



# **Collections Care and Conservation Policy**

February 2017

## **Our Mission**

The West Yorkshire Archive Service exists to preserve the past, serve the present and protect the future. We do this by collecting and looking after the unique documentary heritage of the region and by helping members of the public use and enjoy these records.

**Preserving the past, serving the present, protecting the future**

## **Our Vision**

To provide a welcoming and engaging service that will inspire people to use the archives of West Yorkshire, enabling them to celebrate their identity and understand their past, present and future.

## **Introduction**

The West Yorkshire Archive Service [WYAS] is committed to the care and conservation of its collections in pursuit of its mission to preserve the past, serve the present and protect the future.

Our users will appreciate and understand the privilege of seeing and handling original historical materials as part of our vision to inspire them to connect with and value their heritage.

Using current archival standards, our aim is to ensure that these collections are permanently protected, preserved and accessible for both archive users and staff.

## **Standards**

All current WYAS collections care and conservation activity is informed by the following standards and frameworks:

**Archive Service Accreditation Standard, June 2014, The National Archives (TNA)**

**The professional standards of the Institute of Conservation (ICON)**

**Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Libraries and Archives, 2002, The Collections Trust**

<b>PD 5454:2012</b>	<b>Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.</b>
<b>PAS 198:2012</b>	<b>Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections.</b>
<b>BS 4971:2002</b>	<b>Repair and Allied Processes for the Conservation of Documents. Recommendations</b>
<b>BS EN 16790:2016</b>	<b>Integrated pest management (IPM) for protection of cultural heritage</b>
<b>PAS 197:2009</b>	<b>Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management</b>
<b>BS 11200:2014</b>	<b>Crisis Management – Guidance and Good Practice</b>
<b>PD 25666:2010</b>	<b>Business Continuity Management – Guidance on Exercising and Testing for Continuity and Contingency Programmes</b>
<b>BS EN 15898:2011</b>	<b>Main general terms and definitions</b>

BS EN 16095:2012	Condition recording for movable cultural heritage
BS EN 16242:2012	Procedures and instruments for measuring humidity in the air and moisture exchanges between air and cultural property.
BS EN 15757:2010	Specifications for temperature and relative humidity to limit climate-induced mechanical damage in organic hygroscopic materials.
BS EN 15999-1:2014	Guidelines for design of showcases for exhibition and preservation of objects. General requirements.
PD CEN/TS 16163:2014	Guidelines and procedures for choosing appropriate lighting for indoor exhibitions.
BS EN 15946:2011	Packing principles for transport.
BS EN 16648:2015	Transport methods.
BS ISO 18916:2007	Imaging materials. Processed imaging materials. Photographic activity test (PAT) for enclosure materials
BS ISO 18902:2013	Imaging materials. Processed imaging materials. Albums, framing and storage materials
BS ISO 11108: 1996	Archival Paper: Requirements for permanence and durability
BS EN ISO 9706:2000	Paper for Documents: Requirements for Permanence
BS EN ISO 18938:2014	Imaging materials. Optical discs. Care and handling for extended storage.

Future developments in national and international standards for collections care and conservation will inform any changes made to the relevant policies of West Yorkshire Archive Service. These include:

- BS/EN 16893 Conservation of Cultural Heritage - New Sites & Buildings Intended for the Storage & Use of Collections. This new standard is intended to replace BS PD5454:2012 and PAS 198:2012 when it is published, expected to be 2017.
- BS 4971:2002 Repair and Allied Processes for the Conservation of Documents. Recommendations. This standard is currently under review.

## Function and scope

The policy outlines the reasoning, principles and approach WYAS applies to activities which have an impact on Collections Care and Conservation. It encompasses both physical and digital collections, as well as organisational records such as catalogues which are critical to their care and use.

WYAS physical collections are predominantly paper-based and mostly in formats such as volumes, bundles and plans. Other materials such as parchment, seals and photographs form a smaller proportion of WYAS holdings. WYAS digital collections can be held in a variety of file formats and may be stored on a variety of disc or tape-based removable storage devices, which may be in optical or magnetic format.

