
Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

Preservation and Conservation Policy 2013-2018

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Mission Statement

Preservation and conservation are at the heart of the Service mission statement:

*Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service's priority is to ensure the **proper management of Worcestershire's heritage for current and future generations. We protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret, share and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire.** We help the modern county of Worcestershire to achieve its priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan, especially sustainable development, a strong economy, better education and skills and independent healthy living. We are developing a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.*

1.2 Standards and Principles of Remedial Conservation

Conservation work is undertaken by a qualified conservator within a purpose-built studio at The Hive. All work is undertaken to the highest ethical standards with the aim of having minimal impact on the authenticity of the document. Conservation is carried out using accepted techniques and materials that have been shown by research to be chemically and physically stable. All items are photographed and documented before treatment. Details of the original condition and treatment undertaken are recorded in the Conservation database.

Conservation will consist of the minimum necessary treatment to the archives in order to stabilise them, prolong their life, and render them fit to be used, without compromising their integrity.

Details of remedial conservation are outlined in the Collections Care and Conservation Plan

Standards followed: Archive storage at The Hive has been built (2012) to BS5454:2000 standards and conforms to PD5454:2012. It follows guidance now contained in PAS 198:2012. Conservation technique follows BS4971 Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents

2.0 History:

2.1 pre-Hive

Basic conservation and repair was carried out in the early days of the Worcestershire Record Office but it was not until the building of the new County Record Office at County Hall in 1984, that the Record Office had full conservation facilities, albeit at the Hereford Branch of what was then the Hereford and Worcester Record Office. When local government was again reorganised in 1998, and the counties separated, conservation facilities remained at Hereford and no new ones were created in Worcestershire. Such conservation needs as there were, were fulfilled through external contracting and consultancy, while in-house attention turned more to preservation and improving packaging.

2.2 Surveys

In 2004 the National Preservation Office carried out a Preservation Assessment which highlighted the priority needs for conservation in the Office's collections. Specific reports were produced for Parish Deposits, the Book Collection, Probate Records and the Map Collection, as well as a Global Survey Report, all of which were compared with a national survey. From 2004 the Office attempted to address those areas of concern that it was able to, both physically and financially. In tandem with this, preparations were in hand for the building of a new Record Office which was to include a conservation facility.

2.3 New premises and facilities

As a result of the creation of the Hive, a Conservation Studio was scoped and a specification produced that would include a considerable range of equipment and material to provide a fully functioning Conservation workshop for paper, parchment, book and other document repair. A Conservator began work in December 2012 as an established member of staff, able to also undertake external commissions. The history of conservation in Worcestershire meant that priorities needed to be assessed. This has included reviewing the NPO Survey Reports and the more recent conservation assessment that led to the specification of the new workshop and professional appointment.

3.0 Terms of deposit for acquisitions

Material is accepted into the archive in a variety of formats and may include handwritten or typescript primary sources, maps, plans, designs, drawings, photographs, printed material, audio-visual, born-digital and electronic media of any date.

At the point of deposit and accessioning an assessment of the physical condition of the deposit is recorded and thereon through cataloguing to production in the searchroom, its physical state is noted.

Worcestershire Archive Service will not normally accept:

- Potentially hazardous material such as cellulose nitrate film or infested material that would pose a risk to the repository or other collections
- Archives damaged beyond repair, unless the continuing historic value is judged to be significant
- Records of a particularly specialist nature requiring skills or equipment beyond our resources to preserve, exploit or interpret or for which there is a more suitable repository

Worcestershire Archive Service reserves the right to adopt preservation policies including migration to ensure the readability and long term preservation of the information contained in electronic media. Details relating to electronic media can be found in the Digital Preservation and Digitisation Strategy.

Records deposited on loan are subject to the terms of deposit, while records deposited as gifts become the property of the county council. Certain expectations and terms apply to those records which are held on loan, from external bodies, authorities, and private persons concerning the extent of cataloguing and conservation treatment they may receive.

