

# Preservation Standards for Traditional Media: What do we get for our investment?

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# Why do we use standards?

- To ensure that we regulate and manage to a set range of benchmarks
- To satisfy legal and operational responsibilities
- To meet core professional obligations
- To satisfy depositors
- To make us all feel better

# What do we want from a standard?

- A consensus for managing collections
- A range of benchmarks against which to measure performance
- A measured group of aspirations
- A means by which we can progress
- A process to identify weaknesses
- The opportunity to make a case for funding, either internally or from external sources

# Preservation Standards for traditional archival media

- Need to fulfill the objectives of the organisation
- Need to view the preservation activities of an archival institution as part of the records continuum
- Need to be realistic and achievable
- Need to be flexible and enable progression
- Are a vital element of professionalism

# So, standards underpin all preservation activities

- European Standards
  - British Standards
- Archival standards
  - Good quality
  - Best practice
  - No standards

# Current work underway for storage standards; Three initiatives

1. New European standard being developed by CEN/TC346 (lead by the UK), **for all collections**. When finished (c. 2013), this standard will replace 2 and 3 below
1. New spec for environmental conditions (PAS 198), **for all collections** (MLA, CyMAL, Collections Trust, National Archives)
1. New Published Document PD 5454 replacing BS5454:2000, **for archives only**

# CEN TC346 Conservation of Cultural Property

– has the following Working Groups

1. General guidelines and terminology
2. Materials constituting cultural property
3. Evaluation of methods and products
4. Environment
5. Transportation and packing methods



**CEN/Technical Committee 346:  
Conservation of Cultural property**

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graph TD; A["CEN/Technical Committee 346:  
Conservation of Cultural property"] --- B["Working Group 1  
General guidelines &  
Terminology"]; A --- C["Working Group 2  
Characterisation of  
materials"]; A --- D["Working Group 3  
Evaluation of methods &  
products"]; A --- E["Working Group 4  
Environment"]; A --- F["Working Group 5  
Transportation & packing  
methods"];
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**Working Group 1**  
General guidelines &  
Terminology

**Working Group 2**  
Characterisation of  
materials

**Working Group 3**  
Evaluation of methods &  
products

**Working Group 4**  
Environment

**Working Group 5**  
Transportation & packing  
methods



# Standards

- **British Standards Institution,**  
*Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents, BS 5454: 2000*

BRITISH STANDARD

BS 5454:2000

**Recommendations for  
the storage and  
exhibition of archival  
documents**

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# What did BS 5454: 2000 ever do for us?

- Ensured that we spoke a common technical language
- Built respect for the preservation needs of collections
- Defined specialist information on formats
- Demystified building-related risks – extended the capacity for preservation professionals
- Set a national benchmark for all new archive building projects

# UK Heritage Lottery Fund Grants April 1994 – March 2010

- £66.8m to 46 projects for new buildings or extensions to existing archive buildings
- £22.7m to 33 projects that conserved or refurbished archive buildings



Enabled an evaluation of the quality of practice in the following areas:

- Policy
- Buildings
- Storage
- Housekeeping
- Handling and use of collections
- Environmental monitoring & control
- Conservation
- Surrogate copies and new media
- Emergency preparedness

# What else did it do?

- Caused us to obsess over detail
- Increased the use of mechanical air-conditioning plant
- Created specialist enclaves amongst suppliers and architects
- Was used unashamedly to get funding – it is only a recommendation

# The likely future scenarios

- Pressures on public services and organisations to save money
- Pressures on local government services to reduce energy consumption
- Pressures on local government services to reduce “Carbon Footprints”



# Unsustainable recommendations

BS 5454: 2000

*Recommendations for storage and exhibition of  
archival documents*

Frequently-handled material:

13 – 19°C ± 1°C

45 - 60% ± 5%

How will we answer these  
questions?



# What can we do?

- Review all energy use – carry out an energy audit
- Collect data about energy use – is the archive service a bigger energy user than schools or the local swimming pool?
- What are the developments in green energy that can be applied to an archive building?
- Build awareness and develop a strategic response

# Practical solutions

- Turn off the plant to the storage areas on the weekends
- Reduce daily air changes
- Change all bulbs to energy efficient versions
- Automatic shut off for lights in unoccupied areas
- Increase insulation

# Green options for archive buildings

- Solar panels for hot water
- Photovoltaic cells for electricity
- Wind turbines for generating electricity
- Ground source heat pumps for heating
- Rainwater harvesting for toilets
- High levels of insulation
- Sun-pipes for corridors

