

Lancashire Archives

inspiring people and communities to explore their heritage; promoting and continuing to collect Lancashire's archives while preserving them for everyone to use and enjoy, now and in the future

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

1 Purpose of the Policy, monitoring and review

- 1.1 This policy forms part of the suite of policies relating specifically to the collections held by Lancashire Archives. It replaces the *Preservation Policy, 2007* and the *Conservation Management Plan, 2007*. It should be read in conjunction with the ***Collections Management Policy***, which describes the statutory and legal basis for Lancashire Archives, the preservation and management of its collections, the framework of standards within which it operates and the code of ethics followed by staff caring for and conserving the collections.
- 1.2 The *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* outlines the strategic approach of Lancashire Archives in caring for and conserving its archive collections to ensure that they will be available for future generations to use and enjoy. It provides a comprehensive statement on the preservation of the archive collections and communicates the principles that guide the conservation activities necessary for their long term protection and security.
- 1.3 The *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* provides a framework to aid managerial decisions on future development, a source of information to staff who share a common responsibility in caring for the collections, a statement of commitment to archive users and depositors, a supporting document to facilitate funding applications, and a benchmark to improve standards and measure performance.
- 1.4 The policy is underpinned by the British Standards Institution *Code of practice for cultural collections management PAS 197:2009* and *PAS198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections*
- 1.5 The Archives Service Manager and the Archive Conservation Manager are responsible for developing the *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and for ensuring that it is implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- 1.6 The Archives Service Manager is responsible for ensuring that there is adequate funding for collections care and conservation at Lancashire

Archives and sufficient trained staff with appropriate knowledge to accomplish long-term objectives in this area.

- 1.7 This policy will be reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of approval

2 Collections Care and Conservation principles

- 2.1. Lancashire Archives stores archival material, whatever its nature or format, in secure and suitable accommodation with appropriate environmental conditions which we monitor daily.
- 2.2 We follow relevant national standards and best practice, and a professional code of ethics, in all aspects of collections care and conservation
- 2.3 We adopt a risk management approach to collections care and conservation, with an ongoing programme of condition surveys and assessment followed by appropriate remedial action.
- 2.4. We carry out remedial conservation work, using appropriate techniques to stabilise and slow down further deterioration with the minimum of intervention.
- 2.5. We provide access to archives, while ensuring their protection and minimising the risk from handling.
- 2.6 We care for our born-digital collections in accordance with our ***Digital Preservation Policy***

3 Accommodation for the archive collections (including fire safety)

Lancashire Archives aims to fulfil the requirements of PD 5454:2012 *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*

- 3.1 The archive collections are housed in purpose-built accommodation comprising eight strongrooms in two linked buildings. The 1988 addition was described as 'one of the very few repositories to have implemented the [BS 5454] recommendations in full'¹
- 3.2 In the strongrooms archive collections are stored, according to their physical nature and condition, on clearly-labelled mobile and static steel shelving, wall-mounted metal map racks and in map cabinets.
- 3.3 Lancashire County Council's Accommodation Management Service inspects and maintains the buildings and carries out regular testing and servicing of the fire detection and alarm systems.

¹ *Archive Buildings in the United Kingdom 1977-1992* the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, 1993

3.4 All 8 strongrooms are constructed to withstand fire and are fitted with 4-hour fire doors. Smoke detectors are located throughout the building and an automated fire detection and alarm system, compliant with BS 5839 – 1 *Fire detection and fire alarm systems for buildings. Code of practice for system design, installation, commissioning and maintenance*, is linked to the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. Automatic fire extinction is not installed because of the controls in place and because of proximity to the fire station. In the event of a fire an automated system of dampers stops air flow in the trunking of the air-conditioning system.

3.5 The **Fire Risk Assessment** for the record office buildings considers the risk to the archive collections as well as to staff and visitors, and documents the measures in place to minimise the risk of fire.

4 **Security of the archive collections**

Appropriate levels of security reduce the risk of vandalism and theft.

4.1 External security is provided by a perimeter fence. There is security lighting and surveillance by video-recording infrared cameras monitored by Lancashire County Council. An intruder alarm is provided to meet the requirements of DD 245:2002 – *Code of practice for the management of false alarms* and PD 6662:2000 - *Scheme for the application of European standards for Intruder Alarm systems*. It is linked to Preston Police Station and an external security agency.

