

## Collection Care: Terminology

The creators of the Collection Care for Archives in Traditional Formats course have developed a set of definitions for terms that are used in the course and/or by those responsible for collection care in archives. The terminology is intended to assist course learners in understanding and articulating the principles and practices advocated in the course, not to prescribe their use of the terms in other contexts and cultures. Regardless of our working and learning environments, we need to ensure that the terms we use are clearly defined and appropriate. Thus, it is possible that a term used in the learning materials may be explained here to refer to something that in other contexts is used for a different thing altogether, or the same thing is referred to by different terms in the learning materials and the learner's own workplace. We encourage learners to familiarise themselves with the terminology so that they understand the concepts and issues such that they are able to explain them to others and, if necessary, adapt the language they use in managing collection care for archives to ensure that colleagues and other stakeholders understand and commit to the necessary processes.

### Key to 'Source' column:

DAT: Taken from the "Dictionary of Archival Terminology", ICA Handbooks Series Volume 7, KG Saur 1988

UDAT: Taken from the "Universal Declaration on Archives Terminology", ICA, 2021

([https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ica\\_uda\\_terminology\\_0.pdf](https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/ica_uda_terminology_0.pdf))

TASC: Taken from the Archive-Skills Consultancy training handbooks ([www.archive-skills.com](http://www.archive-skills.com))

ICOM-CC: International Council of Museums' Committee for Conservation

(<https://journals.openedition.org/ceroart/2794?file=1>)

| Term                      | Definition  | Source |
|---------------------------|---|--------|
| Acid free paper and board | Paper or board made of either rag or chemical wood fibres or a mixture of both and treated with compounds which result in a pH value which is neutral or somewhat alkaline. (DAT)   | DAT    |
| Acidification             | The process which increases the acidity of paper. It is caused by the storage environment, poor quality source material and the passage of time. It destroys the paper's structure and causes it to lose its strength and become discoloured and brittle. |        |
| Air conditioning          | Mechanical equipment for managing and regulating the temperature and relative humidity of the atmosphere in a room or building.   |        |
| Alum                      | The common name for aluminium sulphate (chemical formula $Al_2(SO_4)_3$ ) which is an ingredient in the size used in papermaking.   |        |
| Analogue archives         | Non-digital archives in physical formats, including photographic and audio-visual archives.   |        |

| Term                   | Definition  | Source |
|------------------------|---|--------|
| Archival management    | The function of looking after archives throughout their life cycle, including: determining what is to be taken in or collected; accessioning; arranging and describing; making them accessible to the public and researchers; preserving them for future generations.   |        |
| Archival packaging     | A range of enclosures and boxes designed for archive formats that meet high standards of construction and constituent materials e.g. being free from acid content. This standard of packaging should be the default for archival collections.   |        |
| Archive                | See <b>Archives</b>   |        |
| Archive repository     | See <b>Archives</b>   |        |
| Archives               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Records of decisions and activities of individuals, organisations, families and societies which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their ongoing value as primary source material providing evidence of the history of the individual, family, organisation or society served by the archives.</li> <li>2. Institution with the remit of acquiring, cataloguing, preserving and providing access to archives. The holdings may come from one or more individuals, families or organisations which means an archive repository often contains more than one archive or fonds.</li> <li>3. Building or premises where archives are stored, preserved and access is given to the public and researchers.</li> </ol> (UDAT) | UDAT   |
| Archivist              | An individual whose profession is concerned with archival management  |        |
| Atmospheric pollutants | Chemicals, for example carbon monoxide and dioxide, nitrogen oxide, sulphur oxide or hydrocarbon fumes, released into the atmosphere by engine exhausts and heavy industry which are hazardous to living organisms and the environment.   |        |
| Bookcloth              | Material, usually woven fabric such as cotton, which is treated to make it more durable and to protect it from adhesives. It is used to cover the book spine and boards on either side of the text block.   |        |
| Carrier                | The physical object, for example sheet of paper, piece of parchment, bound volume or magnetic tape, which holds the information that makes up the archival record.  |        |
| Collection care        | The archival function of caring for the collection or collections in a holistic and strategic way not only to ensure their physical preservation but also to avoid and mitigate risks of damage at any time or location. See also <b>Preservation Management</b>  |        |

