

Northern Region Film and Television Archive Statement of Policy in Regard to Preservation

Preamble

This statement defines the Archive's policies with regard to the preservation of deposited moving image materials.

I. Preservation Aims and Objectives

Policy Statement

1. The Archive aims to preserve all deposited materials in order to ensure that they will be accessible to future generations. We attempt to realise this aim by means of a combination of storing original elements in appropriate environmental conditions and, where necessary, by making copies on media which are more suited to long-term archival preservation.
2. The Archive recognises that viewing of original element places them in danger from wear and tear and from accidental damage. Therefore, in order to ensure the aim of preservation, The Archive will, as a general rule, restrict access to deposited materials in circumstances where access would jeopardise the long-term preservation of those materials.
3. Any copies produced for the purpose of long-term preservation will, wherever possible, be on the same media format as the original element unless (i) it can be copied to a more convenient format without loss of definition or sound quality (e.g., but not limited to, 9.5mm originals contact printed onto 16mm stock for preservation), or (ii) the original format is obsolete to the extent that its use can no longer be maintained within The Archive (e.g., but not limited to, 2" Quadruplex videotapes).
4. The Archive aims at all times to follow the preservation practices recommended by recognised professional bodies in the field of moving image archiving (e.g. FIAF and AMIA), to keep abreast with new developments in the field and, where possible, to incorporate them into our own practices. We attempt to realise these aims by ongoing training of technical staff, by institutional membership of the relevant professional bodies and by attendance of The Archive's representatives at conferences and symposia organised by these professional bodies.

Definitions

1. 'Deposited Material' for the purpose of this statement shall mean the original artefacts as deposited plus the moving image content recorded on them.
2. 'Element' for the purpose of this statement shall mean an artefact which is a media format as defined below, upon which is recorded specific Deposited Material.
3. 'Media Format' for the purpose of this statement shall mean any unique combination of physical carrier and encoding system (analogue or digital) used to record moving image material. For example, a Beta SP videotape recorded in NTSC would be considered a different format from one recorded in PAL, and there would be no standards conversion undertaken for the purpose of preservation.

II. Categorisation and Storage of Elements

Policy Statement

1. When an element is accepted by The Archive for permanent deposit or a copy is created to meet preservation or access needs, it will be assigned one of the following preservation categories in order to

define how it may and may not be used in order to safeguard the permanent preservation of the deposited material:

- **Master Status.** Master status element must be kept in an appropriate temperature and humidity controlled environment and may only be used for the purpose of making further copies.
 - **Copying Status.** A copy made from a master status element, usually by The Archive, which cannot itself be viewed but which is necessary in order to produce a viewing copy (e.g. an intermediate positive made from an original camera negative). These must be kept in an appropriate temperature and humidity controlled environment.
 - **Viewing Status.** A copy produced from a master or copying status element which is used purely for access purposes and which has no technical restrictions placed on its usage. These should be kept in a temperature and humidity controlled environment if space allows, but have lower priority than master, copying and certain surplus status elements.
 - **Surplus Status.** An acquired element on which is recorded identical deposited material (i.e. moving image content) to another acquired element which is of a higher quality and/or in better condition and which has been assigned master status. As the surplus element(s) are not needed to ensure the long term preservation of the material, they may be used for viewing. Restrictions may be placed on the use of surplus elements in individual circumstances; for example, if a surplus element is in a particularly good condition, The Archive may decide that it can be used for projection in complete reels but not for unsupervised research viewing.
2. In determining the allocation of temperature and humidity controlled vault space for viewing and surplus status elements, priority will be given to elements on physical carriers which are most susceptible to chemical decomposition when stored in inappropriate environmental conditions. In order of priority these are:

1. Cellulose Nitrate film (all types)
2. Cellulose Acetate colour film showing signs of acetylation
3. Cellulose Acetate colour film not showing signs of acetylation
4. Cellulose Acetate black-and-white film showing signs of acetylation
5. Videotape over ten years old (since manufacture) and/or showing signs of chemical damage
6. Cellulose Acetate magnetic soundtrack elements showing signs of acetylation
7. Cellulose Acetate magnetic soundtrack elements not showing signs of acetylation
8. Cellulose Acetate black-and-white film not showing signs of acetylation
9. Videotape under ten years old (since manufacture)
10. Magnetic data storage media
11. Polyester colour film elements
12. Polyester magnetic soundtrack elements
13. Polyester black-and-white film elements
14. Optical and magneto-optical data storage media

Definitions

1. 'Acetylation' for the purpose of this statement shall mean physical damage to film bases of the cellulose acetate group caused by the release of acetic acid fumes, colloquially known as 'vinegar syndrome'.

