

Collections conservation & preservation management policy

Aim & purpose

The University of Huddersfield Archives & Special Collections Service aims to collect and preserve material relating to the University of Huddersfield and its predecessors; to those organisations, families and individuals which have a direct connection with the University and/or its predecessors; and that material with a curriculum or research relevance to the University. It also aims to make this material available for use by members of the public.

This collections conservation and preservation management policy and accompanying strategy focusses on the long-term needs of the holdings in the fulfilment of this aim. It will assist in decision making and prioritising work in a range of circumstances, including:

- Providing access to the holdings which is balanced with their long-term preservation;
- Day to day preservation work on the holdings by staff;
- Annual conservation work which is outsourced;
- Tasks undertaken by volunteers;
- The submission of funding bids with a preservation aspect;
- Improvements to physical or digital storage facilities;
- The development of new accommodation;
- Mitigating the risk of an event disastrous to the holdings (fire, flood, pest/mould infestation), and, exceptionally, in disaster recovery.

Scope of the policy

Preservation is the actions enabling the materials in the holdings – either the physical media themselves or the information they contain – to be retained indefinitely. The holdings are kept by the Service “for posterity” and use by researchers both in the present and in the future.

Preservation is a wide-ranging term which encompasses

- managerial and financial considerations such as storage and accommodation, staffing levels and policies;
- physical storage facilities and environment;
- managerial and administrative procedures and decisions affecting how items are stored, and how & how often they are used;
- physical processes of repairing individual items through specialist conservation treatments;
- physical processes of reformatting including the creation of surrogate copies, through microfilming, photocopying, and digitisation.

Preservation is a responsibility for which the staff take the lead, but which is a responsibility shared by all researchers of the collections. Preventive preservation activities underpin every activity that takes place in the Service, and need explicitly to be incorporated into day to day work.

Note that this policy excludes University of Huddersfield records in the care of Schools, Campuses and Services until those selected for permanent preservation as archives are transferred to the permanent holdings of the Archives & Special Collections Service.

The holdings

Scope

The materials held by the Service are complex artefacts, and whilst the medium is important to the message (with the exception of digital materials), the message or information content is of paramount importance. In the case of digital materials, medium and message are intrinsically linked in a way not found with other formats. Generally, although the medium is of secondary importance to the information content, effective preservation of the original medium is the most cost-effective way of securing the long-term preservation of the message. Preservation activities must therefore encompass both media and format

The materials held are of a range of basic media, including

- manuscript on parchment;
- manuscript on paper;
- typescript or electrophotographically processes on paper;
- conventionally printing processes on paper;
- one-layer photographic materials (eg. daguerreotype);
- two-layer photographic materials (eg. albumen prints, wet collodium glass plate negatives, gelatin dry glass plate negative);
- three-layer photographic materials (eg. gelatin printing-out/developed-out papers, collodion printing papers);
- magnetic tape;
- digital.

In addition to these media, the format (or manner of arrangement, such as bound volume, folded paper, CD-ROM) will involve some or all of the following physical processes or products which bring a mix of media:

- pigments in inks, bindings, endpapers, and seals;
- adhesives including “Scottish” glue, starch paste, PVA, indiarubber-based;
- bindings of a combination of materials including wood, millboard, leather, buckram, vellum, bookcloth, bleached or unbleached linen/calico/cotton;
- card mounts and frames (usually metal or wood);
- wax seals (of 3 main kinds);
- seals of other materials including lac/shellac, lead, gutta-percha.

Sizes vary, as does the quality of materials dependent on the manufacturing process. The greatest range of quality is that of the holdings on paper, varying from highly acidic newspaper to good quality paper with an alkaline buffer. The longevity of parchment, photographic materials and magnetic media will also be heavily influenced by the quality of the original manufacturing process, in particular the proper removal of acids and other chemicals.

Significance

The significance of the holdings to the University, to the region and nation derives primarily from their status as primary sources. The majority of archival records held by the Service are unique and irreplaceable archival records, or rare published or unpublished items. A Statement of Significance of those collections held at March 2013 is contained within the Collections Conservation Management and Maintenance Plan 2013-23.