The policy is relevant to and intended for: WYAS staff; the public; depositors; volunteers; the governing body (West Yorkshire Joint Services Committee) and other stakeholders.

## Principles

- WYAS is committed to the permanent preservation of its current and future collections for all current and future generations to interpret and appreciate.
- Archives which are physically stable improve, extend and prolong access to their intellectual content.
- All WYAS stakeholders play a role in Collections Care and Conservation when interacting with the collections and the systems and infrastructure surrounding them.
- Risks which threaten the preservation of WYAS collections are varied and change over time. Ongoing assessment, management and reduction of these risks are fundamental to our mission to preserving the past.
- A current Collections Care and Conservation Plan will direct WYAS in maintaining and enhancing the physical stability of its collections.
- Public availability of the policy promotes the importance of Collections Care and Conservation and increases the accountability of WYAS.
- Current sector-recognised standards underpin this policy as well as shape improvements.

## Managing risks to the collections

Storage and access facilities provided for WYAS collections are varied, spanning five locations and occupying seven stores.

WYAS recognises that its collections are exposed to inherent risks, the severity and likelihood of which depend on many factors. We aim to reduce these in principled, but pragmatic ways in order to accommodate local needs, facilities and resources. We manage predictable risks, such as the natural deterioration of the organic materials within archives, and minimise the likelihood of unpredictable risks such as theft.

Tools such as Benchmarks In Collections Care assessments, Preservation Assessment Surveys (PAS), hazard risk assessment matrices and analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat (SWOT) are used to evaluate the following collection care issues within our various service areas and storage locations.

### Buildings/Storage

WYAS storage and access facilities will provide PD5454 level protection for the majority of its collections for the majority of the time, including installation of fire and intruder detection and monitoring systems.

Five of these storage facilities are managed within buildings shared with other organisations<sup>1</sup>; two storage facilities are dedicated to WYAS collections storage<sup>2</sup>.

Facilities management, including housekeeping is coordinated and commissioned according to local arrangements. WYAS's facilities management partner, Bradford MDC provides advice and services where required. We will maintain records to monitor and coordinate facilities management and aim to also increase our influence and autonomy in our shared buildings to help improve it.

WYAS aims to achieve PD5454 standard storage for all of its collections all of the time. We will actively seek project funding, local partnerships and the advocacy of top WYJS management and its governing body to work towards this.

WYAS plans shelved storage of its collections to maximise their physical protection. This includes use of barcoding, standard box sizes and a locations database. This means we can store items according to physical needs (such as format) and access needs (such as frequency). We will continue to roll out this programme, including for new accessions and where collections are intended for relocation.

Collections may be identified and prioritised for transfer to other WYAS sites to provide tailored storage for example for atypical formats such as oversized items, sensitive media such as photographs or in the location in which they are to be used.

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<sup>1</sup> WYAS Bradford (at Bradford Central Library) , WYAS Calderdale (at Calderdale Central Library), WYAS Kirklees (at Huddersfield Central Library and Red Doles Library store), WYAS Leeds (at West Yorkshire Joint Services, Morley)

<sup>2</sup> WYAS Wakefield (at West Yorkshire History Centre), WYAS Central Archive Store (at West Yorkshire Joint Services, Morley)

## **Emergency preparedness**

An emergency such as fire or flood is usually an unpredictable event which, on any scale could threaten the survival, stability, integrity and access to WYAS collections.

WYAS's disaster plan is designed to provide practical and flexible guidance which can be interpreted according to need. The sections on preparedness, reaction and recovery apply service-wide. Coupled with up to date contact lists relevant to each WYAS location, the plan focuses on safeguarding the collections whilst supporting business continuity to minimise disruption to management of the collections and related services.

Introduction to the disaster plan is included in new staff induction programmes with periodic training and disaster kits provided at all WYAS sites. We will ensure that all staff know what may constitute an emergency, first response procedures and who to contact.

We will create priority (although inevitably subjective) lists of key collections towards which salvage or protection efforts may be directed or focussed should the need arise. Additional support for emergency salvage is available via subscription to an external provider (Harwell) as well as membership of a regional emergency planning support network (Yorkshire Rapid Response Network).

