

DENBIGHSHIRE ARCHIVE SERVICE

COLLECTION CARE & CONSERVATION POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Denbighshire County Council is a local government authority which administers an area consisting of parts of the former counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Merioneth and which came into being on 1 April 1996. As a consequence of their former collecting policies, some records relating to the present county are lodged with neighbouring archive services.
- 1.2 According to the scheme for the provision of the Denbighshire Archives Service under the requirements of Section 60 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994, Denbighshire County Council agrees to administer Denbighshire Archives and be responsible for the custody of its existing collections. Denbighshire Archives Service (previously known as Denbighshire Record Office) has been in existence since 1972.
- 1.3 Denbighshire Archives Service is appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a repository for locally deposited public records under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958. It is recognised by the Representative Body of the Church in Wales as a repository for parochial records within the area defined by its agreement with the Denbighshire Archive Service.
- 1.4 Denbighshire Archives Service abides by current archives legislation including;
 - Public Records Act 1958
 - Local Government Records Act, 1962
 - Local Government Act (Wales) 1994
 - Data Protection Act, 1998
 - Freedom of Information Act, 2000.
 - Environmental Information Regulations, 2004

2. Mission statement

- 2.1 The principal duty of Denbighshire Archive Service (hereafter DAS) is to preserve the documentary heritage of the County for future generations whilst enabling and promoting access by the public.
- 2.2 In pursuing this end our main objectives are;
 - A. To collect archive collections.
Locating and accruing archives which are of historical significance to Denbighshire.
 - B. To preserve and store archive collections.
Safeguarding unique and irreplaceable collections by providing suitable storage and professional management.
 - C. To catalogue and index collections to make content accessible.
Organising and arranging collections into a way which enables researchers to find what they are looking for with ease.
 - D. To provide and promote access to archive collections.

Supervising and encouraging the use of a free to use public search room whilst providing alternative services to remote researchers

3. Collection Care & Conservation Policy Aims

- 3.1 The objective of the policy is to outline how we aim to ensure that we meet our overarching service aims, specifically;

B. To preserve and store archive collections.

Safeguarding unique and irreplaceable collections by providing suitable storage and professional management.

D. To provide and promote access to archive collections.

Supervising and encouraging the use of a free to use public search room whilst providing alternative services to remote researchers

- 3.2 The Collections Care and Conservation Policy outlines the strategic approach of DAS in caring for and conserving its archive collections to ensure that they will be available for future generations to use and enjoy. It provides a comprehensive statement on the preservation of the archive collections and communicates the principles that guide the conservation activities necessary for their long term protection and security.
- 3.3 The Collections Care and Conservation Policy provides a framework to aid managerial decisions on future development, a source of information to staff who share a common responsibility in caring for the collections, a statement of commitment to archive users and depositors, a supporting document to facilitate funding applications, and a benchmark to improve standards and measure performance.
- 3.4 The policy is underpinned by the relevant British Standards, namely, PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management, PAS198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections and PD5454: 2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival material.
- 3.5 The Lead Archivists are responsible for developing the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and for ensuring that it is implemented, monitored and reviewed.
- 3.6 The Business Information Team Manager is responsible for ensuring that there is adequate funding for collections care and conservation at DAS and sufficient trained staff with appropriate knowledge to accomplish long-term objectives in this area.

4. Collections Care and Conservation principles

- 4.1. DAS stores archival material, whatever its nature or format, in secure and suitable accommodation with appropriate environmental conditions which is monitored daily.
- 4.2 We follow relevant national standards and best practice, and a professional code of ethics, in all aspects of collections care and conservation.
- 4.3 We adopt a risk management approach to collections care and conservation, and plan to introduce a programme of condition surveys and assessment which will provide a prioritised conservation plan.
- 4.4. The Archives stabilise the items in their care, both physically and chemically using preventive measures. There is no in-house conservator and professional conservators

are consulted, when appropriate, to provide advice about remedial treatments and advice on planning for the long term care of collections.

- 4.5. We provide access to archives, whilst ensuring their protection and minimising the risk from handling.
- 4.6. DAS are part of the Archives and Records Council Wales' (ARCW) Digital Preservation Working Group and contribute to an All-Wales Digital Preservation solution. We will adopt the Digital Preservation Policy for Wales once it has been ratified by ARCW and develop appropriate institutional policies and strategies.
- 4.7. DAS consider collections care to be the responsibility of every member of staff.

5. Accommodation for the archive collections

- 5.1. DAS aims to fulfil the requirements of PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials
- 5.2. The archive collections are housed in a former Pentonville style gaol which was refurbished to allow PD5454 compliant archive storage in the year 2000. The archive collections are spread throughout 56 individual cells which provide for storage capacity of 372m³.
- 5.3. In the strongrooms archive collections are stored, according to their physical nature and condition, on clearly-labelled mobile and static steel shelving and in map cabinets.
- 5.4. Denbighshire County Council's Facilities Management Service inspects and maintains the buildings and ensures that regular testing and servicing of the fire detection and alarm systems is carried out by an approved contractor.
- 5.5. All storage areas are fitted with VESDA detectors and an automated gas fire suppression system.
- 5.6. The fire and intruder alarms are monitored 24 hours a day by RedCare and the North Wales Fire Service will automatically attend all out of hours automated fire alarms.
- 5.7. The Fire Risk Assessment for the record office buildings considers the risk to the archive collections as well as to staff and visitors, and documents the measures in place to minimise the risk of fire.

