

Teesside Archives

Collection Care and Conservation Policy

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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 in one building with the records stored in two locations in commercial storage. It safely stores records in their original format and makes them accessible through organisation, conservation and preservation. 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 safeguard 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 or remedial 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 or remedial 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 stores particularly vulnerable photographs and negatives offsite in the media store of the National Conservation Service storage facility in Oxfordshire where they are monitored but can still be retrieved. 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, 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:

- BS.EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for Location, Construction and Modification of Buildings or Rooms intended for the storage or use of Heritage Collections. (*this replaces PA198:2012*)
- BS 4971:2017 Conservation and Care of Archival and Library Collections (*this replaces PD5454:2012*)
- Standards for Record Repositories by the Historical Manuscripts Commission
- Standards set by The National Archives
- A national code of ethics – Institute of Conservation Professional Standards 2020 is followed in all aspects of collections care and conservation.

The service has used Benchmarks in Collection Care 3 to help set out clear and realistic goals for managing conservation and preservation issues to achieve best practice. Various surveys of collections have also helped 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 which prioritises condition surveys and assessment followed by appropriate preventive or remedial action.

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

Teesside Archives carries out remedial 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 weekly 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.

Nearly all the collections are temporarily stored offsite in commercial storage in two locations. In both locations the buildings are protected with a burglar alarm and 24 hour monitoring. The shelving is mostly of metal construction. The service has one small strongroom within the Dorman Museum which is secure, covered by the museum alarms and storage is on metal mobile shelving.

All areas of the commercial storage buildings and the Museum strongroom are covered by smoke and heat detectors connected to the fire alarm and to the fire station via a warden control centre. There are hand held fire extinguishers throughout the buildings. All systems are regularly serviced and the different workforces follow all required training. The service and commercial storage facilities liaise with the Fire Brigade who conduct regular walk-throughs to familiarise themselves with the buildings.

Teesside Archives aims to conform to BS 4971:2017 and BS EN 16893:2018 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 weekly basis using electronic thermohygrometers in the museum covering all the rooms that our collections may be stored or used. Weekly monitoring readings are downloaded for the main commercial storage. Monthly readings are collected for the archives stored by the National Conservation Service. This data is analysed on a quarterly basis and remedial action is taken by liaising with the company or personally taking action as necessary following the weekly checks to rectify environmental fluctuations.

An Integrated Pest Management program is in place with monitoring of insect blunder traps which are checked on a fortnightly 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. Rodent and bird control is managed the Council. Both commercial facilities have an IPM programme with data available from one.

Regular visits and communication takes place for the closest and main commercial storage unit to highlight potential problems and to work to improve the existing working procedures the company follows.

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 importance of a safe clean environment in the strongroom/storage facilities and the value of good housekeeping in collections care. All floors and shelves are cleaned on a cyclical rota by trained staff using minimal moisture and no chemical based cleaning products. Aisles are kept clear of debris with vulnerable outside records being stored safely.

All lights are turned off in the strongrooms/storage facilities and most fluorescent tubes have UV filters.

Middlesbrough Council Property Services deals with the maintenance of the museum building 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. The commercial storage company carries out its own risk assessments.

Packing and Storage

New acquisitions are inspected for overall condition and the presence of pests, before going to the strongroom and then into commercial storage. All mouldy, insect and pest infested

records are quarantined until they have been assessed, cleaned and stabilised by the Conservator. Any interventive or remedial 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. Given the raised level of handling of collections when being recalled or returned to commercial storage Teesside Archives aims to give all records two layers of packaging such as polyester sleeves and acid free envelopes, and a second layer such as an acid free box or portfolio. Any weak or damaged outside packaging is replaced immediately before being sent back to storage.

Archives are stored according to their physical nature and condition, on metal shelves, on map shelving, in metal drawers 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 remedial 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', un-catalogued, 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 scanning and reprographic service is in place for items in good condition.

Exhibitions

Teesside Archives will not normally loan out original archives for exhibitions. However exceptions can be made if it is decided that the display conditions for the exhibition are safe for the documents that are requested. This also applies to exhibiting archives within the Dorman Museum if the conditions within and outside the cases are acceptable. 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.

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 or remedial 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 or remedial 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 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 in partnership with the Dorman Museum which is regularly updated. This ensures the protection of the building, 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 and Dorman Museum have 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.

The Commercial storage company has its own Disaster Control Plan which it regularly updates. If an emergency happens Teesside Archives will be informed immediately so that we can liaise and monitor the situation regarding our collections.

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

- [National Conservation Service – Benchmarks 3- Conservation Planning Tool](#)
- [The National Archives -Caring for Archives](#)