| Term                   | Definition   | Source |
|------------------------|--|--------|
| Collection care policy | A policy which establishes an archive institution's commitment to collection care and the preservation of archives. It sets out the aims and priorities for collection care to achieve the long-term preservation of the collections, and access to the information they contain.  |        |
| Collection survey      | A methodical examination and documentation of the physical condition, packaging and storage of archival materials according to a defined set of criteria. Data is collected and analysed in order to establish the current standard of collection care, identify remedial conservation, packaging and storage needs which will inform priorities and provide evidence for resources to effect improvements.<br>See also <b>Scoping survey</b> , <b>Sample survey</b> and <b>Prioritised survey</b> |        |
| Conservation survey    | Methodical gathering and analysis of data about the condition of archive material, its packaging and storage environment in order to understand and plan for its collection care over time.  |        |
| Conservation           | All measures and actions aimed at safeguarding tangible cultural heritage while ensuring its accessibility to present and future generations. Conservation embraces preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration. All measures and actions should respect the significance and the physical properties of the cultural heritage item. (ICOM-CC)  |        |
| Conservator            | An individual whose profession is concerned with the preservation and conservation of archives.  |        |
| Conservator-restorer   | See <b>Conservator</b>   |        |
| Cube tube              | A telescopic container constructed from archival board with square ends used to contain and protect rolled items. It can be easily labelled and these square containers can be economically stored longways on deep shelving.  |        |
| De-humidifier          | A piece of equipment for removing water vapour from the atmosphere.  |        |
| De-humidification      | The reduction of the relative humidity of the atmosphere in a storage area by the use of chemical or mechanical means. (DAT)   | DAT    |
| Digital archives       | 1. Archives in formats which require hardware, software and electricity to access and read.<br>2. The digital repository which houses the digital archives.  |        |

| Term                     | Definition   | Source |
|--------------------------|--|--------|
| Digital thermohygrometer | A <b>thermohygrometer</b> which uses digital technology to measure temperature and humidity. Note that, unlike thermohygrographs, thermohygrometers do not record temperature and humidity.  |        |
| Digitisation             | The process of making digital copies of archives originally created in analogue formats.   |        |
| Disaster coordinator     | The individual who may or may not be part of the archive repository's staff, who is responsible for managing and coordinating disaster prevention, planning and recovery.  |        |
| Disaster mitigation      | A set of actions designed to reduce the severity and impact of a disaster on archive collections.  |        |
| Disaster plan            | A set of contingency actions to enable an archive institution's speedy recovery with minimal loss of holdings in the event of a disaster. It includes anticipating and preventing potential hazards and risks, plans for mitigating the consequences of disasters if they do happen, and detailed steps to salvage the archives and to recover from a disaster once it has occurred. |        |
| Disaster                 | A sudden and negative event that damages some or all archival holdings and interferes with normal archives services and programmes: it may also harm the archive institution's property and interfere with business activities.  |        |
| Dissociation             | A situation in which the archives repository has lost track of all of its holdings and/or the collection management data. It also refers to situations where the archives staff is discouraged or discontented with the poor environment for and the low status of the collections in general to such an extent, that they are unable to address the risks.                          |        |
| Emergency                | A situation that threatens to damage or has already caused harm to archival holdings, premises or operations which, whilst needing to be dealt with according to disaster plan procedures, is not as severe as a disaster.   |        |
| Emergency plan           | see <b>Disaster Plan</b>   |        |
| Endpapers                | Papers, often decorative, stuck to the inside of the book boards to hide the raw edges of the bookcloth where it is folded in around the boards and to provide strength and support to the book structure.   |        |
| Filtered downflow bench  | An electrical appliance for use when removing dirt and mould from archives. It consists of a HEPA filter below a bench with downward suction to ensure dusts are pulled away from the item (and the operator).   |        |

| Term                         | Definition   | Source |
|------------------------------|--|--------|
| Fire Officer                 | The individual who is in charge of managing the fire-fighting operation in the event of a fire. Archive staff must defer to the Fire Officer with respect to leaving and re-entering the premises.   |        |
| Fire Chief                   | American and Canadian term for <b>Fire Officer</b>   |        |
| FFP2 or FFP3 grade facemasks | Masks (filtering facepieces) graded to resist, or filter out, different sizes of particle, including mould. Note that these masks conform to European standards. Masks required for working safely with mould-contaminated archives in other parts of the world will have different names and conform to the appropriate regional standards. The North American equivalents are N95 and N99. |        |
| Foxing                       | The discolouration of paper by brownish spots and stains. (DAT)  | DAT    |
| Format                       | 1. The size, shape, constituents and construction of the physical object on which archives are recorded.<br>2. The programme or coding used to create and read digital files   |        |
| Four-flap folders            | Cruciform, four-flap design folders which fully enclose archival items for maximum protection and are secured with non-bleached linen tape.  |        |
| Freeze drying                | The treatment of water-soaked documents by quick-freezing and subsequent drying under high vacuum at gradually rising temperatures. (DAT)  | DAT    |
| Fumigation                   | Processes designed to destroy insects, mildew or other infestations threatening archive material. This includes anoxic fumigation which removes oxygen by increasing the level of nitrogen and temperature-based methods.  |        |
| Glassine                     | Poor quality wood pulp tissue paper commonly used for photograph enclosures and interleaving.  |        |
| Guano                        | Pest excrement found in archive repositories. Technically guano refers only to the accumulated excrement and remains of birds, bats, and seals and is confined mainly to islands off the coasts of Peru, Baja (Lower) California, and Africa.  |        |
| Handling                     | The manual holding, manipulation, use and movement of archive materials, primarily in human hands but also with the aid of boxes, trolleys and supports.   |        |
| Hazard                       | A natural or man-made threat that has the potential to cause harm to the archive collections.  |        |
| HEPA filter                  | A High Efficiency Particulate Air filter designed to filter out mould and fungal spores.   |        |
| Hygrometer                   | An instrument for measuring relative humidity. (DAT)   | DAT    |
| Hygrothermograph             | See <b>thermohygrograph</b>  |        |

