University of York

Borthwick Institute for Archives: Collections Care and Conservation Policy

1. Policy

1.1 The mission of the Borthwick Institute for Archives (Borthwick) is to support and expand the University of York's cultural endeavour and contribute to human understanding through collecting archives and special collections, preserving them and making them widely available for research to all people, now and in the future.

1.2 The Borthwick is committed to preservation for access. It will preserve archives and special collections so that they can be used by present and future generations. Preservation is a central function of the Borthwick and underpins its core activities.

1.3 The Borthwick will minimise the risk of damage or deterioration to the archives and special collections in its care, through preservation and conservation as defined in Appendix 1.

1.4 The Borthwick will apply recognised standards for the preservation and conservation of the archives and special collections in its custody. The principal standards, best practice guidelines and tools that it employs are given in Appendix 2.

1.5 The Borthwick will apply cost effective preservation and conservation measures for maximum benefit to the holdings. It is committed to a programme of preservation and conservation work, carried out in accordance with assessed priorities and available resources, drawn from both internal and external funds, as set out in the preservation plan.

Risk assessment and management

1.6 The Borthwick will manage the risks to the archives and special collections through the provision of appropriately qualified staff, secure, environmentally-controlled storage, searchroom and exhibition facilities, environmental monitoring, preservation equipment, training and guidance in document handling, surrogates, and a secure and standards-compliant digital archiving facility. These systems will be covered by a regularly reviewed Borthwick disaster control plan and the Information Services Directorate and University’s business continuity planning measures.

1.7 Qualified archive conservators at the Borthwick will provide professional advice and support for its preventive and remedial conservation activity. Conservation staff will work to the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organisations (ECCO) code of ethics and the Institute of Conservation (ICON) code of conduct. They will strive to keep abreast of current developments in their field and promote an awareness and understanding of the Borthwick’s conservation work amongst its staff, users, volunteers and the wider public.
1.9 The Borthwick will employ appropriately experienced, trained and qualified staff to oversee digital preservation activities at the Borthwick, keep abreast of current developments in this field, and promote its activities to internal and external audiences.

1.10 The Borthwick will assess the needs of the archives and special collections and identify any risks of deterioration through surveys and a high level technology watch. The results of these activities will inform its preservation and conservation priorities.

1.11 Prioritisation for remedial conservation work and treatment decisions will be driven by preservation and conservation survey work, user demand, physical condition, significance, and anticipated use, as assessed by the Senior Team.

1.12 Prioritisation for digital preservation activities will be driven by risk assessments, an embedded technology watch, user demand and the availability of appropriate tools, as assessed by the Senior Team.

**Acquisition of archives**

1.13 Where facilities for the preservation of particular formats of archives are not available in the Borthwick at the point of acquisition of those archives, the Borthwick will aim to secure and provide such facilities either onsite or elsewhere (for example through deposit of archives in a specialist repository).

**Security**

1.14 The Borthwick will store all the archives and special collections books in its care securely. It will protect the archives and special collections books against environmental threats, theft, vandalism, deliberate or accidental damage, and mishandling.

1.15 Access to digital storage will be closely controlled and integrity checks will be performed across the digital archive on a regular basis to ensure that each digital object remains authentic and unchanged over time.

**Buildings and Storage**

1.16 The Borthwick will ensure that its building provides the appropriate conditions for the storage, consultation and exhibition of the archives and special collections in its care following the recognised standards and through regular maintenance schedules.

1.17 Digital archives will be stored and actively managed in a way that conforms to the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System. The digital archive will keep multiple copies of archives in different locations in order to limit and mitigate any potential data loss.
Housekeeping

1.18 All areas will be kept clean to minimise the threat to archival and special collections material from dust, pollutants, pests, mould and other agents of deterioration. Good housekeeping practices will be routinely implemented by a specially trained team of cleaners and these practices will be monitored by archives staff, enabling action to be taken quickly in the event of a threat.

1.19 New accessions will be inspected for threats such as damp, mould, pests and dirt and isolated and treated as necessary before being placed in the strongrooms. Digital archives will be inspected for viruses and malware before being ingested into the digital archive.

Environmental monitoring and control

1.20 The Borthwick will manage the environment in all areas where archives and special collections are stored, consulted and exhibited using a building management system and/or digital loggers, and will take appropriate action if the temperature, relative humidity or light levels fall outside the ranges specified in the recognised standards specified in Appendix 2.

Packaging

1.21 The Borthwick will package all the physical archives in its care in suitable materials as a first defence against agents of deterioration. Packaging for books in Special Collections will be determined on a case by case basis.

Disaster recovery and continuity

1.22 In the event of a disaster, the Borthwick's Disaster Control Plan will be implemented to protect the archives and special collections.

Access

1.23 Public access to physical archives and special collections books in their original format will take place under the controlled conditions of an invigilated searchroom in accordance with the Borthwick's searchroom regulations.

