

Shropshire Archives
Preservation and Conservation Policy
November 2015



Gateway to
the history of
Shropshire
and Telford



1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and history

1.1.1 History of the Service

Shrewsbury Corporation established a borough library and museum in 1885, largely through the efforts of the Shropshire Archaeological Society. In 1898 a Records Committee was set up by Salop County Council, initially to report on the records of the clerk of the peace, but an honorary archivist was appointed only in 1934. In 1947, Salop County Council created a Record Office to organise their Quarter Session records and large estate, parish and other official collections, and this appeared to duplicate some of the work of the Shrewsbury Borough Library and Museum. A guide to these holdings was produced in 1952.

The Borough Library became part of the County Library Service in 1974 and its extensive collections formed the basis of a local studies library with a county-wide role. The County Record Office continued to be organised independently but became the principal repository for the vast collection of manuscript material deposited with the County Council. The re-organisation of County Council services in 1988 led to the creation of the Leisure Services Department and the County Record Office and Local Studies Library were finally administratively united as the Records and Research Unit.

1.1.2 Shropshire Archives and the Records Management Service

Further re-organisation in 1995 led to the creation of Shropshire County Council's Information and Community Services Department which funded the £1.8 million project to build the Records and Research Centre. Located in Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, the purpose-built centre has four levels with a total floor space of 1,500 square metres. At the same time a Records Management service was established at Shirehall to manage the records and information created by Shropshire County Council. Following local government reorganisation in 1997, an agreement between Shropshire County Council and Telford and Wrekin Council secured funding to maintain the Service's remit over the historic county.

In 2004 following public consultation, the service was renamed Shropshire Archives, gateway to the history of Shropshire and Telford. In 2009 Shropshire became a unitary council and inherited large quantities of archives and records from the former Borough and District Councils. This meant that additional storage space was required and an out store was established to house both records and archives in 2012.

1.2 Mission Statements

Shropshire Archives will take the lead in preserving and improving access to Shropshire's archives and local history collections in order that individuals and communities can better understand, research and appreciate their heritage.

The Records Management Service will work to ensure that Shropshire Council manages its information and records sources in an appropriate, efficient and economic manner.

1.3 Service Objectives

1.3.1 Objectives –Shropshire Archives

- To fulfil a custodial role in the preservation, acquisition and cataloguing of Shropshire's archives and local history collections
- To promote and provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to use Shropshire's archives and local history collections to better understand, and appreciate their heritage
- To develop and to promote best practice in the preservation, enhancement and use of Shropshire's archives and local history collections
- To develop and to support sustainable partnerships and to enable communities and people to engage, explore, conserve and enjoy their own heritage

1.3.2 Objectives – The Records Management Service

- To ensure that information and records sources are retained only for as long as is necessary for legal compliance and administrative need.
- To develop and promote best practice and legal compliance in the creation, use, maintenance and disposal of information and records sources.
- To co-ordinate the selection and offering of records and material to Shropshire Archives, thereby contributing to the corporate memory of Shropshire Council.
- To work with the Information Governance team and the Information Governance Group to ensure Shropshire Council's compliance with legislation relating to information and record keeping.

2 Policy Aims

Preservation and conservation are central to Shropshire Archives' Mission Statement described above. This document sets out the overriding policy framework and objectives for the preservation and conservation of books and printed material, archives and records by Shropshire Archives.

3 Statutory Position.

Shropshire Archives is a recognised place of deposit for public records, and a diocesan record office for records from the Shropshire parishes of the dioceses of Hereford and Lichfield. It is also licensed to hold Manorial and Tithe records, and records of local government and other public and statutory bodies. The service provides a local studies library service under the Public Libraries Act 1964.

The service works to ensure that Shropshire Council complies with the following legislation:

- The Local Government Act 1972 (s.224) which states the Local Authority needs to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to, or are in the custody of the council of any of their officers'.
- The Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. These relate to those records created by central government and designated as 'public records' which may be held locally. These Acts place an obligation upon services to 'permanently preserve' the original records.
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2005.

1.2 Preservation and Conservation standards

Shropshire Archives complies with the following legislation and guidance relating to the preservation and conservation of material:

- PD5454:2012 Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Materials
- PAS 198:2012 Specification for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections
- PAS 197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management
- BS4971:2002 Repair and Allied Processes for the Conservation of Documents.
- BS1153 Recommendations for processing and storage of silver-gelatine-type microfilm
- BS4783 Storage, transportation and maintenance of media for use in data processing and information storage. Recommendations for magnetic tape cartridges and cassettes
- The code of ethics adopted by ECCO (the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations), 2002

2 Policy Aims

2.1 Scope and general aims

The preservation of original written historical material, and the information retained in it, for future generations, is a central function of any archive and local studies service. This includes ensuring the impartiality of the evidence for legal purposes. The conservation and preservation of original records is a fundamental pre-requisite to the role of making original or surrogate records available to the public. Without preservation there cannot be access.

'Preservation', in the archive context, is any action taken to prevent deterioration of material short of direct action on the material of the object itself. Any such direct action is termed 'conservation'.

The preservation of collections requires high quality storage and specialist staff. Conservation involves advanced technical skills which require time and experience to develop to a high level. The comprehensive cataloguing of collections is also an essential part of the process. All staff have a role to play in ensuring that these functions are fulfilled.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Shropshire Archives accepts its statutory and non statutory obligations to preserve the original material in its custody as a central function of the Service and for the sake of future generations. It also aims to direct Shropshire Archives in fulfilling its statutory and non statutory obligations to preserve the original material in its custody for the sake of future generations.

The policy is supported by the Collections Care and Conservation Plan which sets out the objectives through which the service will achieve the aims of this policy. A senior member of staff will be given the responsibility for implementation and monitoring of this policy, currently this is the Senior Conservator.

2.2 Preservation Aims

Given the present overwhelming backlog of conservation work in the archival, printed and pictorial material held by the Service preservation management is recognised as the most cost effective way of prolonging the life of this material.

The preservation aims of the Service are to:

- Ensure that the storage conditions at Shropshire Archives are maintained largely in accordance with the relevant British Standards.

- Ensure that the storage conditions at the Records Management store are appropriate for the semi current material held there.
- Minimise the physical risks to the collections. These physical risks include the risks of disaster, such as fire and flood, as well as damage through handling and copying, by staff, volunteers and customers.
- Ensure the appropriate selection and training of all staff and volunteers working in conservation.
- Ensure the appropriate and regular preservation training for all staff and volunteers.
- Promote good preservation practice through the provision of information and advice.

2.3 Conservation Aims

The conservation aims of the Service are to:

- Maintain an appropriately equipped conservation studio at Shropshire Archives, and ensure that adequate resources for conservation materials are available.
- Ensure all conservation work is undertaken by, or supervised by, suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- Seek to maximise efficiency in the use of limited resources while remaining in general compliance with professional standards as accepted by the national archive community.
- Ensure that all staff work with conservation staff to achieve the integration of conservation with other functions of the service.
- Maintain appropriate statistics to reflect the work of the section.

3 Assessing preservation and conservation priorities

The current approach adopted by Shropshire Archives is that most conservation and some preservation measures, such as microfilming, will be managed on a collection or project basis rather than a single item basis for the sake of efficiency.

Priorities for conservation/preservation are established by considering the following criteria and weighting them appropriately:

- Degree of vulnerability
- Accessibility
- Public demand for consultation
- Anticipated demand for consultation
- Amenability to surrogate creation
- Existence of surrogate
- Existence of catalogue
- Historic /symbolic importance
- Market value
- Degree of degradation
- Statutory obligations
- Ownership
- Eligibility for external funding

As the main archive service for Shropshire, Shropshire Archives recognises its role in preserving the archival heritage of the county whether it is in the custody of the service or not. If preservation or conservation work or advice is requested by the owners of these records the Service will prioritise the work according to the criteria above. Work on such

material will, in general, only be undertaken if fully financed by the owners, and if it does not compromise the priority work of the conservation section.

This policy was written in November 2015 and will be reviewed in November 2020 or sooner if circumstances dictate.