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## 1 Scope

This policy covers the management of the care of archives in the custody of the Royal Berkshire Archives. Reference is made throughout the document to conservation and preservation work, though the term preservation is applied to both.

*Conservation* is used to define the remedial protection or repair of archives by physical, aqueous or chemical treatments.

*Preservation* is used to define the preventative protection of archives without any direct treatment being applied to them.

## 2 Governing standards

The Royal Berkshire Archives has adopted the following standards for its preservation work:

- BS4971: British Standard: Conservation and care of archive and library collections 2017
- BS16893: British Standard: Conservation of cultural heritage 2018
- ISO14721: International Standard: Open archival information system 2018

In addition, the Royal Berkshire Archives will seek to implement best practice guidance on preservation from the Archives and Records Association, the Institute of Conservation, or other recognised national bodies.

### **3 Staffing**

- 3.1 Conservation work at the Royal Berkshire Archives will be undertaken either by professionals with a relevant conservation qualification or by staff with relevant experience under the direction of such a professional.
- 3.2 Preservation work may be undertaken by staff or volunteers under direction from a suitably qualified professional.
- 3.3 All staff at the Archives will receive some preservation training. Volunteers will receive task-specific training. Dedicated preservation staff will additionally undergo job-specific training either in-house or through a recognised external provider.

### **4 Funding**

- 4.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives will commit dedicated resources to preservation work. However the Office may additionally seek external funding for preservation projects from time-to-time.

### **5 Security, storage and environment**

- 5.1 Archive storage at the Royal Berkshire Archives will conform to the recommendations for construction, security and environment set out in BS4971 and BS16893 above. Storage areas will be monitored constantly to ensure that the recommendations are adhered to, and a record of storage conditions will be maintained.
- 5.2 All hard copy archives acquired by the Archives will be assessed for mould, dirt or infestation before they are transferred to archive storage. Only appropriate archival packaging will be used within storage areas.
- 5.3 The Archives will maintain good housekeeping within its storage areas. All storage areas will be kept clean and periodic inspections for mould or infestation will be undertaken.
- 5.4 Access to the storage areas will be controlled and no visitor to the Archives will be left unaccompanied within them. The storage areas will be locked at the end of every working day.
- 5.5 The Archives will provide or procure secure digital storage for electronic collections to conform to ISO14721. The storage will be monitored, and access to it controlled as if it were hard copy material.

## **6 Preventative work**

6.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives aims to provide protection to all documents in its care, so that they are not at risk from harm in its custody.

6.2 Documents will be assessed individually for action to protect them from harm. This assessment will include the existing condition and state of materials as well as action to protect documents from harm through future handling or use. Examples of preventative work include removing staples or fastenings and document cleaning.

6.3 The Archives will manage a programme to copy vulnerable material in its care so that visitors and staff are provided with an alternative to using original items.

6.4 The Archives will manage a programme to provide packaging for all items in its collection. This packaging will include boxing, wrapping and sleeving.

6.5 All materials and methods used in preventative work shall not affect the condition of the documents in any way and shall conform to BS4971 where appropriate.

## **7 Remedial repair**

7.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives aims to repair documents that are either received in too poor a condition to be used or are at risk of significant damage without remedial repair.

7.2 The Archives will manage a programme of repair work. Items selected for repair will be risk assessed by professional archivists and professional conservation staff before any action is taken. In general, the level of repair used will be the minimum required to stabilise the item. Examples of remedial repair work include strengthening or infilling damaged papers, resewing or recovering books, and reconstituting seal fragments.

7.3 Certain principles will always be adhered to during repair:

- 'like for like' materials should be used
- the nature and extent of the repair should be evident
- the repair will not affect the evidence or information contained in the document
- the repair should not damage or weaken the document
- the repair should be reversible without damage

7.4 All materials and treatments used will conform to the recommendations in BS4971. A record of both materials and processes used will be kept for each document repaired and will be available on demand.

## **8 Emergency preparedness**

8.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives will maintain and review an emergency or business continuity plan to protect its collections. This plan will be approved by Reading Borough Council's Emergency Planning Officer.

8.2 The Archives will ensure that risk assessments are carried out to support the continuity plan.

8.3 Training and equipment will be provided for all staff who volunteer to assist in emergency work.

## **9 Document handling and access**

9.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives will promote good handling of documents by both visitors and staff to minimise the risk of harm through use and will provide advice, materials, equipment and training to support good handling practice.

9.2 The Archives' public searchroom will be supervised. Staff will be required to ensure the security of documents is maintained and that good handling is practised.

9.3 The Archives will not produce documents for research if such use would result in a high risk of loss or damage to the document. If such a document is requested the Archives will assess the document for repair and inform the researcher of the outcome of assessment. The Archives will also consider other options for providing access to the document, such as through staff research or creation of a copy of the document.

9.4 Copies of any item will be provided in such a way that the item is not at risk of harm or damage from the copying process. Guidance on copying practice will be made publicly available and will also include information relating to copyright and permissions for re-use.

## **10 Exhibition and loan**

10.1 The Royal Berkshire Archives will conform to BS4971 in respect of any documents exhibited within the Archives.

10.2 Loan or exhibition of any document to another party will be approved by a senior professional at the Archives. Documents on loan or out for exhibition should be stored securely, and efforts made to provide conditions as close as is practicable to BS4971 and BS16893.

10.3 A receipt specifying documents out on loan should be signed by a representative of the person or institution accepting the loan. The receipt will specify the conditions of the loan. A record will be kept of all documents provided on loan.