



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Nottinghamshire
Archives

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION POLICY

2005
Revised 2007

1 Introduction

This policy has been drawn up in accordance with The National Archives' *Standard for Record Repositories, 2004* and after consultation with the Local Studies/Archives Policy Co-ordination Group and Nottinghamshire Archives Users' Group.

The Policy has been approved by Nottinghamshire County Council Cabinet member for Culture and the responsible officer on behalf of Nottingham City Council Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure and Tourism.

2 Name of repository

Nottinghamshire Archives

3 Address

County House, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham, NG2 1AG

4 Governing body

Nottinghamshire County Council
(with a 25 year agreement to run archive services for Nottingham City Council commencing 1998)

5 Definitions

Preservation is the use of passive non-interventative measures for the protection of an archive. This is achieved by providing appropriate environmental conditions, storage facilities and suitable packaging materials and not by physically altering the fabric of the archive by the use of chemicals or repair techniques.

Conservation is the use of active physical measures to prevent the further deterioration of an archive, ie using chemicals and professional repair techniques. Such physical measures are carried out to at least the minimum required and do not alter the integrity of the archive.

Surrogacy is defined as the replacement of an archive with a copy while retaining the original thereby preserving the original and providing easier or greater access to it.

6 Service Aims and Policy Objectives

- 6.1 Nottinghamshire Archives aims to preserve and conserve archives relating to the geographical county of Nottinghamshire, in all media and regardless of date.

- 6.2 To this end Nottinghamshire Archives aims to provide a secure and environmentally-controlled storage facility and to meet the highest possible standards for the preservation and conservation of archives.
- 6.3 This policy aims to provide the parameters within which preservation and conservation will be undertaken at Nottinghamshire Archives.

7 Standards

- 7.1 NA conforms to the British Standard *Recommendations for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents* (BS 5454), 2000
- 7.2 All preservation and conservation work is carried out in accordance with the British Standard *Repair and Allied Procedures for the Conservation of Documents* (BS4971), 2002
- 7.3 The exhibition of parish records is carried out in accordance with the *Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978*, as amended in 1992
- 7.4 NA was recognised by The National Archives as a suitable repository under the *Standard for Records Repositories, 2004* which standard requires the services of one or more professionally qualified conservators.
- 7.5 NA is working towards compliance with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's *Benchmarks in Collection Care*
- 7.6 The *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations* are observed for the handling and storage of substances covered by the Regulations.

8 Principles

- 8.1 All preservation and conservation undertaken will respect the integrity of the archive ie ensure the 'textual, pictorial and physical content and character' of the document is maintained (BS 4971).
- 8.2 All preservation and conservation will be undertaken with minimum intervention the aim being to support and stabilise items to ensure their preservation and to minimise the risk of further damage. If techniques are not available to conserve an item, it will still be stabilised to prevent it deteriorating further.
- 8.3 When deciding how an archive is to be treated, its format, storage and usage will be taken into account.

- 8.4 All preservation and conservation treatment will be reversible and employ materials which are both distinguishable from, and yet compatible with, the original and aesthetically acceptable.
- 8.5 All materials used for the conservation of archives must be chemically inert and of approved archival quality. They should be purchased from approved suppliers and (if appropriate) data sheets obtained. If there is uncertainty about a material, it should be tested before being used.
- 8.6 All preservation and conservation treatment will be fully documented both as to the materials used and the processes employed. The resulting records will be kept indefinitely. If appropriate a photographic record will be kept of the archive before and after treatment (see section 16).

9 Induction and Training

- 9.1 Conservation staff will keep up to date with developments within the profession as a whole including the use of new techniques and materials. Nottinghamshire Archives will assist in this by supporting attendance on training programmes arranged by professional bodies such as the Institute of Paper Conservation, the Society of Archivists and the Society of Bookbinders.
- 9.2 Nottinghamshire Archives will subscribe to the Institute of Paper Conservation, the Journal of the Society of Archivists and other relevant professional bodies, as necessary.
- 9.3 All other staff will be trained in preservation and conservation issues as appropriate as part of their induction programme:
- for all staff, the minimum requirement will be attendance on the following internal courses:
 - Handling Documents including reprographics
 - Manual Handling (Health and Safety in the storage areas)
 - in addition archivists and archive assistants will attend internal courses on:
 - Preservation of Archives (storage, boxing etc)
 - Assessing conservation needs
- 9.4 As part of their general internal training programme staff will attend a seminar on Emergency Response.

