

Report on the application of the Public Records (Jersey) Law 2002 for 2006

2006

The financial constraints on the Jersey Heritage Trust brought about by the three-year funding agreement with the Committee for Education Sport and Culture (ESC) continued to have a direct effect on the Archivist's work and the work of the Archive staff in respect of the Law to be circumscribed. Thus staff continue to take in archival public records and make them publicly available; otherwise they are only reactive to enquiries for advice about the retention and disposal of documents.

Modern records and archival public records

Modern records

Few enquiries were made in 2006. However there was a significant one, made by the Head of Administration in ESC regarding the retention of school records. As a result of this request, the Archivist and her Senior Archivist met ESC colleagues and representatives of the Health and Probation departments (these departments also have records relating to children) to discuss the retention periods for school records. This work has been constructive and is on going.

The Archivist commented on the draft Freedom of Information (FOI) Law in June 2006. A Freedom of Information Law as proposed in that draft would effect changes to the Public Records Law. The Archivist agreed that there is a clear need to ensure the three laws cited in the proposed law (FOI, Data Protection and Public Records) are aligned and create a workable and appropriate framework for the management of information and its release.

Archival public records

The Jersey Heritage Trust delivered its responsibilities under the Public Records Law in 2006. Deposits of archival public records at Jersey Archive in 2006 continued steadily including substantial deposits from Transport and Technical Services and the first deposit of records from the parish of St Lawrence, bringing the number of deposited parishes to ten. As usual, the entire archives team has spent a great deal of its time processing these archives so that they are fit for storage in the secure repositories. The Archivist and the Senior Archivist also made a number of visits to the parish hall in St Ouen to survey the St Ouen records. The transfer of the St Ouen archival public records will be made when primary research in the parish archives is completed for the proposed history of St Ouen.

As many archives as possible have been catalogued so that they can be accessed by the public but the cuts to the service in November 2004 meant that the cataloguing backlog for all records at Jersey Archive grew from eight to twelve years with the loss of one archivist. In 2006 the backlog of uncatalogued records grew to eighteen and a half years. Uncatalogued records that should be available are not as a result of the backlog.

Records Advisory Panel

The Records Advisory Panel met in March, June, September and December in 2006. The Archivist is grateful for the continued support and practical advice offered by the Panel.

Funding

In the last quarter of 2006, as the result of the Archivist's annual report on the Public Records Law for 2005, various States bodies including the Corporate Management Board reviewed the funding available to the JHT for its work at the Archive in respect of the Law.

The Corporate Management Board did not agree to fund the proposed initiative to employ a public records manager and offered the alternative suggestion that the Archivist should write to all the accounting officers of the States departments

- to advise them of the nature and impact of the risk to States business if records and information are not managed well;
- confirming the services that may be provided through the Jersey Archive
- indicating the cost for the provision of those services.

At the end of 2006 the Archivist conducted a brief consultation by email with the Public Records Officers (PROs) of the departments to find out what progress had been made in their departments with working under the law and especially the development of retention schedules. In following up the Corporate Management Board's alternative suggestion identified above she will pick up the departmental responses to her email survey.

Sue Groves
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Jersey Heritage Trust
August 2007

Appendix A

Archival public records transferred from Departments and public institutions in 2006:

23 accessions were received from public bodies (includes departments, parishes and utility companies) under the Public Records Law. They amount to 17 cubic metres of records, the equivalent of 100 metres of shelves.

Chief Minister's Department
Customs and Immigration Department
Jersey Telecom
Judicial Greffe
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Parish of St John
Parish of St Lawrence
Parish of St Mary
Rural Economy
St Clement's School
States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service
States of Jersey Meteorological Department
States of Jersey Treasury
Transport and Technical Services Department