agreed future date);
- The dates, rationale and stakeholders involved in any amendments to the original strategy;

- Identification of deselected material;
- Dates of disposal;
- A description of disposal methods;
- A description of the rationale for disposal;
- The names and roles of personnel carrying out disposal;
- The name and roles of the person who authorised disposal.

Deselected material should also be recorded within the archive. Existing indexes and catalogues can be used where possible, or new supporting documents created. Recording of the deselection process should therefore be at 'Item' level of ISAD(G) General International Standard Archival Description (ICA 2000).

- **Material Archive**

  The selection strategy for each material/object category should be recorded separately (i.e. a selection strategy for iron nails may be different from the rest of the iron assemblage).

  The selection record must include:

  - The material/object classification being selected;
  - The names of people responsible for the selection process;
  - A list of items or material/object categories to be included in the preserved archive;
  - Identification of planned selection review points during the project;
  - References to standards, policies or guidelines and the rationale for any deviations from them, if applicable;
  - A description of the deselection procedure, including any quality assurance processes and risk management (e.g. the application of a sampling strategy);
  - The dates, rationale and stakeholders involved in any amendments to the original strategy;
  - A record of the deselected material. This may vary according to the type of material/object (and a concomitant assessment of the risks in their deselection, alongside ethical considerations). For each material or object category, the record should include:
    - Characterisation by material type
    - Characterisation by object type
    - Dates of disposal
    - A description of disposal methods
    - A description of the rationale for disposal
    - The names and roles of personnel carrying out disposal

- Deselected material should also be recorded within the archive, within existing indexes and catalogues where possible or new supporting documents. How deselection is recorded should be relevant to the type of material/object, e.g. it will be relevant to record the deselected bulk material by context, count and weight, but any deselected registered object should be recorded according to their object identifier.
- Textual description of deselected material is the minimum and can be enhanced with further recording, such as photographs and drawings, decisions may also be made to ensure material is fully analysed before deselection.

# 4. Permanent curation[7]

Curation is the process of ensuring that archive materials remain stable, secure and accessible in the long term. It is an ongoing process that ensures the integrity of an archaeological archive after the project has been completed, but the care of all archive components is a process that should start at the beginning of a project, from the point any documentation is created or material objects (finds) are collected. The stage of permanent care and curation, including the demands of the recipient repository, must be taken into consideration from the planning stage.

## 4.1. Cooperation with the recipient repository

**General rules**

- An archaeological project is not completed until the archive has been transferred to a repository that follows acknowledged best practice and meets the standards required by national, regional or local schemes for maintaining required levels of preservation, curation, care and access.
- Wherever they exist, international, national, regional, local and/or repository standards for archaeological archives and collections management should be followed.
- In terms of sustainability of the archive, a publicly funded repository should be the preferred facility for long term curation.

[7] Based on: Perrin et al. 2014.

- Regardless of whether national, regional or local laws or regulations dictate where the archive must go or not, the recipient repository, or repositories, should be identified and involved at the project outset.
- It is preferable for both the documentary and material archive to be curated in the same repository or at least, persistently interlinked.

**Planning stage**

- The repository curator must be consulted in order to ensure that the anticipated material and documentary archives are compiled in accordance with the repository's collection policy and specifications. The latter influences all the archiving procedures throughout the project (collecting, recording, temporary curation and transport).
- The selection strategy, including scope and methods of deselection, must be agreed with the recipient repository.
- When necessary, the curator must be involved in reviewing and amending the selection strategy.

**Data-gathering stage**

- The repository curator should be consulted when relevant revisions and amendments of the original selection strategy are required.

**Analysis, reporting and archive transfer stage**

- The project should follow the repository's requirements for deposition from the outset in order as far as possible to facilitate preparation for archive transfer.
- The repository curator should be consulted during final revision and modification of the selection strategy.
- Before the compilation of the preserved archive, a final archive assessment should be conducted in order to complete the selection process.
- It should be ensured that all documents relating to the selection strategy are included in the preserved archive when it is transferred to permanent storage.

## 4.2. Copyright and ownership

The title to the archive and issues over copyright are complex and specific to different countries/states. National, regional or local legislation in this regard influences archaeological archiving and more precisely, selection.

Regardless of specific regulations, copyright and transfer of title, where appropriate, should be clarified and agreed during the project planning stage. Bear in mind that even when the ownership of any part of the archive is automatically assigned to the State, some additional procedures may be required in order to ensure that the archive is legally deposited in a recipient repository.

Licensing agreements or equivalent forms of settling these issues must consider the possibility of re-use of archives for various purposes (online publication – where possible, scientific research, education, outreach etc.).

Failure to consider legal issues can cause inappropriate or uncontrolled deselection of an archaeological archive.