10 Building and Environment Control

- 10.1 NA will provide secure and environmentally-controlled areas for the storage of archives in accordance with BS 5454. The temperature of the storage areas will be maintained at a fixed point between 13°C and 16°C \pm 1°C and the humidity at a fixed point between 45% and 60% \pm 5%.
- 10.2 Light levels in the storage areas should be at a maximum of 200 lux for access purposes; at other times the area should be in darkness (for exhibitions see section 20)
- 10.3 Nottinghamshire Archives will arrange for regular maintenance of the plant to ensure that the above tolerances are maintained.
- 10.4 The regular cleaning of the storage areas (both floors and shelves) will be carried out.
- 10.5 A secure and constantly supervised search room for the consultation of archives will be provided.
- 10.6 All archives will be stored in the storage areas (or temporarily in the sorting room while being cleaned and accessioned) for both preservation and security reasons.

11 Emergency Planning

- 11.1 Nottinghamshire Archives will produce and revise on a regular basis an emergency plan.
- 11.2 Nottinghamshire Archives on behalf of historic collections within County and City Libraries will subscribe to the East Midlands Museum Service's Regional Emergency Disaster Support.
- 11.3 The Libraries, Archives and Information Service will subscribe to Harwell Drying and Restoration Services on behalf of all departments of the County Council and the historic collections in Nottingham Central Library.
- 11.4 Nottinghamshire Archives will provide training for all NA staff (mandatory) and selective Libraries' staff (optional) on the response to be taken in the event of an emergency.

12 Preventative Preservation: storage and packaging etc

- 12.1 Nottinghamshire Archives will ensure that all archives are correctly packaged and stored to ensure their preservation; *for* guidelines see Appendix 1.

12.2 Archives will be packaged using suitable archival-quality materials and where possible stored in archival quality boxes. Large items including maps and plans will be appropriately stored (see Appendix 1).

13 Backlogs and surveys

13.1 It is recognised that there is a backlog of conservation work. Systematic condition surveys of collections will be undertaken to determine the extent of the backlog and to prioritise needs; *for further details see Appendix 2.*

13.2 Consideration will be given to using the National Preservation Office's *Preservation Assessment Survey.*

14 Assessment and Prioritisation

14.1 Archives are assessed when accessioned as to whether they are free of insects or mould, whether they are clean and whether they can be handled. Any insect infested/mouldy/dirty documents are treated as a matter of urgency. Any documents which cannot be consulted by the public on preservation grounds are noted.

14.2 Further assessment is made when the collection is catalogued and the items prioritised for conservation work. The prioritisation is made by the Senior Archivist (Archive Services) in consultation with the Senior Conservator and Senior Archivist (Public Services) taking into consideration:

- the historical importance of the collection
- the likely level of use by the public
- the conservation requirements in terms of time and resources
- the conservation skills required
- the likelihood of further deterioration should action be delayed.

14.3 To assist in the prioritisation process a points system has been devised taking into account all the above factors.

14.4 Such priorities and the resultant annual work programme might however be overridden by any requests from the public to consult documents which cannot be made available on preservation grounds. A decision will be made as to the minimum conservation treatment required to make such documents accessible as quickly as possible.

15 Work Programme and Performance Measurement

- 15.1 The work programme of the Conservation Unit consists of five elements:
- a) a major preservation project (eg cleaning, re-wrapping, survey work)
 - b) a major conservation project (eg on a particular collection or priority items from the conservation backlog)
 - c) local studies/Arts/NA's library work (see section 22)
 - d) exhibitions
 - e) ad hoc and emergency conservation and preservation work
- 15.2 A programme is drawn up each year by the Principal Archivist and the Senior Archivist (Archive Services) in consultation with the Conservation staff and included in the Annual Implementation Plan.
- 15.3 Conservation and Preservation work is measured by the use of performance indicators.
- 15.4 Whenever necessary and following appropriate training, staff, other than the dedicated conservation staff, and volunteers may be involved in preservation projects.

