

30-year rule

This was the rule relating to the standard period for the closure of public records under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. Its effect was that public records were open to public access after 30 years unless steps were taken to open them earlier, or to close them for longer periods. Since the Freedom of Information Act came into force on 01 January 2005, the 30-year rule is now redundant.

Accelerated opening

This was the process whereby public records were made available for public access in advance of the usual 30-year closure period via means of a Lord Chancellor's Instrument. Since the Freedom of Information Act came into force on 01 January 2005, accelerated opening is now redundant.

Accession

A collection of records constituting a whole dataset or part of a dataset transferred to NDAD at any one time.

Accompanying documentation

Documentation supplied by the transferring government department with the dataset to assist NDAD specialists in understanding and documenting the system/dataset; or Documentation of secondary importance to the dataset. Accompanying documentation is non-archive material and therefore is not catalogued, nor made available to the public. It may not be preserved permanently within NDAD. See also **Dataset Documentation, finding aids**.

Aggregation

One of the processes which may be carried out to prevent viewing of data which the transferring government department and/or TNA has designated as in any way sensitive and/or confidential. Summary forms of the data are produced which contain fewer records and/or less detail than the raw data. The data may, for instance, be averaged over a geographical area (such as a parish or census district) or over a time period. From 01 January 2005, this is done by invoking relevant FOI Exemptions.

Anonymisation

Process carried out to prevent viewing of any data which the transferring government department and/or TNA has designated as in any way sensitive and/or confidential. Anonymisation is carried out either by blocking display of certain fields (such as names, addresses or telephone numbers), or by producing summary forms of data. A summary form will contain fewer records and less detail than the raw data. The data may have been averaged over a small geographical area (such as a parish or census district) or over a small time period. From 01 January 2005, this is done by invoking relevant FOI Exemptions. See also **redaction**.

Application software

Software to perform functions for the users (such as Word Processing or a Payroll System) as distinct from systems software (such as the Operating System)

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| Catalogue descriptions | The description of record series, datasets and related documentation in finding aids prepared by NDAD. |
| Coded data | Data which are held in code form, where short sequences of letters or numbers are used to represent information in a database. An example is the use of single-letter codes to represent different types or classes of vehicle. NDAD needs explanations of the codes either in a separate computer file or on paper. |
| COM/Fiche Output to fiche (COM) | COM is the direct recording of computer output on to microfilm or microfiche. |
| Data dictionary | Details (often held online as part of, for instance, a database management system) of components of a system, including file and field names, characteristics, relationships and structure. |
| Data model/ structure | A data model is a graphical representation of the structure and relationships of the items of data (files, fields etc) within a system. |
| Dataset | A computer file or related set of computer files, and where applicable associated metadata (e.g. data dictionary) in digital form, which are organised under a single descriptive title and are capable of being described as a coherent unit in the Archive's finding aids. A dataset may comprise one or more accessions and may form part of a series of related datasets transferred to NDAD over time. As an example, in the case of an annual survey which is transferred to NDAD annually, a dataset would comprise all the data for one year's survey. For the purposes of transfer to NDAD, datasets are distinguished from digital documents which are provided by departments to assist in interpreting, or providing context to, a dataset. |
| Dataset documentation | Documents supplied with the Dataset which are deemed to be worthy of permanent preservation as archives e.g. survey forms, reports produced using the data. These documents could originate on paper and/or as computer files (see Digital documents). |
| Digital documents | Digital documents are documents that are stored on a computer. The documents may have been created on a computer, as with word-processing files and spreadsheets, or they may have converted into digital documents by means of document imaging. The term 'Electronic documents' is widely used by TNA and others and is now the preferred term for describing such documents within the Dataset Documentation Catalogues. Within the NDAD transfer process, references to digital documents cover material (which could just as easily be in paper form) sent with the dataset to assist in interpreting, or providing context to, the dataset; i.e. the term excludes the dataset itself and any accompanying metadata in digital form which was an integral part of the original system (such as a data dictionary). Digital documents would not have been part of (i.e. held as data within) the original computer system although they could include the system documentation (e.g. system specification, user manual etc). [In the case of a document management system, digital documents do constitute the data within the system but such systems are not normally intended for transfer to NDAD; they fall within the remit of The National Archives electronic records management programme]. |

Extended closure

The extension of the closure period of a public record beyond 30 years, in accordance with a Lord Chancellor's Instrument. Since the Freedom of Information Act came into force on 01 January 2005, the extended closure process no longer exists.

