

Teesside Archives

Collection Care and Conservation Policy

Version 3.0

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Mission Statement

Teesside Archives service, funded by Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland, and Hartlepool Borough Councils, exists to create, maintain and preserve the collective memory of Teesside.

Our mission is to make our collections of unique records of historical and evidential value accessible to current and future generations locally, nationally and world-wide to inspire an interest in the history, industry and communities of Teesside and promote a sense of local pride and identity.

Teesside Archives service will collaborate efficiently and effectively with our four funding authorities, and help to support other organisations, volunteers and communities for the long term benefit of our collections and users.

Background

The service was established in 1974 and is currently directly managed by Middlesbrough Borough Council but is funded by the four Borough Councils of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar & Cleveland. The service became Accredited in July 2018.

Teesside Archives service is based at The Dorman Museum. It safely stores records in their original format and makes them accessible through organisation, conservation and preservation. The records are currently held in off-site commercial storage – this is a temporary measure while funding for a new Archives Store at The Dorman Museum is found. The service has had one fully qualified full time Conservator since 1985. Volunteers are trained to help carry out cleaning and packaging jobs overseen by the Conservator.

Terminology

Preservation: The retention and maintenance of material over time.

Collections Care: Range of activities intended to safe guard a collection. These activities can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning.

Conservation: Interventive techniques applied to a physical item to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of item to ensure their continued availability.

Policy aims

This policy aims to explain how Teesside Archives service will continue its stewardship towards its collections. It will set out what Teesside Archives will do to achieve its duty of preservation – its duty to the future- while maintaining and promoting access- its duty to

the present. It includes all aspects of storage, handling, substitution using surrogates as well as interventive conservation.

This policy applies to all collections stored and managed by Teesside Archives service. It includes collections under the ownership of Teesside Archives service, those deposited on long term loan and Public Records held in any format, including paper, parchment, plastic, glass, digital, audio or film. This policy covers the care of newly deposited/gifted records, and existing collections. This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies on Access and Collections Management and relevant procedures.

Limitations of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Teesside Archives service can accept files in digital format but currently does not have a digital preservation system in place for their long term management. While the service will manage these records to the best of their ability, permanent preservation cannot be guaranteed until an appropriate system is in place. The service may not be able to accept digital collections of a large size as storage is limited.

Teesside Archives service does not have specialist facilities for the storage of film, negatives or particularly vulnerable photographs. Film archives, where appropriate, are held, stored and preserved at the North East Film Archive in Middlesbrough.

Three-dimensional artefacts and works of art will normally be referred to the appropriate museum service or gallery as they are difficult to store and keep accessible in our building unless they form an integral part of an archive collection.

Overview and Conservation Principles

The service is committed to meeting the standards set out in:

- PAS198:2012 Specifications for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections
- BS4971:2017 Conservation and Care of archival Collections
- BSEN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage- New sites and Buildings Intended for the Storage and Use of Collections)
- Standards for Record Repositories by the Historical Manuscripts Commission
- Standards set by The National Archives
- A national code of ethics – Institute of Conservation’s Professional Standards 2020 is followed in all aspects of collections care and conservation.

Previous use of the MLA Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives Self Assessment Checklist in 2008 has helped to highlight and guide the preservation issues to achieve best practice. As a member of the National Conservation Service there is now access to Benchmarks 3.0 Conservation Management Planning Tool which will be used along with other surveys of collections in order to inform and develop the preservation and

conservation strategies and forward plans. A risk management approach is taken to collections care and conservation, with an on-going programme of condition surveys and assessment followed by appropriate remedial action.

The Collection Care Risk Assessment covering the ten agents of deterioration will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Teesside Archives carries out interventive conservation work, using appropriate techniques and materials to stabilise and slow down further deterioration with the minimum of intervention.

Teesside Archives stores archival material, whatever its nature or format, in secure and suitable accommodation with the most appropriate environmental conditions where possible with regular monitoring.

Teesside Archives provides access to archives, while ensuring their protection and minimising the risk from handling.

The born-digital collections preservation is followed in accordance with our Collections Management Policy.

