

Preservation Policy

June 2020

Dorset History Centre
Bridport Road
Dorchester
DT1 1RP



Service Description

The **Joint Archives Service** (JAS), based at **Dorset History Centre** (DHC) is operated on behalf of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council, and Dorset Council. Partnership between the two authorities as delivered through the joint service sits at the heart of JAS activities and underwrites the protocols and processes by which DHC preserves material.

Archives are documents (hand-written, printed items, maps, plans, slides, postcards, photographs, audio-visual material, digital records and comparable items in diverse physical formats) from all dates. They are items that have been selected through a process of appraisal as being worthy of permanent preservation.

DHC is the sole local authority archive within the county with Accredited status as designated by The National Archives.

Vision and Mission

DHC is the physical and virtual hub for the archival heritage of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole in both hard copy and digital formats. The JAS acquires, preserves and makes accessible the archives of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole and so promote cultural, economic, educational and social well-being.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Archives are the records created by people and organisations over the centuries in the course of their life and work that form the raw material of the history. These documents are unique and irreplaceable and as original record provide valuable primary historical evidence and often have a legal evidential standing.
- 1.2 Several million documents dating from the 10th century to the present day are stored at DHC in secure environmentally controlled strongrooms for their long-term preservation.

2. Aim and Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for preserving collections within the custody of the JAS for future generations. It gives direction to staff carrying out their responsibilities regarding the preservation function and provides public information on the principles which guide preservation in the Dorset History Centre.

3. Scope

- 3.1 Preservation is the retention and maintenance of material over time through appropriate, packaging and storage in environmentally monitored and controlled conditions.

- 3.2 Conservation is the use of interventive remedial treatment and non-interventive preventive measures to arrest the deterioration of an item and facilitate the physical preservation and accessibility of an item or collection.
- 3.3 The preservation of digital materials is addressed in the Digital Preservation Policy (2020).
- 3.4 This policy operates in conjunction with other relevant JAS policies, including the Acquisitions Policy (2020) and Collections Care and Conservation Policy (2020) and the Terms of Deposit (2020).

4. Preservation Strategy

4.1 The Dorset History Centre:

- Aims to ensure the long-term preservation and availability of the records in its care for present and future generations. This will be undertaken in as environmentally-efficient way with the least mechanical intervention, and energy possible.
- Recognises that preservation is integral to all archive activities from acquisition through to access and that every staff member has a part to play.
- Values all types of records according to their long term historical worth rather than as a result of the nature of their media.
- Undertakes conservation treatment with the intention of protecting and preserving the item to ensure the maximum evidential value but with the minimum impact on the authenticity of the record
- Will make original material accessible where possible. Where there is high demand for an item, it is badly degraded or extremely fragile the JAS will endeavour to make a digital surrogate of the item to protect the original item from further damage.

5. Condition of newly acquired archives

5.1 The condition of archives when deposited at the DHC is determined by three factors:

- The materials from which the records are made e.g. composition of paper, inks, photographs etc.
- How they have been handled by previous users including repair with self-adhesive tapes.
- How they have been stored before they came into the custody of DHC e.g. somewhere damp or in direct sunlight.

6. Processing of newly deposited archives

6.1 Items arriving in the DHC are examined for damp, mould and insect infestation in a specially designated reception area where appropriate action is taken. DHC has cleaning and drying facilities for this treatment to be carried out. The items are then boxed in acid free archival standard boxes and, if required appropriate archival packaging is used to protect the items inside the boxes or where there is outsize material.

6.2 A high proportion of the records held by DHC are boxed for storage and, in addition, many records have individual packaging, using archival standard materials. Volunteers are assisting in stocktaking and repackaging collections and externally funded projects enable repackaging to be carried out on a project basis and during cataloguing.

7. Storage and Security

7.1 The DHC repositories are temperature and humidity monitored and controlled for long-term preservation of archives and they are secured through an electronic access system. The storage environment conforms to PD 5454: 2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.

- 7.2 The staff entrance and access to office areas (not open to the public) are controlled by the electronic access system.
- 7.3 A pest management programme is in place.
- 7.4 DHC occasionally mounts exhibitions of documents inside and outside the building and depositors request permission to withdraw records for temporary display. Temporary removal of documents is recorded on withdrawal and return and loaned only to or with the permission of the depositor.

8. Surrogate Access

- 8.1 Photocopying of secondary sources and original documents is permitted by the staff for the public, within specific guidelines outlined in the Copying Policy.
- 8.2 Overhead digital imaging equipment and scanners are used to carry out digitisation programmes and supplement the photocopying service. The digital camera permits safe digitisation of volumes and larger flat formats. Fragile documents, books and flat documents larger than A3 can only be copied using the digital overhead cameras operated by trained JAS staff. Scanning projects to digitise photographic collections are carried out by trained volunteers.
- 8.3 Digital imaging standards are being developed; including systematic archiving and retrieval systems to prevent duplication of work and avoid loss of data. It is our policy to preserve digital copies of documents with individual references, and all maps, plans, photographs and whole books; but not individual pages of books, single sheets from large bundles without individual sub-numbers or items imaged in black and white.

9. Training and Awareness

- 9.1 All staff members are provided with document handling and awareness training during their induction which includes guidance on retrieving and replacing documents in the strong room, moving documents through the building and handling them during use. Volunteers also receive training in document handling and the principles of archival repackaging.
- 9.2 Appropriate book rests and document weights are available to ensure safe handling of archives. Where they exist customers may be required to consult surrogates to avoid damage to original items.

10. Standards and legislation

- 10.1 The JAS adheres to standards and best practice for preservation. Standards and guidance which inform preservation strategies and processes developed by DHC include PD 5454: 2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials and BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections.
- 10.2 All information will be managed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations.

11. Roles and responsibilities

- 11.1 All members of JAS staff and volunteers have a responsibility to protect and preserve the records in their care. All JAS staff are responsible for their handling of the collections and for supervising the handling of collections by customers at DHC. In addition, all staff should raise any concerns regarding the condition of individual items or collections with the Collections Care team and complete an Intercept form as required.

11.2 Guidance is provided for the public by members of staff, and the staff monitor use of documents in the search rooms, providing assistance when necessary. Basic rules are in place enforced by JAS staff regarding use of pencils only and a restriction on eating and drinking in areas where original records are accessed.

12. Communication

12.1 All staff members actively promote preservation at all times by making customers aware of the need to care for documents in talks and other outreach activities.

12.2 Staff communicate the importance of appropriate document handling in the search rooms and maintain supervision of the use of the documents and demonstrate this by example in their own work.

13. Review of the Policy

13.1 The policy will be reviewed in consultation with interested organisations, stakeholders and individuals every 3 years to take into account any new legislation, regulations, guidance, or business practices. The policy will be reviewed in June 2023.

14. Further information or comment

14.1 Copies of this policy are available in large print.

14.2 To comment on this policy or for further information about it, contact the Service Manager for Archives at:

Dorset History Centre, Bridport Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1RP

Tel: 01305 250550

E-mail: archives@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/libraries-history-culture/dorset-history-centre/dorset-history-centre.aspx>