## **Business continuity**

WYJS's business continuity plan will complement the WYAS disaster plan. Leadership, management and financial frameworks will provide resilience in unforeseen events or circumstances which may impact the preservation of the collections.

## **Security**

WYAS minimises the risk of losing any of its unique and valuable archives through theft or misplacement. Our collections are stored securely on dedicated premises where access to the collections is restricted, controlled and monitored. The public use these collections in supervised search rooms.

We will also keep records to monitor the location and access situation of any collections which are temporarily removed from their usual storage area.

Additional security measures such as CCTV and electronic access control will be applied where proportionate and practical.

## **Environmental monitoring**

Temperature and humidity levels affect the rate WYAS collections deteriorate. PD5454 and PAS 198 provide guidance on the ranges suitable for their storage to minimise this.

WYAS continuously monitors and records conditions with calibrated equipment in all its storage areas to check compliance with these recommendations and inform preservation measures. We will regularly review and professionally interpret the collected data for use in planning control measures.

Our largest storage facility (WYAS, Wakefield) will also allow conditions to be assessed remotely and in real time; we will extend this technology across WYAS storage facilities to enhance the impact of our environmental monitoring.

## **Environmental control**

WYAS will provide environmental conditions in line with recommendations in PAS198 and PD5454 for the majority of our collections for the majority of the time to maintain their stability and extend their usable life.

To do this we will:

- Ensure air conditioning systems provide specified conditions
- Ensure building maintenance, housekeeping and strong room practices support environmental control
- Install temporary equipment such as dehumidifiers to locally improve conditions where and when required
- Move physically sensitive or valuable collections to a more suitable storage area where and when required
- Package collections to provide suitable micro-climates and environmental buffering
- Arrange storage areas with consideration for air circulation
- Minimise the time collections are outside the storage area
- Acclimatise collections moved between different environments

## **Packaging**

WYAS' policy is to provide basic archival packaging and labelling to all collections where practical and that this may be carried out by any member of staff with basic training using materials advised as suitable by Conservation staff. We will also support future depositors who may be able to package collections prior to deposit.

Our aim is to increase physical protection, provide a buffer to variations in environmental conditions, enhance chemical stability, standardise physical formats, provide surfaces for labelling and group items together. Packaging will also facilitate our barcoding programme which enhances the access, security and organisation of our collections.

A large proportion of our collections will be most effectively packaged within an outer enclosure such as a box, and inner packaging which encloses the document itself such as a folder. We will take into account the additional storage space required to package or repackage collections appropriately.

## **Access**

We will physically make available collections to staff or users with the authority to do so and within the relevant legal frameworks. Exceptions to this policy may apply for Collections Care and Conservation reasons, including where a reproduction is available or an item is deemed to be “unfit for production” (if access will produce irreparable damage or presents a health and safety risk due to mould for example).

WYAS manages access to its collections to help reduce the inherent risks of damage to them incurred as part of this service. This includes designing procedures, training and information for staff, the public and other stakeholders. We also use our intellectual management of collections (cataloguing, labelling etc.) to help reduce unnecessary access and handling.

We will identify collections or documents which may be at particular risk from access and use the catalogue to record this. Use of at-risk items may be restricted, refused or may be facilitated for example using preservation measures such as packaging and reprographics.

## **Handling**

WYAS collections are at risk of damage during handling by staff or users, especially if items are frequently used or are unwieldy or fragile. We aim to reduce this by providing appropriate collection handling assistance such as book rests and weights as well as suitable furniture and equipment for the consultation and transit of archives such as trolleys.

We will train staff and advise the public in good handling practice and encourage a culture of awareness and individual accountability.

## **Transportation**

WYAS aims to provide collections access at the same site as the storage facility. However, as a multi-site service, collection transit is often necessary by a dedicated member of staff and vehicle, for example to access conservation or reprographics.

Collection transfer procedures and documentation help monitor and reduce risk to the collections. High risk items such as glass or infested collections are only transported off site when this can be justified.

Large scale collection removals, for example using external contractors, will be project managed to reduce risks to the collections.

## **Reprographics**

WYAS values the use of surrogates produced via reproduction from an original archive as a both a preservation and access tool, as well as a business asset. We may provide

or facilitate the reprography of collections items according to request, for preservation or exhibition.