4.2 All doors are fitted with appropriate locks. Access to the staff and strongroom areas is restricted to relevant staff and operated by electronic security badges.

4.3 Lancashire Archives belongs to the County Archives Research Network. Everyone visiting Lancashire Archives is required to sign in and out of the building. We issue badges to volunteers and accompany visitors at all times.

4.4 Searchroom staff operate a security barrier to allow access to and from the secure area of the searchroom where archives are consulted.

4.5 We provide lockers for visitors to secure their personal possessions, and ensure that large items and bags are not brought into the secure area of the searchroom

5 **Environmental control and monitoring**

Lancashire Archives aims to provide environmental conditions which conform to PD 5454: 2012 *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*

- 5.1 Air-conditioning systems, replaced in 2011, operate in both buildings. Lancashire County Council's Accommodation Management Service monitors conditions and maintains the plant.
- 5.2. The plant replacement in 2011 has afforded us the opportunity to increase and improve environmental monitoring in the eight strongrooms. The Archive Conservation Manager has a computer link to a sensor in each of the strongrooms and can collect and store information recording and monitoring patterns and changes in the environmental conditions. This information can be used in mapping areas dedicated to specific collections.
- 5.3 Day to day conditions are monitored remotely by the Accommodation Management Service but are also monitored on site daily by our Conservation team, using recording thermohygrographs, data loggers and traditional hygrometers.
- 5.4. In order to reduce the risk of damage by UV light the archive storage areas have no windows. Energy efficient artificial lighting has automatic emergency mechanisms and the fluorescent tubes are protected by diffusers. Windows in public and staff working areas are fitted with vertical blinds.
- 5.5 Lancashire Archives recognises the importance of a safe clean environment in the storage areas and the value of good housekeeping in collections care. All strongrooms are cleaned regularly, on a cyclical rota, and are inspected each day by the strongroom supervisor as part of the routine monitoring of these areas.
- 5.6 At Lancashire Archives collections care is the responsibility of every member of staff. The Collections team works closely with the Conservation team to minimise the risk of infestation and of carrying and transporting contaminated material within a collection. Wherever possible potential new accessions are surveyed and treated at source.
- 5.7 When a new accession arrives, we survey, clean and repackage the material and create a collection (fonds) level entry for the archive before locating it in a strongroom.

6 Packaging and storage of the archive collections

Proper cleaning, packaging and storage reduces the risk of damage to the archive collections. Lancashire Archives leads the way in archival storage design and in providing a legacy for future generations.

- 6.1 We use the best conservation products: high quality acid-free paper and board, polyester sleeves, unbleached tape and brass paperclips which meet the technical specifications recommended for archival use.
- 6.2 All folders and boxes are now made by our in-house box-making service. Computer Aided Design technology enables bespoke packaging which provides the optimum storage solution for our archive collections – an acid-free environment of light, but strong, reusable packaging which is safe, and easy for staff to handle.
- 6.3 We assess the physical condition of all new accessions in a designated area and provide appropriate preventive conservation treatment, including cleaning. Contaminated archive material, which has the potential to harm or infect other collections, is placed in isolation and assessed by trained conservation staff who determine appropriate treatment.
- 6.4 We carry out an ongoing programme of re-boxing and of cleaning and repackaging earlier accessions which were not prepared to current standards.
- 6.5 We store archives in the strongrooms according to their physical nature and condition - on shelves, in cabinets, drawers and boxes as appropriate for their format. The location of items is clearly indicated by shelf signs and labels
- 6.6 We seek to maintain a tidy and safe environment in the strongrooms. The Strongroom Supervisor and regular Health and Safety group inspections ensure procedures are followed.

7 Conservation treatments

Remedial conservation is essential for the long-term survival and accessibility of the archive collections.

- 7.1 At Lancashire Archives remedial conservation is carried out by trained and qualified archive conservators and by trainee archive conservators, on the ARA programme, under the direction of the Archive Conservation Manager. It is undertaken in accordance with health and safety requirements and appropriate risk assessments, and following nationally recognised ethical and technical standards - especially BS 4971:2002 *Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents-Recommendations*, and the European Confederation of Conservators-Restorers Organisations (ECCO) *Professional Guidelines and Code of Ethics*, 2002-2004.
- 7.2 Archive conservators carry out condition surveys and audits using the *Benchmarks in Collection Care* assessment tool to inform the direction of conservation work. By identifying archives likely to deteriorate because of

chemical or mechanical damage we can determine future conservation priorities.

