

## Lothian Health Services Archive Fact Sheet 6: Cataloguing



### What is cataloguing?

Cataloguing archive collections involves creating standardised descriptions so that their contents can be easily identified and accessed by users. Such descriptions cover whole collections, series of records and individual items. Ideally, all archive collections should be catalogued to item level, but this is rarely possible in practice as cataloguing is a very time-consuming process. However, cataloguing is extremely important as without it, collections are rendered inaccessible.

### LHSA Catalogues

In 2002 manually-typed Lothian Health Board handlists created during the 1980s-90s were replaced with machine-readable versions. These now include significant amounts of new material listed to collection, series and item levels.

LHSA's collection catalogues are available to browse on paper or electronically via our website ([www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk](http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk)). Paper copies are available at LHSA and also at the National Register of Archives (Scotland), West Register House, National Archives of Scotland.

The LHSA website allows you to view and search individual collection catalogues in pdf format. You can also search collection summaries (top level ISAD(G) finding aids). These summaries also appear on other national web sites, such as the Archives Hub, and the Scottish Archive Network. (Further information about these can also be found on the Online Resources Fact Sheet 7.)

Around 90% of all the LHBs (hospitals and NHS administrative bodies) are catalogued to item level and approximately 90% of the GDs (gifts and deposits from organisations and individuals) are also catalogued, half to item and half to series levels.

Since 1999, a larger number of records have been accessioned than in any period previously. This is a direct result of the reorganisation of the Lothian trusts, divisions and hospitals, which commenced in 1994 and is still on-going. The majority of these accessions now require cataloguing. The LHBs are given priority in order that they can be included in the Board's FOI Publication Scheme as information/records that are reasonably accessible. (See Fact Sheet 2 for further details.)

LHSA's other main collections are case notes, photographs, objects and the printed reference collection. The case notes have been listed to series level as a result of the externally-funded *Finding the Right Clinical Notes* project, which ran from January 2000 to July 2002. However, there are no item level catalogues for them, which would enable individual patients to be identified. The *Scottish Cultural Resource Access Network* project, also externally funded, has enabled us to mount c.1,500 digitised and captioned photographic images on their web site. (See Fact Sheet 7 for details of these and other non-NHS funded projects.) These make up a small percentage of LHSA-held photographs (c.40,000 still images). Apart from an incomplete and outmoded manual card index, there

are no other finding aids (catalogues) as such. Descriptions of LHSA objects and the most frequently used books, official publications, pamphlets and grey literature which comprise the reference sections are recorded in databases, which primarily serve as finding aids for LHSA staff rather than users.

To summarise, more than 25 years of archival labour have gone into producing a variety of LHSA catalogues. The development of web-based versions has improved access. However, more work will be required to improve our descriptions, extend coverage throughout the entire Archive and also take full advantage of new web-based search technologies.