Loans Policy

Our vision

Working with partners to be the physical and virtual heart of Suffolk's past, present and future archives and to encourage all those interested in the county's history in their journeys of discovery.

Our mission

Suffolk Archives helps residents and visitors engage with our county's rich heritage. It collects, conserves and communicates the recorded history of Suffolk from the 12th century to the present day, empowering people in exploring their roots, remembering their past, and planning their future.

1. Purpose of policy

This policy lays out how Suffolk Archives (SA) and Suffolk County Council (SCC) will handle requests for loans of archival materials, both owned by SCC and those on deposit. The policy is linked to other policies such as the Access Policy and Collection Information Policy.

2. Withdrawal of archive material by the owner or depositor

The owner or depositor must put their request in writing to SA with

- 5 days' notice for temporary withdrawal or loan of their material
- 2 months' notice for permanent withdrawal of their material up to 3 linear feet
- 6 months' notice for permanent withdrawal of their material for collections over 3 linear feet

Materials temporarily withdrawn are not covered by SCC insurance whilst in transit or out of the custody of SA. SCC will not accept responsibility for any damage caused to such materials during periods of temporary withdrawal.

A loan form must be completed, signed by an authorised party and an authorised member of SA staff, and kept on file.

3. Loan of archive material by a third party

Requests must be made in writing, and submitted with written permission from the owner or depositor, to SA with

- At least 2 months' notice (6 months for exhibition purposes)

Materials temporarily withdrawn are not covered by SCC's insurance whilst in transit or out of the custody of SA. SCC will not accept responsibility for any damage caused to such materials during periods of temporary withdrawal.

A loan form must be completed and kept on file, together with the written permission from the depositor.

4. Request to borrow archives and local studies material owned by SCC

To request a loan of SCC-owned material, a written request must be submitted to SA outlining details of the items requested and the purpose of the loan.

SA welcomes preliminary discussions about the availability of particular items before a formal request is made.

SA will consider all loan requests reasonably and transparently. When assessing loan requests, the impact and purposes of the proposed loan will be considered alongside the well-being of the items requested.

5. Loans for exhibitions (see also Exhibition and Display Policy)

SA considers requests to borrow items from its collections for inclusion in exhibitions at other Accredited or Registered institutions, whether in the UK or further afield. This section sets out the factors we will consider when assessing, approving and conducting outward loans from the collections we hold. SA seeks to balance its desire to reach a wider audience through external displays and exhibitions, with its responsibilities for the physical integrity and security of the items in our care.

Loans are made to: -

- widen access to the collections and facilitate outreach;
- reach new audiences and inspire enjoyment in archives;
- broaden educational provision;
- support and develop partnerships with other heritage organisations;
- contribute to the wider understanding of archives.

Facilitating access to its collections is one of SA's principal functions and it seeks to demonstrate best practice in the risk-management of outward loans. To enable this, applications for loans must meet all conditions as laid out in this policy and be submitted in writing. Signed submission acts as a loan agreement and a statement that the Borrower has read this policy and agrees to be bound by its terms. Failure to abide by the conditions of this Policy will jeopardise the terms of the loan.

If you wish to borrow documents, please consider that: -

- SA requires a minimum advance notice period of six months for any loan for exhibition purposes
- loans are not made to travelling exhibitions
- the period of loan is not usually more than three months
- SA does not usually lend more than 6 documents to any one exhibition
- the Borrower is responsible for all costs, including insurance, conservation treatment if required, conservator time, and all costs associated with the installation and collection of borrowed items, including courier time and preparation.
- SA must be clearly acknowledged in both the display itself and in any catalogues accompanying the exhibition.
- Where applicable, depositors, depositing organisations and/ or owners must be clearly acknowledged.

SA also reserves the right to cancel or choose not to proceed with a loan at its own discretion but will not normally do so unless in an emergency or where the Borrower fails to comply with the loan conditions. The Borrower must return any or all of the exhibits in the event of a written request by SA to do so.

SA must be notified immediately of any proposals to change the dates of a loan, or of any closures or changes at the borrowing institution, which affect the item(s) on loan.

For overseas loans, custom formalities and the provision of export licences etc. are the responsibility of the Borrower. Borrowers must comply with any relevant legislation (e.g. CITES) and make appropriate custom arrangements.

SA will normally send a courier if it has not lent to a venue previously, if the item loaned is fragile or installation is particularly complex, if the item is rare or of high value or if the journey is long or hazardous

Any additional conditions that attach to the specific material requested for loan, for example restrictions concerning the handling of items or the photography of them, will be detailed in writing by SA in good time, prior to the loan taking place.

Any information collected during the loan application process will only be used and retained in connection with that application and in accordance with the current Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

6. Suitability and Refusals

The suitability for loan of each individual archival item will be assessed by the conservator and archivists at SA. In cases where SA is unable to lend a document due to its condition, size, format or similar reason, we will suggest a good quality facsimile copy as an alternative.

A member of SA staff may visit the designated venue, with absolute discretion to withdraw the documents on loan if dissatisfied with the conditions they observe.