16 Conservation Records

- 16.1 Cards are completed for each item which record the condition of the document before being treated, the work carried out and the materials used. Where appropriate a photographic record, before, during and after treatment, is also made.
- 16.2 All records are kept permanently.
- 16.3 At present these are kept as paper records but the feasibility of keeping an electronic record will be investigated.

17 Surrogacy

- 17.1 Nottinghamshire Archives undertakes an annual microfilming programme of its most heavily used records as a) a preservation strategy and b) as part of its access strategy.

18 Reprographics

- 18.1 Reprographic guidelines are available for the public outlining our procedures with regard to the provision of copies of documents, with the proviso that the document must not be physically damaged by the process used. The preservation of the document is paramount and determines if and how a copy is made.

18.2 A document may be copied by it being either photocopied or digitised (the latter by either scanning or photography) or in the case of maps and plans by being traced.

18.3 The following items are not photocopied:

- a) fragile documents
- b) tightly-bound volumes
- c) large maps
- d) deeds or other items bearing seals
- e) large/folded deeds or deeds with multiple membranes
- f) manuscript rolled items

18.4 The Principal Archivist reserves the right to refuse to copy any document if by doing so it would be damaged.

18.5 When copying documents exposure to bright light is kept to a minimum. Members of the public using their own camera are requested to use natural light and to borrow a tripod to use when sufficient space is available in the searchroom. If flash has to be used then it should be kept to a minimum. The public should not place documents on the floor to copy them.

18.6 Those staff involved in providing the reprographic service will be given additional training in the handling of documents when copying them.

19 Document Handling

19.1 The biggest threat to the survival of any archive is from use. The correct handling of documents is therefore the simplest and easiest way of ensuring their preservation. Good practice should be adopted by all who handle documents be they staff or users and the former should set an example to the latter by always handling documents with care and attention.

19.2 All staff (including volunteers) will be trained in the correct handling of documents and written guidance will be issued to members of the public using the searchroom and staff (see Appendix 3).

20 Exhibitions

20.1 When exhibiting archives their preservation is paramount. Thus the duration of an exhibition, its security, the frequency with which individual archives are displayed and the format and size of the documents to be exhibited should be considered. Whenever possible, facsimiles should be used.

- 20.2 Exhibitions will only be provided for a limited amount of time, that period being determined by consideration of, *inter alia*, the environmental conditions, the vulnerability of the documents and the security of the venue.
- 20.3 For exhibitions of more than two weeks duration a lux level within the cases will be recommended of between 50 and 80 lux; in other areas of the exhibition it should not exceed 300 lux. The temperature within the cases should be maintained between 13° C and 16° C and the humidity between 45% and 65%.
- 20.4 All documents must be exhibited in locked cases.
- 20.5 When a document is too large to fit in a case, a digitised copy may be used providing the production of that copy does not harm the document.
- 20.6 All documents will be suitably mounted or supported etc to ensure they are not damaged while on display.
- 20.7 If documents are displayed using Nottinghamshire Archives' cases, guidance on the display environment, their handling and security is given (see Appendix 4).
- 20.8 If documents are to be on display at an external venue for longer than 14 days, a long term exhibition form incorporating a condition report for each document must be completed prior to their leaving the Archives.
- 20.9 The Principal Archivist reserves the right to refuse to exhibit any document if by doing so it would be damaged.

21 Withdrawals

- 21.1 Documents may be withdrawn either temporarily or permanently by their owners. If the withdrawal is temporary, written advice on the correct handling of the documents is given (see Appendix 5).

22 Work undertaken for Local Studies/Central Library/NA Libraries

- 22.1 Nottinghamshire Archives undertakes the fine binding of local studies stock and other conservation work for the County Local Studies collection, historic collections in Nottingham Central Library and Nottinghamshire Archives reference library. The City's work is undertaken under a joint agreement. This work is covered by the *Libraries' and Archives' Conservation Policy, 1999*.

23 External Advice

- 23.1 Nottinghamshire Archives will provide advice on all matters relating to the preservation and conservation of archives and books.

