

Scope of the Policy

This document sets out the Collections Care and Preservation Policy for the Highland Archive Service (HAS) and identifies the preservation and conservation requirements necessary to ensure that all archive collections in our care will be available and accessible in the future. A robust Collections Care and Preservation Policy; the principles of which can be applied systematically across all collections, is essential to prevent and mitigate damage; mechanical, biological and chemical from occurring and to stabilise collections. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Collections Management Policy which sets out the Vision, Mission Statement and Service Objectives as well as with the Collections Information Policy, Deposit Agreement Form and other relevant policy documents.

Background to the Conservation Service

The Conservation Service was established in 2009 when HAS relocated to a £10.5 million purpose-built archive facility including conservation studio, supported by The Highland Council (THC) and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The team consists of two full time Conservators; a Senior Conservator with overall responsibility for collections care, work planning and health and safety as well as acting as an Instructor on the Archive and Records Association (ARA) Conservation Training Scheme, and a Conservator working on externally funded projects. The Conservation Team is responsible for looking after the collections which are held across HAS.

Preservation Assessment

A 'Preservation Assessment Survey' was carried out to assist HAS in identifying the percentage of collections in our care which have specific preservation and conservation requirements. The Conservation Team aims to ensure that all collections in its care will be available for future generations to access, and the survey assisted this aim by identifying the extent of the Collection's conservation needs.

Preservation Provision

1.1 Preventive Conservation

- HAS recognises that preventive conservation is the most effective means of preserving the large number and diverse range of materials and record types and takes a 'whole collection' approach to ensuring collections are protected in the present and for the future.
- The aim of preventive conservation is to minimise deterioration and damage by managing risks to the collections and its success depends on collaboration between all areas of the service.
- Preventive conservation draws on knowledge from materials science, building science, chemistry, physics, biology, engineering, systems science and management and requires involvement of almost all staff at some level.

Preventive conservation occurs at all stages of the record's life and encompasses:

- Integrated pest management.
- Ensuring all staff are trained to appropriate levels for their interaction with and/or management of the collections or individual items.
- Provision of stable environments while in storage, on display, in transit and in use.
- Protection from physical damage through appropriate support, housing and handling.
- Readiness to respond appropriately to events that put collections at risk, by identification and management of risk, including disaster response planning.

1.2 Provision of suitable building conditions

- HAS staff are tasked with ensuring that appropriate building conditions are in place for the long-term storage of the collections.
- Buildings are checked regularly and routinely for signs of water ingress, pests, vandalism and structural defects.

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- Once identified, problems are immediately reported to senior staff and the facilities management team. Fire detection and prevention systems are maintained in line with current standards and are tested and serviced regularly.
- When capital projects are planned, the care of the collections is taken into account, and professional archive staff are involved in the planning and sign-off process.

1.3 Handling

- Practicality dictates that archives must be handled by staff and by customers for research and access purposes.
- All searchrooms are supervised by staff who have been trained in the safe handling of historic documents.
- Customers are given appropriate guidance and document surrogates are employed where necessary.
- Fragile items are identified and withheld from public access, and conservation treatment is scheduled and prioritised as resources permit.

1.4 Training

- HAS staff are given training in the safe and appropriate handling of historic records as part of their induction.
- Refresher courses led by a member of the Conservation Team are held periodically.
- Training includes how to handle documents correctly and safely, use of trolleys and handling aids when applicable, and guidance on using appropriate Protective Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), i.e. nitrile glove, FFP3 masks, apron and sensible footwear when required.
- Disaster response and salvage training is also provided to all relevant staff.

1.5 Group visits

- Many of the groups who visit the Highland Archive and Registration Centre, Inverness spend time in the conservation studio learning about document preservation including storage, treatments and handling as part of their visit.
- The Conservation Team regularly features in the HAS engagement programme and participates in open days and events including those in partnership with external bodies.

Integrated Pest Management

2.1 Cleaning

- Training is provided by a professionally trained conservator to staff and volunteers.
- Once trained, archive staff are able to clean documents unsupervised, however volunteers are always supervised

2.2 Quarantine

- New acquisitions are inspected before being allowed into the repositories to ensure that the introduction of pests is prevented.
- If staff identify potential pests in any collection, they will hold items temporarily in a safe place, and/ or in quarantine until a conservator has assessed the items and/ or until all risk of contamination has passed.
- Every archive centre has a disaster box which includes appropriate packaging allowing items to be double bagged and frozen if required. If this is not possible, the affected items shall be removed from the collection, and may be disposed of after consultation with the depositor.

