The National Archives

Archive Principles and Practice:
an introduction to archives for non-archivists

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1 Introduction
1.1   What is the purpose of this guidance?

The purpose of this guide is to support people who own or look after archive material. It will help you to assess and plan for the care and development of your archive collection. It applies to all sizes of collection from a small storage cupboard to the contents of a large storeroom.

The prospect of organising and developing your archive can be daunting. If the process is divided into simple tasks, the process becomes much easier to manage. 'It is often easier to recognise that action is needed than to know where to start.'[1] With this in mind, the guide includes practical steps, which **can** easily be taken to protect archival collections.

1.2   Who is this guidance for?
This guidance is mainly aimed at people who look after or own archives, but who are not professional archivists and need some simple guidance.

It may also be useful for museum, library and other heritage professionals who have archives in their care and need guidance to improve what they can do.

1.3   How is this guidance arranged?
The guide is organised into two main sections to provide a helpful level of detail for beginners and more experienced professionals. For beginners, working through each section will build knowledge and allow you to work towards best practice with an understanding of the methods and support available.

- **Section 2 is for beginners** and has **simple steps** to improve what you are doing (or not doing) to better care for and provide access to your archival collections. It includes protection from the major risks of fire, flood and theft and is suitable for beginners and small organisations without a professional archivist.
- **Section 3 is for more experienced custodians** and shows how you can take **additional steps** to improve what you are doing, including more complex solutions to care for and protect your collections.[2] It is suitable for people with some knowledge and experience in small to medium sized organisations.

There are 2 supplementary sections with additional information and examples of good practice.

- **Section 4** includes **useful information for all who care for archives**.
- **Section 5** includes **case studies** describing good practice and progress made by others.

2. First steps in archives

2.1 What are archives?
2.1.1 Archives are collections of documents or records which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research. Records are

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[1] *Managing the Preservation of Library and Archive Collections in Historic Buildings,* National Preservation Office (2002)

[2] A custodian is someone who keeps or looks after a collection. It often describes someone in museum or gallery sectors. It is used here to describe someone who keeps or looks after an archive collection.

created by the activities of organisations and people; they serve an active purpose while in current use and some of them are later selected and preserved as part of an archival collection.

Archive collections are usually unique, which is why it is so important to take proper care of them. They need to be carefully stored and managed to protect and preserve them for current and future use.

2.1.2 Sometimes these collections are kept in specialist collecting institutions, which are also called archives. Examples of these include national and local archives and record offices. Archives are also kept by other institutions, including museums and libraries. Sometimes archival collections are kept in other locations such as religious organisations, universities, schools, businesses, charities, arts organisations and community groups that often hold their own institutional records.

2.1.3 Why are archives important?
Archives have value to nations and regions, organisations, communities and individual people. They provide evidence of activities which occurred in the past. They tell stories, document people and identity, and are valuable sources of information for research. They are our recorded memory and form an important part of our community, cultural, official and unofficial history.

2.2 Major risks
Risk cannot be avoided completely and even if you are well-prepared, events happen which can damage buildings and the archives stored in them. However, much can be done to manage these risks.

The first thing to do is think of the things that can go wrong, then look at what steps you can take to prevent things going wrong, then plan what to do if despite your efforts things do go wrong and there is an incident of some sort. The major risks are fire, flood, theft and unauthorised access. Guidance on these is given at 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 below. An important tool to safeguard archival collections is a disaster management plan and guidance on this is given at 2.2.4 below.

2.2.1 Fire prevention
Fire prevention is the first line of defence in preventing destruction or irreversible damage to archives. Areas where archives are stored should be solidly built and must avoid the risk of fire. Storerooms should be assessed for risks from fire and suitable counter measures put in place. These include fire-resistant doors, walls, ceilings, floors and windows. All of this is supported by the fire-prevention measures required for any place of work or public building.

What you can do

- Never use open fires, stoves, gas, radiant electric or paraffin heaters in an archive building.
- The storage area should have fire-resistant doors, walls, ceilings, floors and windows.
- Most offices have 20-minute fire resistant doors. Archives need more protection than this. The ideal would be four-hour fire resistant doors.
- Electric wiring circuits should be routed through metal conduits (tracking which holds the wires clear of other materials.)
- Master switches for electrical circuits should be outside the storage area.
- Smoke detectors should be fitted inside and outside the storage area.
- Smoke detectors should link to the building's main alarm system and, where possible, the Fire Service.

2.2.2 Flood

Water will cause major damage to archives. Flooding can be caused by water coming into the building from outside or by water leaking from tanks or pipe work inside the building.

What you can do

- If the building is in an area known to be at risk of flooding, archives should be stored on the first floor or above. Ideally, they should be relocated to another building less at risk.
- Shelving should be raised off the ground to avoid damage from minor flooding or leaks.
- Roofing, guttering and drains for rainwater should be in good condition and regularly checked and maintained to prevent water entering the building.
- Water tanks and pipe work inside the building should be in good condition and regularly checked and maintained to prevent leaks.
- Pipe work should not run through storage areas. This includes all plumbing and central heating water pipes.
- Storage areas should not be directly below water tanks, boilers or pipe work.
- Basement storage should be avoided. Where used, it needs special attention to prevent flooding. If possible, it should not be near to storm drains or sewage pipes.

2.2.3 Theft or unauthorised access

Protecting archives from theft, deliberate damage or disorder ensures that they remain complete, intact and usable. Storage rooms, areas and cupboards must be lockable. Only the people responsible for caring for the archives should access these areas.

