

Appendix 1: Portsmouth History Centre Development Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025

A. Portsmouth History Development Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Why has this strategy been written?

This strategy is a response to long term developments in our work (including the evolving needs of our users, Portsmouth City Council's vision for the city, and guidance from The National Archives), and to how our ideas and awareness have developed during the pandemic.

1.2 How has this strategy been created?

The strategy has been developed in discussions between Portsmouth History Centre staff and other Library and Archive Service staff members, taking into account comments and reactions by members of the public as expressed in user surveys and comments in person and by email.

1.3 What will this strategy achieve?

The strategy will help us to deliver the aspirations set out in our Mission Statement (see Section 6 below) and give a focus to our work, as well as being a way to present ourselves to our users and others.

1.4 What are the timescales for this strategy?

This strategy is for the period 2022-2025.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Portsmouth History Centre

Portsmouth History Centre is part of Portsmouth Library and Archive Service, which is part of Portsmouth City Council.

Portsmouth History Centre has Accredited status under the National Archives' Accreditation scheme. (Accredited archive services are required to demonstrate that they continue to meet the Accreditation Standard in order to retain Accredited status).

Portsmouth History Centre is situated on the second floor of Portsmouth Central Library.

Portsmouth History Centre's collections consist of the Archive Collections, the Local Authors Collection, the Local Studies Collection, and the Naval Collection.

Four archive stores (one for frequently used archives, one for maps, and two for photographs and other audio-visual items) are also in the Central Library. The largest archive store is situated on the first floor of Southsea Library.

Archives stored at Southsea which are requested by members of the public are brought to Portsmouth History Centre by a regular van run.

A good proportion of the Local Authors Collection, the Local Studies Collection, and the Naval Collection are on the open shelves in the History Centre. The remainder, including any duplicate copies, are held in the stack in the basement store at the Central Library. A small number of items from all collections are kept in the glass cases at the History Centre. (Unless they are vulnerable for other reasons these tend to be the titles published before 1800).

These collections are all accessed at Portsmouth History Centre.

Collecting and preserving, and making accessible, are the two sides of managing our collections: making the collections available for people to enjoy without compromising their security and long-term preservation, so that future generations can benefit from them too.

2.2 The Collections

Archive collections have been described as 'the written memory' of a group or place. Our collections can only be 'the written memory of the people of Portsmouth' if the collections are fully inclusive of all the people here, in all their diversity. However, we are aware that our collections contain little or nothing about some groups and communities in the city.

2.3 Our Current Audiences

Our audiences include the people of Portsmouth and environs, visitors to the city, genealogists and other researchers all over the world. However, our users are almost all White British, and mostly in the 40-80 age group - we want to broaden the range of our users, so that they better reflect the whole range of Portsmouth's communities.

2.4 Our Volunteers

We value the contribution the volunteers make to the History Centre. They improve the service we offer by undertaking a range of tasks which staff do not have time to do. However, our relationship with our volunteers is very much 'win-win'. Some are gaining experience which will help them find employment or a place on a training course, some value the social contact and the opportunity to gain new skills and to be useful. Our volunteers are almost all White British and retired. We want our volunteers to be more diverse and to expand the range of tasks they undertake.

2.5 Working with others

We work with groups and organisations in the city, advising on keeping and caring for archives. We support projects operated by other groups and organisations, by helping researchers, offering training in Oral History, by

providing storage for and access to collections generated by these groups, and in other ways.

2.6 The Impact of the Pandemic

The Covid 19 pandemic disrupted the work of Portsmouth History Centre. Members of the public were unable to visit, and for some of the time staff were not able to work on background tasks and answer enquiries.

However, during the pandemic both staff and public have become more aware of the importance of online access, and this is now prompting us to explore how we can increase our presence online.

We want to become more 'outward facing', reaching into the community as well as welcoming those who already visit Portsmouth History Centre.

3. Horizon Scanning and Future Needs

Already our users expect access to information about the collections online, and to be able to see digital images of the collections. The pandemic has made us aware of our new online audiences. These trends are likely to continue and grow, as technology develops and more people become computer literate.

An online publicly available catalogue is essential to ensure that potential users all over the world can identify items we hold that may be essential for their research and interest. Many collections have not been fully documented; many of the earlier lists exist only in paper form. Many have yet to be input onto Spydus. However, increasingly, people expect everything to be available online, and we must respond to these new expectations.

We need to 'upskill' so that all Portsmouth History Centre staff are familiar with, and competent in, new technology, so that we can better respond to the needs of these new audiences.