See also Terms of Deposit Policy and the General Regulations and Searchroom Rules

4 Preservation and Conservation Aims:

4.1 Storage of Archival Materials

Items are stored following the recommendations of BS 5454:2000 in one of seven purpose-built strong rooms which contain mobile and static shelving. Photographs, glass negatives and other audio-visual material are stored in a designated strong room. Items are re-shelved as soon as possible after use. Locations are clearly indicated by shelf and bay numbers within storage areas and in a computerised Location Index. Strongroom shelving and floors are cleaned on a regular basis.

4.3 Handling of Archive Material

Staff are trained in correct handling techniques for documents in the care of Worcestershire Archives. Trolleys are provided for the transportation of items from storage to access areas. Book supports and appropriate light weights are supplied for use by searchers, and staff are available to give advice on their correct use. New staff are given induction in procedures and policies of the Service, including handling of archives. New researchers are given induction before being asked to sign to confirm their understanding of the rules and being able to use the public searchroom.

4.4 Archive Security

Public access to original documents is limited to a designated area which is closely supervised by staff and where Searchroom Rules, inter alia, prevent the use of pens or presence of food and liquids. Access to storage areas is restricted, by the use of security swipe cards, to archive staff. Documents are only produced in the searchroom or for exhibition in accordance with the standard document request procedure.

Worcestershire Archives Service will be entitled in their absolute discretion, in respect of records deposited on loan to:

- Photograph, microfilm or otherwise copy, the ownership of copyright in all such copies to be vested in the Council
- Number them with finding references for identification and safe-keeping
- Carry out such conservation work as may be considered desirable and practicable by the Service
- Withhold them from public access if in a fragile condition or whose condition could be worsened by public use until all practicable and necessary treatment has been carried out

4.5 Environmental Monitoring

Strongrooms have been designed to conform to BS5454:2000 and are controlled and monitored through the Building Management System by SGP Facilities Management at The Hive. There are separate monitors for humidity and temperature readings in each strong room. Environmental units are set to provide a temperature range of 16-18° and relative humidity at 50% (\pm 5%). Room 60, storing specialist media, has a set temperature range of 11-13° with a relative humidity bandwidth of 35-45%.

Temperature and humidity levels within each strongroom are monitored and recorded with the aim of providing a stable storage environment and weekly reports provided to the Archival Policy and Collections Manager and Conservator.

4.6 Disaster planning

Worcestershire Archives will maintain, develop and regularly update an Archives Disaster Plan, in conjunction with Building Management at The Hive and the County Council Corporate Information Management Unit

4.7 Photocopying and surrogates

The preservation of records includes a consideration of the use of surrogates and provision of alternative versions of the record.

See the Digital Preservation and Digitisation Strategy

4.8 Exhibition Facilities

Original archives are only to be on display in secure cases which are environmentally sound and meet requirements for exhibition in BS5454:2000. They will, in any event, not normally be on display for more than three months. For other display cases, in The Hive or as part of WAAS outreach, facsimiles will usually be used.

5.0 Prioritisation of conservation and preservation work

5.1 Priorities

Conservation work will not normally be carried out on records deposited on loan without the agreement of the depositor, which may include a financial contribution.

Worcestershire Archives will prioritise those records needing conservation which have intrinsic value or special needs or provide suitable training opportunities for staff development. On undertaking such work priority will be given to stabilising damage; detailed conservation work will be reserved for records of exceptional historic, symbolic or physical interest or value, and for records required for exhibition and outreach purposes.

5.2 Costs

In the terms of deposit of records held on loan the expectation is that while the period of custody by the County Council may be unspecified, the records shall remain deposited in the council custody for a period sufficient to justify any expenditure on them by the Council on storing, cataloguing and conserving them, which in normal circumstances would be for a minimum of 50 years.

If material is withdrawn from such custody permanently, costs will be charged to cover storage, cataloguing and conservation of the records concerned.

5.3 Funding for Preservation

Dedicated funds are available for preservation, allowing items to be stored in acid-free boxes, folders and other housing. Items are stored within packaging of appropriate format and size. The Service commits to store and care for records deposited on loan in conditions no less favourable than those which apply to its own organisational records.

Opportunities will be taken, where appropriate, to seek external funding either as part of a wider project or purely on the basis of individual items of work, to progress further conservation of archives.

This policy was written in August 2013 and will be reviewed in 2018 or earlier if circumstances dictate