Archives and current records need to be protected from unauthorised access. This means that people who should not have access to the records and the information they contain should be prevented from gaining access. Secure storage applies to all types of records: paper and parchment; digital records; video and sound recordings and any copies made of them. Protecting archives and records in this way is sometimes called 'information security'.

What you can do

- Storage must be lockable and kept locked when not in use.
- Access to the storage area must be controlled and monitored.
- If storage areas have to be shared, archives should be clearly separated and only handled by people responsible for their care.
- No item should be moved or removed without the permission of those people responsible for their care.
- If an item is moved or removed, a note must be left with details of where it is and who has it.
- A register of withdrawals and returns should be kept.
- A separate area for viewing and using the archives should be set aside if possible.
- All areas should be monitored when in use.

2.2.4 Disaster planning

The impact of risks can be reduced by disaster management planning, for example arrangements for salvaging the archive if a major incident such as a flood, a fire or a break-in happens. Taking action as soon as possible is essential to reduce damage caused by such incidents. If items have been stolen, prompt action may help recover them.

What you can do

- Detailed guidance on disaster planning and management is available which will help you to consider likely outcomes and to develop your own contingency preparations:
    - The National Archives: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/disaster-planning-risk-management.pdf.
    - National Preservation Office: www.bl.uk/blpac/disaster.html.
- Report theft or vandalism to the police as soon as possible.
- Contact the Sales Monitoring team at The National Archives to provide details of stolen archives: sales@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk. We monitor sales of archives and documents; providing information could help find and recover your stolen archives.
- Contact the Art Loss Register to provide details of stolen archives: www.artloss.com/content/home. The register is a not-for-profit organisation for registration and supporting the recovery of stolen art, antiques and collectable material.

Protection from fire, flood and theft along with planning for what to do if the worst happens will protect your archives from major risks and help prevent major damage or loss.

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The following sections look at what can be done to further improve the care of your archives, and at low or no cost. They include *taking control*, *improving storage* and *supporting safe access*.

2.3 Taking control

2.3.1 Provenance and original order

Archivists apply the two principles of 'provenance' and 'original order' when managing their collections. These principles should be the foundations for all the activities you carry out on your archives. You need to understand how and where your archives were created and how they are ordered before you take steps to improve how they are kept and cared for.

Provenance

Provenance means the history of ownership related to a group of records or an individual item in a collection. For archives, this means the creators and any subsequent owners of the records and how the records relate to each other. Preserving information on these relationships is essential as they provide evidence of how and who created and used the records before they became part of the archives. Provenance provides essential contextual information for understanding the content and history of an archival collection.[3]

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[3] As described in further detail in in Jackie Bettington et al (editors) *Keeping Archives* (Australia: Australian Society of Archivists 2008), p.16

Original order

Archives are kept in the order in which they were originally created or used.[4] It is essential to understand this when working with archives so that this original order is preserved. This original order allows custodians to protect the authenticity of the records and provides essential information as to how they were created, kept and used. Sometimes this original order has been lost through poor handling or re-sorting.

Unlike books, archival records are not understood on their own as individual items. Their meaning comes from their relationships with other records and the people or organisations that created and used them. When archives are listed or catalogued, as described at 1.2 below, the aim is to describe and preserve these relationships.

2.3.2 Listing and cataloguing

Detailed cataloguing is a worthwhile though time consuming process. Many established archives have backlogs of material waiting to be catalogued, so you are not alone if you do too. If you do not have time or resources to catalogue everything in detail now, you should set time aside to make a quick box, file, volume or item list if you do not already have one.

- This gives you an overview of the contents of the collection.
- It allows you to make a quick assessment of any major issues with the condition of the material or any special storage needed because of its format (e.g. photographs, textiles, audio-visual or digital material).
- It allows you to identify material that might be particularly significant for research and it enables you to spot any material that might need special access restrictions.
- When material is listed, it allows you to take physical and intellectual control of it – it is like stock control in a shop.
- And when you provide access, it safeguards material, as you know what you have and what you are making available to researchers.

How to make a quick box list

- Have ready: pencils, paper with forms or boxes to fill in.
- Have clean hands and a clean, dry area to work in.
- Set aside some time when you will not be disturbed or interrupted.

You can begin the listing by box number, title (even if that is a little sketchy) and number of boxes. You can label boxes with pencil or with slips of paper inserted in the boxes. Never use sticky notes or labels on archival records themselves as they cause damage. Use slips of paper to label bound volumes.

Example box lists

Box / volume numbers	Title	Number of boxes / volumes	Box contents	Covering dates	Notes on problems / condition
00001-00007	Apples and Pears, Grocers	7	Business records	Not known	None
Box /	Title	Number of	Box contents	Covering	Notes on problems /

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[4] As described in further detail in Jackie Bettington et al (editors) *Keeping Archives* (Australia: Australian Society of Archivists 2008), p.18

volume numbers		boxes / volumes		dates	condition
00001-00012	Ms Enid Example	12	papers	c1890-1950 (rough dates)	Box 2 diaries loose bindings and previous water damage
00013	Mr Ernest Example	3 volumes (photograph albums)	Photographs, with some letters and postcards	1935-1945	Vol 3 some photographs loose.

A simple listing task may also give you a chance to clean your storage area and check for evidence of any pests.

If you have time, you can produce more detailed catalogues of your records. This is covered in more detail at section 3.3.