The composition and growth of the holdings is managed through the Acquisition Policy (last reviewed 2011). Documentation providing intellectual and physical control is managed through the Documentation section of the Access Policy (2011) and by the Collections Information Policy (2014).

Extrinsic & intrinsic threats

The holdings are at risk from a range of threats of which the risk must be mitigated or minimised, or the threat actively combated or removed.

Extrinsic threats include

- fire
- flood
- atmospheric pollution
- insect & mould infestation
- theft
- vandalism
- poor handling

Intrinsic threats are those inherent in the media themselves. “As a generalisation, the greater the storage density of the medium, the more sophisticated is the equipment needed to access the information stored, and the shorter the life of that medium”¹

Retention

Preservation aspects of acquisition and retention are covered in the Service Acquisition Policy (2011).

Security

As far as possible, the Service works to implement the recommendations of BS 5454:2000 *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents* (which also encompasses Special Collections collections).

All items removed from storage areas are logged using two-part request slips, one which remains with the item and the other on the shelf marking the location. Removal of items from repositories is also logged. After shelving, the top copy of the request slip is permanently retained in reference number order if required for audit purposes.

An annual stocktake will include an audit of a sample of material removed from storage areas.

Access to secure storage areas is restricted to Service staff, or others accompanied by Service staff.

Building and environment

The primary physical measure to protect and preserve archival collections is the creation and maintenance of a suitable archive storage repository which conforms to the optimum quality recommendations set out in BSI PD5454:2012 *Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials*. In line with PD5454, the environment for storage and display of the collections has been specified and will be reviewed by an assessment of risks, significance, nature and condition of archives, and energy use for environmental management, as set out in *PAS198:2012 Specification for the Management of Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections*.

¹ Harvey, R. (1993) “Preservation”, in *Keeping Archives* ed. Ellis, J. Port Melbourne, Australia: Australian Society of Archivists, pp.74-107.

To ensure that the new repositories continue to meet PD5454 and emerging standards, the following measures will be taken:

- i. An annual review of conservation standards, covering security, fire protection, emergency preparedness and environmental control of storage and areas where archives are used;
- ii. A collection care action plan will be drawn up based on survey data and following a Benchmarks in Collection Care survey in its new premises, within which targets and actions will be reviewed quarterly, and set within the annual and periodic budget review to prioritise resources;
- iii. Continuous monitoring of temperature and humidity levels and annual inspection of lux and ultra-violet light levels in the storage and research rooms, using building management systems employed for internal climate control, and standalone meters;
- iv. Involvement of relevant expertise to review monitoring data at least weekly, interpreting the data to identify problems if they arise and seek potential improvements;
- vi. Involvement of relevant expertise to review and up-date security and fire protection (including the National Security Adviser where appropriate).

In addition to the storage areas, environmental information will be recorded and interpreted from other areas in the archive building where collection items are used or displayed, including the research spaces, display and documentation areas. Data to include humidity, temperature, pollutant and UV/Lux light levels.

Collection management

To manage large collections of archives, individual or discrete groups of items must be identified and documented, placed in protective enclosures and their location in the storage repository systematically recorded. The Service undertakes through its Collections Information Policy to ensure that appropriate levels of documentation are produced immediately upon accession and subsequently, and the items placed in suitable archival quality packages and stored in known locations in the repository.

To ensure their adequate protection in storage, the following measures will be undertaken:

- i. Systematic provision of an archival outer box or other package for all relevant associated groups of archives, where such boxes do not currently exist, in quantities and in a manner that will not place archives at risk while in storage, following the recommendations set out in BSI PD5454:2012 and as further defined in BS 4971: 2002 *Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents. Recommendations*;
- ii. Monitoring the quality of purchased batches of archive boxes over time and instituting a rolling programme of replacement by batch or collection where they have become degraded, or individually where they have become damaged;
- iii. Provision of high quality archival packaging for individual documents, books, magnetic and optical sources, or small numbers of like items;
- iv. Maintenance of a regular cleaning and dusting regime in the repository and reading room areas (including for shelving and boxes), implementing a staged programme so that no area is left unchecked or un-cleaned for more than three months;
- v. Use of insect traps and other pest monitoring devices and a reporting and recording procedure to ensure that infestation is avoided;
- vi. Monitoring for mould outbreaks inside and outside boxes of archives and establishing a contingency procedure for response to any outbreaks, to meet the requirements of health regulations and to protect archives from bio-deterioration.