2.3 Environmental Controls

- HAS is committed to pursuing the standards of best practice which are set out in BS4971 2017 'Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections' and EN16893 2018 'Conservation of Cultural

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Heritage Specifications for Location, Construction, and Modification of Buildings or Rooms Intended for the Storage or use of Heritage Collections’.

- All repositories are controlled by air conditioning systems; three by Building Management Systems and one, Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre a standalone air conditioning system. This helps to preserve and prolong the longevity of vulnerable and fragile documents.
- Staff monitor the climate within each of the repositories to ensure that the temperature and relative humidity is consistent with the standards recommendations; 16c - 50%rh. (At the Highland Archive Centre, Inverness, there are two cooler repositories, storing photographic and audio-visual material; 14c – 40%rh.)

2.3.1 Environmental Monitoring and Pest Control

- Environmental conditions within all repositories and display areas are monitored 24/7 using data loggers, recording the temperature and relative humidity within each strong room.
- The data is collected and analysed on a monthly basis by a member of the Conservation Team and this information is used to plan improvements and to implement control measures as necessary.
- In addition, weekly environmental checks are carried out in across all archive centres using a handheld digital thermohygrometer.
- When an insect is identified as an ‘archival enemy’ i.e. beetles or larvae, appropriate action is then taken to eradicate the insect(s).
- Repositories are monitored using insect traps as part of weekly environmental checks. Traps are changed every 3 months.

2.4 Display Cases

- Exhibition cases are secure, positioned to avoid excessive vibrations, sources of strong light and heat.
- The environment is kept stable using a Pelsorb® cassette (that can be re-conditioned in a repository) and a data logger, allowing consistent data recording of collections.
- Appropriate light levels are measured using a lux meter using guidance, found on BS4971 and using the National Conservation Service’s guidance document on Display Lighting and Fading Policy.¹

2.5 Packaging

- An ongoing project is underway which aims to increase the number of documents which are housed within archival-quality packaging materials. Acid-free boxes, filefolders and wrapping papers are used, along with polyester and Tyvek® sleeves.
- Potentially acidic ancillary packaging materials, or those of unknown quality, are replaced using appropriate packaging.
- Documents will be labelled and packed in a manner which reduces the need for handling.
- Photographs will be stored in polyester, polypropylene or Silver-safe® enclosures, rolled items will be protected with polyester, acid-free tissue or Tyvek®, and vulnerable unboxed material will be wrapped and stored appropriately.
- Records collected by the Records Management Service will only be accepted if they are placed in the approved corporate records box and do not exceed the maximum weight limit of 15kg

During Transit

3.1 Records in Transit

- Occasionally archives are in transit, whilst uplifting a collection for accessioning or before and after conservation. The item(s) must be assessed as fit for travel by an archivist, who will consult with a conservator as necessary.

¹ National Conservation Service; Guidance on Display Lighting and Fading Policy, CMR 127 17-04-01, 28th April 2019

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3.1.1. Packing during transit

- Documents must be packed in such a way that they will not be compromised or damaged during the journey. They should be protected from sudden jolts, excessive vibration, and environmental factors such as wind and rain.
- Documents should be carefully wrapped and placed into sturdy containers which can be sealed and moved without difficulty.
- Vulnerable or fragile documents should be protected by enclosing them within suitably padded boxes.
- Careful consideration should be given to the unpacking process to minimise the risk of accidental damage on arrival.

3.2 Personnel

- Archive staff must wear relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Always use trolleys and handling aids when applicable.
- Adequate support must be used in transit to support documents.
- Appropriate training will be provided by a conservator.

3.3 Whilst in transit

- When transporting a large quantity of material, boxes should be packed into plastic containers or carefully stacked and transported within a suitable van.
- Records should be packed carefully into vehicles to ensure that the movement of the vehicle will not damage them.
- On arrival, the staff member should transport only what can be carried comfortably and safely using relevant PPE.
- During loading and unloading it is preferable to place documents onto a suitable trolley to minimise the risk of personal injury, and to prevent the accidental damage of records from poor handling or dropping.

3.4 Labelling and Tracking

- Each transit container should be addressed clearly, and all boxes and packaging should be labelled with the relevant reference numbers. Production slips must be completed and filed correctly, ready for transit.

3.5 Vehicles

- Archive staff may transport documents between sites, only once approved by their Line Manager in line with service / depositor agreements.
- Staff vehicles (own car, pool car or hire vehicle) must be covered by business insurance.

3.5.1. Vehicle Security / Health and Safety

- Staff must ensure that records are protected from exposure to weather, excessive light and other risks such as theft. Eg. Original records must not be left unattended in a vehicle.
- To ensure the safety of both staff and documents, a risk assessment must be carried out in advance of any transit taking place which involves a large quantity of materials.
- With regard to the transportation of small quantities of material, it is the responsibility of the driver to minimise risk and ensure that reasonable security measures are adopted.