2.4 Improving storage

2.4.1 Archives need to be stored in conditions which are cool, dry and seasonally stable, with minimum exposure to natural or artificial light and protection from pests, pollution and access by unauthorised people. Making a quick assessment based on the *how to* guidance below will allow you to identify any immediate needs or risks and to plan how to tackle them.

The archive storage area should be maintained and used only as a store. This will help to maintain security, environmental stability and light levels.

Any archive store should allow for expansion space for additions to the collection. It also needs extra space to allow for repackaging, which can mean that the collections take up more space than they did before.

2.4.2 Storage – rooms
- Look at your storage area – is it clean, dry and secure? It should be.

- **Always clean without chemicals or water, using a vacuum cleaner where possible.**

- **Vacuum cleaners should have good filters to avoid spreading more dust around your storage area. *HEPA* filters are even better as they catch a larger amount of very small particles, leaving the area cleaner.**

- **It is a good idea to wear a dust mask while cleaning the storage area.**

- Are the doors (and windows) lockable and secure? They should be to prevent uncontrolled access or theft.

- Are repairs to the storage area needed?

- When repairs are being made, store the archives in another secure place. Chemicals in paint and other decorating materials can affect archival materials as they release gases. Avoid oil-based paints. Take care to minimise dust and debris while rooms are refurbished.

- The archive store should include a good load-bearing floor to take the weight of the archival collections, the packaging and shelving.

- **If you know or think there are hazardous materials in your collections or you find evidence of mould, seek specialist advice from a conservator. See section 4.3.**

2.4.3 Storage – cupboards
- Look at your storage cupboard – is it clean, dry and secure? It should be.

- **Always clean without chemicals or water, using a vacuum cleaner where possible. It is a good idea to wear a dust mask while cleaning the storage area.**

- Is the cupboard made of strong materials and fixed to an interior wall? It should be

- Is the cupboard lockable and secure? It should be to prevent uncontrolled access or theft.

- Wood can give off acetic acid, which causes chemical damage to archives and can make them deteriorate faster. Newer wood usually gives off more acetic acid. Older wood can give off less, but continues to give off acetic acid over time.

- Air circulation is important – allowing circulation of air within the cupboard to avoid pockets of high humidity, while preventing dust or pests from entering.

2.4.4 Storage – shelving
- Shelving should preferably be open **metal** racking which is secured to the floor and ceiling. To prevent damp it should not be fixed directly to exterior walls.

- Wooden shelving or cabinets sealed and treated with fire resistant solvent-free paint or water based varnish is acceptable for boxed material or bound volumes. Wood can give off acetic acid, which causes chemical damage to archives and can make them deteriorate faster. Newer wood usually gives off more acetic acid. Older wood can give off less, but continues to give off acetic acid over time. Metal shelves are the best option.

- Open shelves allow circulation of air and allow easy inspection and cleaning. The lowest shelf should be around 15cm from the floor and not more than 200cm high.

- The top of the shelves should be at least 30cm from overhead lights to prevent heat damage to documents stored at high levels.

- Shelving should be open-fronted and easy to access. The shelves should be **large** enough to fully support the archives stored on them. (For example large maps or plans, large or heavy boxes, multiple boxes.)

- The shelves should be **strong** enough to fully support the weight of the materials placed on them.

2.4.5 Storage – packaging

- Packaging is an extra layer of protection for archives. It should protect the contents from light and pollution. It also provides some protection from damage, pests, and changes in light or humidity.
- Use archival boxes, folders, sleeves and other packaging materials wherever possible. Archival boxes and packaging are low in acid and lignin and designed to protect the archives to professional standards.[5]
- If you cannot afford archival-quality boxes or packaging, use clean, lidded cardboard boxes for temporary storage. Cardboard file storage boxes or file folders can be used for short-term storage.
- Always label boxes clearly, including covering dates, so that you know what they contain.
- Never over-fill boxes, especially where this makes them too heavy to handle. This can cause damage to the contents and is a health and safety risk to staff.
- If you cannot buy storage boxes or folders straight away, the boxes from photocopy paper may be used for temporary storage. These are only a temporary solution, but can provide some protection from physical damage, dirt, dust and light.
- Never re-use cardboard boxes which have contained food as these can attract pests.
- Photographs and fragile single documents should be stored in archival polyester pockets or sleeves. Brand names include Melinex, Mylar and Polymex.
- Silver safe paper can be used in between pages in photograph albums to protect photographs.
- Temporary packaging should be replaced with archival packing as soon as possible. Archival boxes and folders which are delivered flat packed are the cheapest to buy.

We cannot recommend individual suppliers of archival packaging, though companies include:
Conservation by Design www.conservation-by-design.co.uk/
Preservation Equipment Limited www.preservationequipment.com/
G Ryder and Company Ltd www.ryderbox.co.uk/
Conservation Resources www.conservationresources.com/

2.5 Supporting safe access

2.5.1 Personal and confidential information

Not all archives are suitable for immediate access. If they contain personal information about living people or information that is confidential for some other reason, you may need to restrict access to them. If in doubt, it is better not to make the restricted or confidential material available until you have had a chance to consider it further and consult others. Guidance is available online on handling personal information covered by the Data Protection Act. See the code of practice at:
nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/dp-code-of-practice.pdf.

If you are a public sector organisation, you may find that the archives are covered by the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations, both of which provide a right of access for members of the public. If so, you can refuse access only if one of the exemptions in the Act or the Regulations apply. Guidance on these exemptions is available online on the Information Commissioner's website: www.ico.gov.uk. If you need advice on how any of this legislation applies to your archives, please contact asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk for further guidance.