- 7.3 Individual items are prioritised for treatment depending on user demand, the context of the item within the collection, or its physical condition.
- 7.4 We assess material before conservation work is carried out in order to determine the most appropriate treatment.
- 7.5 We carry out remedial conservation treatments with the minimum of intervention in order to retain the integrity and authenticity of the item. The future storage format, storage location and anticipated use of the item also influence the level of treatment applied.
- 7.6 We record all conservation treatments and examinations and include photographic documentation where appropriate.
- 7.7 We use the CALM archive management system to record information about the physical condition of archives and are working towards recording their conservation requirements and treatment there also.

8 Access and Handling

Lancashire Archives welcomes people from all sectors of the community and aims to provide access for everyone in accordance with the ***Lancashire Archives Access Policy and Standards***.

- 8.1 Lancashire Archives makes catalogued archives available to all users for consultation in appropriately controlled and supervised conditions, and in accordance with the current ***Searchroom Rules***. Uncatalogued material or archives deemed to be at risk in their present format may be produced under supervision.
- 8.2 Access to archives is subject to legitimate closure requirements, the reasonable wishes of the depositor and the physical condition of the item.
- 8.3 Lancashire Archives supports the use of surrogate copies and makes them available where the condition of the original material is unstable, or where current or anticipated use will pose a threat to its survival. Microfilm surrogates are provided in line with our ***Microfilm Policy***. Researchers are encouraged to use surrogate copies to minimise handling and reduce the risk of further damage to the original.

- 8.4 Staff and volunteers are trained in handling archives and promote best practice in the searchroom. We provide researchers with appropriate aids, (such as foam book wedges, protective polyester sheets, and a variety of weights) to protect books and archives, and show them how to use them.
- 8.5 Lancashire Archives recognises the value of using digital technology to increase access to archives and safeguard the collections. Many archive catalogues are available remotely through the online catalogue LANCAT and the national Access to Archives website: www.a2a.org.uk. An increasing number of original archives is also being made available online. Digitisation is carried out in line with our ***Digitisation Policy***.
- 8.6 Photocopies and digital copies of documents provide remote access and are supplied in accordance with our ***Copying Policy***.
- 8.7 Lancashire Archives recognises both the benefits of displaying archives and the risks of exhibiting original material. Material from the archive collections is made available for exhibition in line with national and professional standards. Institutions and individuals borrowing original material are required to comply with the terms and conditions specified in our ***Exhibition Loan Agreement***.

9 Disaster planning

- 9.1 Lancashire Archives maintains an ***Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response Plan*** in line with the corporate framework. This ensures protection of the buildings, archive collections and staff as well as the most appropriate response to recover archival holdings and make provision for business continuity in the event of an emergency. The plan has provision for staff training and testing.
- 9.2 Lancashire County Council subscribes to Harwell Drying Restoration Priority User Service which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.
- 9.3 Disaster and recovery equipment is housed in one central location. Disaster boxes are located on the lower shelves of the work room adjoining the Conservation workshop. Items held in each box are listed on the outside of the box. Stacking trucks and bogies are also stored with the disaster boxes and are used for transporting them as and when needed. Plastic sheeting is kept on shelving in the Conservation workroom. All items are checked and monitored in March and September each year.

10 Communication and training

- 10.1 Lancashire Archives provides advice and guidance on best practice and the importance of collections care to other Lancashire County Council Services, outside organisations and institutions, community groups, owners of private archives and the general public.
- 10.2 We communicate an understanding of the nature and value of archives and the importance of collections care and appropriate conservation through our outreach activities and in exhibitions, publications and information leaflets.
- 10.3 We support and develop staff to deliver high quality services in line with the framework of Lancashire County Council's corporate strategy, the Cultural Services Training Plan, and the Lancashire Archives ***Training and Development Policy***. All staff and volunteers are trained in handling archives and in safe working practices.
- 10.4 Lancashire Archives maintains active professional relationships with the archival and preservation communities and organisations in the UK, including the Archives and Records Association and the Institute of Conservation.
- 10.5 This policy will be communicated to all interested parties and made available to the public on Lancashire County Council's website.

January 2014

Approved by the Head of Cultural Services, 21 February 2014