

East Riding Archives

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

East Riding Archives collects the archives and written heritage of the East Riding, its communities and its people. We preserve this unique collective memory for present and future generations. We encourage and support the use of our collections by everyone for research, learning and enjoyment.

1. Introduction

1.1 Our vision and purpose

The purpose of this Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to ensure that the documents entrusted to East Riding Archives (ERA) are cared for and managed in a consistent and safe way.

ERA has a responsibility to ensure that the documents in its care can be used and enjoyed by future generations. Therefore we aim to deliver excellent collections care programme in cooperation with staff and users. We intend to protect and prolong the useful life of both physical and digital collections by addressing the risks in a consistent, efficient, cost effective and safe way. We also aim to ensure that the highest standards of conservation of archive material are maintained and codes of ethics adhered to.

1.1 Scope

This policy provides a framework for East Riding Archives, and sets out our operational approach. It is designed to mitigate the main risks and threats to the long-term survival and accessibility of archives and local studies materials.

The policy covers the following themes:

- Preventive conservation
- Remedial conservation
- Preservation of digital resources
- Disaster Response Preparedness
- Communication and training

2. Preventive conservation

2.1 Standards

Standards are a vital element in developing reliable preservation procedures and in promoting collaboration. ERA will comply with relevant standards as far as possible and maintain a watching brief on relevant and appropriate standards as they emerge, with a view to adopting any that are appropriate and considered useful.

2.2 Accommodation for the Archives Collections

ERA aims to fulfil the requirements of PD 5454:2012 *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*. All our collections are housed in purpose-built building, (the Treasure House) comprising five repositories. Archives collections are stored according to their physical nature and condition, on clearly-labelled mobile and static steel shelving and in map cabinets. East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Building Service inspects and maintains the building and carries out regular testing and servicing of the fire detection and alarm systems.

2.3 Fire Safety

All 5 strong rooms are constructed to withstand fire and are fitted with 4-hour fire doors. Fire and smoke detectors (including VESDA very early warning aspirating smoke detection) are located throughout the building and automated fire detection and alarm system is linked to the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. Automatic fire extinction is not installed because of the controls in place and because of the 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.

2.4 Security of the archive collections

We are committed to ensure appropriate levels of security to reduce the risk of vandalism and theft.

There is surveillance by CCTV cameras, monitored by the Archives and Treasure House Manager. An intruder alarm is provided and is linked to an external security agency. All doors are fitted with appropriate locks. Access to the staff and repository areas is restricted to relevant staff and operated by electronic security badges.

Everyone visiting East riding Archives is required to sign in and out of the building. We issue badges to volunteers, visitors and contractors at all times. Research room staff operates a security barrier to allow access to and from the secure area of the research room where archives are consulted. 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 research room.

2.5 Environmental Monitoring & Controls

The environment in our repositories is controlled by a bespoke air conditioning system. East Riding Archives are committed to pursuing the standards of best practice, which are set in PD 5454:2012 – *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*, PAS 198:2012 –

Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections and the Collections Trust 'Benchmarks in Collection Care'.

The environmental conditions within all storage and display areas are monitored continuously. Annually calibrated digital loggers are used to record the temperature and relative humidity within each strong room. Collected data is analysed on a monthly basis by conservation team.

Additionally, readings from BMS sensors are checked on a daily basis by conservation staff in order to provide fast response to the environmental changes. Archives Manager is informed promptly about any abnormalities. East Riding Mechanical Engineering Service is called for assistance immediately should the environmental conditions become unstable.

We are also committed to continually improving our environmental performance – to reducing our energy use and our carbon emissions. For this reason we will look to find the best balance between passive and active environmental control solutions. We will therefore document, monitor, review and continually improve our environmental management system in co-operation with appropriate professional bodies.

2.6 Light

Overall exposure to light in storage and retrieval areas is kept to a minimum.

There is no day light in our repositories and production room. Windows in public use and staff working areas have a layer of protective UV film. Artificial lighting consists of fluorescent tube lighting fitted with UV filters. A procedure to check UV filters annually will be introduced to ensure that the UV levels do not exceed recommended values (10 μ W per lumen).

2.7 Air-borne pollution:

Air-borne pollution is filtered where possible through AHU carbon filters.

2.8 Storage enclosures

Proper packaging and storage reduces the risk of damage to the archive collections. All of our new accessions are packaged according to the current preservation recommendations, in particular PD5454:2012. We also continue to deliver best packaging solutions to the earlier accessions which were not housed to meet current standards, as per identified needs and available resources.

To protect our collections we use high quality acid-free paper and board, polyester sleeves, unbleached tape and brass paperclips. We aim to house our holdings in acid-free boxes. Where this is not possible, for example due to the size of an item, a Tyvek® cover is used instead. Documents are labelled and packed in a manner which reduces the need for handling. Photographs are packed be stored in polyester or Silver-safe® enclosures, rolled items are protected with Tyvek®, and vulnerable unboxed material will be wrapped and stored appropriately.