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[5] Lignin is a compound found in wood-pulp papers. It can cause deterioration of archival materials, especially when exposed to light.

2.5.2 Providing access

Handling and access is a major risk to the safety of documents. Always supervise people who view your archives, even in a private collection, and provide guidance on basic document handling. You should also restrict the types of items researchers can take into your reading room or library area if you have one. Anyone who uses your archives must handle them carefully.

Examples of reading room rules can be found online which may help you. The National Archives' welcome leaflet has a simple list of what can and cannot be taken into reading room areas: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/tna-welcome-leaflet.pdf. A more detailed list of reading room rules is available online here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/rules.pdf. (Please see points 10-24 and appendices 4a and 4b.) **In general anything which can conceal, damage or be confused with the records and any food and drink should be excluded from the area where archives are stored or looked at.**

2.5.3 Safe access - handling
- Don't take risks.
- Handle archives as little as possible.
- Ensure hands are clean and dry.
- Examine archives for signs of damage before making them available.
- Use only pencil for taking notes.
- Never use adhesive stickers to mark pages (or 'Post it' type sticky notes).
- Use soft, flexible weights to hold pages in place.
- Never moisten or lick fingers to turn pages.
- Be careful when moving heavy items, use a trolley.
- Never carry heavy, awkward or large items on your own.
- Support documents at all times – large items need a large table. Bound volumes (bound together like books) need supports such as foam wedges or pillows so that they don't open too far. Padded strip weights can help prevent plans or volumes with over tight bindings from curling upwards while being displayed or consulted.[6]
- Have a clean, flat work space away from hazards ready before bringing out the archival material.
- Photocopying and scanning can cause damage to documents through exposure to strong light and closing the lid to flatten the document. If you must copy in this way, copy once only and keep the photocopy or digital scan to make other copies from. Document feeder trays on photocopiers and scanners can damage documents and should not be used.

2.5.4 Safe access – supervision
- Always supervise anyone who is viewing the archives
- Have a designated area where archives are produced for viewing
- The area should be clean, tidy and well presented
- The area should be easy to supervise whilst not hindering researchers
- Researchers should not be allowed into the storage areas
- Keep records of researchers and the archives they have viewed.

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[6] The National Archives' Document handling guidance includes photographs of wedges and padded weights with advice on handling different kinds of documents. It is available online here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/document-handling.htm.

3. Next steps in archives

This section of the guide includes more detail on managing your archive, and where to find additional information and further help.

3.1 Storage conditions and preservation

3.1.1 In section 2 we identified some of the main risks to archives and how to deal with them. Poor storage conditions can also put archives at risk. Archives need to be stored in conditions which are cool, dry and stable, with minimum exposure to natural or artificial light. They also need to be packaged adequately and handled carefully. Providing good storage conditions slows down deterioration over time and helps to prevent damage from dirt, mould or pests.

3.1.2 Poor environmental conditions, inadequate packaging and handling arrangements will encourage deterioration of the archive over a prolonged period of time. General information about caring for archives is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/caring_for_records.htm. There is also a British Standard for the storage of archive material (BS 5454). **It is the ideal which all established archive services aim for**.
The Standard is described here:
nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/environmental-management.pdf. In general, recommends a cool, quite dry, stable environment to store archives. A new guide to support this Standard, *PD5454: Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials,* is expected to be published in late 2011. It will include updated information on how to put in place the recommendations in BS5454.[7]

3.1.3 Making a quick assessment based on the boxes below will help you to identify any needs or risks and to plan how to tackle them.

3.1.4 Storage environment

- High temperatures and high relative humidity speed up chemical changes in the materials archives are made from. This speeds up degradation. Relative humidity is the amount of moisture in the air at particular temperatures - measuring it tells us how moist the air is in a particular room or area.
- Changes in temperature and relative humidity can also increase degradation of the materials the archives are made from.
- A stable environment where the temperature and humidity does not change much is best. An attic space can reach extremes of temperature and relative humidity. Attics cannot be easily monitored or accessed, so should not be used for storage.
- When relative humidity is above 65%, mould can germinate and spread through collections causing extensive damage.
- Paper and parchment should not be stored below 40% relative humidity for long periods of time as it can become dry and brittle. This increases the risk of damage through mishandling.
- Photographs and film benefit from storage at a lower relative humidity of 30-35%.
- Avoid natural light from outside in your storage area.
- Keep lights on for a minimum amount of time, and only when staff are inside your storage area.

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[7] British Standards Institute, Standard in development: *PD 5454 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*.
http://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/Home/Project/201001376

3.1.5 Protecting archives

- You can protect archives against deterioration over time by using archival packaging which provides an additional level of protection against changes in environmental conditions and a first line of defence against fire, water, light, dust, and pests.
- Other adaptations to bring your storage closer to BS5454 include: improvements to ventilation; improvements to air circulation; pest monitoring; screening windows to avoid ultra violet light; structural improvements to buffer changes in temperature and relative humidity.
- Simple equipment can be installed to monitor insect (and rodent) pests, temperature and relative humidity.
- Intruder alarms can be installed to provide a deterrent to break-ins. These are most effective when remotely monitored. These systems can include remote smoke, heat, carbon monoxide and flood detection which allow a prompt response when incidents happen.
- Filtered air removes large particles of dust and pollution in the air, preventing them from causing damage to the archives. This requires mechanical systems and costs of installation, running and maintenance, that need to be considered
- If you look after an archive in an organisation, you can discuss preservation and prevention, along with any conservation and repair needs with your management team. The aim is to secure more funding and help to look after your archive now and for the long-term future.

