

Collections Care & Conservation Policy

September 2023

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 acquires material. This is enshrined in the 2022 Inter-Authority on Archives which was approved by the Cabinets of both councils.

Local history services (primarily local studies library material) are provided locally at **Poole History Centre** and **Bournemouth Library's Heritage Zone** respectively.

DHC is the sole local authority archive within the county with Accredited status as conferred by The National Archives. Local studies library services and the Historic Environment Record are operated on behalf of Dorset Council.

Our Vision

That Dorset History Centre is the physical and virtual hub for the archival and recorded heritage of the county of Dorset in both hard copy and digital formats.

Our Mission

To acquire, preserve and make accessible the archives of the county of Dorset and so promote cultural, economic, educational and social well-being.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The JAS operates an integrated Collections Care and Conservation policy to deliver the long-term preservation of all the collections in its care.
- 1.2 The staff directly involved in this are the Archivist (Collections), the Archives Conservation Officer and the Collections Assistant (Reprographics), supported and assisted by volunteers.
- 1.3 This team provides technical advice, expertise and support to other staff in the service in preserving all the collections whether deposited, gifted or owned by the JAS for future generations.

2. Aim and Purpose

- 2.1 This policy provides a framework for the JAS in caring for and managing the records held at Dorset History Centre for future generations and in providing appropriate access to the archives and the information contained within them.

3. Scope

- 3.1 Preservation is the retention and maintenance of material over time whilst Collections Care is the management of all risks to the collections, including

physical risks inherent in the item or risks from other items with which it is stored, theft, vandalism and poor handling, fire, water, pests, pollutants, light, incorrect temperature and/or humidity as well as those risks associated with its management in storage, use or display.

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 This policy applies to the management of the physical risks to the collections at the Dorset History Centre and describes the type and extent of interventive conservation that will be undertaken and in what circumstances. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Preservation Policy (2023) and Digital Preservation Policy (2023).

4. Collections Care and Conservation Principles

- 4.1 All risks to collections will be assessed, and measures put in place to control them. The aim is to stabilise and preserve the original physical object where it is damaged and/or at high risk of damage during storage and/or use. Conservation practise is designed to arrest deterioration through understanding its mechanisms and applying scientifically investigated treatments and preventive measures. This is undertaken within an ethical framework to ensure that the intrinsic nature of a document is not altered, and that recognised professional standards are maintained.
- 4.2 Conservation includes examination, documentation, preventive measures, remedial treatment, and sympathetic repair where it is necessary to achieve stabilisation. No attempt is made at restoration and any supplementary materials introduced as part of this process must be distinguishable from the original in order to avoid the possibility of compromising or falsifying the original material evidence.
- 4.3 Any approved treatment will be carried out in accordance with the following general principles of archive conservation:
- Preventive measures will be taken to minimise the risk of damage. Handling training will be given to all staff and volunteers. Documents will be packaged, stored and handled in a manner designed to reduce both chemical and mechanical damage as far as possible.
 - Documents/collections at risk of damage due to high demand and/or poor condition will be made accessible, where possible, by providing a surrogate copy such as a digital image.
 - Wherever possible, items shall be preserved in the original form and condition that exist when referred for conservation, except where these significantly jeopardise their life expectancy or prevent access, in any suitable format, to the information they hold.
 - Framed archival documents and photographs will be de-framed by conservation staff before being stored in the repository. This may be reviewed if the frame is deemed to be integral to the interpretation of the object. If an item is de-framed information pertaining to the object or its provenance that is attached to the backboard will be removed (as possible) by conservation and retained.
 - Conservation treatment shall usually be restricted to consolidation and, if necessary, stabilisation to the extent that items can be digitised for access and last for a significant time into the future when stored in appropriate conditions and handled infrequently.
 - Detailed conservation work will only be carried out on significant objects i.e. material with historic, symbolic or physical interest or value. Archive staff will be consulted regarding the importance of specific records.

- Information held within items selected for treatment shall not be lost as a result of this process or be placed at risk of future loss as a consequence of treatment.
- All conservation treatment will be detectable and reversible.
- A full conservation record will be kept of all interventive treatment. It will record the structure of the object prior to treatment, an assessment of its condition including the results of any diagnostic tests, a consideration of the options for treatment as appropriate, and a report of all treatments carried out and all chemicals, materials, and processes used. These records will be maintained indefinitely.
- All materials and procedures used for preventive or remedial treatment will meet British/International Standards and/or current conservation requirements for suitability of purpose, in order to avoid introducing harmful components to documents, users, or the environment, and to maximise performance over the long term.
- The range of items treated shall be determined by the facilities and resources available and the skills of the conservation staff; where appropriate, suitable training and development shall be acquired to maintain or supplement this range.
- A reporting system, linked to the archive management program, is in operation for any member of the JAS staff to refer individual items or collections that they consider require assessment for conservation treatment.
- Conservation treatments will be approved after consultation between conservators and archivists. This will ensure that all available historical, scientific and technological information concerning the effects of treatment on the object have been considered.

4.4 Conservation staff are expected to continually review their conservation practice in the light of on-going research and development in the field, and to interpret the conservation policy according to professional standards and best practice.

5. Standards and legislation

- 5.1 The JAS aims to adhere to standards and best practice for conservation. Standards and guidance which inform conservation strategies and processes developed by the JAS include the following:
- BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections
 - BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage
 - Recommendations of BS 4971:2002 Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents.
 - Icon Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics 2020
 - The Icon Ethical Guidance 2020
 - European Confederation of Conservators Organisations (ECCO) Professional Guidelines and ECCO Code of Ethics
 - Best Practice Guideline 4: Preservation and Conservation: A guide to policy and practices in the preservation of archives, Chris Pickford, Jonathan Rhys-Lewis and Jerry Weber, 1997 Society of Archivists
 - European Confederation of Conservators Organisations (ECCO) Professional Guidelines and ECCO Code of Ethics
 - IFLA Principles for Care and Handling of Library Material, Ed. E P Adcock, 1998
 - National Preservation Office recommendations
- 5.2 While every attempt is made to ensure that the standards above inform the implementation of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy the availability of resources may at times affect compliance.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1 The staff directly involved in this are the Archivist (Collections), the Archives Conservation Officer and the Collections Assistant (Reprographics), supported and assisted by a team of volunteers.
- 6.2 All JAS staff are responsible for their own 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 input information into the archive management system, as required.
- 6.3 Conservation treatments are undertaken by appropriately qualified conservators, or by those trained by and under the supervision of appropriately qualified conservators.

7. Review of the Policy

- 7.1 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 next date for review of this policy will be September 2026.

8. Further information or comment

- 8.1 Copies of this policy are available in large print.
- 8.2 To comment on this policy or for further information about it, contact the Service Manager for Archives and Records at:

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