

Carmarthenshire Archives

Collection Care and Conservation Policy

2022 – 2026

Mission statement

Our mission is to identify, collect and preserve historical documents relating to county of Carmarthenshire and make them available to anyone who wishes to use them.

We are also committed to raising awareness about our work and demonstrating the many ways in which archives and records can be used by all members of the community.

Policy aims

The purpose of this Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to ensure that the holdings of Carmarthenshire Archives are cared for and managed in a consistent and safe way.

This policy provides a framework for Carmarthenshire Archives and sets out our operational approach. It supports our Mission Statement as set out above and should be read in conjunction with our Forward Plan, Collection Management Policy, Access Policy, Collection Care and Conservation Plan and other relevant policy documents.

Roles and responsibilities

All Carmarthenshire Archives staff are required to assist in implementing the Collection Care and Conservation policy as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

Terminology

- **Preventive conservation** is the retention and maintenance of material over time. It includes the management of all risks to the collections, including those from the collection items themselves and other collection items, physical forces, thieves and vandals, dissociation, fire, water, pests, pollutants, light, incorrect temperature and incorrect humidity.
- **Remedial conservation** is the direct application of interventive remedial treatment and non-interventive preventive measures to arrest material deterioration, and promote the physical preservation and accessibility of an item or collection.

Preventive conservation

- **The building** - Carmarthenshire Archives is checked regularly and routinely for signs of water ingress, pests, vandalism and structural defects. Once identified, problems are immediately reported to the Archives Transformation Manager. Fire detection and prevention systems are maintained in line with current standards and are tested and serviced regularly.

- **Security** - The service maintains a high level of the security for the collections. Security alarms and sensors are fitted throughout the building with CCTV and security in operation 24 hours a day.

Arrangements exist for restricting entry to designated areas and visitors and non-archive staff must be accompanied by a member of staff if entering the storage areas.

- **Archive storage** - Carmarthenshire Archives aims to maintain a suitable storage environment for the range of archival material that it contains. At present the service does not have specialist storage for photographic, audio visual and electronic media.

The storage areas are maintained in line with BS EN 16893:2018. It is constructed from a high-quality fire-retardant material offering 4 hours protection against fire. The storage areas are kept locked at all times and can only be accessed by the archives staff.

- **Access** - Access to original documents will be in the controlled conditions of the search room. Carmarthenshire Archives will promote good handling by the provision of protective equipment e.g. book rests; polyester film for maps, plans and drawings; protective sleeves for photographs, etc. Written good handling guidelines are provided in the search room and staff will advise and monitor public handling of the records.
- **Digital preservation** - Digital assets are stored on a corporate server, which is professionally managed in line with agreed practice but does not currently meet the Open Archival Information System Reference Model.

The Archives will work with the ITC department to ensure that there is appropriate security for information and collections held digitally and work towards meeting the Open Archival Information System Reference Model and other relevant standards. The Archives will also work in partnership with external organisations, such as Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW), regarding a collaborative approach to digital preservation and management.

- **Housekeeping**
 - **Cleaning** - Arrangements are in place for housekeeping tasks including cleaning of public and secure areas in order to minimise the threat to collections from pests, pollution and mould.

All staff and volunteers are trained to clean documents in a way that is not detrimental to the collection.

- **Quarantine** - New acquisitions are inspected before being allowed into the storage areas to ensure that the introduction of pests is prevented. If pests are discovered in the collection, these items are quarantined until all risk of contagion has passed. If this is not possible, the affected records are removed

from the collection, and may be disposed of in accordance with the Terms of Deposit.

- **Pest monitoring** - The storage areas are monitored using blunder traps. These are checked regularly. If pests are discovered, these are examined and identified, so that the risk posed to the collections can be accurately assessed. If and when a problem is discovered, the affected area is monitored to ensure that the source of the problem is identified. Appropriate action is then taken to eradicate the pests.
- **Environmental monitoring** - The climate within the storage areas are continually monitored by a radio controlled data logger system linked to the Archive Transformation Managers' computer to ensure that the temperature is consistently between 16-18 degrees Celsius and that the relative humidity is between 45-60%. Servicing and calibration of the sensors is undertaken on an annual basis. Random condition checks on items are carried out by staff to identify any issues such as pest activity, mould growth, etc. which may be caused by an inappropriate environment.
- **Environmental control** - Carmarthenshire Archives is committed to pursuing the standards of best practice which are set out in BS EN 16893:2018 and BS4971:2017. Within the storage areas, the environment is controlled by a bespoke air conditioning system. This helps us to arrest the deterioration of vulnerable and fragile documents. Natural light sources are kept to a minimum and all items are enclosed in boxes where appropriate to provide a degree of protection against the environment.
- **Emergency planning** - An Emergency Response Plan for the building has been created. This is reviewed regularly and updated where necessary. All members of staff are given a hardcopy of the Emergency Response Handbook, and a digital copy is filed on the networked server. Salvage materials and emergency response boxes are located in the building. Practical training for all staff in responding to disaster situations is provided periodically.

Remedial conservation

- **Decision to treat** - The decision to treat will be made by the Archives Transformation Manager. Remedial conservation will be undertaken only when necessary, to ensure the long term safety of vulnerable material. The decision will take into account the historical importance of the item, its condition, and the cost implications. Consideration will also be given to the needs of the researcher and the level of use which the document is expected to sustain in the future.
- **Practitioners** - Where necessary all remedial conservation work will be undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced conservator. At present, all remedial conservation work is carried out by externally sourced contractors.
- **Documentation** - Before any work takes place, a mutual agreement will be reached between the Archives Transformation Manager and the contractor with regard to the approach and the treatment of items. Each treatment will be costed and fully documented.

Review

This policy was created in December 2022. It will be reviewed in 2026, or sooner if circumstances dictate.