

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Legal Records at Risk

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10 February 2016

No longer sustainable...

This is a recent “donation” of solicitors’ records to a local archives....

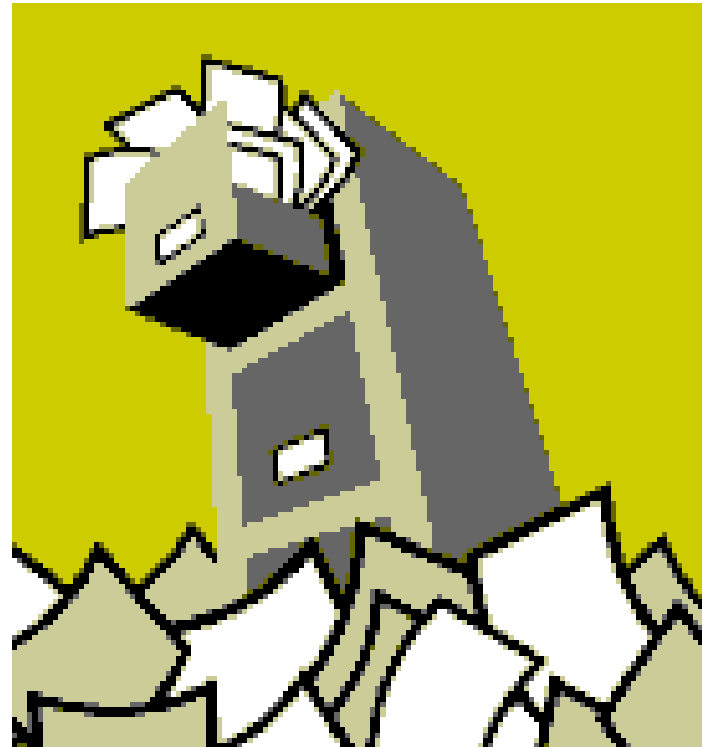
The records were in an appalling condition but because they were at risk the archives accepted them.

Other record offices advise that they can’t afford to carry out this kind of rescue service in future.



No longer practical....

The British Records Association can no longer afford to act as a free warehouse facility for the unwanted records of law firms



No longer required to keep....

The Solicitors' Regulation Authority now has legal authorisation to destroy all 500,000 cartons of records (and born-digital material) of intervened firms held in its Coventry warehouse



No longer accessible...

The SRA and the Council for Licensed Conveyancers can't access many of the born-digital records of intervened firms.

So they can't assess their importance either for ex-clients or for potential researchers



Not interested...

We have contacted the 10 major London Law Firms (twice), plus 23 other institutions specialised to law (ISLs)..

- We have had three positive responses..
- Two negative responses...
- And no response at all from the rest!

Auctioning of legal records;
confidential records left in skips,
mouldy records...still happening..



The Legal Records at Risk Project

Will identify - and facilitate the rescue of - legal records of potential value which may be at risk through globalization, digital obsolescence, neglect, lack of interest or lack of resources to preserve and provide access to the records.



How? By...

- Publishing examples of best practice or horror stories
- Raising awareness among legal information owners of their recordkeeping responsibilities
- Working with ISLs to encourage better management of legal records
- Working with the research community to identify their needs plus gaps in provision
- Working with the archives community to seek practical solutions to resourcing issues

What's the benefit?

For ISLs and researchers

- Helping ISLs to identify and better manage their records
- Bringing ISLs with records of value together with relevant repositories
- Lobbying for ISLs to pay their fair share of the transfer process/ creating a charging model
- Enhancing research access to legal records of value

For archives

- Working towards a co-ordinated and cost effective legal records transfer process
- Working with archives, libraries and research institutions on developing digital archiving models for born-digital records of value
- Seeking funding for, eg, consultant archivists to undertake on-site appraisal and listing prior to transfer

How can you help?

- A co-ordinated records rescue strategy, bringing together all relevant parties
- A database of records at risk
- A peripatetic pool of archival specialists
- Digital continuity/archiving guidance
- Aggressive outreach to the private sector on the benefits of/necessity for information management
- Advice on/help with funding