Suitability for reprography is dependent upon a collection item's physical and legal status. It should also enhance both its access and preservation prospects - copying should not be detrimental to the long term preservation of the original. We will reduce the impact of copying where possible by the use of packaging for protection and the use of cameras in preference to platen copiers. Public self-service copying is permitted only by camera or by overhead bookscanner, where available.

WYAS will arrange systematic programmes of reprography such as microfilming and digitisation for prioritised and appropriate collections to provide enhanced access and preservation benefits. Preceded by collections assessments, this may include stabilisation of at-risk material. Bespoke handling training is given to operators.

To inspire people beyond the normal reaches of our collections, we will produce high quality surrogates externally by arrangement to facilitate long term exhibitions for example or for publicity, this policy avoids exposure of originals beyond periods and parameters recommended in PD5454.

Professional members of staff may refuse copying for relevant physical or legal reasons.

## **Exhibitions and loans**

WYAS seeks to inspire people with its collections beyond the usual confines of the search room. We will do this whilst ensuring their protection in accordance with our Exhibitions and Loans Policy and in the following ways:

- use of PD5454 standard display cases at the West Yorkshire History Centre;
- use of temporary exhibition cases for events;
- selection of appropriately stable material;
- Provision of archival display supports;
- use of surrogates;
- condition assessment before and after display;
- arrangement of short term loans to accredited Museums or Archives.

Depositors occasionally request temporary withdrawal of collections items held on their behalf by WYAS for display. We will provide professional advice regarding the risks of doing so and will assist in taking any measures to mitigate these risks. Borrowers are required to fund any conservation required.

Long term external loans (over one year) or permanent loans are not permitted. The Head of Archives has final discretion over matters concerning exhibition and loans.

## **New collections**

WYAS will continue to collect archives indefinitely, according to its Collection Policy. We will assess new acquisitions at the earliest opportunity for physical stability to prevent deterioration from rapidly evolving problems such as damp or insects or contamination of existing WYAS collections. Advice is sought from Conservation if additional monitoring is required before incorporation into the main collections. No new acquisitions are placed directly into WYAS strong rooms without inspection and quarantine.

WYAS will provide new collections with improved storage conditions and collection care standards to prolong their accessible life. Initial assessments will consider their broad preservation needs including factors such as condition, packaging, previous storage, format and extent.

WYAS will also be a source of advice and information to potential depositors regarding collections care in order to improve the stability of future acquisitions.

## **Conservation treatment**

WYAS Conservation will carry out conservation treatment on selected collection items to enable access and retard degradation. Conservation treatments may include cleaning, repair or rebinding.

Selection for conservation treatment is based on:

- access demands (present and anticipated);
- reprographics needs and availability of surrogates;
- long term stabilisation and storage requirements;
- relevant collections surveys and risk assessments;
- status of deposit or ownership;
- historical significance;
- current condition and stability.

All interventive conservation activities are recorded using the Conservation module of the Calm database.

Conservation treatment is carried out at the WYAS purpose-built studio at the West Yorkshire History Centre or occasionally at other sites. Appropriately qualified staff undertake conservation treatments guided by current, recognised professional standards such as BS 4971 and ICON's Code of Ethics.

Conservation treatment will be led by an Accredited Conservator-Restorer (ACR), awarded by the Institute for Conservation (ICON). Where external conservation work or consultancy is required, practitioners must also be qualified appropriately.

## Surveys

WYAS will survey its collections periodically to quantify and assess stability, preservation and conservation needs. The extent and detail of a survey will be tailored towards a particular Collections Care and Conservation enquiry and the results used to strategically plan activities such as packaging, cleaning and storage arrangements. Survey information and related decision making is recorded and results communicated internally and externally as required.

We will also use recognised survey methodologies such as the Preservation Assessment Survey and Benchmarks in Collection Care for their statistical information and contextual perspective as a means to target and direct improvements.

## Training

WYAS staff will receive relevant training at an appropriate level to help minimise physical risks to collections and promote consistency and best practice. This includes provision of written guidelines relating in particular to handling, reprographics and packaging, and use of a handling collection to illustrate best and bad practice.