1.24 The Borthwick will restrict or mediate access to fragile material as necessary for its preservation. Material may be declared unfit for public access until such time as it has been treated by a conservator, or a surrogate copy has been created.
1.25 The Borthwick will promote good handling practices, through the provision of preservation equipment, verbal advice, written guidance, social media, handling training, and surrogates, as appropriate.

1.26 The Borthwick will make surrogate copies of documents to minimise handling of the originals in the interest of their long-term preservation. Where surrogates are available, access to physical archives and special collections books in their original format will only be granted where researchers can demonstrate that the surrogate is not an adequate substitute. Dissemination copies of born digital material will be created as surrogates for access in order to protect the authenticity and integrity of the born-digital originals and preservation copies to which access will not be permitted.

1.27 Reproductions of documents and special collections books to facilitate access, either at the request of individual researchers or as part of a larger project, will only be made where the Borthwick can minimise the risk of damage to documents as a result of the copying process.

Exhibitions and loans

1.28 Exhibitions in the Borthwick will be mounted in secure display cases in accordance with the recognised standards. Original documents and special collections books will be displayed for no longer than four months and facsimiles will be used where appropriate. Environmental conditions in all exhibition areas will be monitored, light sources will be UV filtered, and the areas will be monitored by CCTV.

1.29 The Borthwick will provide documents to their owner, other archive repositories, museums, libraries or galleries for exhibitions on completion of the appropriate documentation. The Borthwick reserves the right to reject exhibition requests for documents and special collections deemed at risk, where the host organisation’s facilities cannot be shown to meet the recognised standards, or appropriate insurance is not available.

Principles of conservation of physical objects

1.30 The Borthwick will minimise the need for remedial conservation by actively promoting and undertaking preventive measures wherever possible.

1.31 Conservation treatment will respect the evidential and physical integrity of the original documents, apply minimal intervention and employ reversible methods wherever possible and appropriate, use repair materials to the recognised conservation grade, be fully documented, guided by the recognised standard and carried out in accordance with health and safety requirements and risk assessments.

Principles of digital preservation
1.32 Representations of digital objects will be created that respect the significant properties that need to be retained. The integrity of the original files and other manifestations will be maintained by the use and verification of checksums at regular intervals. Technical metadata will be extracted from digital archives and stored in a standards compliant way to facilitate future management of and access to the archives.

1.33 A complete record of preservation work undertaken during the ingest process and as a result of enacting preservation plans will be maintained and the original data objects will be maintained and preserved.

2. Scope

2.1 The policy applies to all archives and special collections in all formats held by the Borthwick Institute.

2.2 The policy is binding on the staff, volunteers, contractors, users of and visitors to the Borthwick Institute.

3. Oversight

3.1 Overall responsibility for preservation and conservation is with the Assistant Director of Information (Archives and Policy) as Keeper of Archives.

3.2 The Borthwick Senior Management Team is responsible for overseeing policy implementation.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Preservation will be the shared responsibility of all Borthwick staff, volunteers and users.

4.2 The Preservation Team will be responsible for coordinating preservation activities.

4.3 The archive conservators will carry out conservation work on site and will provide professional preservation and conservation advice and support.

4.4 Digital archiving activities will be managed and coordinated by the digital archivist.

5. Policy implementation documents

5.1 This document is supported by the following policies and implementation documents:

- Collections care and conservation plan
- Preservation and conservation procedures
- Digital preservation plan
- Digital preservation procedures
- Disaster control plan
- Reprographics procedures
- Digitisation policy, plan and procedures
- Access policy, plan and procedures
- Forward plan
- University Library contingency management plan
- University Library business continuity plan
- University of York business continuity plan
- University of York Information Security Policy
- University of York Data Protection Policy

Document history and status

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>19 Oct 2013</td>
<td>A Jones</td>
<td>Began first draft</td>
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<tr>
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<td>A Jones</td>
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<td>J Mitcham</td>
<td>Incorporated digital preservation principles</td>
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Review cycle          Annual
Date of next review   April 2017

Appendix 1          Definitions

**Preservation** is the *holistic preventive care* of archives.
Digital preservation is the active management of digital archives to ensure they remain accessible and retain their authenticity over the long term.

Conservation is the concentrated active care of damaged or fragile documents in any format. It involves invasive procedures, which alter the state of documents in order to stabilise or repair them.

Appendix 2 Standards

The principal standards, best practice guidelines and tools the Borthwick employs as at April 2016 are:

- PD 5454 (2012): Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents
- BS 4971 (2002): Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents
- ISO 14721 (2012): Space data and information transfer systems -- Open archival information system (OAIS) -- Reference model
- ISO 16363 (2012): Space data and information transfer systems – Audit and certification of trustworthy digital repositories
- MLA, Benchmarks In collection care for museums, archives and libraries 2.0 (2011) <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/benchmarks-in-collections-care-resources>
- European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers’ Organisation code of ethics <http://www.ecco-eu.org/about-e.c.c.o./professional-guidelines.html>
• Institute of Conservation code of conduct