

Access Policy

Background

BT Archives preserves the records of BT and its predecessors and promotes access to the records and their content, internally as a corporate resource and externally to national and international communities.

BT Archives serves multiple communities:

- BT people (staff, contractors and pensioners)
- General public
- Educators and students
- Subject enthusiasts
- Heritage specialists

BT Archives aims to meet the needs of each group as far as current resources allow. We recognise that there are many overlaps between the different communities, often to the advantage of our access objectives.

BT Archives' Access Policy is developed to balance the principles of access, confidentiality and collection care. This is to ensure compliance with legislation and archival standards, and to guarantee the existence of materials for future researchers.

This policy outlines our approach to public access. BT Archives also provides a comprehensive research and access service to people across BT Group.

Legislation

BT Archives aims to identify and comply with relevant legislation and ethical codes in relation to access to archives, including:

- Public Records Acts 1958 as amended
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Companies Act 2006 and predecessors

Standards

BT Archives aims to meet the following standards on access:

- National Council on Archives, Public Services Quality Group, *Standard for Access to Archive* (2008)
- International Council on Archives, *Principles of Access to Archives*, 2012

BT Archives is committed to providing excellent customer care to all our communities. All our people have access to BT's customer service training and resources.

Access to Records and Closure Periods

In all cases, access to records will be provided in accordance with data privacy law or regulation.

Pre-Privatisation Records

BT Archives' collections include material of BT and its predecessors up to 6 August 1984 (the date BT became a private company). Such records are legally defined as Public Records, and BT has a statutory responsibility to make them available to the public under the Public Records Act 1958 as amended.

BT Archives will make public records available free of charge in its search room (defined opening hours; appointment required) and online for its digitised content.

Post-Privatisation Records

Public access to documents that are not public records (i.e. those created after BT's privatisation in 1984) and that are more than 30 years old, may be permitted at the discretion of the Head of Heritage & Archives, with reference to other areas of the business as appropriate.

Reproduction

Users are able to make or obtain copies of public records within the guidelines of BT Archives reprographic policy. Information on copying charges and services is available on our website and in our search room.

Any copies that are made of material in the BT Archives (whether photocopies, digital images or any other form of copying) must be used only for the personal study of the researcher. They may not be published, circulated or reproduced in any way unless permission has been granted by BT Archives.

On-site Access

BT Archives welcomes external parties to undertake research using the archive collections in its dedicated search room.

Details of our location, services and facilities are published on our webpage www.bt.com/archives. We will provide adequate notice of planned closures on our website and directly to researchers.

The search room provides an appropriate and comfortable environment for access to archival material.

The search room is open to everyone although visitors under 14 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Wheelchair users are accommodated by prior arrangement.

BT Archives will have helpful, knowledgeable trained people on duty and will provide speedy and reliable retrieval of documents ordered from its stores.

Finding aids are available in the search room.

BT Archives provides facilities to access material in all media in the search room, including:

- Microfilm and microfiche readers
- Viewing/listening facilities for film and sound recordings
- Viewing facilities for digital surrogates
- Dedicated space to consulting maps, patents and other outsize documents

In order to safeguard our collections, all visitors to the search room are required to show photographic identification, complete a Visitor Record form and abide by the regulations and guidance on display in the search room. Any visitors consulting post-privatisation records will need to complete a separate access form and abide by additional rules.

Users must handle the archive material in a sensitive and careful manner. They must take care to retain the archives in the order in which they are found. Under no circumstances may any archive material be removed by a researcher from BT Archives.

Users can photograph records themselves using their own cameras, after paying for a camera licence. We also provide a self-service photocopier and microfilm/fiche printers.

Documents will not usually be made available to external researchers prior to the completion of cataloguing.

Where documents are deemed unfit for production, they will be temporarily withdrawn while remedial conservation action is sought.

Remote Access

BT Archives recognises that not all current and potential users can come to our search room.

Trained archive staff will provide free information on our holdings by telephone, email and post.

BT Archives will undertake straightforward enquiries including identification of potential sources within the collections, but does not carry out research on behalf of external parties

Enquiries will be answered in accordance with the Public Records Acts and Data Protection legislation.

BT Archives does not have the resources to provide a paid research service, but will refer researchers to published lists of Independent Researchers e.g. on The National Archives website.

Web Publishing

BT Archives is committed to making as much information about collections as possible freely available online.

We seek to take an innovative approach to new technologies and to work with different partners to create online digital resources.

- Summary collections information and subject information sheets are available on our website www.bt.com/archives
- Our archive catalogue can be accessed online via BT Digital Archives, where remote users can also view and download digitised photographs and documents from our collections www.bt.com/btdigitalarchives

- A selection of our film titles are available to watch at www.btplc.com/Thegroup/BTsHistory/BTfilmarchive/home/
- Thousands of our technical diagrams are available on the Telecommunications Heritage Group Resource online Archive www.thgr.org.uk/
- BT phone books (1880-1984) can be searched on Ancestry www.ancestry.co.uk

Exhibitions and Loans

See Collections Management Policy.

Measuring Success

BT Archives monitors website traffic (page views, visits and catalogue searches) for www.bt.com/archives and www.bt.com/btdigitalarchives .

We record visitor and enquiry figures.

Review

The Access Policy is reviewed every five years or earlier if needed.