All new staff will undertake an induction session with the Conservation team to introduce WYAS policies and procedures relating to collection care. Training needs are informed by consultation, monitoring and surveys (such as Benchmarks in Collections Care).

We will ensure all staff can identify urgent cases for conservation assessment, such as live mould, insects, wet or damp items where time is a critical element of the preservation process.

We will also provide advice and training on Collections Care to the public via enquiries and workshops to help raise awareness of best practice, to benefit our existing and future collections.

## Managing digital content and collections

WYAS has a business interest in maintaining and recovering accessibility to digital information resources. This is recognised as a core development area for WYAS and critical for its future relevance. WYAS has been active in assessing the needs and resources required to collect, manage, preserve and keep its digital collections available.

Selection, accessioning and ingest of digital materials, along with the development of strategies for digital preservation and for the storage and handling of digital material will take place in accordance with the WYAS Digital Archives Policy.

## **Volunteers**

WYAS provides volunteer opportunities relating to Collections Care and Conservation in accordance with its Volunteer Policy. Volunteer contributions are intended to complement, assist and extend the reach of collections care without replacing professional expertise. The privileged level of access volunteers are given to do this, inspires a closer connection with archives, one of our key aspirations.

We will select projects for volunteer contributions which are beyond the normal scope of staff and will typically involve cleaning and packaging. Our volunteer programme will be supported but also limited by, the supervision, training and resources required.

## **Finances**

Resources required to support Collections Care and Conservation of WYAS collections are budgeted for and financed by WYJS. This includes staffing, training, operational support, buildings, maintenance, storage, energy, equipment and materials.

WYAS will seek to extend its Collections Care and Conservation impact via projects which link to collecting, cataloguing and outreach policies and priorities. External funding may be sought to support such projects from charities, trusts, commercial and educational bodies in local, regional or national contexts. Harnessing wider benefits, for example from additional equipment, expertise, training, experience and partnerships is incorporated into project planning.

WYAS does not expect depositors to fund conservation work unless they wish priority conservation of their collections.

## **Responsibility and endorsement**

WYAS, Head of Archives has overall professional responsibility for the Collections Care and Conservation policy. Operational aspects of the policy are directed by professional staff, including the Head of Conservation and members of the Conservation team for specialist advice. WYJS Divisional Manager for Heritage has strategic responsibility for governance, resources and business plan areas affecting WYAS policies; the WYJS Business Manager endorses WYAS policies and makes recommendations for their incorporation by the governing body, West Yorkshire Joint Services Committee.

## **Review**

This policy is issued in February 2017 and will be reviewed and updated as necessary every three years.

## Definitions

**access:** contact with and viewing of archive documents for the interpretation and appreciation of both their form and content through physical, surrogate and virtual means, usually via search rooms, events, displays and the internet

**archive:** archive documents preserved, without limit of time, in a designated repository, and normally in the arrangement in which they were created

**collection:** a group of archival documents selected for preservation and access

**collections care:** a suite of integrated philosophies, activities and practices, including preservation, conservation and access, which contribute to reducing risk to the archive's physical and intellectual stability and integrity

**conservation:** the active protection of an archive, by the minimal physical and chemical treatments necessary to resist further deterioration, which will not adversely affect the integrity of the original

**degradation:** the gradual deterioration (towards ultimate destruction) of archive materials due to chemical, physical and biological action

**depositor:** the owner (individual or organisation) of archival documents held by WYAS on their behalf for archival storage and public access purposes, according to the terms of the deposit agreements

**digital collections:** archival material, whether born digitally, or as a digital version, existing on physical hardware within and without WYAS

**emergency:** unpredictable event of any size or extent which threatens the stability of the collections and the infrastructure which supports their preservation and access

**preservation:** the passive protection of an archive, where no direct physical or chemical treatment to the item occurs beyond the provision of safe environmental and storage conditions

**surrogate:** where a copy or facsimile of the original is made in order that its preservation can continue while the facsimile takes the strain of use, exhibition etc.

**volunteer:** individuals who offer their time and skills free of charge to support and extend the reach of collections care work