Section taken from:

The Armed Forces Museums & Archives, Archive Manual

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1. The Betterment of the Facility: How to create / develop the repository and facilities.

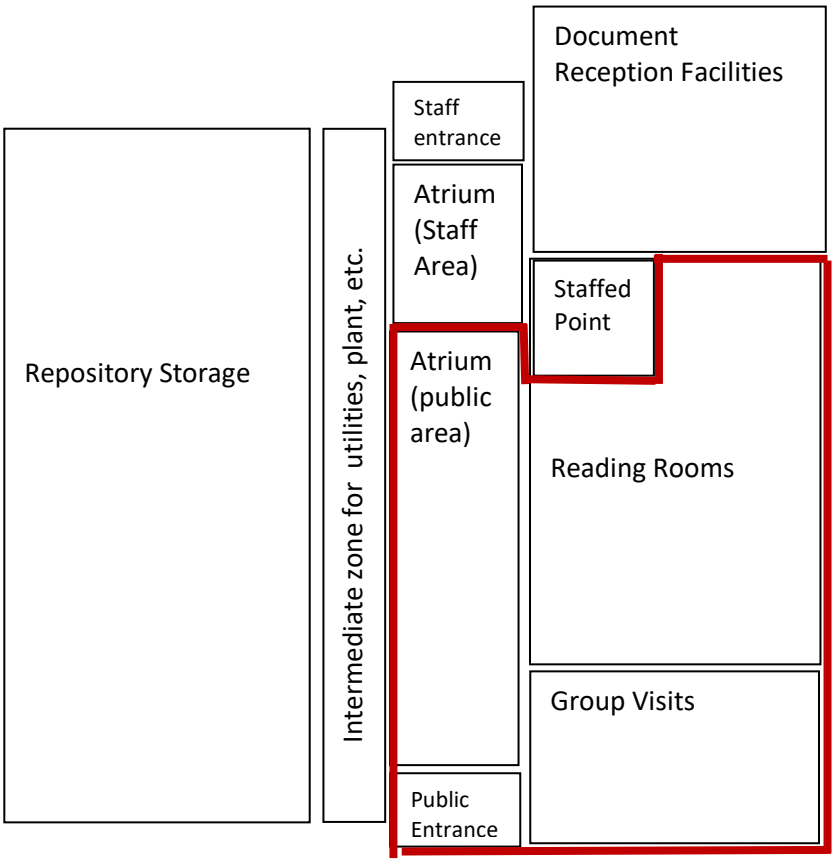
1.1 Introduction

This section covers both the development of a new archive and the development of an existing facility. For most armed forces museums the first option is only likely to occur if the museum is relocated and, even then, the chances are that an existing building will be allocated as the new home.

Always remember that you are planning not just for now but also for the future.

1.2 The Ideal Archive Design

The ideal design for an archive facility separates the repository storage from populated (working) areas, and further divides staff and public facilities. The key to ensuring an effective working space lies in the analysis of workflow; all the tasks that are undertaken within the building. The following is a simplified depiction that demonstrates these basic principles.



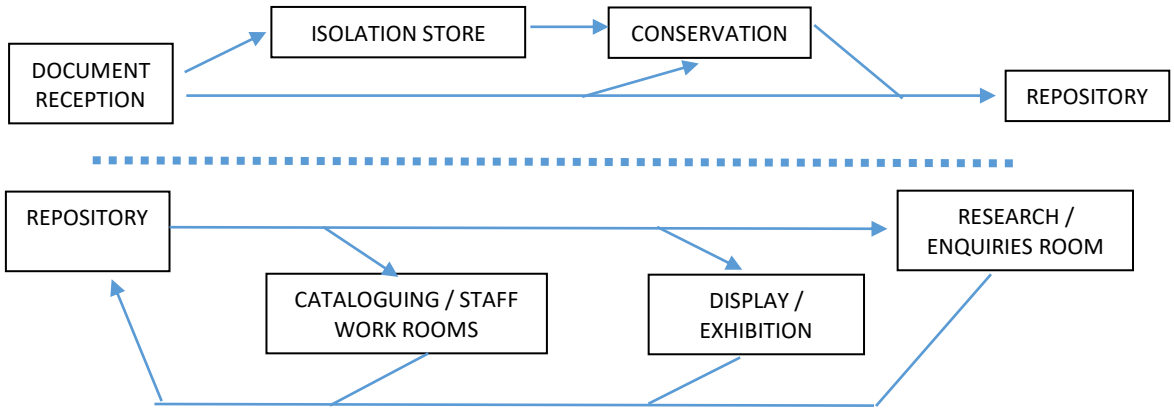
Note how the repository area has been separated from all populated areas. There is also a segregated intermediate zone for utilities, plant and access routes that serve both sides of the building. Public access is controlled within a defined area (red line). Staffed areas are designed to mirror document flow from reception, through staff activities (not shown), through to use by a researcher. The building has been designed to isolate storage, intermediate and populated zones in the event of fire or other disaster.