3.2 Records Management and Archives

3.2.1 The first purpose of managing records is to meet the business or operational needs of an organisation or person, allowing them to function effectively. While the records are meeting these needs they are in active use. When they are no longer needed in active use, they are reviewed to decide which should be selected to become part of an archive collection. This cultural and historical research value is their second purpose.

3.2.2 Records that are not selected for permanent preservation should be destroyed when no longer needed. Remember that if they contain sensitive or confidential material they must be destroyed securely – they should never be disposed of with general waste or recycling. **Never destroy older historical records or records which you are not sure whether to keep.**

3.2.3 It will be useful to do a survey of your organisation or group to find any historical records that are kept in other places such as offices or other storage areas. You can review these for significance. Any records selected for the archive can be moved to your central storage area.
This is also a chance to survey the records being created now and how they are structured. If they are well managed now, it will be easier to review and select them for your archive in the future.

3.2.4 Further information on records management is available online here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/implementation-guides.htm. These are a series of guides, beginning with *Guide 1: What is records management.* The guides were written to help people in the public sector comply with the records management code. They are useful for anyone needing an introduction to records management, good practice and how it applies in an organisation.

3.2.3 Structure, function and activities

Looking at the structure, function and activities of the organisation or person may help to make sense of the structures found in collections of archival records. The table below has 2 examples of how records might be produced by the function and activities of an organisation and of a person. They show how records are produced by these activities and have a logical order.

Structure	Function	Activities	Records
Community Support Group • Committee • Support team • Admin team	• Community Support	Fundraising Publicity Community visits Community events Administration	Financial records Marketing material Records of visits Planning, minutes, feedback Correspondence
Professional writer • Books • Articles • Publishing	• Writing	Writing Administration Publicity Events	Working papers Correspondence and diaries Marketing materials Speaking notes

3.3 Cataloguing and arrangement

3.3.1 Records selected for preservation as archives should not be re-arranged just because they are being kept for a different purpose. Their original structure and arrangement should be respected as far as possible, in accordance with the principles of provenance and original order mentioned in section 2. For example, the minutes of a committee are likely to have been kept together and should continue to be kept together and catalogued as one series of records, arranged by date. Sometimes archival records have become mixed up over time and may have lost their original order. As you work through them, you may be able to recover some of this order and make more sense of their structure.

3.3.2 Cataloguing gives you an opportunity to document and check the contents of collections, identify any records which are particularly interesting and also any which should not be open for research for the reasons explained at paragraph 2.5.1. For archives open for research, describing what you have and even publishing catalogues online will enable potential researchers to complete their initial investigations before they visit you. Importantly, it also allows researchers to discover what you **don't** hold in your collections, avoiding unnecessary enquiries.

3.3.3 Document Management Systems which are designed for the general sharing of administrative and business records are not usually a suitable product for cataloguing archive material. Specialist cataloguing software is available, some of which can be downloaded free of charge. The International Council on Archives provides ICA-AtoM a web-based open source software: http://ica-atom.org/. State Records News South Wales, Australia, provides Tabularium, a Microsoft Access database application designed for collection management, including cataloguing: http://tabularium.records.nsw.gov.au/.
Alternatively, you can use ordinary office software to catalogue your archives. For example, you can use tables in word-processing software to structure the descriptive information as outlined in the box below. These features can be used to create a level of description for each record with a sequence of items and

descriptions following in a list. You can then convert the list to PDF format for publication online. You can even upload catalogues created in word-processed documents into some professional archival cataloguing systems.

3.3.4 Cataloguing archives

Archives catalogues use a hierarchical structure with details of the collection at the top level, then series piece, and documents. Information in cataloguing is organised into units of information such as 'Name of creator' and 'Dates of creation'. The technical term for these categories is 'field'.

You can adopt the General International Standard Archival Description, ISAD(G) for cataloguing in a hierarchical structure. The essential fields are:
- Reference code
- Title
- Name of Creator
- Dates of Creation
- Extent of Unit of Description (quantity) and
- Level of Description (where you are in the hierarchy).

Further information is available on the International Council of Archives website. It provides general guidance for the preparation of archival descriptions: www.icacds.org.uk/eng/ISAD(G).pdf.

A simple example of a catalogue structure is shown below.

Reference code	Title	Name of creator	Scope and content	Dates of creation	Extent	Level of description
APP1/1-APP1/7	Records of Apples and Pears, Grocers	Apples and Pears, Grocers	Records of Apples and Pears, Grocers, Cutler Street, Sheffield.	1955-1962	7 boxes	Series
APP1/1	Delivery records	Apples and Pears, Grocers	Box 1 Receipts and delivery notes 1955-1957	1955-1957	1 box	Piece
APP1/1/1	receipts	Apples and Pears, Grocers	Receipts June-September 1955	1955	1 file	Item

3.4 Funding and Sustainability

3.4.1 An archive needs a consistent and reliable commitment of resources and the first step to secure this is a specific archive budget for conservation materials, equipment and other archive expenses. Without these resources, the collection is unlikely to reach its full potential, to continue to grow and be effectively preserved. They are more likely to be provided if you can show that the archive can contribute to your corporate identity and support your organisation's activities.

3.4.2 Funding for archives

Funding can come from inside or outside your organisation.

Prepare details of the contents, value and needs of your archive so that you can convince the management team you report to that funds should be provided to look after the archive for the future.

