

Gloucestershire Archives Preservation Policy

Background

Gloucestershire Archives looks after the historic archive collections¹ relating to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire² and the local and family history resources³ relating to Gloucestershire. It helps people to access and use these records. The Archives operates from its Alvin Street premises in Gloucester.

We are recognised by The National Archives as the place of deposit for public records relating to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. We are also the appointed record office for the Diocese of Gloucester.

Several million documents dating from the 12th century up to the present day are stored in our strong rooms. They are appraised, sorted, catalogued and indexed so that they can be easily accessed, given conservation treatment where necessary, and stored in the best environment for their long term preservation.

Our archives are unique and irreplaceable, being the original and only record in existence and their value lies in their retention in original form⁴. They are primary source material and often have legal evidential standing.

Policy statement and scope

Our Preservation Policy provides a framework for maintaining our collections in the best possible conditions in order that they might have the best chance of surviving over the long term, and in the case of archives permanently.

¹ An archive is a group of records that have been created by an organisation or individual in the course of daily activities but no longer needed by them for regular reference. We look after archives because of their value as historical evidence. The individual records in an archive can vary in format but each is a combination of a medium and the information recorded on or in it e.g. single sheets of paper with typed or handwritten text, maps, bound volumes, photographic negatives and prints, audio visual recordings and digital documents/files.

² Gloucestershire Archives provides an archives service for South Gloucestershire Council, which runs its own records management service and manages access to its information via FOI, DP and EIR.

³ Previously known as the Gloucestershire Collection, this includes published information about the history of local areas and their communities e.g. local newspapers and locality-based books, pamphlets and journals covering a range of topics

⁴ Note that for digital archives it may not be possible or desirable to retain the original carrier or format – for further details see our Digital Preservation Policy

The scope of this policy is the physical preservation of archives and other collections in our care.⁵ It should be read alongside our other policies, particularly those on Access, Buildings and Collections Security, Collections Care and Conservation, Collections Development, Digital Preservation and our Emergency Plan.⁶

Terminology

Preservation is the retention and maintenance of material over time

Conservation is the direct application of interventive remedial treatment and non-interventive preventive measures to arrest material deterioration, and promote the physical preservation and accessibility of an item or collection

Preservation policy principles⁷

- Archives will be preserved in perpetuity
- All aspects of their original format, their historical, textual, pictorial and physical nature will be preserved wherever possible (but see footnote 4)
- The risks to collections will be assessed, and measures put in place to control them.
- Preventive conservation measures will be employed to protect and preserve collections and individual items

⁵ It excludes Gloucestershire County Council records that are not scheduled for permanent preservation

⁶ All policies are available at <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/policies>

⁷ Supporting standards: PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management, PAS 198: 2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections, BS 4971:2002 Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents – recommendations; The National Archives Standard for Record Repositories 2004; Re:source Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries, A Self-assessment Checklist, The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, 2002

- Remedial conservation treatments will be applied where there is an identified and prioritised need. No major treatment will be carried out without the owner's permission
- Conservation treatments will only be carried out by appropriately qualified persons
- All treatment will be restricted to the minimum necessary to stabilise an item/collection and make it fit for use or copying
- Original material will be made accessible or a surrogate copy of the item provided (in the case of high demand/badly degraded/extremely fragile items). Surrogate images may be available online. The original item will be protected from further deterioration in the best possible conditions

Storage

Our collections are maintained in secure storage areas specially designed to maintain humidity and temperature levels consistent with the long-term preservation of archival materials. They conform to PD 5454: 2012 *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials* and are regularly monitored to ensure that they continue to meet the required standards. A pest management programme is also in place.

The storage areas are approved by the national inspecting body, The National Archives.

Processing of newly acquired archives

Preliminary preventive measures are put in place as soon as a collection is acquired. Collections are checked for damp, mould, and insect infestation, in a specially designated reception area, and appropriate action taken. Collections are put in protective low acid boxes, and outsize material is specially supported and/or wrapped.

Selection for further treatment

Individual documents/collections may require further preventive measures, conservation treatment and/or copying. Work is prioritised according to the amount of use that the

document/collection receives or is expected to receive, whether it is completely unfit for use and/or if there is a special need such as preparation for an exhibition. Treatment is given according to the type of damage, and the resources available/attainable at the time. Our Conservation Policy sets out the principles that underlie any conservation action.

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

Surveys are also carried out to assess the current physical state of holdings. Staff and customers are encouraged to report any signs of damage to records. This data is used to inform preservation and conservation planning.

Handling and using records

Staff and volunteers receive appropriate training on caring for records. Our customers may access records only under supervision and are expected to comply with basic rules of conduct. We provide guidelines and appropriate book and document supports to ensure safe handling of records. Customers may be required to consult copies to avoid damage to original records.

Disaster prevention, control and recovery plans

We have a full Emergency Plan, which outlines the measures adopted to reduce the risks of an emergency situation and, should one occur, those for immediate reaction and recovery. The Emergency Plan is regularly reviewed, tested and updated, at least annually.

We carry out Business Continuity planning as part of the wider Gloucestershire County Council Business Continuity Strategy

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years

Document Control

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| Approval Body | Gloucestershire Archives Management Team (GAMT) |
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Version History

| Version | Version date | Summary of Changes |
|---------|--------------|--|
| 1.0 | August 2006 | New policy (minor amends made between 2007 to 2009) |
| 1.1 | March 2010 | Reviewed and amended following changes in corporate style. Approved by Libraries Senior Management Team. |
| 2.0 | Sept 2014 | Reviewed and revised to include risk management approach and compliance with new standards. Some minor amendments and re-formatting. |

Date of next revision: 2017