Facilities and equipment will be provided for the packaging, cleaning and disinfection of archival material. No archives with loose dirt or infestation will be placed in the repository areas.

Facilities will be sourced for copying archives to improve access and ensure preservation, through digitisation and if appropriate archival quality microfilming (see also Digital Preservation Strategy).

Conservation Assessment and Treatment

An important feature in the care of archives and special collections is the application of conservation expertise to ensure that the condition of heritage material is adequately assessed and remediated where necessary. This will need to be outsourced periodically or with grant aid following bids for specific projects. The Service's strategy for conservation will be:

- i. To establish the nature and condition of its collections and their suitability for use and/or surrogacy, by undertaking a high level, statistically robust sample survey (e.g. BLPAC Preservation Needs Assessment Survey) and subsequent targeted surveys designed along similar lines to focus on discrete collections identified as being most vulnerable.
- ii. To prioritise any actions to improve the condition of individual archives or collections based upon researcher demand and identified research and learning benefits;
- iii. To use survey data to design conservation, packaging and surrogacy projects and seek external grant funding to make these possible.

Access

Use and handling of the holdings is governed by the Guidelines for researchers using the searchroom (Appendix 1).

Staff will monitor the condition of individual items requested by researchers, and will refuse access (rarely) or copying (more frequently) on preservation grounds where appropriate. These decisions will usually be made by a professionally qualified member of staff. A surrogate may be provided as an alternative.

As far as possible, the Service works to implement the recommendations of PD5454: 20012 (which also encompasses Special Collections collections). Exhibitions are limited to 12 weeks duration. Displays (which are usually for longer periods, and are not mounted under standard conditions) use facsimiles.

Surrogating or substitution

Where a surrogate is available, access will not usually be provided to the original item except in the case of a specialist requirement which cannot be met by the surrogate (eg. examination of watermarks for dating purposes).

Surrogate copies may be made on an *ad hoc* basis during the accessioning or cataloguing process of material for which demand is likely to be high and where the original is at a greater risk of damage from handling. Oversize material in particular will be considered for surrogacy.

Microfilming is carried out to BS ISO 6199:2005 *Micrographics – microfilming of documents on 16mm and 35mm silver-gelatin type microfilm – Operating procedures* by a bureau which is authorised by the British Library as compliant with the standards.

Where appropriate, digitisation will be used as a means of providing surrogates in line with the Service's Digitisation Strategy (2014).

Conservation treatments

Preventive preservation actions across the whole holdings are balanced with active conservation treatment of individual items. Conservation work is bought in from external providers working to recognised professional standards (chiefly BS 4971:2002 *Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents*). Individual conservators are professionally accredited with the Archives & Records Association and the Institute of Conservation.

Resources

The education and training of any staff (including volunteers, if appropriate to their role) is fundamental to the successful implementation of this policy. Any staff should have an appropriate responsibility for preservation in their individual job descriptions, and this should be included in the person specification used for recruitment and selection of new staff.

The care of archival materials must be undertaken by suitably skilled and knowledgeable staff, whether directly employed by the Service or under contract. Appropriately qualified staffs will be employed for documentation, collection management, and public access.

All staff on induction will be trained in basic handling and collections care. Further individual staff training and development needs will be identified and met where possible through the University's performance management framework which encompasses an annual individual staff development plan. Training will include refresher training in techniques and practices where appropriate.

Training and education may be carried out in-house, by partners such as West Yorkshire Archives Service Conservation Unit, or by external providers with appropriate expertise. Training will be provided for staff in

- the handling, care and environmental monitoring of archival materials
- the production of suitable bespoke packages for items such as folders and sleeves,
- basic collection cleaning and re-housing programmes
- the monitoring of environmental conditions when special attention is required
- disaster recovery response.

Staff performance will be monitored through the performance management framework and through regular line management.

Other University staff are also indirectly involved in preservation activities, such as colleagues in Estates & Facilities and in Computing & Library Services. Their responsibilities will be clearly outlined and agreed, and their fulfilment of responsibilities regularly monitored.