External funders may support your archive for specific projects or packages of activity. Funding guidance is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/grant_aid.htm.

The National Cataloguing Grants scheme may be a source of funding. Details are available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/cataloguing_grants_scheme.htm. Points 4 and 5 of the *Guidance notes for applicants* will be of particular interest.

You may be eligible to apply for the new cataloguing grant for business archives: www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/catgrant/.

To discuss funding possibilities further, contact the Funding Advice Manager at The National Archives: asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

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3.5 Benefits from managing your archives

3.5.1 There are a number of benefits that flow from managing your archives. Firstly, they provide evidence of your various activities and your wider accountability to society in relation to a wide area of responsibilities. Examples include demonstrating compliance with child protection regulations and the requirements of the Charity Commissioners. Archives also help to market and promote your organisation's history, activities and brand identity to potential supporters, users and customers. For this reason your archive ideally should reflect the true complexity and diversity of your organisation's activities. The archive can also be used to support your contemporary activities, provide a source of images for the corporate website and educate colleagues and the wider community on the history and identity of your organisation.

3.5.2 Policies and Standards
Policies and standards are produced to support the long-term sustainability of archives, wherever they are kept. Together, they provide the principles and practice to shape how work is done to best effect, making the best use of the available resources. Policies can be internal or external. Internal policies are intended to support your mission or your collecting remit. External policies are intended to support the wider archive sector. Standards for archives are usually external and cover all aspects of managing archives, they are a means to measure best practice and to deliver policy aims.

The National Archives produces the Standard for Record Repositories. Archives can subscribe to the standard and agree to bring their practices in line with it. The Standard is available online here:

nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/standard2005.pdf. If you are interested in subscribing to the standard for your archives, please contact: asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

3.5.3 Archives for the 21st Century
This is the latest government policy on archives. It is aimed at archives in the public sector including universities. The recommendations can be applied to organisations of all kinds and are illustrated by useful case studies. The full policy and action plan are available online here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy/aft21c/.

3.5.4 Collection Development
The National Archives is supporting a framework of collection strategies to ensure that records of events and of the lives and activities of individuals and communities, and of public, private and charitable organisations are:

- being kept

- preserved efficiently and effectively

- made easily available and widely accessible.

The strategies support collection development for archives which have meaning and impact for their context and user communities. Further information is available online at: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/policies/collection-strategies.htm.

3.5.5 Promoting archives
The Archives Awareness Campaign promotes local and national archives across the UK and Ireland, celebrating the wealth of archive material available to the public: www.archiveawareness.com/.

Archive Pace Setters is a scheme aimed at highlighting innovation in the sector: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/projects-partnerships.htm.

3.5.6 Support and guidance from The National Archives

- All of our information for the archives and cultural heritage sector, including our newsletter, *Archives Sector Update* can be found here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/.

- Support available to private archives (including clubs, societies and secretariats): nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/advice_private_owners.htm.

- Support in caring for archives is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/caring_for_records.htm.

- There is an A-Z guidance section on our website; *archive management* will be of particular interest: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/guidance/a.htm, along with *disaster management:* nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/guidance/d.htm.

- Framework of standards, including records storage, public access and cataloguing: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/framework.htm

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3.5.8 Digitisation

Digitisation is the creation of digital copies of records that originated in traditional physical formats such as paper, parchment, photographs, film, sound and video. Many archives are beginning to digitise their collections to protect originals from regular handling, to provide wider access to collections, or in response to technical change. Guidance on image formats for digitisation is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/digitisation-image-specification.pdf.

In some cases archives work with commercial partners to digitise their collections. General guidance on this is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/guidance/d.htm. You can also contact Licensing at The National Archives for specific advice on digitisation with third parties, including selection, length of and terms of agreement: associates@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

One aspect to be aware of is intellectual property. Before digitising material in your collections you need to ensure that you own the copyright and other rights in the records. If the copyright belongs to someone else, you may need to arrange copyright clearance with the rights owners. A detailed explanation of copyright and related rights is available online here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/copyright-related-rights.pdf.

3.5.9 Digital archives and preservation

Many types of records and information are now created or 'born' digitally, including emails, word processed documents, spreadsheets, photographs, video and websites. Digital records need to be actively managed in storage, so that they remain accessible and usable into the future. Storage alone is not a solution to digital preservation and a regime of regular preservation actions is needed to ensure they remain viable over time.

Digital archives systems are used to store and manage digital records and information. They may be complex server-based systems for large quantities of information, or regimes of managing preservation of data on media such as CDs, DVDs and external hard drives.

Digital preservation for an archive collection is a complex area of work which requires at least some level of technical knowledge, and ideally access to more advanced expertise.

It is important to note that uploading digital or digitised assets to the internet alone does not preserve them - though it is a powerful means of providing access. The Museums, Library and Archives Council have produced some useful guidance, *Advice for community archives on web archives* which includes a seven-point checklist of aspects to help preserve digital assets over time. It is available online here: www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/~/media/Files/pdf/2010/programmes/Guidelines_for_online_community_archives.

The National Archives has produced a set of frequently asked questions to support people in caring for digital records and archives. These are available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/digital-preservation-faqs.htm.

Guidance on digital preservation policies is available here: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/digital-preservation-policies-guidance-draft-v4.2.pdf.

Digital Preservation Europe has an introduction to digital preservation available online: www.digitalpreservationeurope.eu/what-is-digital-preservation/.

The National Library of Australia provides details of the critical elements of digital preservation online: www.nla.gov.au/digital-preservation/critical-elements.