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# Annexes

## Annex I

| SELECTION STRATEGY CHECKLIST | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PROJECT PLANNING** | | |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Tick/Date** |
| **1** | Create a draft selection strategy in line with:<br>• Legal regulations<br>• Existing local, regional and national research strategies<br>• The aim and objectives of the project<br>• Requirements of the repository<br>• Other relevant documents (e.g. data management plan) | |
| **2** | Agree the selection strategy with relevant stakeholders, including the project initiator and the recipient repository. | |
| **3** | Decide with relevant specialists how uncollected material is to be recorded. | |
| **4** | Agree with the relevant stakeholders (e.g. heritage service, landowner, project manager, curator(s) and finds specialists) methods of disposal for deselected material. | |
| **5** | Formulate the selection strategy in writing (by completing a template or equivalent). | |
| **6** | Attach relevant supporting documentation to the selection strategy. | |
| **DATA-GATHERING** | | |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Tick/Date** |
| **7** | Ensure the project team is familiar with the selection strategy. | |
| **8** | Implement the selection strategy and monitor. | |
| **9** | Review the selection strategy and revise as appropriate. | |
| **10** | Agree revisions with relevant stakeholders. | |
| **11** | Carry out disposal of uncollected material. | |
| **12** | Document the implementation of the selection process | |
| **ANALYSIS, REPORTING AND ARCHIVE TRANSFER** | | |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Tick/Date** |
| **13** | Review the project archive in active use for selection taking into account specialist advice. | |
| **14** | Consult the curator of the recipient repository and agree final selection strategy. | |
| **15** | Compile the archive by final application of the selection strategy to the project archive in active use. | |
| **16** | Dispose of deselected material as described in the selection strategy. | |
| **17** | Transfer the preserved archive to the permanent repository | |

# Annex II

The following table presents lists the roles and responsibilities with regard to selection in an archaeological project. Bear in mind that one person can assume several roles in a project, which is why it lists the roles and not the individual stakeholders. The roles were devised as the most general possible so as not to be country specific. Depending on the legal system, the list of actual stakeholders may also include state or provincial heritage bodies, local authorities, landowners, etc. All members of the project team are responsible for implementing the selection strategy in every stage. Only responsibilities for the specific roles are therefore listed in the table.

The terms used are adopted from *A Standard and Guide to Best Practice in Archaeological Archiving in Europe* (Perrin et al. 2014); roles are defined in Annex III.

| SELECTION AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PROJECT PLANNING** | | |
| **No.** | **Responsibilities** | **Roles** |
| 1 | The project description must specify the necessity for a clearly defined selection strategy that takes account of local, regional and national research frameworks. | Project Initiator |
| 2 | Consider binding legal regulations when formulating a selection strategy. | Project Initiator |
| 3 | Consider the research aims and objectives of the project and the research potential of the archive when formulating a selection strategy. | Project Manager<br>Specialists |
| 4 | Consider the requirements of the archive repository and their collection policy when formulating a selection strategy. | Project Manager<br>Repository Curator |
| 5 | Archaeological practitioners should have consistent and well-established methods for the selection of documentary (including digital) material. These should be referred to in the project design/scheme of investigation. | Project Manager<br>Specialists<br>Digital Information Manager |
| 6 | If finds are expected, include in the project design a properly formulated selection strategy for finds that sets out a clear mechanism for deciding what should be included in the preserved archive and how other material should be dispersed. | Project manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Specialists |
| 7 | Agree the selection strategy, as part of the project design, with the project initiator and the repository curator. | Project Manager<br>Repository Curator |
| 8 | Set up a procedure for reviewing and amending the selection strategy that includes consultation with appropriate specialists. | Project Manager<br>Repository Curator<br>Specialists |
| 9 | If there is a material archive and it is decided that certain classes of material or types of object are not to be selected, appropriate measures for disposal must be agreed in advance with relevant stakeholders (e.g. owners of the finds or state heritage service, the repository curator, appropriate specialists). | Project Manager<br>Project Initiator<br>Repository Curator<br>Specialists |

