



Buckinghamshire County Council

Libraries and Heritage

Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

Preservation Policy

February 2005

1 Scope of the policy

The policy covers principles and practices to be observed in the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies as a whole and the conservation workshop in particular. It outlines the key considerations for working with archives.

2 General principles

The preservation of archive materials requires skills acquired by training and experience. These must be exercised with professional judgement at all times. It is the responsibility of those who administer archive collections to ensure that the highest standards are met.

3 Storage

- 3.1 Archives must be stored in strongrooms of robust construction with protection for all walls, roofs, ceilings and openings against unauthorised entry, fire, flood and damp. Strongrooms should meet the *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*, BS 5454:2000, and The National Archives *Standard for record repositories* (1st edition, 2004).
- 3.2 Strongrooms must have controlled levels of temperature, relative humidity and lighting meeting the recommendations in BS 5454:2000. Conditions will be monitored continuously and reported to the County Archivist at agreed regular intervals, so that any appropriate action may be taken.
- 3.3 Strongrooms are to be cleaned at regular intervals including floors, shelves, boxes, volumes and other loose items. Ideally there should be a continuous cleaning programme.
- 3.4 All documents should be packed and stored using appropriate materials of archival standard.
- 3.5 It is essential to ascertain the future use and storage requirements of all items before conservation work is undertaken.
- 3.6 Documents should be cleaned by conservation staff as soon as they are received at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies. Any seriously contaminated material must be placed in labelled polythene bags and removed to the conservation workshop for suitable treatment.

- 3.7 Any potentially damaging fixtures (eg paperclips, staples) are to be removed during cataloguing. Documents with adhesive tape should be referred to conservation staff.

4 Conservation

- 4.1 All methods used should be reversible.
- 4.2 All materials used should be of archival standard.
- 4.3 All conservation methods should use materials compatible with the document being repaired.
- 4.4 All conservation work carried out must relate specifically to the needs of each document to be conserved.
- 4.5 No process should remove or conceal the written or visual evidence of the document. Unnecessary or excessive repair is unacceptable.
- 4.6 No attempt should be made to complete a missing text or image or to restore an item to an imagined original state.
- 4.7 No binding method should restrict access to the text.
- 4.8 A detailed record of materials and methods should be kept.
- 4.9 All processes for archival conservation should conform to the more detailed recommendations in BS 4971: Parts 1 and 2.
- 4.10 Programme for conservation will be determined between the Heritage Manager (County Archivist) and the Conservator, based upon the value and usage of documents, degree of deterioration and specific requests from members of the public to consult documents.

5 Document handling

- 5.1 Careless and inappropriate handling of documents is the most common cause of damage in repositories. The risks can be minimised through the involvement of the Conservator in training for users and staff. Guidelines for the safe handling are available.
- 5.2 The searchroom is to be supervised at all times whilst open to the public. It is the duty of all staff, not only those on duty at any particular time, to ensure that the searchroom rules for document handling are enforced at all times and to correct any breaches of the rules they may see.
- 5.3 Documents will not be produced if, in the opinion of the Archivist on duty or the Conservator, they are too fragile to be handled. If a request is received for such an item, the item will be examined and an assessment made of the conservation treatment required. If treatment is estimated to take less than

three hours, the Conservator will endeavour to complete the necessary work within three months of the request being made.

- 5.4 The copying of documents in surrogate formats (eg microforms and digital images) will be pursued as resources allow. In cases of documents which have been reproduced in this way, the surrogates normally should be produced in preference to the original.

6 Reprography

- 6.1 The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies will endeavour to provide copies of documents for private study wherever possible, subject to their condition and format, restrictions specified by their owners, copyright restrictions.

Photocopying

- 6.2.1 This is potentially the most damaging means of reproduction. In deciding whether an item is suitable for photocopying, staff should be guided by National Preservation Office leaflet *Photocopying of Library and Archive Materials* and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies' own internal guidelines for photocopying.
- 6.2.2 Members of the public will not be allowed to make their own photocopies from original archive material.

Photography

- 6.3.1 The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies will undertake to supply photographs of documents in its care. A commercial photographer will be used, and the charges dependent upon his or her rates.
- 6.3.2 Users will normally be allowed to take their own photographs of documents, subject to the Centre's rules for photography and copyright restrictions.

7 Disaster planning

- 7.1 The Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies is covered by the Libraries and Heritage Service disaster recovery plan in place, which will be reviewed annually.
- 7.2 Training and equipment will be provided for the use of staff volunteering to assist in disaster recovery.