2.9 Housekeeping

Staff and volunteers will be trained to clean storage and display areas in a way that is not detrimental to the collections. Chemical-based commercial products are avoided when cleaning areas where documents are kept. Only a professionally trained conservator, or a person (a technician, other staff member or a volunteer) working under their direct supervision, will be employed to clean documents.

Pest Control Service is delivered through an internal contract with the East Riding Council. Storage and display areas are monitored for the presence of pests. Traps are regularly checked, findings documented photographically and trapped pests are identified.

The physical condition of all new acquisitions is assessed in a designated quarantine area before being allowed into the repositories. Particular care is being taken to ensure that the introduction of pests is prevented. Contaminated archive material, which has the potential to harm or infect other collections, is placed in isolation and assessed by trained conservation staff. Appropriate preventive conservation treatment, including freezing, quarantining and cleaning is provided.

If mould or pests are discovered in existing collection, 'Procedures for reporting mould, pests and items in unusable condition' will be followed. Affected items are quarantined until all the risk of contagion has passed. If this is not possible, the affected records may be sent to an external company for treatment, or be removed from the collection and disposed of in accordance with the Term of Deposit.

2.10 Handling

Practicality dictates that archives must be handled by staff and by service users for research and access purposes.

Staff and volunteers are trained at least every three years in handling archives and promote best practice. We provide researchers with appropriate aids, such as book cushions and a variety of weights to protect books and archives, and show them how to use them. Fragile items are identified and withheld from public access, and conservation treatment and photography are scheduled as resources permit.

2.11 Exhibition guidelines

ERA 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. Every item is consulted with conservator prior to going on display.

The cases are secure and are positioned to avoid excessive vibrations, sources of strong light, radiators and external walls. Originals are only placed in the cases outside the café opening times.

Temperature, humidity and light levels are monitored regularly by the Museum's staff. During summer the ambient temperature in the exhibition area rises significantly, hence the exhibition of original material is usually avoided. Attractive poster displays of facsimiles are used instead.

2.12 Surveying collections

A British Library 'Preservation Assessment Survey' was conducted in August 2004, before moving the collections to the Treasure House. A further survey, based on the same principles, was conducted in April 2015. We aim to carry on general condition survey every 10 years. This will enable us to update our records and reveal the impact which this period of preservation and conservation work has had on the collection.

Furthermore, every three years we aim to carry out Collections Trust 'Benchmarks for Collection Care' self-assessment survey; and to perform risk assessments for our collections from 10 agents of deterioration. These assessments will inform the preservation priorities and the action plan of the conservation team.

In addition, we survey our most valuable or most used collections regularly, in order to project the best preventive or conservation programme for them.

3. Remedial Conservation

3.1 Remedial conservation

All our conservation treatments are 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*, the European Confederation of Conservators-Restorers Organisations (ECCO) *Professional Guidelines and Code of Ethics, 2002-2004*, and the Institute of Conservation (ICON) *Code of Ethics, 2014*.

When repairing a document we endeavour to retain as much of the original as possible, whilst ensuring that long-term stability and accessibility are maintained. The future storage format, storage location and anticipated use of the item also influence the level of treatment applied.

3.2 Decision to treat

Needs of the collections held in East Riding Archives will be identified through: Collections Trust 'Benchmarks in Collections Care' and risk assessments, carried out every 3 years; and Preservation Assessment Survey, carried out at least every 10 years. On that basis, Conservator in co-operation with Management Team is able to set out long term aims to prolong the useful life of the collections.

Additionally, all Archives staff will be trained to recognize instances when prompt action is needed: discovery of mould; discovery of pests; item in unstable condition. Written 'Procedures for reporting mould, pests and items in unusable condition' are to be followed in these cases.

Remedial conservation is undertaken only when necessary, to ensure the long term safety of vulnerable material. Individual items are prioritized for treatment depending on user demand, the context of the item within the collection, and its physical condition. Decisions about treatment

and conservation priorities are set through agreement amongst Conservator, Senior Archivist and Archivists.

3.3 Practitioners

At East Riding Archives remedial conservation is carried out by appropriately trained and qualified conservator and by conservation technician, working under the direction of conservator. Externally sourced contractors may be employed when resources permit. To ensure the long term safety of the collections, only appropriately qualified and experienced conservators will be employed. Conservation technicians can be employed providing qualified conservator is able to supervise them.

Additionally, conservation workshop offers opportunities for volunteers. Volunteers work under direct conservator's supervision. They assist conservation team with re-packaging documents, creating lists, labels and boxes, and carry out basic remedial treatments such as surface cleaning and tear repair. Volunteers work is regulated by the East Riding Archives Volunteer Charter and East Riding Archives Volunteer Code of Conduct.