Digitisation

4.1 Scanning and photography of records

- Digitisation for the purposes of this policy describes the scanning and photographing of books, maps, plans, drawings, manuscripts, prints, negatives and slides, i.e. it refers to the creation of digitally produced surrogates and facsimiles.

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- Digitisation underpins our preservation strategy by allowing us to increase public access to information, whilst reducing the need for original material to be handled directly.
- HAS may digitise historic records which are held as part of the HAS archive collections to facilitate access, for display purposes or as part of a wider project.
- HAS may digitise historic records on behalf of private clients and external organisations, subject to copyright and subject to our pricing policy.
- Digitisation is carried out either in house or by a professional photographer as and when required.

Disaster Planning

5.1 Disaster Planning

- Each archive centre has a disaster response plan which is reviewed regularly by the Senior Conservator, working closely with the Archivist and wider archive team and updated where necessary.
- Staff are given a hardcopy of the disaster response handbook as required, and a digital copy is filed on the share drive.
- Salvage materials and disaster response boxes are in each of the four archive centres.
- Each box has an inventory printed on the lid, and the contents are regularly checked.
- Practical training for all staff in responding to disaster situations is provided periodically.

5.2 Training

- Disaster training is provided as part of induction as appropriate and refresher training for all staff is also delivered periodically.
- Training includes how to handle documents correctly and safely, disaster response and salvage, including appropriate (PPE).

Conservation

6.1 Remedial Conservation

- HAS has two professionally trained conservators and remedial conservation work is undertaken by them.
- HAS maintains a conservation priority list, recording all items from the collections requiring treatment (see below). Each item has been allocated a priority, i.e., “High”, “Medium” or “Low” (Appendix C).
- Catalogue entries on the CALM database will be updated to reflect the priority level, using the “Conservation Priority” field. Up to ten items in each category (High, Medium and Low) will be selected as priorities at any given time.
- The Archivist(s) along with the Senior Conservator will decide which items to treat based on the conservation priority provided in the CALM database.
- Conservation staff will provide advice, guidance and training to staff throughout the year.
- To ensure the long-term safety of the collections, only appropriately qualified and experienced conservators will be employed. Externally sourced conservators may be employed depending on requirements and as resources permit.

6.2 Documentation

- Before any work takes place, treatment options will be discussed with the Archivist(s).
- All items must be catalogued before any conservation work begins.
- All conservation work will be recorded using the specialist archive management software (CALM).
- Reports are created for each item which is treated, and these reports are linked to the catalogue record.

Conservation and Staff Responsibilities

7.1 Conservation Service

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- Conservation staff work collaboratively to ensure that optimum care of the collections is achieved; ensuring documentation, storage and movement of the collections is managed correctly, and assisting and contributing to the care of collections.
- Our aims are to ensure the long-term preservation of the records that we treat and to provide a service that is trusted and valued by providing specialist advice to HAS staff, depositors and external clients, on the preservation and conservation of their collections.

7.2 Staff

- All HAS staff should be vigilant of risks to the collections and changes in their condition.
- Any risks and changes should be reported to the Conservation Team.
- Conservation training forms part of the HAS induction programme and refresher training is provided.
- HAS encourages conservation staff to have or be working towards the achievement and maintenance of accredited status.

7.3 Monitoring

- HAS staff will report any preservation and conservation requirements to the Conservation Team.
- Statistics will be maintained for preventive conservation work on records, including: pest treatments; records assessed and stabilised for storage; environmental data for storage areas; record condition reports; environmental data for exhibition and transport of collections.

Policy Review Schedule

This policy will be reviewed at least once every 3 years, or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation.

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Appendix A

Definition of terms

Conservation Collection Care and Preservation terms

The following definitions represent the common use of the relevant terms in the conservation profession.

Conservator

A conservator is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future. Conservators contribute to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties. Conservators undertake responsibility for, and carry out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; development of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and interventions.

Conservation

Conservation activities are aimed at preserving records and their significance and may include preservation, conservation treatments, examination, documentation, research, treatment, preventive conservation, and education.

Conservation ethics

Conservation practice is guided by conservation ethics which outline conservators' obligations to maintain the integrity of the records being cared for in the long term; to take into account the interests of stakeholders, including cultural and religious considerations; to preserve the values that contribute to the significance of the record; to record all actions taken to preserve/conservate the record; and to ensure that appropriate skills and knowledge are employed in all conservation activities.

Conservation treatment

Conservation treatments consist mainly of direct, or interventive, action carried out on cultural heritage material with the aim of stabilising condition, repairing damage and retarding further deterioration.