24 Work for outside bodies

- 24.1 Work is not undertaken for external bodies or individuals. Enquirers are referred to:
- The Conservation Register
 - c/o UK Institute for Conservation
 - 702 The Chandlery
 - 50 Westminster Bridge Road
 - London, SE1 7QY
- (website: www.conservationregister.com).

25 Date

This policy was issued on 14 December 2005 and reviewed in 2007. It will be reviewed henceforth every three years.

Preservation guidelines for the correct storage of archives

- 1 The storage areas should be kept tidy with all archives being returned to their correct location immediately they are no longer being consulted by either users or staff. If documents are left out for any reason, eg outreach work they should be left on the designated shelves tidily and if necessary placed in boxes as a temporary protective measure.
- 2 New accessions should be
 - inspected on receipt for any evidence of insect damage, mould, dirt etc. Any documents requiring cleaning or treating should be stored in the document reception areas and brought to the attention of the conservators. No document requiring such treatment should be placed in the strong rooms nor placed in archival boxes until it has been treated.
 - Placed in archive boxes, wrapped in archive text paper, or if too large for the boxes, wrapped individually in preservation grade paper. All plastic bags should be removed. Plastic/PVC wallets should be removed and replaced with archive text paper or conservation grade polyester sleeves.
 - All ferrous metal and plastic paper clips should be replaced with brass ones.
 - Ideally loose papers should be flattened and wrapped in acid free paper, each bundle being marked as to whether or not it is an original one. If this is not done at the accessioning stage, all loose papers should be flattened when they are catalogued.
- 3 Bundles/single items
 - All items should be flattened and stored as flat as possible. If an item is too large for a box, it should be stored as a flat item, not placed in a box with its edges curling up.
 - Documents should not be defaced in any manner; the exception is the reference which should not obscure any information on the document.
 - Where documents are found clipped together with a pin or a ferrous metal paperclip, the pin or clip should be replaced with a brass paper clip.
 - Where papers are stored in a ring binder etc, they should be removed from the binder and may be threaded together using unbleached linen tape through the existing holes; no new holes should be made in the documents.

Appendix 1 contd

- When wrapping archives, acid free paper should be used and unbleached linen tape which should not be tied so tightly that it 'bites' into the document.

4 Boxes

- When boxing up archives, the heavy items should be placed on the bottom and the light ones on top. Thus volumes should be placed underneath bundles of loose items. When returning documents to boxes after use this practice should be followed.
- Boxes should not be over filled so that the lids do not fit
- Boxes should not be overfilled so that they are too heavy to lift. If this is unavoidable eg a single heavy item is placed in a box, then a 'HEAVY' label should be stuck on the box. In many cases it may however be more economic in terms of space to wrap such items individually.
- Any boxes considered heavy should not be stored on the top or bottom shelves.
- Neither volumes nor boxes should hang over the edge of the shelf, especially where there is mobile shelving.
- Boxes should always be stored flat on shelves; never on their side (even temporarily while being moved) and never on the floor.
- In Upper storage, boxes only should be placed on the bottom two shelves of each bay; volumes, rolls and other loose items should never be placed here as they will get damaged when the strong rooms are swept.

5 Volumes

- If there are loose items in a volume these should be removed, a note being made of the page from which they came. The note may be a page number, or in the case of minutes, the date of the meeting where they were found or some other form of identification. In some cases it may be necessary to foliate the volume (not paginate). The loose items should be placed in a separate folder and if significant listed separately, the catalogue recording the page where they were found. If they are not significant enough to list, then the separate folder should be kept with the volume and at the end of the catalogue entry a note made of the quantity ie 'one volume and x docs'.