4. Legal Requirements and Core Values

4.1 Legal Requirements

Portsmouth History Centre acquires material in accordance with a statutory framework which includes the following:-

Local Government (Records) Act 1962: enables all local authorities to promote the use of their records and empowered county and county borough councils to acquire records by purchase, donation or deposit

Local Government Act 1972 (section 224): places an obligation on 'principal authorities' to make proper arrangements for documents that belong to them or are in their custody

Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967: PCRO is recognised as a Place of Deposit under the Public Records Acts and acquires Public Records under the authority of the Acts

Manorial Document Rules 1959 and Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules 1960: PCRO is a designated place of deposit for manorial and tithe records and is a Historical Manuscripts commission Approved Repository

Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992): PCRO is designated by the Bishop of Portsmouth as the official place of deposit for records of parishes located in the deaneries of Portsmouth, Gosport, Havant and Fareham

4.2 Portsmouth History Centre Development Strategy and the 'Imagine Portsmouth 2040' themes

The Portsmouth History Development Policy will help us to deliver the 'Imagine Portsmouth 2040' themes:

In 2040 we believe in our community, our equality and our innovation. We believe in collaboration and respect.

In 2040 we want to be a healthy and happy city, a green city, a city rich in culture and creativity, with a thriving economy and easy travel, a city of lifelong learning.

We will contribute to these themes in various ways throughout the strategy, but especially in the following sections:

In Section 3 (Horizon scanning and future needs): Our community, our equality, our innovation; collaboration and respect. A healthy and happy city, a green city.

In Section 6 (How will you implement the strategy?): Our innovation

In Section 7 (What will success look like?): Our community, our equality, our innovation; collaboration and respect. A healthy and happy city, a green city, a city rich in culture and creativity, with a thriving economy and easy travel, a city of lifelong learning

5. Strategic Vision

Portsmouth History Centre's mission statement is:

Inspiring everyone to explore Portsmouth's archive heritage by collecting and preserving the records, stories, and collective memory of the people of Portsmouth, and enabling access to these unique records locally, nationally and internationally

To help to fulfil the mission statement, these are our aims:

- Our collections reflect all Portsmouth's communities
- Information about our collections is accessible to everyone
- Portsmouth History Centre is a place where everyone is welcome
- We use every opportunity we can to reach our audiences

6. How will you implement the strategy?

6.1 Financial considerations

The strategy will be delivered within existing budgets

6.2 Our collections reflect all Portsmouth's communities

We will:

- give time to identifying groups and communities which are under-represented in the collections. This will not be a one-off exercise, but rather an ongoing process, by which the collections will become more inclusive and representative.
- be proactive in attracting collections and other input from a wide range of communities, and undertake targeted collecting to address gaps in our collections
- advise communities who wish to retain their own collections on their care and safe storage

6.3 Information about our collections accessible to everyone

So that information about our collections can be accessed online, we will identify ways that catalogues can be entered on the Spydus catalogue by using trained staff and volunteers with the necessary skills. We will work with Civica to develop tools to import catalogues from existing Word documents. We will

- identify a priority list
- set targets for adding catalogues to Spydus and monitor this on a regular basis

6.4 A History Centre where everyone is welcome

Portsmouth History Centre should be a welcoming place for everyone. We will

- seek to encourage more people, and a wider range of people, to use the History Centre
- explore ways to make the History Centre welcoming to the casual visitor without compromising security
- reach into the community by developing our connections with organisations in the city, including schools, community groups and associations, and into residential homes for the elderly, and the University of Portsmouth, establishing new links and creating new ways for members of the public to discover Portsmouth History Centre

- organise events such as 'hackathons' (structured sessions where people use our collections to research, create a body of material/references, about particular groups and communities) to broaden our knowledge and awareness
- develop a wider range of roles for volunteers, including by building on our links with Portsmouth University so we can develop volunteer roles which would be relevant to students seeking work experience

6.5 Using every opportunity to reach our audiences

We will

- find imaginative and creative ways to promote and raise awareness of Portsmouth History Centre
- increase our understanding of our current users and non-users through a variety of evaluation methods, including surveys of library users, and our interactions with the people we meet through any of our activities
- host a broad range of displays covering a variety of topics
- develop the area on the landing outside Portsmouth History Centre, including the existing display area, as an introduction to Portsmouth's history which is accessible to everyone
- take archives into community settings with displays in branch libraries, community centres, shopping centres, etc.
- build on our existing presence on social media to promote Portsmouth History Centre imaginatively and creatively, and to attract new audiences
- use social media to showcase events and items from the collections, and identify potential new social media platforms
- put exhibitions online with the aim of reaching a wider audience
- deliver talks and workshops online as well as 'in person' on a wide range of subjects
- Work in partnership with Museums and Visitor Services and others within Portsmouth City Council and outside agencies as appropriate to deliver these activities

Exhibitions and talks, whether delivered at Portsmouth History Centre, in community settings, or on-line, will cover subjects such as:

- local and national themes, events and anniversaries, recent and longer ago;
- areas of the city;
- the anniversaries of important people and events;
- talks to contribute to local and national events;
- handwriting and other workshops
- on-line training for schools on finding out about the local area, using sources at Portsmouth History Centre, in ways that are relevant to the National Curriculum.