| Term                                  | Definition   | Source                          |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Inert polyester                       | A type of plastic used to enclose and protect archival materials, particularly most types of photographic print, which does not degrade over time nor affect them negatively. Secol, Melinex and Mylar are trade names for inert polyester.  |                                 |
| Integrated Pest Management programme. | A regime which manages the risk of pests in archives by monitoring and trapping, identifying, preventing and setting criteria for action at various levels. IPM regimes aim to be economical and have the least possible effect on people, property, and the environment. Also known as IPM.   |                                 |
| Lignin                                | A naturally occurring element found in wood. When wood pulp is used for paper making, the lignin reacts with temperature, light and relative humidity and ultimately causes chemical deterioration of the paper.   |                                 |
| Mechanical air-conditioning           | See <b><i>Air conditioning</i></b>   |                                 |
| Microfilm                             | A fine-grain, high resolution film in roll form containing images which have been reduced in size from the original.   | English adapted from the French |
| Mildew                                | The type of mould that causes a fine pale dusty coating.   |                                 |
| Mobile shelving                       | Sets of shelving that run on grooves or tracks so they can be moved together and apart. Unlike static shelving, there is no need to leave a gangway between each shelving bay which allows for more shelves and therefore more space to store the archives.  |                                 |
| Mould                                 | Growth of tiny fungi on organic archival media that has been exposed to moist warm air, which causes deterioration and staining. (TASC)  | TASC                            |
| N95 or N99 grade facemasks            | Masks (filtering facepieces) graded to resist, or filter out, different sizes of particle, including mould. Note that these masks conform to European standards. Masks required for working safely with mould-contaminated archives in other parts of the world will have different names and conform to the appropriate regional standards. The European equivalents are FFP2 and FFP3. |                                 |
| Neem                                  | A plant, which is native to Southeast Asia and India whose oil is a proven insecticide with low toxicity to mammals.   |                                 |
| Parchment                             | A writing and illustrating surface made from animal (usually sheep or goat) skin.  |                                 |
| Passivhaus                            | A building technique from Germany that produces a low ecological footprint utilising insulation and high quality building materials.   |                                 |
| Permanence                            | Degree to which a material's original chemical properties retained over time are resistant to deterioration. (TASC)  | TASC                            |

| Term                          | Definition  | Source |
|-------------------------------|---|--------|
| Personal Protective Equipment | Any equipment worn by individuals to protect them from hazards. Examples include hard hats, rubber boots, boots with steel-toecaps, masks and overalls. Also known as PPE.  |        |
| Pests                         | Animal life that pose a threat to the preservation of archive materials.  |        |
| pH Value                      | A measure of the intensity of the acid content of paper or board, also referred to as hydrogen ion concentration. pH is expressed as a logarithmic scale from 0 to 14; the neutral point is 7.0; with values above 7 alkaline, values below, acid. (DAT)  | DAT    |
| Phase box                     | A tailor-made box to hold volumes or other special format archives. Usually a cruciform and four-flap design.   |        |
| Photochemical damage          | Damage caused to poor quality materials by the effect of exposure to natural or artificial light. (TASC)  | TASC   |
| Photovoltaic cells            | A small electrical device that converts sunlight into electricity. Multiple cells form photovoltaic modules, also called solar panels.  |        |
| Plastazote                    | An inert, acid-free foam used as packaging for more fragile archive material.   |        |
| Pollutants                    | See <b>Atmospheric pollutants</b>   |        |
| Preservation management       | That area of professional archival management which pertains to the long-term safe keeping of archival material. It includes the maintenance of the building fabric, security, storage including atmospheric conditions and shelving, surveys of collections, priorities for practical conservation, strategies for protection using packaging, emergency planning, high standards of handling, the use of surrogates as part of an access strategy, good housekeeping and cleaning, staff training and awareness raising. (TASC).<br>See also <b>Collection care</b> . | TASC   |
| Preservation microfilming     | The use of microfilm to preserve the informational content of documents that either are in poor condition or that were created utilising poor quality materials, as well as to preserve originals from deterioration through repeated handling and use. (DAT)   | DAT    |
| Preservation policy           | See <b>Collection care policy</b>   |        |
| Preservation                  | 1. A basic archival function of storing and protecting records<br>2. The totality of processes and operations involved in the physical protection of records/archives against damage or deterioration and in the repair or conservation of damaged or deteriorated documents. (DAT)   | DAT    |