| DATA GATHERING | | |
|---|---|---|
| **No.** | **Responsibilities** | **Roles** |
| 10 | Ensure all project personnel are familiar with the selection strategy. | Project Manager |
| 11 | Monitor the application of the selection strategy throughout the data-gathering phase in order to ensure it is being followed but also to identify any requirement for amendment; e.g. unexpected groups or configurations of finds or stratigraphy may lead to the selection of material that was initially identified for disposal. | Project Manager<br>Digital Information Manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Specialists |
| 12 | Amend the selection strategy in accordance with procedures agreed in project planning. | Project Manager<br>Project Initiator |
| 13 | Maintain a file selection procedure for digital data that manages the deletion of duplicate or superfluous files. | Digital Information Manager |
| **ANALYSIS, REPORTING AND ARCHIVE TRANSFER** | | |
| **No.** | **Responsibilities** | **Roles** |
| 14 | If there are finds, conduct an assessment of the material archive specifically for selection purposes. It is important to consult with the repository curator at this stage. | Project Manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Specialists<br>Repository Curator |
| 15 | The pre-analysis assessment stage of a project may inform the selection process, e.g. finds specialists, while assessing the potential of the assemblage, may identify items that should not be selected. | Project Manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Specialists |
| 16 | If there is a stage of finds analysis, the selection strategy should be maintained. If finds are re-identified (e.g. as a different material type) a secondary selection process may be required. | Project Manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Specialists |
| 17 | If you are producing documents, databases, spreadsheets, photographs or drawings, of analogue or digital type, ensure you exercise version control. This will inform the selection of material for archive; e.g. it may be useful to select for archive some draft versions of reports, to show how interpretations were developed. It is therefore important to indicate the order in which drafts were produced. | Specialists<br>Digital data manager<br>Graphic personnel |
| 18 | Conduct a final archive assessment to complete the selection of material for retention. | Project Manager<br>Finds Manager<br>Repository Curator |
| 19 | Ensure that project documentation accompanies the archive, such as recording systems and techniques, selection and sampling strategies, project designs, recording manuals etc. | Project Manager<br>Repository Curator |

# Annex III[8]

| DEFINITIONS OF ROLES RELEVANT TO SELECTION | |
|---|---|
| **Digital Information Manager** | The person within an archaeological project team who is responsible for managing the creation, security, viability, preservation and accessibility of digital data. |
| **Finds Manager** | The person responsible, during an archaeological project, for managing the materials (finds) collected, including cleaning, marking/labelling, packing, recording, storage and specialist liaison. |
| **Project Initiator** | The person who has identified the need for an archaeological project to be undertaken, will monitor the project outcomes but does not necessarily manage the project team. |
| **Project Manager** | The leader of the project team during an archaeological project, with responsibility for ensuring the aims are met, including the project archive is fully compiled and transferred to the archive repository |
| **Project Team** | All personnel working on an archaeological project. |
| **Repository Curator** | The person responsible for ensuring the preservation and accessibility of archaeological archives after they have been transferred to a repository for long-term care. |
| **Specialist** | Any person engaged in the collection or analysis of specialised information during the course of an archaeological project, for instance a specialist in palaeobotany or pottery studies. |

[8] After Perrin et al. 2014, 43.

# Annex IV

# Examples illustrating various aspects of selection in archaeological archiving

The following examples, collated by member of the EAC Working Group for Archaeological Archives, illustrate specific points from the *Guidance on selection in archaeological archiving*. Their order reflects the contents of the guidance.

## Example 1: Selection of archives in long-term curation:

ENGLAND: rationalisation of museum archaeology collections

This project was a response to the need for guidance for the rationalisation of museum archaeology collections and demonstrated rationalisation represents a repetition of activities that should be undertaken during the initial project and emphasises the importance of following a selection strategy during the project, to ensure the effective transfer of a finished archive to a repository. Rationalisation is the procedure of reducing the size of a museum collection in response to altered curatorial priorities, perhaps due to collecting area changes, or the reduction of duplicate holdings. In terms of an archaeological archive, rationalisation in a repository may be seen as an exercise in 'retrospective selection', to ensure that the materials collected from any individual project fit with current collecting policies. As a precursor to producing the guidance, Historic England funded five museums to undertake scoping studies into how they would approach rationalisation of their collections and what the outcomes might be. The chosen repositories represented a varied range of staffing levels, size and character of collections, and locations, whilst the collection issues they faced were representative of those across England. Participants were asked to audit their holdings, establish selection criteria, and to estimate the resources required to deliver rationalisation to its conclusion. They were also to calculate the amount of storage space that would be created and to reflect critically on the whole process. One of the outcomes was a demonstration of how costly retrospective selection is. Some of those costs were related to the age of the archaeological project archives, with associated issues of poor documentation, while there was also a need to employ material specialists, to resource time for curators to familiarise themselves with each archive (which, it should be stressed, seeks to replicate the degree of knowledge the original project team would have), as well as to document and undertake disposal. The documents can be found here: http://socmusarch.org.uk/projects/guidance-on-the-rationalisation-of-museum-archaeology-collections/

## Examples 2 and 3: Procedures for disposal of deselected material

SLOVAKIA: ammunition from before 1946

When an archaeological find is ammunition originating before 1946, it can be picked up only by a Police pyrotechnician. They are obliged to submit a notification of the pick-up of the find to the Regional Monuments Board within 30 days. The notification contains basic data on the place of the discovery, the type of the find as well as its photo documentation. The find itself is destroyed in controlled circumstances.

