

**University of Westminster Archive
Collection Care and Conservation Policy**

This policy explains the principles guiding the continuous care and conservation of collections held by the University of Westminster Archive from acquisition, through processing, and during handling and use by our various stakeholders. These principles support our ongoing commitment to the long-term preservation of all material in our custody, actioned through formal procedures, in line with professional best practice.

1. Policy

Mission

- 1.1. University Records and Archives provide a professional archives and records management service to the University of Westminster and is positioned in the Library and Archives Service department, part of the Student and Academic Services Directorate within Professional Services. It leads on the management of institutional records and is responsible for two archives with a mission to collect, preserve and provide access to the University of Westminster Archive (hereafter the University Archive) and the Westminster Menswear Archive collections.

Scope

- 1.2. This policy applies to physical material, held in various formats, by the University Archive. The preservation of digital assets held by the University Archive is covered in the separate Digital Preservation Policy.

Building and Environment

- 1.3. The University Archive is housed within 4-12 Little Titchfield Street, part of the University of Westminster Regent Campus, where all onsite collections are held in secure and dedicated storage.
- 1.4. The building is managed by the wider University of Westminster Estates Planning and Services team (hereafter Estates). They implement a programme of routine maintenance of the building fabric, structure and protection.

Security

- 1.5. Assessment of risks to the building's access, use and security have been carried out by Estates. Systems and equipment identified as being required for security of the building have been installed according to mandatory standards and insurance requirements.
- 1.6. Access to secure storage areas is limited to University Records and Archives staff and the building security team.

Storage and Environmental Control

- 1.7. Secure storage areas at 4-12 Little Titchfield Street conform to international standards for long term preservation of archive collections. The temperature and relative humidity within storage and access areas is regularly monitored by University Archive staff using

systems recommended by the National Conservation Service. Monitoring data is assessed by the University Archivist and kept indefinitely.

Housekeeping/cleaning

- 1.8. Secure storage areas at 4-12 Little Titchfield Street are cleaned by University Archive staff as part of a cleaning programme, with training provided as part of staff induction. Access areas, including the reading room and staff office, are cleaned by University of Westminster cleaning staff.

Monitoring and assessment of collections

- 1.9. New accessions to the University Archive are assessed for mould, pest or water damage as part of the acquisition process. Where necessary, material is quarantined or sent for external conservation work before being stored amongst other archive collections.

Pest monitoring

- 1.10. Secure storage areas at 4-12 Little Titchfield Street are monitored by University Archive staff as part of an integrated pest management programme, with training provided as part of staff induction. Access areas, including the reading room and staff office, are monitored by Estates.

Preservation and Conservation

- 1.11. The University Archive holds material in various physical formats, including paper, photographs, glass slides, audio and video film and tape, CDs and DVDs, and objects including ceramics, textiles, medals and trophies. Where possible, the packaging, housing and conditions that best ensure the long-term stability of each format is used. Unstable material that is identified as being at risk of damage is prioritised for rehousing, transfer, or conservation work.
- 1.12. The University Archive are members of the National Conservation Service, which provide conservation advice and support, including benchmarking and training for University Archive staff to ensure best practice.
- 1.13. Items that require conservation work are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Minor conservation work (e.g., removal of staples) is undertaken by University Archive staff. External accredited conservators are used to carry out more complex or external conservation work.
- 1.14. All conservation actions carried out by University Archive staff or external conservators will be recorded on the Archive catalogue.

Handling, Use and Transportation

- 1.15. University Archive staff are provided with training for correct and safe handling, use and transportation of archive material during induction.
- 1.16. Procedures for correct and safe handling of archive material are provided for researchers in the Reading Room, and students during archive placements. Supervising University Archive staff ensure these are enforced and offer guidance and assistance where necessary.
- 1.17. Procedures for the safe transport and use of archive material in teaching sessions are followed by University Archive staff, and supporting guidelines provided for teaching

staff and students. University Archive staff supervise the sessions to ensure procedures are enforced and to offer assistance where necessary.

- 1.18. Loan of material to other University of Westminster departments, or external institutions, is assessed on a case-by-case basis, in line with the Loans Policy and Procedures, and at the University Archivist's discretion.
- 1.19. Unstable material in the collections, identified as at risk of damage, will be marked as restricted access on the Archive Catalogue, and a surrogate provided where possible. Access to the original item by researchers is at the University Archivist's discretion.

Surrogates

- 1.20. University Archive staff only may create surrogates of archival material, in line with best practice. The safety of the original material is prioritised.
- 1.21. For archival material that is heavily used and/or fragile, surrogate copies, either physical or digital, will be provided to researchers in the first instance.
- 1.22. Preservation of surrogates will be maintained to ensure original material will not need to be copied again.

Risk assessment and Disaster preparedness

- 1.23. A written disaster recovery and business continuity plan is in place and is tested and reviewed on a regular basis. This plan covers the response in the event of power failure, fire, flood or extended periods of staff unable to access the building, e.g. epidemic/pandemic.
- 1.24. A disaster kit is held in the University Archive staff office. A supply of absorbent cloths and a dehumidifier is kept in each of the storage areas.
- 1.25. Salvage procedures, priority lists, and lists of restoration services have been created and are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.
- 1.26. University Records and Archives maintain an ongoing subscription to the Harwell Document Restoration Services Priority User Service which will provide emergency resources in the event of a disaster.

Offsite storage

- 1.27. Material that is duplicated, or available in an alternative format, may be stored at an off-site location. Off-site storage companies will be assessed regarding suitability for the format of material, and contracts will be reviewed every three years.

2. Implementation and review

- 2.1. The policy is managed by the Head of University Records and Archives and approved by the Library and Archives Service Management Team.
- 2.2. This policy will be communicated to interested parties within University of Westminster, and to external agencies and others with an interest in its context, on demand. It will be made available to the public via the University Records and Archives webpages.

2.3. All staff in University Records and Archives are responsible for implementing and adhering to this policy.

2.4. This policy will be reviewed at least every four years.

3. Feedback and complaints

3.1. We welcome feedback on our procedures and policies and will review all feedback as appropriate.

Version Control

DATE	VERSION	DESCRIPTION	CHANGED BY
15/8/2025	1.0	New Policy. Ratified by L&AS Mgt Team 31/10/25	Elaine Penn

Date of next review: Aug 2029

Appendix A – Legislation and standards

We manage the collections in our care within the following statutory, contractual and standards framework. We will adapt our services to meet any applicable legislation introduced over the lifetime of this policy.

Legislation

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Public Records Act 1958, amended 1967

Standards

- EN 17820:2023 Specifications for the management of cultural heritage collections
- BS 4917:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections
- EN 16893:2018 Conservation of cultural heritage
- ISAD(G) General international standard archival description, 2nd edition

Codes of Ethics

- International Council on Archives, Code of Ethics 1996
- Archives and Records Association, Code of Ethics 2024
- Information and Records Management Society, Code of Ethics 2019

Related URA policies

- University of Westminster Records and Archives Access Policy 2025
- University of Westminster Records and Archives Collections Management Policy 2025
- University of Westminster Records and Archives Privacy Notice 2025
- University of Westminster Archive Collection Acquisition and Development Policy 2025
- University of Westminster Archive Collection Information Policy 2025
- University of Westminster Records Management Policy 2023
- University of Westminster Records and Archives Digital Preservation Policy 2024
- Westminster Menswear Archive Collection Development Policy 2019