3.6 Decisions on long-term custody

If long-term preservation of your archives is not practical for you, you might consider depositing them with an established archive service to secure their long-term safe keeping. There are benefits to this route as an established archive service is best placed to store, preserve and provide access to archival collections for the long term.

Deposit with an established service may be particularly appropriate for material which needs specialist care, such as moving image and sound recordings, textiles, and photographs.

3.6.1 What you can do

You can search for archive services within your region or area of collecting interest on ARCHON, the contact directory for archive repositories and institutions in the UK: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/

You can search by area, for example 'Norfolk'.

You can search by specialist theme, for example, 'film' or 'photography'.

The directory has contact details for each organisation. It may be useful to contact them if you are considering deposit with an established archive service.

The National Archives has issued guidance on deposit agreements: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/loanagreement.pdf.

4. Useful information

4.1 Other published guidance

Collections Link brings together useful guidance on a range of subjects for archives: www.collectionslink.org.uk/index.cfm?ct=search.home/tagList/130.

The Preservation Advisory Centre at the British Library provides regular courses (some of which are free of charge): www.bl.uk/blpac/index.html. They also publish a broad range of useful guidance: www.bl.uk/blpac/publicationsleaf.html.

British Library, Preservation Advisory Centre, *Basic Preservation:* www.bl.uk/blpac/pdf/basic.pdf.

British Library, Preservation Advisory Centre, *Building Blocks for a Preservation Policy:* www.bl.uk/blpac/pdf/blocks.pdf.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Benchmarks in Collection Car:* www.mla.gov.uk/~/media/Files/pdf/2002/2002_Benchmarks_in_Collections_Care_Resource.

UNESCO, Memory of the World, General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage:unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001256/125637e.pdf.

The National Archives, Protecting archives and manuscripts against disasters (2004): nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/memo6.pdf.

The National Archives, Standard for Record Repositories: nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/standard2005.pdf.

4.2 Audio-visual preservation

4.2.1 Many non-specialist archives hold audio-visual material in their collections. This includes moving image and sound recordings which may be in many different formats from film, video, tape and vinyl to DVD and digital files. A range of advice is available to support you in caring for these specialist collections.

The Archives and Record Association has guidance for Film and Sound Archives in non-specialist repositories: www.archives.org.uk/images/Film_BPG.pdf, www.bl.uk/about/policies/endangeredarch/pdf/08guidelines_film.pdf.

Basic Principles of Film and Video Preservation and Conservation are available on the Collections Link website:www.collectionslink.org.uk/index.cfm?ct=assets.assetDisplay/title/Basic%20Principles%20of%20Film%20and%20Video%20Conservation%20and%20Preservation/assetId/384.

PrestoSpace is a project working to improve and standardise practice for audio-visual material. A useful preservation guide is available online: http://wiki.prestospace.org/pmwiki.php?n=Main.NavigationGuide

The Preservation Advisory Centre has a guide to Photographic Materials which includes moving image film: www.bl.uk/blpac/pdf/photographic.pdf

4.3 Specialist advice

4.3.1 Finding a conservator

Assessment and repair of archives which are damaged or fragile is a job for an expert: never attempt temporary repairs with unsuitable materials. Items which are in poor condition should be carefully placed in boxes or folders, and not made available to researchers until they have been treated or repaired.
The National Archives provides details on finding a conservator: nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/consulting-a-conservator.htm.

4.3.2 Finding an archivist

Consultant archivists work on a freelance basis and are available on a short term basis to carry out specific packages of work. These activities include surveying collections, cataloguing, recommendations and guidance, packaging, preservation and so on.

You might also consider employing an archivist for a specific period of time to address particular aspects of managing or caring for your collections. There is a JISCMail discussion list for archivists and records managers, which may be useful for inviting interest in your requirements. Items posted to the list are circulated by email: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=archives-nra.

4.4 Archival networks

Joining a network enhances an organisation's online presence and potentially opens up dialogues with archivists and information management professionals working in similar circumstances.

4.4.1 ARCHON is a directory of contact details and locations of record repositories and institutions: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/ It also provides repositories with a unique repository code which can be used in ISAD G compliant cataloguing: www.icacds.org.uk/eng/ISAD(G).pdf (*General International Standard Archival Description, Second Edition p13, 3.1.1. Reference code).*

New ARCHON entries can requested by completing an online form: nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/searches/update.asp. Having an ARCHON entry and code is the first step to joining an archive network, as networks ask contributors to have a unique repository code.

The National Register of Archives provides the best all round information on archival sources for British history. It is a central point for collecting and sharing information about archive collections held in many places, reflecting the richness, diversity and complexity of British society. It includes unique online access to 44,000 lists and catalogues describing archives of British history held in the UK and abroad: nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra. Repositories on the ARCHON Directory often submit lists or finding aids to the National Register of Archives, which contains information on the nature and location of manuscripts and historical records that relate to British history. If you are interested in submitting lists to the National Register of Archives, please contact Archives Sector Development: asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

4.4.2 As well as the online resources maintained by The National Archives there are also several other networks which provide online access to descriptions of archival collections in the UK. These include the Archives Hub, Archives Wales, SCAN and Genesis. Workshop and training days are organised for existing and new participants.

4.4.4 AIM25 is a network which has a specific remit for providing electronic access to collection-level descriptions of the archives of over 100 higher education institutions, learned societies, cultural organisations and livery companies within the greater London area. Contributors range from large repositories like London Metropolitan Archives to smaller specialist repositories such as the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland. AIM 25 is available online here: www.aim25.ac.uk/.