The education and training of researchers in their responsibilities is also crucial to the successful preservation of the holdings. In addition to the statement on access above encompassing regular use, workshops and other outreach activities will encompass a preservation element or may be developed to focus on preservation. The participation of volunteers in preservation related tasks will also assist with awareness-raising in the wider community.

Resources will be available to the Service for the purchase of expertise from an accredited professional conservator, to undertake detailed condition assessment, staff training, service improvements, project development and prioritised treatment tasks as identified through the conservation management plan.

Space and equipment suitable for condition assessment and preventive conservation measures such as cleaning and packaging of archival material will be available in the Service. If resources allow, an accredited conservator will be retained under contract to the Service to provide an appropriate level of support on a planned basis to meet the relevant demands of this strategy.

Project funding bids will be placed to attract large and small scale grants for the conservation and protection of archive collections prioritised from survey information (such as condition data) and likely user demand. Funding for these projects will allow for appropriately skilled staff to be

employed to undertake them using the conservation facilities and equipment provided or to secure external contract expertise as appropriate.

Risk assessment and risk management

Risks to the holdings will be assessed and managed in appropriate ways, including the policy statements and associated activities above.

Accommodation (including plant) is the responsibility of Estates & Facilities, and is subject to an inspection regime, maintenance planning, and risk assessment. The Service will be represented at regular building management meetings, and will liaise with appropriate staff over problems and remedial actions. The Service will also update the regular risk assessments and build necessary action into the team plan and/or preservation strategy.

A disaster plan exists which covers the Library & Computing Centre and its interconnecting functions. The Service will be represented on working groups which update and review the plan. The disaster plan is the responsibility of the Business Quality and Planning Manager in Computing & Library Services.

Responsibility for the policy

This policy was approved by the University Research Committee on 20 September 2011 and amended by URC on 11 March 2014.

It will be reviewed and revised in 2018.

Appendix 1: Guidelines for researchers using the searchroom

Many of the items that are available for study in the Archives & Special Collections Service have already survived for centuries. Please treat them with the respect they deserve so that they will be available for study by future generations.

The Searchroom is a quiet study area; please do not disturb other researchers.

Your observance of the following simple rules is a condition of access to items held by the Service:

1. On arrival:

- Sign in the Researchers' Register.
- Ensure your hands are clean before handling items.

2. Ordering material:

- Order material with the University Archivist & Records Manager - including items kept in the searchroom in the glass cabinets.
Advance orders are recommended at all times, as material cannot always be produced immediately. Orders: archives@hud.ac.uk
- Some material is particularly fragile. While we aim to make as much available as possible, we will not produce an item if this may further damage it. The decision of the University Archivist & Records Manager is final.

3. Returning material:

- Return all ordered material to staff.
- Do not take items out of the searchroom.

4. Handling material:

- Use pencil only, and sharpen pencils away from the study desks. A sharpener is available beside the microfilm reader-printer.
- Support items properly. In particular, lay flat documents and maps flat on the table and use weights (available beside the microfilm reader-printer) to hold them open. Oversized documents should not overhang table edges.
Use book supports for volumes.
- Minimise touching items, and where unavoidable, take care:
 - Use a strip of paper to follow a line of text rather than your finger or a pencil.
 - Turn pages carefully, one at a time – do not lick fingers to assist.
 - Keep your notebook, elbows and other items from leaning on documents.
 - Ask if you wish to trace a document.
 - Handle photographs only by the edges, away from the image.

5. Facilities:

- Food (including sweets and gum) and drink (including water) may not be consumed in the searchroom. Tobacco products may only be consumed outside the building.
- Mobile phones and other devices must be on silent to avoid disturbing other users.

6. Copying services (other than digital photography, self-service microfilm and computer printouts) are provided solely by staff. Please ask for order forms. Some material may not be copied, for preservation reasons. The decision of the University Archivist & Records Manager is final.

7. Health & Safety. If medical assistance is required please contact the Enquiry Desk. In the event of a fire or other alarm, keep calm and follow the instructions of the staff promptly. Do not put yourself or others at risk.

Staff will be pleased to assist you, and to explain the reasons for any of the above rules.

Your assistance in ensuring the ongoing survival of archival and special collections material is much appreciated.