- Occasionally we may find it necessary to refuse a loan request, for example: where there is insufficient time to consider and prepare the loan, or the minimum lead time has not been adhered to.
- Where suitable environmental conditions and/or appropriate security cannot be provided.
- Where other conditions stated in this policy cannot be met by the Borrower.
- Where the requested archival material is fragile, in a poor or unstable condition, or at risk of damage from handling or during transit.
- If the archival material would be used to support or promote an ethical position contrary to that held by SA/SCC.
- Where the item is required for display by SA, or if an agreement to loan the material has already been agreed with another institution.
- Where the item is required for teaching, learning or other activities in which SA engages, for example digitisation, during the proposed period of the loan.
- Where its absence would be particularly detrimental to the work of researchers at SA.

SA will provide a full explanation for any refusal and is willing to work with potential Borrowers to overcome environmental or display issues at their venues where this is the reason for refusal.
If the Borrower is nonetheless unable to comply fully with the conditions set out in this policy and SA is therefore unable to authorise the loan of original items, or when the owner of the items requested for loan does not grant permission, good quality facsimile copies can usually be provided for the Borrower to purchase.

7. Duration

All loans are for a fixed term. SA does not agree to loans for an indefinite period.

SA will normally only lend to temporary exhibitions of up to 3 months duration. Requests for loans longer than this will be considered, but agreement will be based on the suitability of the archives requested and conditions at the borrowing venue.

The Borrower must undertake to maintain a dialogue with SA and communicate any pertinent information relating to the venue, the exhibition, the items within it and in particular the item(s) on loan from SA, during the loan period.

Loans will be monitored carefully by SA during the loan period. The Borrower is required to confirm that loaned items are still safely present at the borrowing venue and provide environmental and light readings, once each month, in writing.

SA reserves the right to cut short the loan period if it deems that the items lent are deteriorating in any way, are at risk of damage or theft, or if the Borrower otherwise fails to comply with the conditions of the loan stated in this Policy.

8. Costs

SA normally requires Borrowers to meet all costs incurred by both themselves and by SA in making the loan. These costs may include (but are not limited to) staff time for producing condition reports, photography, any necessary conservation and repair work, independent valuation, insurance or minimum liability, mounting of flat items, manufacture of cradles or mounts for books, packing, transport, travel expenses and subsistence of couriers where these are required. SA will prepare an estimate of all projected costs for a given loan and send this to the Borrower at the time the loan is approved or as soon as they become available.

Loans made as part of a reciprocal agreement or partnership will be subject to a separate agreement relating to costs.

In the event of cancellation of the loan by the Borrower, for whatever reason, all reasonable costs incurred to that date will be borne by the Borrower.

9. Conservation Requirements

For all archives to be loaned, SA (or an approved Conservator) will prepare a Condition Report, to be agreed with the Borrower prior to the collection date. The cost of preparing the Condition Report shall be met by the Borrower. This may include in-house digitisation of the items, where images do not already exist. If, in SA's opinion, any conservation work is required to loan items prior to their departure, it will be a condition of the loan that the necessary repair and conservation work is first carried out by SA or by a Conservator approved by SA. The costs of any such work shall be met by the Borrower.

No mark in pencil, ink, paint or any other material may be made on any document, nor may any such existing mark be obliterated. No adhesives of any kind may be applied to the documents. All materials used within the cases, with which the documents may come into contact, must be of archival standard, acid-free and free of any pollutants. Items should only be handled by authorised personnel, except in the event of an emergency. No conservation measures of any description may be carried out other than at SA, unless with their express permission.

The Condition Report will travel with the loan to the borrowing venue. Condition checking during the loan period will occur as follows:

- As soon as possible after receiving and unpacking each loaned item, the Borrower (and courier where appropriate) must compare the condition of the item to that recorded on the Condition Report in order to confirm the Report, or to record any changes that might have occurred during storage and transport.
- During the loan period, any damage or changes noticed in the item's condition must be reported to SA immediately.
- Just prior to return of the loan, the Borrower (and courier where appropriate) must make a final condition inspection of each loaned item before it is prepared for transport. Any changes noticed in the item's physical condition must be recorded and reported to SA. The Report must be returned with the loaned items at the time of their return.
- SA will check the condition of the loaned item against the Condition Report on the agreed return date and both parties shall agree any differences, where applicable, in the condition of the item from the description in the Condition Report.

10. Packing, Collection and Transport

All packing, collection, transport and delivery arrangements must be approved by SA before the item will be released on loan. Packing will be carried out either by SA or by approved archive handlers agreed or arranged by SA. Only agents approved by SA will undertake transportation of loaned items. No loan is to be unpacked, other than by a member of SA staff, or an authorised representative, for examination at any point on either the outgoing or the return journey. Items should travel shortly before the exhibition opens to minimise risk and to mitigate any inconvenience to readers at SA of the item not being available.

Conservation staff at SA will specify the packing requirements on a case-by-case basis and will pack all items for transport to and from the exhibition. All costs incurred in respect of packing and transportation shall be met by the Borrower. A packing case will always be required, either provided by SA or by an agent according to SA's specification and at the Borrower's expense. Cases provided by the agent will be delivered direct to SA for packing. Packaging must be retained and stored safely by the Borrower during the exhibition, so it can be used for the return of loan items to SA.

For overseas loans, the Borrower will be responsible for appointing a shipping agent, subject to approval by SA, who will handle customs formalities. All items must travel under the constant personal supervision of the member of SA staff, or an authorised representative, even if that necessitates the purchase of extra aircraft seats. Cargo haulage will only be considered if the size restricts cabin transportation.

11. Related documents

This policy informs the Collecting, Collection Development and Access Policies.

12. Review period

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation or other developments.
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