



PRESERVATION POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Preservation underpins all aspects of the work of Northumberland Archives from appraisal of record for deposit, storage conditions, packaging, conservation, reprography, staff training to Study Centre procedures. Our aim is to follow best practice in our own work and in the guidance that we provide to our own Authority, our depositors and to any authorities or organisations that we offer advice or support to.
- 1.2 We aim to conform to BS EN 17820 : 2023 Specification for the Management of Cultural Heritage Collections, and to BS4971:2017 Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections. We aspire to achieve best practice as laid out in Benchmarks In Collections Care published by Re:source in 2002.
- 1.3 Preservation issues relating to handling and insurance are referred to in our deposit agreement – a copy of which is available to view on our website.

2. Storage

- 2.1 An assessment of the physical condition of all accessions is made prior to their location in the strongrooms. Guidance for the cleaning, handling and re-packaging of records is set out in our Procedure For The Preservation of Archives. Where physical conservation of records is required this is noted in our CALM database and a conservation priority (high, medium or low) is allocated to the item. Guidance on the designation of this grading is set out in our CALM Cataloguing Manual.

- 2.2 All new accessions are re-packaged in conservation grade materials. We have a re-packaging programme for older accessions. Staff are trained in document handling and packaging techniques and written guidance forms part of our procedural manual.
- 2.3 Our strongrooms are temperature and humidity controlled to meet BS 4971: 2017 – Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections. Monitors to the exterior of the strongrooms at Woodhorn provide constant temperature and humidity readings and data from the Building Management System (BMS) at Woodhorn which is tabulated to provide twice daily reports of readings. Occasionally spot checks of readings at various locations within the strongrooms are taken to supplement this information. The temperature and humidity within the strongroom at Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office are recorded on a TINYTAG digital datalogger and handheld thermohygrometer. These records are retained for 5 years.
- 2.4 The strongrooms are kept in an ordered and tidy fashion. The air conditioning, climate monitoring equipment, fire detection systems and security systems are all regularly monitored and maintained.
- 2.5 The strongrooms have been designed to allow the most effective storage for different physical formats of documents. One member of staff has responsibility for allocating storage to all collections and for ensuring that locations are recorded within our Locations Spreadsheet.

3. Conservation

- 3.1 Many records in our custody are in a poor physical condition and we have limited funding available to address this. As records are catalogued the archivist identifies any need for conservation work and allocates a priority to this work (see 2.1). In recent years our own budget for conservation has been supplemented by generous support from depositors and external grants. We will continue to seek this support.
- 3.2 We currently do not have our own in-house conservation team. Our conservation work is currently undertaken by professionally trained

conservation staff at Durham County Record Office and by Riley, Dunn & Wilson.

- 3.3 All conservation work is undertaken in compliance with BS4971:2017 - Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections. Records of all conservation treatments are maintained.
- 3.4 Frequent handling of records can lead to deterioration in their physical condition. We try to alleviate this by digitising well-used sources and making digital surrogates available to view via our electronic catalogue. We aim to digitally copy all photographic collections after cataloguing and where copyright allows these digital copies are embedded in our online electronic catalogue. Selected items from manuscript based collections are digitised at point of cataloguing and made accessible virtually.

4. Document Handling And Transportation

- 4.1 All new staff are trained in appropriate document handling and written guidance on document handling and packaging techniques forms part of our Collections Manual.
- 4.2 Owners wishing to withdraw documents for display or for any other purpose are provided with written guidance on storage and handling.
- 4.3 Our Study Centre is supervised at all time and staff are vigilant in ensuring that records are handled appropriately and with respect. Book supports, weights etc. are available to our users and staff provide guidance on usage. Our visual introduction to using the Study Centre at Woodhorn provides guidance on document handling.

5. Public Use

- 5.1 Where surrogates exist, we expect users to consult these. We continue to build up a bank of surrogates via our digitisation programme and by actively seeking external funding for digitisation projects.
- 5.2 We issue guidance on the format, size and physical condition of documents that may be photocopied for users. If the document does not fulfil these criteria we can provide a charged for digital copy as an alternative. If the

physical condition of the document does not allow this, the item will be placed within our conservation programme.

- 5.3 We encourage our users to make effective use of our paper-based and virtual finding aids. We monitor usage of our online electronic catalogue and are developing a strategy to increase usage of this. Effective use of finding aids prevents unnecessary usage of documents.

6. Digital Preservation

- 6.1 We are committed to ensure the digital preservation of born digital records deposited with us.
- 6.2 We have undertaken a programme to work to extract historic deposits of digital records from general storage, have placed them in our digital store and ingested content to PRESERVICA.
- 6.3 All new digital deposits are accessioned and added to our digital preservation programme.
- 6.4 Details of our digital preservation programme and procedures can be found in our Digital Preservation Policy.

7. Disaster Plan

- 7.1 We have a Disaster Plan for each of our offices. The Plan is updated regularly. Staff are trained in the actions to take should an emergency situation occur.
- 7.2 We have Disaster Boxes in each service point. Staff are aware of their location and our disaster training includes training on the use of the contents of the boxes.
- 7.3 We subscribe to the HRDS Priority Users Services Scheme.

Created: June 2007

Reviewed: June 2010

Reviewed: Oct. 2016

Reviewed: Nov. 2019.

Reviewed: June 2024.