Appendix 1 contd

- Large volumes may be stored in boxes but the resultant weight of the box should be considered (see 4 above). However this may not be practicable for single heavy volumes which may be better wrapped individually.
 - Volumes which are individually wrapped should be clearly labelled using 'luggage' labels.
- 6 Numbering documents
- Any numbering must never deface existing text or images.
 - All documents should be numbered discretely using a soft (2B) pencil.
 - Loose papers should be numbered on the back in the top right hand corner; volumes on the front end paper (recto) in the top right hand corner.
 - On the very rare occasions that a reference number is changed, the professional convention of circling the original number and writing the new reference alongside should be used.
- 7 Photographic images
- Photographs should be stored individually in either polyester or archival photographic envelopes and the reference be written in 2B pencil on the back of the photograph and, where applicable, on the envelope.
 - Post -1950 photographs may be stored in polyester sleeves; for earlier photographs the advice of the conservation staff should be sought as to whether archival envelopes or polyester sleeves should be used as the medium of the photograph needs to be taken into consideration.
 - Negatives should be stored in either polyester or archival photographic envelopes or in polypropylene sleeves depending on the medium of the negative
 - Slides should be stored in conservation grade slide boxes.
 - Glass negatives should be boxed and stored vertically.
- 8 Maps and plans
- Depending on the size of the item these may be hung, rolled and boxed, rolled and stored loose on a shelf or kept flat.
 - Advice should be sought from the conservators on the storage of maps and plans.

Appendix 1 contd

- Parchment maps should be kept flat, if possible.
- Maps which are to be kept rolled and loose on the shelves should be rolled round a conservation grade tube, wrapped in linen and tied with unbleached tape. They should be supported along the whole of their length.
- Maps stored flat in drawers should not be stored too deep.
- Map cabinets should be kept closed once items have been retrieved

Preservation and Conservation Surveys

- 1 The findings of two surveys are available:
 - a) a survey of tithe maps and awards carried out in 1991/2 and
 - b) a survey of City building byelaw plans carried out in c1994 .
- 2 The stock check of frequently consulted archives begun in 2004 also includes an assessment of conservation and preservation needs.
- 3 In addition, in preparation for the move to Castle Meadow Road in 1993, conservation records were produced for any items requiring conservation work. As items have been identified since 1993, record cards have been created and these cards form the basis for assessing the current backlog.
- 4 Between 1992 and 2003 Conservation Needs Surveys were undertaken for all local studies stock in libraries throughout the County and City. The re-commencement of these was reviewed in 2006 but a survey at that date was not considered necessary. The need will be considered again in 2008.
- 5 Consideration is being given to using the National Preservation Office's *Preservation Assessment Survey*.

Handling original documents (staff)

Introduction

- 1 The biggest threat to the survival of any archive comes from humans; even when archives are handled carefully they still collect grease from hands which over time will discolour and damage items.
- 2 Correct handling of documents is therefore the simplest and easiest way of ensuring their preservation. Good practice should be adopted by all who handle documents be they staff or readers and the former should set an example to the latter by always handling documents with care and attention.
- 3 The preservation of archives is more important than the speed with which they are produced for readers and the following best practice should be observed when producing documents from the storage areas.

Guidelines

- 1 Single items should be placed in polyester wallets (sealed on one long and one short side). This should be done in the storage areas for the transportation of the documents to the searchroom, thus emphasising to the public the vulnerability of the item. It should be weighed and handed to the reader in the wallet and the reader requested to read it without removing it from the wallet. In this way the physical handling of the document is reduced. The document should be transported back to storage in the wallet.
- 2 Groups of loose items or small bundles should be placed in polyester/manilla gusseted wallets. This should be done in the storage areas for the transportation of the documents to the searchroom, thus emphasising to the public the vulnerability of the items. They should be weighed and handed to the reader in the wallet the reader being requested, in the case of loose items, to keep the documents in order. The documents should be transported back to storage in the wallet.
- 3 Documents should be transported using the trolleys provided, and care should be taken when loading the latter. Heavy items should not be placed on top of light, vulnerable ones and so volumes should not be placed on top of single items or bundles of loose items.
- 4 Trolleys should be loaded sensibly: no items whether they are single items or a volume, should be placed on a trolley so they hang over the edge thus allowing the metal edge to 'bite' into the document.

