

Preservation 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

- 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.
- 3.4 This policy operates in conjunction with other relevant JAS policies, including the Acquisitions Policy and Collections Care and Conservation Policy and the Terms of Deposit.

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 specially designed to maintain relative humidity and temperature levels consistent with the long-term preservation of archival materials and are secured through an electronic access system. The storage environment is regularly monitored to ensure it continues to meet the required standards as

specified in BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage, and BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections.

- 7.2 The repositories are regularly cleaned and a pest management programme is in operation to minimise the risk of damage to the collection from pests.
- 7.3 The staff entrance and access to office areas (not open to the public) are controlled by the electronic access system.

8. Document handling and access

- 8.1 Staff and volunteers are trained as required on the correct handling of archival collections. Training of staff includes guidance on retrieving and replacing documents in the repositories, moving them through the building, and handling them during use. Volunteers receive training on document handling and the principals of archival repackaging.
- 8.2 Customers access documents only under supervision in the search room. Invigilating staff are trained to ensure collections care procedures are followed and are available to give specific advice on handling when required. Appropriate book support, pillows, snakes, and weights are available to ensure safe handling of archives. Customers may be required to consult surrogates to avoid damage to original documents.
- 8.3 Documents may be withdrawn from public access if it is judged handling will have a serious effect on their condition or pose a risk to their long-term preservation.

9. Surrogate access

- 9.1 Photocopying of secondary sources and original documents is permitted only by the staff for the public within specific guidelines. Public self-service copying is permitted only by camera.
- 9.2 A digital overhead camera is used for the majority of internal and external reprographic requests, and to carry out digitisation programmes in line with the JAS's digitisation strategy. The digital camera permits safe digitisation of volumes and flat formats and can only be operated by trained JAS staff. Scanning projects to digitise photographic collections may be carried out by trained volunteers.
- 9.3 Suitability for reprography is dependent upon a document's physical and legal status. A document will not be copied if there is a risk to its long-term preservation.
- 9.4 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.

10. Exhibition and loans

- 10.1 Exhibition and loan of original documents must be approved by the Service Manager and the Archive Conservation Officer and will only be permitted if the borrower can meet the JAS's conditions for loans, which include commitments to environmental and security conditions. The JAS reserves the right to undertake a site visit. The use of facsimiles for in-house and external displays is encouraged.
- 10.2 Temporary removal of documents is recorded on withdrawal and return, and, where applicable, loaned only with the permission of the depositor.

10.3 Prior to external loans, condition assessments are undertaken which are used to compare and re- assess when documents return from loan. Borrowers are required to fund any conservation required.

10.4 Depositors occasionally request temporary withdrawal of documents held on their behalf. We will provide professional advice regarding the risk of doing so and will assist in taking any measures to mitigate these risk.

11. Emergency Planning

11.1 The JAS mitigates the risk of damage and loss to its collections as far as possible. Disaster recovery and salvage plans are in place and will continue to be reviewed to ensure any damage is limited in the event of a disaster or emergency. Salvage equipment and materials are regularly checked and reviewed.

11.2 Additional support for emergency salvage is available from Harwell Restoration.

12. Standards and legislation

12.1 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, BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections, and EN 16893 2018 - Archive Buildings Preservation Standard.

12.2 All information will be managed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act and Environmental Information Regulations.

13. Roles and responsibilities

13.1 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 input information into the archive management system, as required.

13.2 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.

14. Communication

14.1 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.

14.2 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.

15. Review of the Policy

15.1 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 September 2026.

16. Further information or comment

16.1 Copies of this policy are available in large print.

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

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

Tel: 01305 250550

E-mail: archives@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Website: www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsethistorycentre