

**Collections Care and Conservation Policy  
Kingston History Centre**



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Brown'.

Date:

1.9.17

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Kingston History Centre, along with Kingston Museum forms the Kingston Heritage Service. The Heritage Service exists to identify and celebrate what is uniquely special about our borough and its people, locales, traditions and institutions and to build on this history while striving to discover, record and share the new stories occurring all around us.
- 1.2. The Heritage Service has the following objectives:
  - To collect, care for, interpret and promote the borough's heritage in order to inspire a sense of pride and a greater understanding of Kingston's rich and diverse history.
  - To work with other local cultural organisations to make connections between the aspects of culture in the borough which define Kingston as a unique place, such as its riverside location, its royal connections and its innovation, creativity and developments in arts and science.
  - To contribute to the growth, regeneration, health and wellbeing of our borough through a variety of partnerships, projects and learning opportunities.
- 1.3. Kingston History Centre (referred to as the "History Centre") collects, manages and provides access and understanding to historical archives and local studies materials relating primarily to the area of present day borough, with some items contributing to a wider local, national and international understanding of its past.
- 1.4. The purpose of this policy is:
  - To ensure the long-term preservation of the collections held by the History Centre for current and future access
  - To raise awareness among staff, researchers, depositors and others about issues relating to the care and conservation of collections
  - To provide guidance for staff involved in making decisions about the care and conservation of collections held by the History Centre
  - To guide the development of plans and procedures relating to collections care at the History Centre.
- 1.5. This policy relates to and is supported by the following documents:
  - Kingston Heritage Service Forward Plan 2016-2020
  - Kingston Library and Heritage Strategy 2017-2020
  - Kingston History Centre Collections Development Policy
  - Kingston History Centre Collections Information Policy
  - Kingston History Centre Collections Improvement Plan
  - Kingston History Centre Collections Risk Assessment
  - Kingston History Centre Access Policy
- 1.6. This policy is also supported by relevant procedural documents which will be regularly reviewed and updated. These cover activity such handling and movement, environmental control and monitoring and security.

- 1.7. The policy has been created in consultation with Kingston Heritage Service staff and senior colleagues to align with the strategy for the entire Heritage Service and Culture Team. Advice and guidance has been taken from relevant professional organisations, such as the National Conservation Service and The National Archives. Those consulted will be able to access the Policy as defined below in section 8.

## **2. Context to collections care and conservation**

### **2.1. Background**

- 2.1.1 Records of Kingston town were first pulled together in 1684 and originally stored within the Town Hall. Access was latterly provided by Surrey Record Office until in 1980 the archives (and local history material which was transferred from the reference libraries) were brought together with the museum, art and archaeology collections to form a new Heritage Unit at Kingston Museum. It was at this point that the service also started collecting records which were not products of the council.
- 2.1.2 With the opening of the Local History Room at the North Kingston Centre in 1992, the archive, local history collections and the majority of the museum collections were moved into repurposed storage facilities at the Centre. The collection grew substantially during this period.
- 2.1.3 In 2015 the History Centre completed its move from the North Kingston Centre to new accommodation in the former magistrate's courts in the Guildhall. Due to space restrictions, the archive collections and some local history material was moved to commercial BS PD5454 compliant off-site storage facilities in Oxfordshire. At this time much of this material was repackaged to ensure its suitability for the new storage arrangements.
- 2.1.4 Most published material now stored permanently at the Guildhall is located on open access shelves in the search room, or in one of three small store rooms. New archival acquisitions and material retrieved from the off-site storage for researchers is also stored in the store rooms. The ability to control the conditions of collections storage areas at the Guildhall is limited due to the building's listed status.

### **2.2. Recent developments**

- 2.2.1 Priority conservation needs within the published material have been identified and attempts are being made to secure funding for this work.
- 2.2.2 An audit to improve information relating to the archival material stored off-site was begun in 2015 and is ongoing. Any further items with outstanding preservation or conservation needs are being identified and prioritised through this process.

- 2.2.3 The introduction of CALM cataloguing software in 2017 has led to the introduction of a new accessioning system which allows for the condition and conservation needs of new deposits to be identified and recorded centrally upon acquisition.
- 2.2.4 While to date the History Centre has little born digital material, it recognises that this will be an area of growth in the coming years. Work has begun to start developing the systems and procedures required to adequately care for these records.
- 2.2.5 The Heritage Service is a member of the National Conservation Service and benefits from its expert advice and guidance in collections care.

### **2.3. Legal status**

- 2.3.1 The Borough has a duty to care for its own records under the Local Government Act 1972, specifically section 224 which states that councils will 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council or any of their officers'.
- 2.3.2 The History Centre has been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as a repository for specific classes of Public Records under section 4 the Public Records Act, 1958.
- 2.3.3 The History Centre has been appointed to hold and receive on deposit manorial and tithe records by recognition of the Master of the Rolls through The National Archives, under the Law of Property Act 1922 and the Tithe Act 1936. Ongoing oversight of recognised repositories is now part of Archive Service Accreditation.

## **3. Intentions for collections care and conservation**

- 3.1 The History Centre acknowledges that it holds its collections in trust for the benefit of the public on a long term basis. It intends to care for and conserve the items in these collections to the highest standard possible.
- 3.2 The History Centre recognises that a focused and inclusive approach to the long-term preservation of collections requires the development of a strategic approach for their preventive and remedial conservation. Consequently, priorities will need to evolve in line with both the corporate and strategic goals of the organisation. The use of a risk management methodology will underpin this process and so inform decision-making and the establishment of priorities. In this way, conservation procedures, plans and measures (preventive and remedial) will be decided upon within the strategic framework, reflecting both priorities and the most effective use of resources.
- 3.3 To underpin this policy the History Centre is informed and guided by the following professional standards and guidance:

- BS PD5454
- BS/EN 16893 Conservation of Cultural Heritage - New Sites & Buildings Intended for the Storage & Use of Collections (forthcoming)
- BS 4971 Conservation & Care of Archival Collections (revision forthcoming)
- Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0

3.4 The above standards and guidance will enable the History Centre to present:

- a consensus for managing collections
- a range of benchmarks against which to measure performance
- a means by which to assess and evaluate
- a process to enable the identification of funding.

3.5 The History Centre will work towards ensuring that digital materials are preserved and can be retrieved and used in line with the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) reference model.

3.6 Information about collections care and conservation is currently held in a variety of places and formats, however the History Centre will work towards CALM being the primary means by which this information is created and managed where this is appropriate.

## **4. Risk Management for Conservation**

4.1 The History Centre acknowledges that the assessment of risk to the collections is the single most important process to ensure the long-term preservation of all collection formats and seeks to analyse risk as follows:

Risk = Probability of loss + impact

4.2 Loss may include loss of collections, loss of value (both financial and historical), loss of status (resulting from loss of collections), or reputational damage for the organisation.

4.3 The purpose of risk management is to identify and address each risk. This may result in different responses as each risk, the nature of the risk and the History Centre's capacity to respond to the risk will vary. Consequently, response will consist of the following approaches:

- Eliminate the risk
- Control the risk
- Manage other issues that affect the severity of the risk
- Accept the risk; but plan to address the risk

4.4 The History Centre will actively undertake risk management for conservation by:

- Assessing the level of risk to the collections at all stages of collection management
- Identifying both practical and operational procedures and protocols to address the risks
- Developing the awareness and skills of staff to meet the challenges
- Commissioning specialist skills where appropriate
- Providing alternatives to consulting original material

4.5 The History Centre will identify the levels of risk to collections and develop procedures and methodologies to define the extent of risk and put in place methodologies to address the risk. These activities will:

- compare the condition of different parts of the collection or collections in different locations
- produce evidence about the damage that has happened to the collection and link it with the conditions in which they are kept
- enable the prioritisation of actions to improve the condition of collections
- assist in estimating the cost and time to achieve the improvements needed
- provide assistance in the compilation of funding applications if appropriate

4.6 This process will enable the compilation of priorities and so inform the development of strategies to address risks to collections. Priorities will be influenced by the following factors:

- resources; including both financial and staff resources
- management commitment
- objectives of the organisation
- enabling access
- reflecting user needs

## 5. Preventative approaches to collections care

5.1. The History Centre team will undertake all reasonable steps to provide suitable conditions and implement best practice in order to provide a clean, safe and environmentally suitable site for collections to be stored, managed and accessed in, as detailed in the remainder of section 5 below. Compliance with the standards identified in 3.3 will be required when approving facilities for the storage of its collections off-site.

### 5.2. Site management

5.2.1 The History Centre at the Guildhall site will be managed through corporate Security and fire prevention procedures in discussion with the Property Team and facilities management providers.

### **5.3. Security**

- 5.3.1 The History Centre will provide a secure and supervised environment for the consultation of materials by researchers in the reading room. All researchers will be required to sign up to the Rules of the Reading Room upon undertaking research.
- 5.3.2 The History Centre will ensure that collections held permanently or temporarily at the Guildhall will be stored securely with appropriate levels of access.

### **5.4. Packaging and storage**

- 5.4.1 The History Centre will ensure that all materials are packaged in reasonable and appropriate specialist packaging in order to best support and protect the materials.
- 5.4.2 As minimum, all material will receive primary packaging suitable to its format in order to help protect it from pests, pollutants, dust, water, heat, smoke and fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity.

### **5.5. Handling and movement**

- 5.5.1 The correct handling of archival and published materials will be undertaken by staff, volunteers and researchers through training, written guidance and introductions to new researchers. Appropriate resources such as weights and book rests are provided in the reading room for this purpose.

### **5.6. Environmental control and monitoring**

- 5.6.1 The History Centre acknowledges the importance of the environmental conditions that collections are subjected to on their long term preservation.
- 5.6.2 The historic environment of the Grade II listed Guildhall building limits the amount of control that is possible over environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity and light. A passive approach will be adopted with the aim of ensuring that conditions adhere to the guidance in BS PD5454 as much as is practically possible. Conditions will be monitored and recorded and advice sought when required.
- 5.6.3 Access to specialised, storage will be utilised for specific collections that require it on a case-by-case basis.

### **5.7. Pests**

- 5.7.1 Collection managers will review all new acquisitions for infestations and place them in the designated quarantine area pending further treatment if required.
- 5.7.2 The History Centre will be monitored for pests and controlled through the use of pest traps. Additional pest control will be provided by the council's facilities management providers and contractors as required.

## **5.8. Cleaning**

- 5.8.1 The History Centre's collections stores will be cleaned regularly to reduce dust and ensure they are tidy under the supervision of collections managers.

## **5.9. Surrogates**

- 5.9.1 The History Centre may create and issue surrogates in lieu of original material which is in poor physical condition or is otherwise at risk of damage as a result of its use.
- 5.9.2 Surrogates may be created by collections managers or approved external suppliers as long as generation of a surrogate does not pose risk to the original material. Surrogates may be in digital format, on microfilm or in hard copy as appropriate.
- 5.9.3 Copies may be made for researchers in line with the Reprographics Policy/Fees and Charges. Decisions on copying will be made on a case by case basis, dependent on the relevant legislation applicable to the material (such as Copyright) and the professional opinion of the collections managers with regard to the condition and stability of the material and any risks posed by making the copies.

## **5.10. Exhibition and loan**

- 5.10.1 Material which is in a stable condition may be temporarily exhibited at Kingston Museum, in History Centre or in other suitable locations. .
- 5.10.2 Material may be loaned out to other institutions or organisations for exhibition or processing on completion of the required paperwork in the loans procedures, and suitable insurance provision supplied where necessary.
- 5.10.3 A condition assessment of any material for display, and the spaces in which the material is to be exhibited and/or stored will be undertaken by a collections manager to ensure compliance with the necessary standards in section 3.3 are met. It is at the discretion of the collections manager to refuse material to be displayed if in doing so there is substantial risk to the material.

## **5.11. Digital preservation**

- 5.11.1 The History Centre recognises that digital records are inherently more complex and less stable than paper records. Their long-term reliability, integrity and usability is at risk from issues including technological obsolescence, failure of storage media and intentional or unauthorised modification.
- 5.11.2 The History Centre recognises that its digital holdings will grow and it will seek to develop its plans and procedures to ensure their long term preservation accordingly.



## **6. Remedial approaches to collections care**

- 6.1 Material which is in need to remedial conservation will be assessed and prioritised depending on the severity of its condition, its usage, its historical and monetary value, the available conservation techniques for the material and the available resources to undertake the work.
- 6.2 Remedial conservation work will be outsourced to the most suitable conservation professionals to undertake the work on behalf of the History Centre. All conservators used will be accredited under the Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers scheme, administered by the Institute of Conservation.

## **7. Disaster preparedness**

- 7.1 The History Centre has in place a Business Continuity Plan, written in partnership with the Contingency Planning Manager, the Property Team and the facilities management providers. This will be deployed in the event of any incident which puts any of the collection at risk.
- 7.2 The Business Continuity Plan covers the immediate action to be taken in the event of the collection being affected by an incident. The History Centre would work with specialist salvage and conservation bodies to ensure the most appropriate and swift action is taken.

## **8. Communicating this policy**

- 8.1 The History Centre will ensure that this policy is promoted, publicised and understood by staff, volunteers, the public, management and stakeholders through:
  - Production of this policy on the Heritage Service's website for access by the public and local groups, such as the Friends of Kingston Museum and Heritage Service.
  - Training for staff, volunteers and where appropriate other stakeholders
  - Promotion in professional activities.

## **9. Roles and responsibilities**

- 9.1 The collections managers, as detailed in this policy, relate to the Borough Archivist, Assistant Archivist and Local History Officer. These posts are responsible for decision making about the care and conservation of the collection as set out in this policy.

- 9.2 Volunteers and other members of the Heritage Team will follow and implement this policy in consultation with the collection managers who will provide training and guidance on specific activities relating to preventative care.

## **10. Implementation, Monitoring & Review**

- 10.1 The Heritage Service acknowledges that a policy is a time bound document and that the priorities and objectives of any organisation change over time due to a range of impacts. The policy must be flexible and able to respond to change – both to local impacts and wider economic and political contexts.
- 10.2 The policy will be reviewed in October 2020 with all necessary consultation being undertaken as part of this process.