Disaster

A disaster is any unplanned incident threatening the structure or contents of an archive, with the potential to have a detrimental effect on collections, and which is beyond the immediate ability of the archive's staff and normal management structure to control. A disaster can be a large or small event.

Preventive conservation

Preventive conservation consists of the actions taken to retard or prevent deterioration of, or damage to, cultural material by control of its environment. This is done through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures for the following: appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage, exhibition, packing, transport and use; integrated pest management; emergency preparedness and response; and reformatting/duplication and surrogacy.

Preservation

The preservation of cultural property through activities that minimise chemical and physical deterioration and damage, and that prevent loss of information. The primary goal of preservation is to prolong the existence of cultural property.

Significance

'Significance' refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. Significance helps unlock the potential of collections, creating opportunities for communities to access and enjoy collections, and to understand the history, cultures and environments of the Highlands.

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Condition

The condition of collections is framed in terms of risk in *normal* use, i.e. the usual or most common use for those collections or records in their life at HAS. This provides a standardised set of condition definitions that can be applied across the HAS and which relate to the proposed use of the collection or the record. The definitions are set out in Appendix B of this document.

Remedial Conservation – Preservation aspect

Remedial conservation describes those interventions which are applied to promote the chemical and physical stabilisation of materials, to extend their life.

Conservation involves the hands-on treatment of items from the collections. This work can be time-consuming and involves such things as the cleaning and consolidation of books and documents, the humidification and flattening of rolled plans and manuscripts, the lining of maps and the strengthening of fragile and / or torn documents.

When repairing a document, we endeavour to retain as much of the original as possible, whilst ensuring that long-term stability and accessibility are maintained.

Remedial conservation will be undertaken only when necessary, to ensure the long-term safety of vulnerable material. The decision to repair a document will consider the historical importance of the item, its condition, and the cost implications. Consideration will also be given to the needs of the researcher and the level of use which the document is expected to sustain in the future. The decision to allow conservation work to take place will be made by the responsible archivist, after consultation with a professionally trained conservator.

Risk management criteria

HAS CIMSPA risk management assessments outline the organisational approach to risk management and define the criteria for assigning different levels of consequence to collection-associated risks.

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Appendix B

References

BS 4971:2017; 'Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections'

EN16893: 2018; 'Conservation of Cultural Heritage Specifications for Location, Construction, and Modification of Buildings or Rooms Intended for the Storage or use of Heritage Collections'

PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management;

PAS198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections

National Records Scotland (NRS) definitions <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/record-keeping/NRSConservationCareandPreservationPolicy.pdf>

'Standard for Record Repositories' (The National Archives, 2004), supplemented by TNA's 'Framework of Standards (2004) <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/standards-framework.html>

Reference BS EN 16095: 2012 Conservation of cultural property- Condition recording for moveable cultural heritage.

European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations, *ECCO Professional Guidelines*, 2002, <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html>

Security

External Intruder alarm to conform to BS4737-4.3

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Appendix C

Rating	Consequence or Impact on Collections
High	<p>Documents in a weak and unstable condition; there is a risk of information loss, e.g. loose pages; cannot be accessed or copied - may be marked 'unfit for production'; evidence of mould/mycological growth as a potential health and safety risk; require conservation treatment to prevent further loss; records with a specific access deadline.</p> <p>The record/s will be damaged beyond salvaging and replacement is not possible. The damage and/or the required conservation treatment will permanently and irreversibly, negatively affect the record/collection's overall significance.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>The number of records that will be affected is high and cost to replace and or/ treat and preserve will exceed the annual operating budget.</p>
Medium	<p>Disfigured or damaged; usable for study; signs of deterioration and so continued use would cause further damage; images of this record in this condition would harm the reputation of HAS.</p> <p>Some permanent impact on one or more of the following would result but may be reduced through treatment: the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, accessibility of the records, availability for access and/or exhibition.</p> <p>The cost of remedial treatments may be considerable or have an impact on other programmed work; additional resources may have to be sought if the conservation treatment cannot be undertaken within operating budgets and has the potential for impact on other in-house work programmes.</p>
Low	<p>Disfigured or damaged but stable, e.g. heavily soiled; usable for study but may require further treatment to prevent eventual deterioration; packaging to be evaluated and upgraded; images of this record in this condition may harm the reputation of HAS. Non-standard archival formats that require special storage or transfer to archival medium.</p> <p>Minor damage could occur but could be relatively easily remedied or treated with no permanent impact on the significance, any of the values that contribute to the significance, the functionality or accessibility of a record and/or the record's availability for access and or exhibition.</p> <p>Conservation treatment times are estimated as small and can be accomplished utilising triage efficiently by specialist staff.</p>