We will

- ensure that the staff have the relevant training and support to ensure that these exhibitions and talks are attractive and up to date.
- design our displays to attract and be accessible to all our city's communities

6.6 The Role of Volunteers

There are demands that the staff cannot fulfil with the constraints already on their time, such as one to one support in using genealogy databases. We will

- recruit people with this knowledge who could offer sessions
- offer fixed term placements to students, particularly those looking for a career in archives
- ensure that all volunteers have the support they need and find their role fulfilling

7. What will success look like?

During the period of the strategy,

- The number of collection catalogues online will grow: At least 100 existing Word or typescript catalogues will be added to the online catalogue each year. In addition, catalogues of at least 50 collections to item level will be added each year to the online catalogue. The number of uncatalogued collections will shrink commensurately.
- More and more communities will be represented in the collections, as we reach out to two groups or communities each year.
- Our users and volunteers will become more diverse to better reflect the diversity of our city as we reach out to these communities.

8. Date of this policy and when it will be reviewed

This policy was approved by Culture & Leisure Executive on The policy will be reviewed and submitted for approval in March 2026.

B. Operational Plan

	Lead officer	Action	Target date
A		Our collections reflect all of Portsmouth's communities	
A1	MG	Identify groups and communities which are under-represented in our collections, using one or more focus groups and other approaches	By end Mar 2022
A2	MG	Develop links with the groups and communities found to be under-represented in our collections: 2 groups or communities in 2022 2 groups or communities in 2023 2 groups or communities in 2024	6 groups or communities by end Dec 2024

A3	MG	Use our participation in the 'Portsmouth Black History' project to develop links with BME communities in the city.	By end Dec 2024
A4	MG	Use our participation in the 'Portsmouth Black History' project to raise awareness of the resources of Portsmouth History Centre among the other members of the group.	Ongoing
B		Information about our catalogues accessible to everyone	
B1	MG	Train PHC staff and volunteers to input catalogues onto Spydus	All staff trained by end Dec 2021
B2	MG	Agree a plan with timescales for inputting catalogues	By end Mar 2022
B3	MG	Train volunteers to do all future cataloguing on Spydus rather than on Word	From whenever volunteers return
C		Using every opportunity to reach our audiences	
C1	MG	Agree a plan for displays of archives (digital copies - or original items where security and the environment allow) in branch libraries and community centres etc.	By end Mar 2022
C2		Explore the viability of:	
C3	JP	Screens on the ground floor of Central Library, and at other libraries, with rolling displays of information about PHC and other facilities and services.	Research into the viability of these projects to be completed by end Mar 2022
C4	JP	Inter-active displays showing the development of particular areas of the city.	
C5	JP	Information boards or panels on the ground floor of Central Library, and at other libraries and community settings around the city, which show the range and depth of our collections.	
C6	MG	Develop a programme of sessions with older people in care homes and other venues to explore specific subjects	By end Mar 2022 and ongoing
C7	MG	Agree a plan for the preparation of talks to be delivered online, including talks for Explore Your Archives Week and Heritage Open Days	By end Sep 2021
C8	JP	All PHC staff to help to plan and deliver talks, displays and exhibitions, and to help to create new guides and leaflets	From Jan 2022
C9	MG	Conduct at least one user survey	By end December 2025
C10	JP	Contribute to other Library & Archive Service projects	Ongoing
D		Working with schools, families and children	
D1	MG	Work with the Portsmouth Education Partnership and local teachers to develop online training for schools about finding out about the local area, and/or the history of the school, using sources at Portsmouth History Centre	By end Jun 2022

D2	MG	Develop a regular programme of school visits to Portsmouth History Centre, tied to these schools visiting for other purposes	By end Jun 2022
D3	MG	We will need to examine the national curriculum in collaboration with the Schools Library Service and discuss this with local teachers to develop something useful to them.	By end Jun 2022
		Staff training and CPD	
E1	JP	All PHC staff to be given training so we can all use Spydus, Facebook, Twitter, etc. and post content	By end Jun 2022
E2	JP	All PHC staff to produce content for Facebook, Twitter etc.	Ongoing