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if you have

- ✓ PERSONAL RECORDS
e.g. letters and personal papers
- ✓ PHOTOGRAPHS
e.g. photographs of the locality or famous local people
- ✓ ELECTRONIC RECORDS
e.g. data bases or e-mail
- ✓ MAPS
e.g. manuscript plans or annotated printed maps
- ✓ FILMS
e.g. videos or moving pictures
- ✓ RECORDS ABOUT MUSEUM OBJECTS
e.g. documentation about provenance
- ✓ RECORDS OF STAFF
e.g. staff and their pension rights
- ✓ FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS
e.g. accounts relating to grants or donations
- ✓ EXCAVATION REPORTS
e.g. unpublished documentation about archaeological digs

you are an archive

ARE YOU

AN ARCHIVE?

VALIDATE

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Is any of this happening in your archive?

- Material showing signs of wear and tear? e.g. file covers coming apart
- Poor quality materials? e.g. edges of loose paper going brown or crumbling
- Photographs fading? e.g. identification of people and places no longer possible
- Difficulty in finding information? e.g. incomplete catalogues or indexes
- Poor storage conditions? e.g. a leaking roof, a sagging shelf or a lack of regular cleaning
- Deteriorating computer based material? e.g. files you can no longer access, obsolete hardware or software, lack of any back-up?
- Deterioration of large format materials e.g. maps, plans and posters

Does it matter?

Yes, it does. Little by little the history, memory and identity of your organisation threatened with disappearing for ever.

What can I do?

Small actions can get big results. For example you can

- Box all the material
- List the archives
- Create a dedicated space for those consulting the archives
- Back-up your computer records
- Consider cold storage for photographs and films

You can find plenty more information in web based literature using key words such as preservation, safeguarding, archives, libraries, museums.



A problem shared is a problem solved

Others have faced the same problems and solved them by -

NETWORKING

Conservators in the Caribbean had no knowledge of the skills and information held in the region until they met at a photographic preservation workshop held in Curacao in November 2003. As a result of working together they have set up a network to support each other, exchange information and develop complementary skills.

JOINT PURCHASING OF MATERIALS

In 2000 a couple of regional museums and cultural heritage preservation organisations in India decided to purchase jointly archival supplies from a local paper manufacturer. As a result, archival supplies are available locally at an affordable price, avoiding expensive imports.

SEEKING SPECIALIST ADVICE

Attendance at a course on preservation and management of photographic collections in 2004 in Rome led to contact with specialists in the measurement of air quality in archives, who gave free advice. As a result further contacts were made to deal with problems related to the growth of mould on photographs.

DEVELOPING JOINT STRATEGIES

Organisations holding archives in the City of London joined together to plan reactions to disasters and ensure that each institution had the necessary back-up when needed. Planning jointly, they knew the priorities for salvage in each organisation, developed salvage routines and combined to purchase supplies and equipment such as polythene sheeting and bags. Mutual support resulted in each organisation feeling more secure in the arrangements for combating disaster.

