

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA
PRESERVATION POLICY

APPROVED BY:

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Director & Provincial Archivist

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1.0 Policy Statement

The Provincial Archives of Alberta is responsible for the safe-keeping of the records of enduring value of the Government of Alberta as well as those records considered to be of historical and cultural significance to the people of Alberta. If our documentary heritage is to survive it must receive care, both collectively and individually. Conservation treatment for individual items is important; however, an integrated, preventive conservation program must be in place for all holdings if a preservation plan is to be effective, cost efficient and pro-active. The Provincial Archives of Alberta recognizes that a preservation management program is the most effective means of preserving its archival materials.

2.0 Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

2.1 To provide a comprehensive policy framework for the preservation of archival and library materials held by the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

2.2 To provide a framework for “best practice” documents and statements on specific aspects of preservation management.

3.0 Policy Scope

Preservation management may be characterized as all of the measures taken to prevent or retard the deterioration of holdings, thereby ensuring long term accessibility to archival and library materials and information. At the Provincial Archives of Alberta this includes a commitment to,

3.1 systematically assessing facilities, holdings, policy development, and pursuing activities to ensure the proper care of archival material within all media.

3.2 providing a safe environment for holdings by monitoring, recording and maintaining standards for temperature, relative humidity, lighting and air quality control.

3.3 protecting holdings from pests, poor handling, fire, flood, vandalism and theft.

3.4 properly storing holdings, ensuring that every record in the Provincial Archives’ holdings are professionally housed to a minimum national archival standard.

3.5 staff responsibility for the preservation of records. As a consequence, all staff will periodically receive regular training in preservation techniques and methods.

3.6 dedication of resources to projects designed to extend the lifespan as well as enhance accessibility of the collections held in the Provincial Archives, such as reformatting and specific treatments of endangered items.

3.7 reviewing policy on a regular basis and, if necessary, updating the preservation policy.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 Provincial Archivist - The Provincial Archivist approves preservation and conservation treatment policies, procedures and “best practices,” and ensures that dedicated funds are in place to support the ongoing preservation of Provincial Archives holdings.

4.2 Managers – Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff members adhere to institutional preservation management policies, procedures and best practices, and for overseeing the integration of the preservation function into all major archival and library functions. The Manager of Preservation Services, in particular, oversees the disbursement of funds for preservation projects, supplies, and equipment, and is directly involved in the development of the preservation management programme.

4.3 Archivists - Archivists must work in partnership with conservation staff and contractors to ensure the long-term preservation and access to archival holdings. Archivists are responsible for determining and assigning use and value priorities to the archival holdings so that the appropriate conservation treatment may be applied. Archivists are also responsible for identifying conservation issues when working with records and for making conservation issues known to the Conservator.

4.4 Conservators - The Conservators are responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Preservation Policy and accompanying activities pertaining to the preservation and conservation of the holdings of the Provincial Archives of Alberta. The Conservators are responsible for those measures taken to repair or restore damaged or deteriorated archival materials to their original condition. In addition, the Conservators

- monitor the archival environment;
- develop and deliver preservation and conservation projects;
- set “best practice” standards for the staff in the implementation of preservation procedures;
- treat record collections when required;
- train and/or arrange for training for all staff, volunteers and term employees on the care, handling and proper housing of archival records.

4.5 Archives Technicians – Archives Technicians are responsible for the daily implementation of the preservation policy and procedures of the Provincial Archives of Alberta through processing activities, which integrate preservation and archival functions.

4.6 Reference Room Staff - The Reference Archivist and the Retrieval Aide play important roles in identifying items from the library, reference room, and the holdings which require intervention in order to remain useful as research tools. Stressing the value of joint responsibility in relations with the public and research community is an important aspect of sharing information about the lesser-known task of preservation.

5.0 References

There are no references at this time.

6.0 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed in January 2005.

7.0 Availability of Preservation Policy

This policy is routinely available and copies of this preservation policy will be made available to staff, Provincial Archives volunteers, the Archives Society of Alberta, and, on request, to other interested organizations and individuals.

8.0 Glossary

Conservation (Interventive Treatment): The physical component of preservation; those measures taken to repair or restore damaged or deteriorated materials back to their original condition. Involves assessment, documentation, testing and stabilization of an item or set of items in order to return it/them to a useable condition, either for research, display, or reproduction. May include the structural conservation and/or aesthetic restoration.

Preservation (Preventive Conservation): The totality of processes and activities involved in the physical protection of records against damage or deterioration and in the restoration / repair of damaged or deteriorated documents. Includes the maintenance of appropriate environmental and storage conditions, re-housing of records in inert or acid-free materials, humidification and flattening of documents, and the creation of custom enclosures.

Reformatting: includes and form of reproduction, including photographic reproduction, microfilming, and photocopying information onto permanent paper (which meet the ANSI Standard for Paper Permanence) for preservation processing.

Holdings Maintenance: A preservation activity that provides original archival materials the minimum archival standard in housing, environmentally controlled and secure storage.

Preservation Management: A tool used by archives to manage the physical condition of holdings, ensuring present and future access. It is based on the principle of preventive conservation and integrates preservation and conservation activities into all archival functions.