

# STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE – ON - TRENT ARCHIVE SERVICE

## PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The role of the Staffordshire and Stoke – on - Trent (Joint) Archive Service is to locate, collect, preserve and to make available, now and in the future, unique and irreplaceable archive collections relating to past and present life in the county of Staffordshire and the city of Stoke on Trent.
- 1.2 We have a clear responsibility to ensure that the archive collections in our care are handed on beyond the current generation in as good a physical condition as possible. The long - term preservation of archives means more than their rescue from imminent destruction or the remedial processes of repairing physical damage in order to enable use and prevent further deterioration. Preservation underpins the work of the Joint Archive Service and is integral to our service delivery. Through our staff training programmes and customer service policies, we encourage a strong preservation ethos among staff and users of the Archive Service
- 1.3 We aim to meet nationally defined standards in relation to the storage, preservation and conservation of archives. We also aim to follow best practice as set out by national guidelines.
- 1.4 Owners of archive collections, who deposit their documents with the Joint Archive Service, are advised of our commitment to the preservation and conservation of their documents in our Terms of Deposit. The Terms of Deposit set out that we will store the records in secure and appropriate environmental conditions and will take all reasonable precautions to preserve the records from damage, loss or theft. The Terms also state that we will take a number of actions to preserve the documents including: copying; carrying out remedial conservation; and withholding from public access documents in a fragile condition until remedial measures can be put in place to make them available for use safely.
- 1.5 A separate policy document is in place for the preservation of records in digital format.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document:

- 2.1 *Preservation* is defined as the passive protection of an archive where there is no direct physical intervention or chemical treatment of the item.

- 2.2 *Conservation* is defined as the active protection of an archive, using professional conservation processes and techniques and where necessary, chemical treatment in order to prevent further deterioration. Such measures should not adversely affect the integrity of the original document.
- 2.3 *Surrogacy* is the action of replacing an original document with a copy. The purpose is firstly to minimise wear and tear on the original and secondly, to improve and facilitate public access.

### **3 STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 All preventative preservation and conservation work is carried out in accordance with BS4971: Repair and Allied Procedures for the Conservation of Documents.
- 3.2 We aim to comply with BS5454:2000, Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents.
- 3.3 We aspire to best practice in preservation, as set out in Benchmarks in Collections Care, 2002 (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council).
- 3.4 Archive conservation processes must safeguard the authenticity of the original document and should be capable of being reversed without damage to it. No attempt will be made to re-insert words or letters that have disappeared and nothing in the original text must be obscured.
- 3.5 The nature and extent of conservation work must always be evident. Like must be repaired with like. A conservator may add new materials in the course of repair but nothing will be added that is foreign to the document itself. Evidential holes will not be repaired unless they weaken the fabric of the document.
- 3.6 All new materials used must be chemically inert and of approved archival quality. Materials will be purchased only from approved archival suppliers. They should have known constituents and their use should be supported by adequate testing.
- 3.7 The original format of a document will be preserved where possible and all processes carried out must be properly recorded.
- 3.8 All details of the document, its condition and make-up prior to any minimal or full preservation or conservation treatment and materials, chemicals and methods used are recorded and if appropriate, the document is photographed.

### **4. ASSESSMENT OF COLLECTIONS**

- 4.1 Collections will be initially assessed, cleaned where necessary and, where appropriate, packed in suitable archival storage materials before

being placed in the Archive Service strong rooms. Where necessary they will also be dried and any mould removed.

4.2 Documents, which have serious mould damage or archives in volatile format such as nitrate film, will be isolated until appropriate action can be taken.

4.3 Newly acquired collections are normally fully assessed for their conservation needs as part of the cataloguing process. Collections, deposited with the Archive Service for some time, are assessed as part of planned survey programmes.

## **5. THE STORAGE OF ARCHIVES**

5.1 The storage areas in all the premises of the Joint Archive Service aim to meet the British Standard for the Storage of Archives, BS5454 2000. In these areas the temperature and relative humidity is controlled within defined parameters and the environmental conditions are monitored regularly. There is a separate storage area for photographic collections at the Staffordshire Record Office which conforms to different, prescribed environmental conditions.

5.2 The environmental and other building systems, including fire detection and suppression, air conditioning and security systems are maintained regularly according to negotiated maintenance contracts. Any incidental problems occurring between maintenance visits are always addressed as they arise.

5.3 The management of the storage areas is the overall responsibility of a designated member of staff in each of the three record offices of the Archive Service.

5.4 Access to the storage areas is restricted to members of staff only. Contractors working in the storage areas will always be supervised by a member of staff.

5.5 Collections in storage are cleaned as part of a prioritised and regular cleaning programme. The storage areas receive regular cleaning using approved cleaning staff.