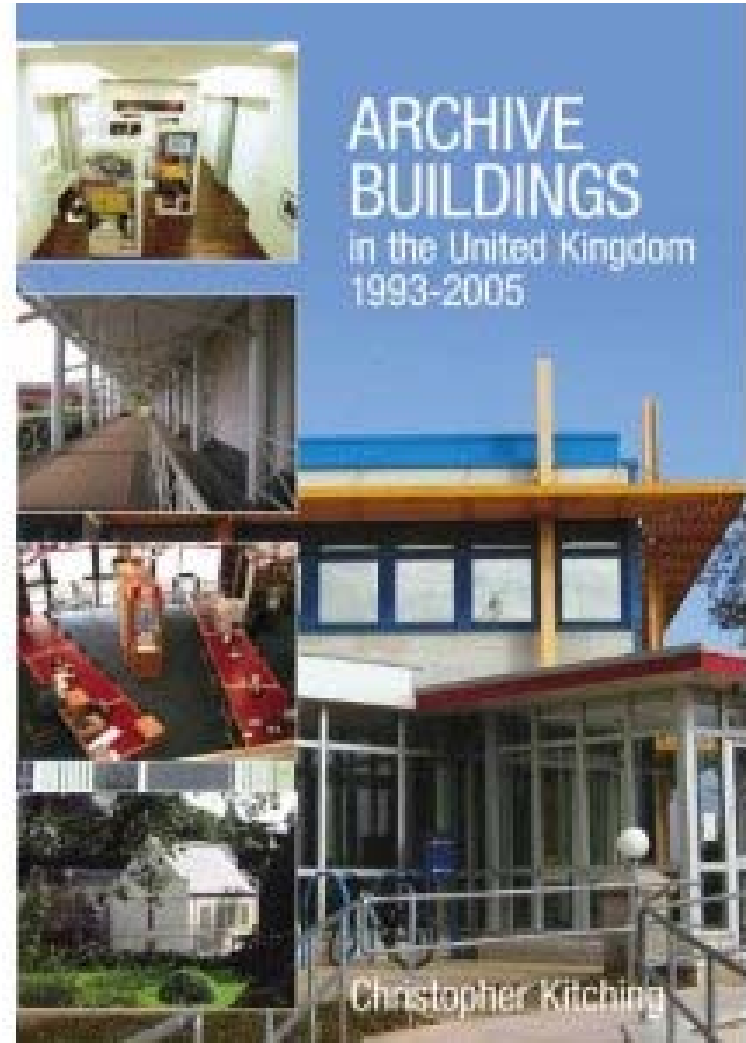
# Will any of these “green” solutions work?

- How effective will hygroscopic wall materials be in buffering humidity levels?
- Do we really understand the effects on archive buildings from the external (ambient) conditions?
- Will wind turbines and photovoltaics produce enough power?
- What problems are we creating by this bias towards hermetic environments?

# Other professional benchmarking and standard advisory publications

**Chris Kitching**  
*Archive Buildings in  
the United Kingdom  
1993-2005,*

Phillimore 2007



PUBLICLY AVAILABLE SPECIFICATION

**PAS 197:2009**

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# Code of practice for cultural collections management

British Standards  
Institution

Publicly Available  
Specification  
(PAS)



Collections  
Trust

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**BSI**  
British Standards

# PAS 197

- Describes the fundamental principles needed to manage collections
- To outline the diversity of activities involved in managing collections
- To be constructive and proportionate rather than prescriptive
- It is not intended as a practical “how to” guide
- It is not a benchmark for assessment

Lets consider two current standards under development in more detail:

- PAS 198 Specification for environmental conditions for cultural collections (publication December 2011)
- Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials (professional consultation completed 30/09/2011)



# PAS 198

- To provide an updated set of requirements for the environmental conditions for cultural collections
- Takes account of the need for a more responsible use of energy and the need to move from a prescriptive to an evidence-led approach
- Allows for risk- based decision making in the management of environmental conditions
- Is applicable to all types and sizes of cultural collections held by all types of collecting organizations such as archives, libraries and museums, whether public or private

# PD 5454

## Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials

- Gives recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents, including library materials
- Provides recommendations that apply to permanent and temporary storage of archival documents, and equally apply to material which is subject to restricted access or is on display
- For use by archivists, librarians, conservators, museum curators,

# So what do we get for our investment?

- An environmental headache – both the maintenance of storage & the challenge of energy savings
- Escalating costs to maintain the status quo
- Loss of support from management as costs seem unreasonable
- Long-term preservation of the collections
- Support and appreciation from users who want access to the collections
- The opportunity to develop flexible and realistic standards