III. Conservation, Copying and Disposal of Elements

Policy Statement

1. **Conservation of Film Elements.** Once the acquisition process has been formally completed, the following work will be carried out on film elements which have been assigned master status:

- Each element will be assigned a unique number through which it is identified on the Archive's technical records database.
- If the original container is either damaged, corroded or of an inappropriate material for archival storage, it will be replaced with a rust-free aluminium container. In such cases any information on the original container will be recorded before it is discarded.
- Deposited elements will be examined to ascertain the film base type, gauge and formats, and for signs of physical damage and decomposition. The information will be entered into the Archive's technical records database, which will prioritise original elements for copying according to conservation need. Faulty joins will be replaced where necessary and spacing added to the element to prevent damage during copying.
- Produced elements (i.e. copies which the Archive has commissioned from an external lab or facilities house) will be examined for quality control before being accepted as master preservation elements.

2. Conservation of Magnetic Videotape Elements. Once the acquisition process has been formally completed, the following work will be carried out on magnetic videotape elements which have been assigned master status:

- Each element will be assigned a unique number through which it is identified on the Archive's technical records database.
- If the original container is either damaged, corroded or of an inappropriate material for archival storage, it will be replaced with a new container made of an appropriate material. In such cases any information on the original container will be recorded before it is discarded.
- Deposited elements will be examined to ascertain the tape format, and for signs of physical damage and decomposition. The information will be entered into the Archive's technical records database, which will prioritise original elements for copying according to conservation need. In determining levels of priority the Archive will take into account actual and likely format obsolescence issues which may prevent elements from being copied in the future.

3. Conservation of Other Media Formats and Artefacts. The Archive has no fixed preservation policy for media formats other than films and videotapes, or for artefacts which are not media formats. In the event of other media formats and artefacts being accepted for deposit, the Archive shall seek to establish what the appropriate conservation techniques are and to carry them out as appropriate. In the event that the Archive is unable to conserve such elements and artefacts to the appropriate professional standards, it will seek to transfer them to a more appropriate repository.

4. Copying of Elements for Permanent Preservation. The Archive recognises that with the possible exception of polyester-base photographic film, all deposited materials on original media formats, film and videotape, are in imminent danger from being lost either through chemical decomposition, format obsolescence or both. Therefore the Archive will carry on a regular programme of copying original deposited elements onto physical carriers best suited for long-term archival preservation, subject to the provisions of clause 1, section 3 above. The Archive's database will be used to prioritise elements for copying according to the factors of physical damage, chemical decomposition and format obsolescence, and copies will be made as the levels of staffing and funding allow.

5. Disposal of Elements and Artefacts. The Archive will only dispose of deposited materials in the following circumstances:

- By returning them to the depositor and/or their legitimate owner, if and as provided for in the deposit agreement.

- By transferring them to another recognised archive, as described in clause 2, section 4 of the Archive's Acquisition Policy or as described in section 3 above.
- By destruction, only if the elements are damaged or have decomposed beyond the point at which they can no longer be copied. The Archive will continue to preserve original elements after they have been copied, for as long as they are in a suitable condition for making further copies. For example, the Archive will not junk a videotape element purely as the result of format obsolescence. An element will only be destroyed if the recorded material cannot be recovered from it and if there can be no reasonable expectation that future conservation technologies may enable the recorded material to be recovered in the future.
- If otherwise required to do so by law.

Definitions

1. 'Conservation' for the purpose of this statement shall mean cleaning, repair and any other physical intervention carried out on a master status element in preparation for long-term storage in appropriate environmental conditions and/or copying.
2. 'Artefact' for the purpose of this statement shall mean any deposited object which is not a media format.

IV. Agreements and Copyright

Policy Statement

1. All deposit and access agreements initially issued by The Archive will include provisions safeguarding the Archive's right to safeguard the long-term preservation of deposited materials, including the right to restrict access where necessary. The Archive may, at its discretion, accept an agreement in which a depositor declines to accept these provisions, but it will not enter into any agreement requiring it to provide access to parties other than the depositor, the legitimate owner of the original elements and/or (if different) the copyright owner in circumstances that may jeopardise the preservation of deposited material.
2. When copying original elements for long-term preservation, permission will always be sought from the copyright owner of the deposited material where applicable. However, in cases where (i) this permission is withheld, (ii) the identity of the legitimate copyright owner is in dispute and/or (iii) the question as to whether or not copyright subsists in the deposited material is in dispute, the Archive will not regard outstanding copyright issues as a valid reason for not copying original elements in cases where the need to do so in order to safeguard their long-term preservation has been clearly identified.
3. All deposit agreements shall state that any copies of original element made by the Archive for the purpose of long-term preservation or access shall remain the property of the Archive at all times, regardless of copyright issues or ownership of the original elements. The Archive will not enter into any deposit agreements which do not include such a provision.

Definitions

1. 'Agreement' for the purpose of this statement shall mean a written document, signed and witnessed by all parties to it.