ENGLAND: Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service and the use of deselected material (by Deborah Fox).

Excavations in 2008, in advance of the construction of a new purpose built public and university library and base for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS), unexpectedly produced the most important body of archaeological evidence for Roman Worcester from any single excavation to date.

The excavation uncovered roads, quarry pits and buildings, including a large aisled hall, and an enormous collection of artefacts and bulk finds. A close working relationship between WAAS, the City Archaeologist and Museums Worcestershire enabled discussions regarding selection and retention to begin on site whilst the excavation was still ongoing and prior to the construction of the building, allowing us the opportunity to incorporate the story of this wonderful site into the building itself.

The material has been quantified and assessed and much will form the archive for curation by Museums Worcestershire but some finds, recorded on site, which would have been discarded have been incorporated into the structure of the new building. For instance, a number of features collectively produced tonnes of tertiary deposits of Roman iron slag, un-associated with its site of manufacture (Fig. 1). Roman Worcester (Vertis) was an important ironworking centre, supplied by ore brought up the River Severn from the Forest of Dean and consequently it's an incredibly common find through the city. A modest quantity of the discarded material was built into a panel of the building.

Other finds, of which a selection would be preserved in the archive but would arguably rarely be accessed or displayed and are robust enough to withstand the elements have also been built into the structure of the building. Decorative cast mouldings from the façade of the mid-19th century Nash's Almshouses, that once stood on the site, have been incorporated into the exterior of the building (Fig. 2) and a Roman grain drying oven has been reconstructed beneath the main internal staircase (Fig. 3).

These incorporated finds link the building to its site, they link the building's occupants, WAAS, to one of its primary functions and they allow a far wider access to the objects themselves by the general public.


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## Example 4: Selection strategy

CZECHIA: selection strategy for digital photo documentation

The Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Science, Prague (IAP), has developed a selection strategy for digital photography ensuring that a comprehensive, but streamlined photographic record is preserved. The directive (no. 6/2017) guides the amount of photographic documentation in field research, as well as defines the subjects that should be photographed. Its purpose is to ensure good practice in the field and to define clear strategy of selection during post-excavation processing, taking into account adequate documentation and the efficiency of the resources spent on data archiving. The directive reflects the fact that with the introduction of digital photography, the possibilities of field documentation have expanded and the selection of documentation for acquisition and archiving has become a separate task. However, it acknowledges that field research remains a creative research process and allows flexibility by ensuring the project manager has the responsibility to increase the recommended scope and number of photographs. Implementation of the directive resulted in lowering the number of redundant photographs transferred to the archive, allowed more detailed metadata descriptions, and enabled data curators to perform more effective control of the dataset content, hence leading to preference of quality and re-usability of the resulting archive over quantity.

**Recommendations**

1. Photographs showing the location of the site

An aerial image (if available), a view of the whole site from a high vantage point, etc.

Recommended number of images: up to 10 for the entire research.

2. Photos documenting the progress of the research

Documentation of the different stages of the research (e.g. equipment performing basic earthworks, preliminary survey, sampling trenches, excavation, sample processing, retrieval of finds in situ, etc.), specific equipment, problems caused by weather, project team, visits by experts and expert panels.

Recommended number of images: 5-20 per month of research, up to 50 for the whole research in one season.

3. Illustrative photographs of archaeological situations

Photographs indicatively showing the basic shape of objects and situations, the nature of fills, etc. Images that generally cannot be converted into a photo plan. The importance of these images lies in complementing the information in black-and-white drawings (colour, fill structure, etc.) and controlling them. It is pointless to take and archive images that contain no new information (e.g. individual mechanical layers by which a buried feature has been examined).

Recommended number of images: 1-5 per feature, situation, or relevant stratigraphic unit.

4. Photo supplementing drawing documentation

Photographs of situations (in floor plans or sections) showing the details more precisely, e.g. position of individual artifacts, arrangement of objects that cannot be faithfully captured by drawing, targeted documentation of colour and fill structure, capturing position of samples taken, etc.

Recommended number of images: 1-2 frames per relevant detail.

The number of images should be adjusted to the documented context. There may be no such details in some cases, but there may be more in larger and more complex features at different stages of the research (e.g. stone furnace before, during and after excavation; shapes of post-holes; container sunk into the floor; deposition of larger waste components on the floor, etc.).

5. Photos replacing drawing documentation

Photographs from which a photographic plan is compiled instead of drawing documentation, and the resulting photographic plan.

Recommended number of images and their archiving: All images that were the source of the photo plan must be preserved, but their appropriate repository is the institutional digital repository, not the AMCR Digital Archive (https://digiarchiv.aiscr.cz/). The resulting photo plan should be treated as a new image, intended to be included in the excavation report and archived.