3.4 Documentation

Condition before and after treatment along with all conservation work is documented using the specialist archive management software (CALM) and added to the object's permanent record. Photographic documentation is included where appropriate.

3.5 Working for external clients

When time and resources permit, repair work on items owned by outside individuals can be performed by conservation team on an hourly fee basis.

4. Digital resources

4.1 Our strategy

Whilst we acknowledge that there is currently no guarantee for long term preservation of digital objects, ERA understands the vulnerability of born digital, digital surrogates, and analogue media in its care, and operates a strategy of format migration and normalisation to mitigate the risks of technological obsolescence:

- The Collections Development Policy will inform decisions about retention, preservation, and access to digital objects and anti-virus checks will be performed at the point of ingest, resulting in the quarantine or rejection of specific records upon failure of such checks.
- Analogue media e.g. VHS video, audio cassette, film reel, vinyl record, will be migrated to digital carriers i.e. CD-ROM, DVD-ROM and the suitability of these carriers reviewed periodically against current technological developments.
- The vulnerability of digital objects means that multiple copies must be produced and we will create separate copies for preservation and access, with additional 'security' copies being backed up to a server. ERA realises that the latter should be secure and dedicated to digital archives, and will aspire to obtain this functionality for its security copies.



4.2 File Formats

In accordance with recommendations from The National Archives (2011), Library of Congress Recommended Formats Statement (2016-2017), and Florida Digital Archive (2008) we will normalise digital objects to the most suitable file format possible. ERA identifies that the current optimum formats are PDF/A1-a for documents, uncompressed TIFF or JPEG2000 for images, PCM WAVE for audio, and Motion JPEG 2000 for video. If current ERA resources preclude these formats from being attained we will aim to migrate files to PDF/A1-b for documents, TIFF (uncompressed) for images, and MPEG-2 / MPEG-4 for video as medium-term solutions.

All digital objects will be incorporated into a 5-year periodic refresh schedule in which carriers and file formats will be reviewed against current technology and refreshed or migrated as appropriate.

4.3 Metadata is essential to the authenticity of digital objects and their management. We will use digital profiling tools to generate metadata on each object and preserve reports to serve as an audit trail of record migration and refresh.

4.4 Digital Storage

Whilst this manual-based infrastructure will help to address the issue of digital preservation, ERA realises that it needs to establish a digital repository to work towards meeting the requirements of the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) Reference Model (ISO 14721:2012) and ISO16363:2012 for trusted digital repository status; and this is our ultimate goal.

4.5 Digitisation / Reprography

ERA 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 Calmview catalogue and The National Archives' Discovery catalogue <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>. An increasing number of original archives is also being made available online.

We also deliver photocopies and digital copies of documents provide to our customers on request. The conservator is always consulted over the best method of producing a surrogate of a fragile item.

5. Disaster Response Preparedness

5.1 Disaster Response and Salvage Plan

ERA maintains Disaster Response and Salvage Plan. It is intended that the plan will provide procedures and basic guidelines to be followed in the event of an emergency, enabling staff to act swiftly to minimize damage to the buildings and holdings.

The plan is reviewed regularly at least every 12 months and updated when necessary. All relevant members of staff are given a hard copy of the disaster response handbook, and a digital copy is



filed on the networked server. Practical training for all staff in responding to disaster situations is provided periodically.

5.2 Harwell Priority User Plus Subscription

East Riding of Yorkshire Council subscribes to Harwell Drying Restoration Priority User Plus Service which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.

5.3 Disaster Response and Salvage Equipment

The Treasure House is a place of deposit for emergency kit which belongs to the Rapid Response Network. Additionally, Archives salvage equipment is stored in the mobile unit stored in the New Acquisitions / Cleaning area. Plastic sheeting is kept in every repository, cut to the size of shelving unit.

Items belonging to the Archives salvage kit are checked and monitored in November each year.

6. Communication and training

6.1 Collections care awareness

We believe that our goals in collections care can only be achieved through co-operation with other Archives departments and with our customers. Therefore we are committed to promote the knowledge about the best practice and the importance of collections care. We provide advice and guidance to other East Riding of Yorkshire Council Services, outside organisations and institutions, community groups, owners of private archives and the general public.

6.2 Staff training

We support and develop staff to deliver high quality services in line with the framework of East Riding of Yorkshire Council's corporate strategy. All Archives staff and volunteers will be trained at least every three years in handling archives and in safe working practices.

6.3 Professional Bodies

We maintain active professional relationships with the local and national archival and preservation communities and organisations in the UK, including the Archives and Records Association and the Institute of Conservation.

7. Links with other Policies

- 7.1 This policy should be read with reference to the following:
East Riding Archives Collections Access and Engagement Policy
East Riding Archives Collections Information Policy
East Riding Archives Collections Development Policy

The policy also links to the ERA Procedure Manual which details procedural arrangements for public access and services, reprographics, security, production and enquiries.

8. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months or earlier if necessary to take into account any changed circumstances.