4.4.5 Contributing to a network such as AIM25 can be a useful method of generating descriptions of holdings in a structured way, in compliance with international cataloguing standards. It is a useful tool to use if in you do not have access to an electronic catalogue, as contributors gain access to an online system which allows them to complete collection level descriptions. These descriptions are published on the AIM 25 website, linked to access information on the ARCHON directory. The directory has clear information on where collections are located and any access restrictions.

4.4.6 The Archives Hub provides a gateway to collections in over 200 repositories across the UK. It complies with the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) cataloguing and indexing standards. The Hub uses Encoded Archival Description (EAD), an international standard for archival descriptions that promotes interoperability and sustainability. You can create EAD descriptions using your own software, or use the Hub's EAD editor, which provides an easy to use, template based form. The Hub can also take in exported descriptions from certain cataloguing software.
The Hub is available online here: http://archiveshub.ac.uk/.
Further information and an online tutorial is available here: http://archiveshub.ac.uk/datacreation/.

4.5 Professional Organisations and membership

4.5.1 Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland
The Society of Archivists (SOA), National Council on Archives (NCA) and Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG) have merged to form the Archives and Records Association, UK and Ireland (ARA) www.archives.org.uk/.

4.5.2 British Records Association
The British Records Association provides a forum for everyone interested in archives including archivists, historians, and owners of records. It is a clearing house and rescue body for archives to ensure that material of historical interest is deposited with appropriate record offices: www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk/index.htm.

4.5.3 Oral history
Rob Perks is Curator of Oral History at the British Library and Secretary of the Oral History Society: www.oralhistory.org.uk/.

4.5.4 Community archives
The Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) is a national group which aims to support and promote community archives in the UK There are resources and useful links for community archives on their website:
www.communityarchives.org.uk/category_idtxt__resources.aspx.

West Yorkshire Archive Service have produced useful ideas and tips as part of their Community Archives Accreditation Scheme. You will see that is has been constructed as a learning exercise, but it has some very accessible information: www.nowthen.org/assets/files/mp3/CAA%20Scheme%20(2).pdf.

4.5.5 Business archives
The Business Archives Council promotes preservation and access for business archives. Advice on managing business archives is provided on a dedicated website: www.managingbusinessarchives.co.uk/.

4.6 Training Courses and Professional Development

4.6.1 The Archives and Records Association has a programme of workshops and courses for all levels of experience: www.archives.org.uk/training/training.html.

4.6.2 The Preservation Advisory Centre at the British Library provides regular courses (some of which are free of charge): www.bl.uk/blpac/index.htm.l

4.6.3 There are a range of companies providing a range of training programmes. The Archive Skills Consultancy which has a programme of regular training including Basic Archives Skills: www.archive-skills.com/training/2010/23-6.php; and the University of Dundee, which provides modules for continuing professional development for people working with archives. These modules include *An Introduction to the Management and Preservation of Archives, Archives Theory and Management* and *Archive Administration, Access and Preservation*: www.dundee.ac.uk/cais/cpd/.You may find more examples by searching online.

4.6.4 The Archives and Records Association also have a useful page on careers in archives. It includes a list of university courses, some of which provide single units of study on professional skills. www.archives.org.uk/careers/careers-in-archives.html.

4.7 Useful books

Jackie Bettington et al (editors) *Keeping Archives* (Australia: Australian Society of Archivists 2008). *This is the third edition of this book, earlier editions are also useful.*

Caroline Williams, *Managing Archives: Foundations, Principles and Practice* (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2006)

Helen Ford, *Preserving Archives* (London: Facet Publishing 2007)

5. Case studies
5.1 This section includes details of good practice in established and new archive services and collections. There are links to detailed information on the archives and their activities. Further case studies will be added to this section following feedback from users of the guidance.

5.1.1 Improvement and best practice
Oswestry Town Council Archives brought all of their archives together in the Guildhall, with air conditioned storage space, search room facilities and a conservation programme; www.oswestry-tc.gov.uk/Core/Oswestry/Pages/Archives_3.aspx.

Whitechapel Gallery developed storage, reading room and exhibition space for their archive as part of major refurbishment work: www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Community%20Engagement/Whitechapel_Gallery.

The Business Archives Council has useful case studies describing how business archives actively support marketing, corporate identity, engagement, evidence and innovation: www.managingbusinessarchives.co.uk/getting_started/exploiting_the_archive/the_business_benefits_that_archive_management_can_deliver.

5.1.2 Cataloguing
Suffolk Record Office tackled their cataloguing backlog by setting up a supervised volunteer project. Details of the project are available online at: www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Community%20Engagement/Suffolk_record_office.

5.1.3 Opening up access and learning
North Yorkshire Record Office worked with the Young Offenders Institution in Northallerton to educate young offenders about the lives of offenders in the past, with the goal of minimising their chances of re-offending.
Details of the project are available online at:
www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Learning%20and%20Skills/N_Yorkshire_Record_Office.

5.1.4 Developing collections
Black Cultural Archives, *Heart of the Race* collected the stories of women involved in the movement for black women's rights. These oral histories were collected by trained volunteers and are stored in a digital archive.
Details of the project are available online at:
www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/best_practice/Collections%20and%20Sustainability/The_heart_of_the_race.

5.1.5 Major development

The Borthwick Institute at the University of York opened their purpose built building complex in 2005, following a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Details of the project are available online at: www.york.ac.uk/library/borthwick/about-us/.