| Term                  | Definition  | Source |
|-----------------------|---|--------|
| Prioritised survey    | A collection care survey that focuses on a particular collection, or a specific part of a collection. See also <b>Collection survey</b>   |        |
| Production            | The temporary removal of an item from its place of storage for use. (DAT)   | DAT    |
| Racking               | A loose term which refers to the shelving structure in the archival storage.  |        |
| Reader                | See <b>Researcher</b>   |        |
| Reading room          | See <b>Research room</b> .  |        |
| Recording datalogger  | A digital datalogger unit that not only measures temperature and RH but also records the data for set periods of time.  |        |
| Red rot               | A condition affecting leather bindings which arises from poor tanning techniques and or dry atmospheric conditions. It causes discolouration, desiccation and loss of strength in the leather which produces a fine reddish brown dust. |        |
| Relative humidity     | The amount of water suspended in a given volume of air, expressed as a percentage of the maximum amount that the air could hold at the same temperature. (TASC)   | TASC   |
| Remedial conservation | Measures taken to stabilise fragile archive material and enable it to be handled, either for direct access by researchers or in order to create a surrogate.  |        |
| Reprographics         | The process of reproducing archive text and images as print or digital copies through electrical or mechanical means such as photography or xerography. Also known as reprography.  |        |
| Researcher            | An individual who consults archives, also called user or researcher. (DAT)  | DAT    |
| Research room         | A secure area for researchers to consult the archives, also known as the research room.   |        |
| Restoration           | Reconstruction of an archival record without regard to the possibility of reversing the procedure. (TASC)   | TASC   |
| RH                    | See Relative humidity   |        |
| Risk analysis         | The process of identifying, examining and developing strategies to mitigate the risks that potentially threaten an organisation's ability to carry out any or all of its functions.   |        |
| Risk                  | The probability of a hazard or threat causing actual harm.  |        |



| Term             | Definition   | Source |
|------------------|--|--------|
| Scoping survey   | A survey that looks at both collection care and broader archives management requirements to deliver data and evidence to inform future planning and priorities for the archive institution. Scoping surveys are usually undertaken when setting up an archive programme or when an archive programme needs assessment or review. See also <b>Collection survey</b>   |        |
| Sample survey    | A collection care survey that covers a proportion or percentage of the whole collection population to produce a statistically valid result that can then be scaled up to estimate costs and set priorities across all holdings. See also <b>Collection survey</b>  |        |
| Size             | A filler, or glaze, often made of aluminium sulphate (alum) which is applied to paper to render it smoother and whiter.  |        |
| Sticky trap      | Insect trap designed to catch crawling insects which may have a chemical lure designed to attract many or specific species.  |        |
| Strong room(s)   | The storage room(s) in an archive repository, also known as stack(s)   |        |
| Surrogate        | A copy of archival material which is made in order to provide a substitute for production to researchers.  |        |
| Textblock        | In traditional bookbinding the folds of paper are brought together as sections, that comprise the text of the book, and these are bound together as a "textblock".   |        |
| Thermohygrograph | A mechanical device for measuring and recording temperature and relative humidity. It consists of a motorised clockwork or battery driven drum which can be loaded with graph paper, two arms referencing temperature and RH with ink pens that touch against the drum/graph paper and trace lines as the drum rotates. The movement of the arms is controlled by hair under tension for the RH and by a bi-metallic strip, that reacts to small changes in temperature. |        |
| Tyvek            | A brand of synthetic flashspun high-density polyethylene fibres which is breathable, resistant to water and impossible to tear used for protective packaging of archives.  |        |
| User             | see <b>Researcher</b>  |        |
| UV light         | Electromagnetic radiation present in sunlight as well as some forms of artificial light which causes chemical changes in organic material, for example the fading of inks or colours and in the discolouration of poor quality paper.  |        |

| Term          | Definition   | Source |
|---------------|--|--------|
| Vacuum drying | The treatment of water-soaked documents by placing them at room temperature in a vacuum chamber, slowly evacuating the air until the temperature reaches freezing point and then proceeding through a series of cycles, the number dependent on the wetness of the documents, in which the chamber is alternately filled with hot, dry air and evacuated until the temperature of the documents is raised to 50°F. (DAT) | DAT    |
| Ventilation   | Ensuring good circulation of air throughout the repository. (TASC)   | TASC   |

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