

Archive Services: partnerships with businesses to explore their heritage

The Scottish Business Archive - supporting business to secure its heritage

One of the largest collections of business records world wide, the Scottish Business Archive at the University of Glasgow represents the business interests of Scotland from the eighteenth century to the present. The collections reflect the contribution and breadth of activity that Scotland's business, industry and enterprise has made, and continues to make, to the world economy.

The Scottish Business Archive offers services to the Scottish business community, providing a corporate archive service. We work closely with the Business Archives Council of Scotland to offer advice and support to business on the management of information resources, and provide an off-site archive management service for heritage resources. This service offers business an alternative option for the professional management of its archives which minimises investment in property and staff.

The management service provides business with a secure, environmentally controlled storage space, coupled with professional management services. These include appraisal, arrangement and cataloguing of archives, and enquiry services, both remote and searchroom services, for the business and members of the public. We can also offer research services - for in-depth research into company archives for particular projects, survey services - to locate company records across premises and advice on the exploitation of heritage assets.

A number of management models are in place to ensure the service meets the needs of individual businesses. These include the long-term deposit of records, whereby the business retains ownership of its archive, and gifts, where ownership of the records is passed to the University. Current clients include drinks companies, engineering firms, financial businesses, and retailers.

By depositing their archives with the Scottish Business Archive, businesses are contributing to the nation's heritage and cultural assets. Whilst it is rooted in the industrial concerns of the west of Scotland such as shipbuilding, railway locomotive manufacture, and textiles the Scottish Business Archive has grown to cover almost all types of business and industrial activity in Scotland and the UK.

The 400 collections represent 1,000 companies, from banking, confectioners and distillers to retail, solicitors and undertakers. With such wide representation of Scotland's business interests, the Scottish Business Archive has a reputation according to the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts as "a centre of excellence for its collecting and scholarly activity in the field of business records" and is the record of Scotland's business and industrial heritage.