File

In computer terms, a file is a collection of information treated as a unit by the computer. A file will usually contain a related collection of records (e.g. customer file would contain information on all your customers. Each record, which would hold data about a particular customer, would consist of fields for individual data items, such as customer name, customer number, customer address). See also database.

File structure

This is used in the question on the Dataset Transfer Form (Data Owner) regarding "the overall file structure of the media on which the data will be transferred". It relates to the type of computer on which the file was written and any data storage/compression mechanism used.

Finding aid

Information (including but not limited to guides, catalogues and indexes) about the contents, context and structure of a dataset for use by users of NDAD.

Freedom of Information Act

After 01 January 2005, all datasets transferred to NDAD are assumed to be open to the public when transferred. Closure or redaction of a dataset will only take place if relevant FOI Exemptions are invoked. This replaces the 30 year closure rule, and the system of accelerated opening and/or extended closure by means of Lord Chancellor's Instruments.

Lord Chancellor's Instrument

A legal instrument whereby the Lord Chancellor (exercising powers under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967) reduces or extends the statutory 30-year closure period of a public record. Since the Freedom of Information Act came into force on 01 January 2005, this is now redundant.

Mark sense forms / reader

Optical mark recognition: method of data capture used where a user can choose from a finite and predictable set of responses, for instance multiple choice examination questions, by making a mark in a particular position on the form. A current application is the National Lottery tickets. An OM (Optical Mark) reader reads and interprets the marks on the page.

NDAD reference

As part of the finding aid, NDAD allocate a unique alphanumeric code to every single dataset, and to every single dataset document. Series Catalogues and Administrative Histories are also identified by unique NDAD references. Do not confuse this element with the TNA Series Number.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

A process which takes an image and turns it into editable text. OCR scanning differs from image scanning in that although both accept a printed document as input, OCR identifies each character and creates an output file which can be used by, for instance, a word processing package. Image scanning results only in a 'picture' of the document.

Onscreen forms

A data entry screen formatted to ask for specific items of data and operated online i.e. data entry taking place with the operator communication directly with the computer.

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| Operating system | The set of programs which tell the machine how to perform actions, enabling it to run applications and to interface with peripherals and users. Examples of operating systems are DOS, Windows, UNIX, VMS, and VME. |
| Pen plots [or] Plotters | Graphical output of data items using computer-controlled pens. Output of this form is typically limited to line drawings, graphs, maps etc. |
| Piece number | The reference assigned by The National Archives to a document within a TNA Series. |
| TNA series number | A reference assigned by The National Archives to a series of records. Series numbers are assigned by TNA to datasets and related documentation which are transferred to NDAD. TNA Series numbers are included in NDAD catalogues but are not used by NDAD for reference purposes; NDAD has a distinct system of references for datasets and related documentation in its holdings (see NDAD reference). |
| Punched card | A cardboard rectangle used for entering data into a computer or other machine and for storing data. A standard Punched Card held rows of 80 characters of data coded as a series of holes punched in columns on the card. These holes were 'read' by a card reader which sensed which holes had been punched out in each column and translated the column dots into machine-readable character codes. |
| Redaction | Process which may be carried out to prevent viewing of data/parts of documentation which the transferring Government Department and/or TNA has designated as in any way sensitive and/or confidential. It includes anonymisation, i.e. blocking the display of certain fields such as names, addresses or telephone numbers. From 01 January 2005, this is done by invoking relevant FOI Exemptions. |
| Registered file | A collection of documents, relating to a particular subject or having some other common characteristic, which are created or stored by a government department in the course of its business and are therefore public records. The file is controlled by the Registry responsible for the papers produced by the Department; the DRO has overall responsibility for registered files from the time they are created through review until their destruction or transfer to TNA. |
| Source code | The code written in a high-level computer language by programmers or code generators, to be subsequently translated by the compiler. |
| Transfer | This term is used to cover the various steps involved in transferring a dataset to NDAD. |
| Transfer form | A listing of materials (data, documents etc) being transferred in batch to NDAD. This would usually include the title of the material and inclusive dates of materials held therein. |