The service keeps under review technical developments in the field of preservation. Where suitable, these will be incorporated into the strategy to provide added benefits and more cost effective operations.

It will promote and encourage the public, businesses and organisations in the Teesside area to deposit records having followed good practice record creation so that those records selected for permanent preservation are on stable materials and in good condition at transfer.

Security and Environment

Teesside Archives recognises that of all potential risks to the long term preservation of physical records, inappropriate storage is the most significant.

The archives are currently being stored in commercial storage at two separate facilities, which has been approved by The National Archives. Special media such as photographs and negatives are kept in the appropriate environmental conditions.

A small quantity of material will be stored on-site at The Dorman Museum in a strong room that will be regularly monitored by the Conservator. The Museum has appropriate security measures and fire safety procedures in place.

The commercial storage firm have all necessary risk assessments in place. The facilities are protected by a burglar alarm with 24 hour monitoring. All areas of the building are covered by smoke and heat detectors connected to the fire alarm and to the fire station. All systems are regularly serviced and the workforce follows all required training.

Teesside Archives aims to conform to BS4971:2017 and BSEN16893:2018 Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents, in order to provide environmentally controlled conditions designed to maintain humidity and temperature levels consistent with the long-term preservation of archival materials. Full monitoring is done on a regular basis using electronic thermohygrometers and thermohygrographs giving continuous readings. The data from these and from data supplied by the commercial storage company is analysed on a quarterly basis and remedial action is taken as necessary following the regular checks to rectify environmental fluctuations.

An Integrated Pest Management program is in place for both commercial storage and within The Dorman Museum with monitoring of insect blunder traps, which are checked on a regular basis. Insects will be identified to accurately assess the risk posed. Action will be taken to quickly eradicate any pests and to rectify the environmental conditions around the pest outbreak, followed by monitoring.

Pollution that is generated either externally or internally is recognised as a risk to the collections and so the Service aims to evaluate, monitor and mitigate the effects of pollution on the different materials held in the collections.

The service recognises the value of good housekeeping in collections care and the importance of a safe clean environment in the strongroom and in the areas of the museum under our control. All floors and shelves are cleaned by trained staff using minimal moisture and no chemical based cleaning products. Aisles are kept clear of debris with vulnerable outsize records being stored safely.

Archives staff will undertake periodic checks of the commercial storage facility in order to ensure that good housekeeping and security of the storage area is maintained, as agreed by The National Archives.

All lights are turned off when not in use, in all areas in which the archive materials are stored.

Middlesbrough Council Property Services deals with the maintenance of The Dorman Museum and any capital projects. Risk assessments are carried out on various aspects of the building and actions of the public and staff to ensure the safety of the building, staff, public and its contents.

Packing and Storage

New acquisitions are inspected for overall condition and the presence of pests, before entering the main area of the museum. All mouldy, insect and pest infested records are quarantined until they have been assessed, cleaned and stabilised by the Conservator. Any interventive conservation work is provided.

Individual Packaging of archives is done to BS4971:2017 recommendations as much as is practicable given the size constraints, method of storage and financial restraints.

Teesside Archives recognises the importance of storing the records in archivally sound packaging to minimise damage from dust, light, pollution, water, smoke and physical damage from handling by staff and public. It therefore aims to give all records at least one layer of packaging such as polyester sleeves and acid free envelopes, and a second layer such as an acid free box or portfolio.

Archives are stored according to their physical nature and condition in map cabinets or plan chests, and in boxes, as appropriate to their format.

Access and Handling

Teesside Archives aims to provide access directly or indirectly, both physical and intellectual access, on site and remotely in accordance with the Access Policy.

Documents are consulted by readers under controlled conditions in accordance with nationally recognised and agreed standards and the Archives Searchroom clearly displays guidance and rules to make the public aware of preservation issues.

Training and education of all staff, volunteers, public and group users will be given in different ways so that they are aware of preservation issues and the safe handling of archives as laid out in other documents. They are encouraged to report any damage or vulnerable records to the Conservator so that a condition assessment can be made, possibly leading to interventive conservation of the item.