## **6. CONSERVATION**

6.1 The Joint Archive Service holds a very large quantity of documents, which require some form of conservation treatment. This means that priorities for conservation are assessed by staff according to specified criteria. These are:

- Public demand, both expressed and anticipated
- Historical/legal significance
- Degree of existing damage and potential future deterioration and degradation
- Suitability for use of surrogates

- Collections which are owned outright by the Joint Archive Service
- 6.2 All staff are encouraged to record documents requiring conservation work, for example, those which they may encounter during the course of the working day, in consultation with the Archive service conservators.
- 6.3 All conservation work is carried out in accordance with the standards, principles and best practice set out above at section 3. Our approach is one of minimal intervention.
- 6.4 All conservation work on the collections held by the Archive Service is carried out in the conservation workshop at the Staffordshire Record Office. The workshop is managed in accordance with current health and safety legislation. Every effort will be made to ensure that equipment used in the workshop is kept up to date and in line with developing conservation techniques.
- 6.5 Full records of all conservation treatments carried out are maintained, including photographic records where appropriate.

## **7. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES**

- 7.1.1 Preservation and conservation work is carried out according to annual work programmes, which form targets in the Service's Annual Implementation Plan and in staff personal performance plans. These programmes provide for an allocation of conservation and preservation time for the three record offices of the Joint Archive Service. The programme is determined by the Head of the Archive Service in consultation with the Senior Conservator and the Heads of the Lichfield Record Office and Stoke on Trent City Archives.
- 7.2 The conservation work programme includes the following: a long term conservation project which will be phased over a period of time; documents identified from archivists' conservation assessment sheets; and exhibition work. Responses to pressing and unanticipated needs are accommodated where possible.
- 7.3 The preservation work programme includes: re-packaging and re-boxing programmes; clear labelling for identification and production purposes; the maintenance of location indexes; and the ongoing effective and efficient use of storage space. It will also contain a major cleaning project which will be shared by the Collections Management Team.
- 7.4 The range of conservation and preservation work, which can be carried out in any one year, is subject to budgetary provision. All work carried out is reported in the Archive Service's Annual Report.

## **8. PRESERVATION AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

- 8.1 Documents which are considered to be too fragile to be handled without further damage to the original will not be produced for consultation before appropriate remedial work has been carried out.
- 8.2 Personal users of the service are made aware of the need to handle documents carefully while they are being consulted. All new users are issued with the Archive Service *Code of Conduct* which sets out handling requirements. This is supported by the Information for Readers Leaflet, *In Safe Keeping*.
- 8.3 It is the responsibility of the reading room staff to guide all users in the proper use of document supports and other protective equipment and to promote awareness among users of preservation issues. Supporting information about the care of documents is displayed in all the Archive Service reading rooms. In addition particular attention is paid to encouraging appreciation for original documents among school pupils visiting our record offices.
- 8.4 In order to protect some types of documents which are in regular use by the public, the Archive Service maintains an annual microfilming and scanning programme. Where documents have been filmed or scanned, service users are required to use microfiche, microfilm or digital copies. There are very limited exceptions to this. They include severe visual impairment or where in the opinion of the duty archivists, the original state of document, e.g faded inks.
- 8.5 There are some documents in the care of the Archive Service which cannot be photocopied for reasons which include their physical condition, size or format or because they have received extensive conservation treatment. These exceptions are set out in our public leaflet, "In Safe Keeping".
- 8.6 The Joint Archive Service provides a wide range of advertised reprographics options to enable users to obtain copies of such documents without detriment to the document itself. In addition the use of digital cameras is permitted subject to the payment of a photographic permit fee and subject to general handling rules. However, the Archive Service conservators must always be asked to advise on particular handling requirements for documents being photographed extensively by service users. The use of self-service document scanners is not permitted in the Archive Service reading rooms without consultation with the Archive Service conservators.

## **9. STAFF TRAINING**

- 9.1 The staff of the Conservation Section of the Joint Archive Service will be appropriately trained and qualified. Conservators will hold the Certificate in Archive Conservation, awarded by The Society of Archivists, or its equivalent. The Senior Conservator will be an

'Accredited Conservator-Restorer' under the 'Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers' scheme run by the Institute of Conservation, The Society of Archivists and associated bodies.

- 9.2 The staff of the Conservation Section are also required to maintain the currency of their training so that new developments and improvements in archive conservation can be applied within the Archive Service.
- 9.3 All the Joint Archive Service staff, irrespective of their role, receive instruction in the safe and proper handling of documents as part of their induction training when they join the Service. The conservation staff also carry out one refresher course on the handling of documents for staff every year. All members of staff also receive instruction in emergency response treatment for documents.
- 9.4 The staff of the Conservation Section are required to provide guidance and advice to staff in all matters relating to conservation and preservation across the Archive Service.

## **10. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN**

- 10.1 An emergency response plan, which is agreed with the Emergency Services, is maintained, reviewed regularly and updated as required. All staff receive training on how to handle documents in an emergency.

## **11 EXHIBITIONS**

- 11.1 The Archive Service will normally only display original documents in exhibitions only on its own premises and subject to the conditions specified down in BS5454 (2000).
- 11.2 Owners withdrawing documents for exhibition are given guidance notes on the display of documents in order to provide security and protection.
- 11.3 Institutions applying to the Archive Service for the loan of original documents for exhibition are required to provide evidence of their exhibition arrangements for the physical care and security of the documents.

## **12. REVIEW**

- 12.1 This policy will be reviewed within three years.

Staffordshire and Stoke – on - Trent Archive Service

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