Appendix 3a contd

- 5 When producing large maps, assistance should be requested from other staff.
- 6 When producing hanging maps, thought should be given to whether it should be lightly rolled to assist in its transportation to the searchroom.
- 7 A large polyester or perspex sheet should be used to protect all maps and plans which should be laid out by staff for the public.
- 8 When archives are being consulted staff should ensure that the public observe the following rules:
 - a) that documents are placed flat on a table or supported using the cushions and foam supports provided; they should not be propped up on the researcher's knees;
 - b) that they do not write, lean or press on the documents or stick 'post-its' on them;
 - c) that they take care when turning pages; page edges or corners should not be held for longer than necessary and fingers should not be licked to assist with turning a page;
 - d) that a piece of clean paper is used to follow the text, not their finger;
 - e) that only pencils are used when taking notes, and any notebooks, paper etc. are not placed on top of a document as notes are made;
 - f) that items in bundles are kept in the order in which they were issued
 - g) when consulting maps and plans please ensure that the documents do not over hang the table and that a protective polyester or perspex sheet is used
 - h) that cotton or nitrile (latex free) gloves are used when consulting photographs, unless each photograph is in an individual polyester envelope
 - i) that nitrile (latex free) gloves are used when consulting parchments

Handling original documents (public)

Please remember that original archives are unique and irreplaceable and one of the biggest threats to their survival is their misuse when being consulted.

Therefore we ask that you follow these simple rules when consulting the archives.

- do not eat food or sweets, or chew gum or consume drinks in any part of the searchroom
- documents should always be placed flat on a table or supported using the cushions and foam supports provided; they should not be propped up on your knees;
- please do not write, lean or press on the documents or stick 'post-its' on them
- care should be taken when turning pages; page edges or corners should not be held for longer than necessary and fingers should not be licked to assist with turning a page;
- a piece of clean paper should be used to follow the text (available on the tables), not one's finger;
- only pencils should be used when taking notes, and any notebooks, paper etc. should not be placed on top of a document as notes are made;
- items in bundles should be kept in the order in which they were issued
- when consulting maps and plans please ensure they do not over hang the table and please use a protective polyester or perspex sheet
- when consulting photographs please use cotton or nitrile (latex free) gloves, unless each photograph is in an individual polyester envelope
- when consulting parchments, please use the nitrile (latex free) gloves supplied by the staff

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES

GUIDELINES FOR EXHIBITORS

1 DISPLAY CASES

- It is essential that the cases remain horizontal at ALL times, both when on display and when being moved through doorways and in and out of vehicles.
- During transit or storage the cases should not be stacked more than three high and the foam protectors (supplied) should always be used.
- At no time should anything be placed on top of the cases as this may result in scratches or even breaking of glass. Please try to ensure that no one leans on the cases.

Your organisation may be charged for any damage caused to the cases or contents.

2 DISPLAY ENVIRONMENT

- All sources of light are damaging to archives. For this reason cases should never be placed in direct sunlight and artificial light should be kept to a minimum.
- Do not place cases in damp or very dry conditions as these can cause serious damage to the archives. Ideally the cases should be displayed where there is a constant temperature of between 16 and 20°C.
- Do not place cases near a source of heat or water.

3 SECURITY

- Cases should be kept locked at all times and the display area adequately supervised to prevent the possibility of theft, vandalism, fire and other hazards.
- Should an accident occur while the exhibition is in your care please inform Nottinghamshire Archives immediately on 0115 950 4524. Do not attempt to repair any damaged item as this can often cause further harm. Nottinghamshire Archives conservation staff will be able to advise on the best course of action.

Guidelines for the Storage and Handling of Archives when Temporarily Withdrawn from Nottinghamshire Archives

On occasion, depositors ask to withdraw their documents from Nottinghamshire Archives. When this occurs, it is requested that the following guidelines are followed with regard to their safekeeping and safe handling.

- They should be locked away securely when not in use. Sole responsibility for their safety lies with the person who has withdrawn them.
- They should not be left in direct sunlight or be stored near radiators, water pipes or any other obvious hazards.
- When being consulted:
 - a) they should always be placed flat on a table; they should not be 'propped up' against any other object.
 - b) care should be taken when turning pages; page edges or corners should not be held for longer than necessary and fingers should not be licked to assist with turning a page.
 - c) a piece of clean paper should be used to follow the text, not one's finger.
 - d) only pencil should be used when taking notes, and any notebooks, paper etc. should not be placed on top of a document as notes are made.
 - e) no food (including sweets and gum) or drinks should be consumed when handling archives or placed in proximity to them.