Teesside Archives will promote good practice in handling records to the public and provide suitable equipment such as soft restraining weights, book cushions and polyester barrier coverings to protect the records while in use in the Searchroom and in workrooms. Users may be required to use gloves when handling certain items. The BookEye scanner has a large black support board and black cushions to aid easy use and produce a good copy.

Sufficient strong, stable, clean trolleys will be used to transport the records around the building, taking into account Health and Safety training and requirements for Manual Handling and Working from Heights.

Original records which are marked as 'unfit for production', uncatalogued, severely damaged or at risk from further handling may require special provision to provide access such as interventive conservation or using or creating a surrogate copy. Researchers are encouraged to use surrogate copies to minimise handling and reduce the risk of further damage to the originals.

Wherever possible detailed finding aids are made available to direct users to the material they wish to see, and so reduce the need for handling of the original records.

Teesside Archives recognises the value of using digital technology to increase access to the archives and safeguard the collections. Self-copying of material using cameras from collections in good condition by users is permitted under supervision in the Searchroom. A photocopying, scanning and reprographic service is in place for items in good condition.

Exhibitions

Teesside Archives will not normally loan out original archives for exhibitions and does not have the facilities to exhibit original records in the area of the Dorman Museum where the archives service operates. However exceptions are sometimes made if it is decided that the display conditions for the exhibition are safe for the documents that are requested. A procedure is followed and written guidelines for condition assessment, the safe packaging, transit, display and handling of archives will be made available when necessary if an exception to the rule is made.

Conservation

Teesside Archives will develop and maintain a methodology for reviewing the physical state of archives in its care, assessing all risks to a collection and putting measures in place to control them.

Interventive conservation is essential for the long-term survival and accessibility of the archive collections and is carried out by a trained and qualified Archive Conservator. It is undertaken in accordance with Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requirements and appropriate risk assessments, and following nationally recognised ethical and technical standards - BS4971:2017 and The Institute of Conservation Professional Standards 2020.

The Archive Conservator will carry out condition surveys to inform the direction of conservation work. By identifying archives likely to deteriorate because of chemical or mechanical damage we can then determine future conservation priorities.

Conservation work is prioritised to take into account the condition of the item and required treatment, the importance/historical archival significance, and the anticipated level of use. The priorities will be jointly reviewed by the Archivist and Conservator.

Conservation work relates specifically to the needs and future storage of the item and a minimal intervention policy will be adopted. Interventive conservation will seek to stabilise and halt further deterioration or damage to an item, whilst ensuring that the maximum degree of evidential value is recovered.

A digital and paper record of the materials and methods used is maintained including photographic documentation where appropriate and made available where required.

The Conservation studio should be updated with equipment and materials when a need is identified. Conservators are expected to continually review their conservation practice in

the light of on-going research and development in the field, and to interpret this policy according to professional standards, current thinking and practice.

Disaster Control Planning

Teesside Archives maintains a Disaster Control Plan which is regularly updated. This ensures the protection of the buildings, archive collections and the staff as well as the most appropriate response to recover the archive holdings and make provision for business continuity in the event of an emergency. Regular staff training, including practical scenario sessions, are carried out and hard copy and digital copies are stored or held where necessary.

The Record Office has appointed specialist contractors, Harwell Drying Restoration - Priority User Service which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.

Teesside Archives has a mobile disaster box which is regularly stock- checked, and also a range of recovery equipment in several locations throughout the building, including a chest freezer for small incidents. All equipment is audited and PAT tested at regular intervals.

There is an informal reciprocal response network in the North East whereby staff from other record offices will come to each other's aid if necessary.

Finances

A budget is allocated for the purchasing of conservation and preservation materials and equipment. The Conservator is responsible for ensuring that the funding is directed to areas of greatest need and is spent appropriately.

Particularly large or badly damaged collections are treated as individually managed projects with procurement of additional resources as appropriate.

Further Reading

- [Preservation Advisory Centre: Building a Preservation Policy](#)
- [Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.1 – Collections Trust](#)
- [British Library Preservation Advisory Centre Preservation Assessment Survey](#)