

Royal Voluntary Service Archive & Heritage Collection

Preservation Policy

1 Introduction

Royal Voluntary Service recognises the importance of its Archive & Heritage Collection as being of major national and international heritage significance. It is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure that its collection is preserved safely for current and future use, in line with its Access and Collection Policies.

Royal Voluntary Service will protect, maintain and monitor its Archive & Heritage collection. It recognises the importance of the British Standard BS 5454: 2000, and will work towards meeting that standard, while currently ensuring that essential environmental conditions and security requirements are met.

2 Definitions

The following terms are used in this document:

Preservation: a variety of activities which contribute to permanent preservation, including preventative measures such as environmental controls, preservation packaging and security controls. It may also include specialist conservation activities.

Conservation: direct intervention to repair and conserve items, carried out by a professional specialist.

Surrogates: any duplicate copy in another medium, including photocopies, microform, digitised copy, or reproduction object. Such copies will be made available in order to protect original material for damage by frequent use or from further deterioration in the case of fragile and vulnerable items.

3 Storage environment

Royal Voluntary Service will ensure that its collections are stored in an environment which provides security from theft, or damage from fire, flood, pest and mould infestation.

Temperature and humidity levels:

Will be maintained as far as possible within the range specified in BS 5454:2000, subject to available resources, in order to provide a stable atmospheric environment.

Pest and mould / infestation prevention:

Royal Voluntary Service will ensure that the storage areas are not at risk of infestation by insects, rodents and other pests, or from mould.

Fire and flood risk:

Will be mitigated as far as possible. The collection is stored in accommodation which has fire detection systems in place (and see 4 below), together with appropriate fire extinguishers. Royal Voluntary Service will work towards ensuring that all storage areas are free of water and other pipes which could cause an accidental flood, and will ensure that material is stored above floor level.

Monitoring:

The Archivist will ensure that regular monitoring of the storage environment is carried out and recorded, and that any potential risk to the collection will be identified and dealt with. The Archivist will also assess new acquisitions for condition and will take all necessary steps to ensure that items in poor condition and in need of conservation are segregated, so that they not pose a threat to the existing collection eg from mould or infestation (see also 6 Conservation).

4 Security

Store rooms:

Royal Voluntary Service will continue to ensure that its collection is stored in a secure environment. The A&HC is held in secure premises, to which access is restricted to named key holders. The premises are protected by monitored security and fire alarms linked to the emergency services.

User access:

Users (including Royal Voluntary Service staff), will have access to archive and heritage material only under close supervision in the search room, and will not be allowed access to the storage areas.

They will also have to provide proof of identity before using the collection (see Access policy).

Theft and damage prevention:

Users will be given safe handling guidelines and material will be checked after use to ensure that no accidental damage or theft has occurred. The Archivist will monitor ebay and other on line sales sites to ensure that no items belonging to Royal Voluntary Service are offered for sale.

5 Preservation packaging

The collection will be repackaged in archival standard packaging as part of the long term appraisal and cataloguing programme. Any new items received will be transferred to appropriate packaging as part of the accession process. Such packaging may include archival acid free boxes, archival folders and photographic sleeves and other specialist packaging. Artefacts and art work will also be placed in protective packaging where necessary.

6 Conservation treatment

The Royal Voluntary Service Archivist will monitor the collection condition on a regular basis. He / she will identify any items which are in need of specialist interventive conservation and will ensure that any necessary work is carried out on any items which are designated as being at risk or otherwise prioritised. Conservation will be carried out only by a professionally qualified conservator who conforms to the appropriate professional standards including BS 4971: 2002 (Recommendations for the Repair and Allied Processes for the Conservation of Documents).

7 Handling

Royal Voluntary Service will ensure that all users of the collection are given a copy of the 'Regulations for Use' as part of their signed user agreement to educate users on the safe handling of the collection.

Archive and heritage items may be seen only under supervision in the search room, and users will be required to sign an agreement concerning safe handling, as described in the user guidelines provided.

Copying will be at the Archivist's discretion and will not be permitted in the case of bound volumes, fragile items. Self service copying will be not permitted, in order to reduce the risk of accidental damage

8 Use of surrogates / protection of fragile items

Royal Voluntary Service will provide surrogate copies (by means of photocopying, photography or digitisation), at the Archivist's discretion and where feasible and appropriate, in the case of items which are considered to be too fragile or at risk from handling. Where surrogate copies exist, these will always be made available in preference to original material.

Royal Voluntary Service reserves the right to refuse access to material which is too fragile for safe handling and is at risk from use if there are no facilities available for the safe creation of surrogates.

9 Exhibition and loan

As stated in the Access Policy, original items may be loaned, in certain circumstances, to other archives or museums for temporary exhibition but this will only be permitted if the Royal Voluntary Service Archivist is satisfied that the host organisation concerned is able to comply with preservation and security guidelines, and that the items are therefore not put at risk.

10 Disaster recovery planning

Royal Voluntary Service will work towards creating a detailed disaster recovery plan and emergency procedures for the Archive. It will also ensure that there is an appropriate section in the Corporate Disaster Recovery Plan. The collection will be insured in order to cover accidental damage repair costs, and a disaster recovery contract with a specialist recovery company will also be taken out.

11 Responsibilities

The Royal Voluntary Service Archivist is responsible for ensuring that all preservation related procedures are in place and that they are updated as necessary. The Archivist is also responsible for ensuring that the archive is preserved in a secure and appropriate environment and that users of the archive follow the 'Regulations for Use'. Other staff responsibilities will be stated in the Disaster Recovery Plan.

12 Preservation Policy Review

The Preservation policy will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently if required.

Date: 26 May 2010