6. Security of the archive collections

- 6.1. External security is provided by a high perimeter gaol wall and gates. A CCTV surveillance system with external and internal motion activated infrared cameras is installed. The intruder alarm is monitored 24 hours a day by RedCare.
- 6.2. All doors are fitted with appropriate locks. Access to the staff and strongroom areas is restricted to relevant staff operated by conventional and electronic fobs.
- 6.3. DAS belongs to the County Archives Research Network. Everyone visiting DAS is required to sign in the building.
- 6.4. Archive material can only be viewed in the staff invigilated searchroom area.
- 6.5. Lockers are provided for visitors to secure their personal possessions, and ensure that large items and bags are not brought into the searchroom.

- 6.6 Researchers are only allowed to view one requested item at a time to ensure all items are returned safely.

7. Environmental control and monitoring

- 7.1 Air-conditioning systems were installed in 2000 during the refurbishment of the building. The system is monitored and serviced by appropriately qualified contractors.
- 7.2. DAS takes the necessary steps through the use of appropriate monitoring and control practice to ensure that the collections are not subjected to unsuitable environmental conditions. Environmental monitoring of the storage areas is undertaken by the lead archivists. The temperature and relative humidity of all 56 storage areas is constantly monitored by data loggers which are downloaded regularly.
- 7.3 DAS recognises the importance of a safe clean environment in the storage areas and the value of good housekeeping in collections care. All strongrooms are regularly checked, on a cyclical rota, for mould or any other infestations. It is intended to introduce an Integrated Pest Management Policy, which will introduce a comprehensive schedule for cleaning and pest monitoring.

8. Packaging and storage of the archive collections

- 8.1 DAS only use quality conservation products from recommended sources: high quality acid-free paper and board, polyester sleeves, unbleached tape and brass paperclips which meet the technical specifications recommended for archival use.
- 8.2 The physical condition of all new accessions is checked in a designated area and we provide appropriate preventive treatment, including cleaning. Contaminated archive material, which has the potential to harm or infect other collections, is placed in isolation until treated appropriately.
- 8.3 There is an ongoing programme of re-boxing and of cleaning and repackaging earlier accessions which were not prepared to current standards.

9. Conservation treatments Remedial conservation

- 9.1 DAS does not have an in-house conservator and any conservation work is carried out by an external professionally qualified conservator.
- 9.2 The lead archivists prioritise conservation treatment depending on user demand, the context of the item within the collection, or its physical condition.
- 9.3 DAS is working towards recording all conservation information on the CALM record.

10. Access and Handling

- 10.1 DAS makes catalogued archives available to all users for consultation in appropriately controlled and supervised conditions, and in accordance with the current Searchroom Rules and Document Handling Guidance. Uncatalogued material is not accessible to researchers. Archives deemed to be at risk in their present format may be produced under supervision at the Lead Archivists discretion.
- 10.2 Access to archives is subject to legitimate closure requirements, the reasonable wishes of the depositor and the physical condition of the item.

- 10.3 DAS supports the use of surrogate copies and makes them available where the condition of the original material is unstable, or where current or anticipated use will pose a threat to its survival. Researchers are encouraged to use surrogate copies to minimise handling and reduce the risk of further damage to the original.
- 10.4 Staff and volunteers are trained in handling archives and promote best practice in the searchroom. We provide researchers with appropriate aids, (such as supports, protective polyester sheets, and a variety of weights) to protect archive material, and show them how to use them.
- 10.5 Photocopies and digital copies of documents provide remote access and are supplied in accordance with our Copying Policy.

11. Disaster planning

- 11.1 DAS maintains a Disaster Plan in line with the corporate framework. This ensures protection of the buildings, archive collections and staff as well as the most appropriate response to recover archival holdings and make provision for business continuity in the event of an emergency. The plan has provision for staff training and testing.
- 11.2 DAS subscribes to Harwell Document Restoration Priority User Service which in the event of a disaster will provide recovery and emergency salvage services.

12. Communication and training

- 12.1 We provide advice and guidance on best practice and the importance of collections care to other Denbighshire County Council Services, outside organisations and institutions, community groups, owners of private archives and the general public.
- 12.2 We communicate an understanding of the nature and value of archives and the importance of collections care and appropriate conservation through our outreach activities and information leaflets.
- 12.3 All staff and volunteers are made aware of their responsibilities and trained in the appropriate care of the archive collections. The safe working practices are communicated to all staff on a regular basis.
- 12.4 DAS maintains active professional relationships with the archival and preservation communities and organisations in the UK, including the Archives and Records Council Wales and the Archives and Records Association.

13. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, but at least every 5 years.

14. Next Review Date

March 2022