Contrast this with the basic division of public, staff and secure zones – see diagram.

New builds offer the potential for an ideal design. With the above example a new ground site offered the best chance of achieving a successful design. In reality, most existing buildings or, indeed, new build sites, are more challenging. In such circumstance it is necessary to marry elements of workflow with current and future requirements and to see how they can be accommodated.

1.2.1 Basic Workflow Model

This diagram shows the work flow of a record from its reception.



1.3 Check List for New Build

If you are fortunate to be in a position where you can build your archive from scratch, these are the first elements that need to be considered.

Site location – standalone, attached or enclosed, neighbouring buildings, immediate location, geophysical environment, capacity for existing / future requirements.

Access – General location, security, transport infrastructure

Utilities – Capacity for new building activities

Legal – Building regulations, heritage regulations, health and safety regulations, disability regulations

Authoritative Body – Requirements of parent body, general site requirements, statutory requirements (where you have a statutory responsibility).

1.4 The Reality Check – The conversion of an existing facility

Rare is the opportunity to achieve an ideal new build as envisaged above. In all likelihood you will be faced with either a refurbishment of existing facilities or an opportunity to relocate, refurbish or convert another existing building. The issues raised in the previous sections, and the guidance given below, is still relevant to a refurbishment or conversion. The distinction comes in the manipulation of given circumstances: a different physical structure; consideration of location, neighbours and environment, revised access and workflow arrangements.

It's important to remember that new builds and existing building developments have something in common – opportunity.

If you are faced with a refurbishment or conversion there are some preliminary steps that you should take.

Obtain base plans of the site and floor plans showing existing access points, areas, rooms, stairs, etc.

Do a site visit to –

Review external movement around the building and through access points.

Consider your neighbours and their activities (is it good for you, will your presence be bad for them). Check to see if there are any changes envisaged in the future

Consider the wider location, neighbourhood and transport routes

Assess the physical state of the building. What resources will it take to refurbish or convert the structure? Who will resource the task?

Consider utilities demand (electricity, gas, water). Is it possible for these to function, and serve purpose, and not be a financial burden in the future?

Thereafter, if the new site is structurally viable -

Draw up a list of what you currently do and what you wish to be able to do after relocating. Envisage workflows. Can you fit in the facilities required?

Compile a list of areas and rooms that you will definitely need and what you would, ideally, like to have in place.

Consider human interaction. Who will be using the building (staff, volunteers, public) and don't forget you need to meet H&S and disability regulations.

If you are fortunate enough to be given a choice of different locations, or a variable combination of areas / rooms within a building, the information from these preliminary steps will also afford the chance of seeing what option works best for your museum.

So what can be achieved?

1.5 Check List for Archive Facility Design

Whether you are developing a new build or refurbishing an existing building the following rooms / work areas need to be considered. The ideal archive would have all such rooms. It is understood that circumstances may require the doubling up of activities in a single room, but it is better to try and separate activities as far as possible. The following list excludes basic facilities (lavatories, etc.) taken as a given.

1.5.1 Core Rooms

The minimum requirement of rooms and why

Room		**The Reason Why**
Reception		A reception provides a secure access barrier whilst, at the same time, permitting the visitor to prepare for their use of the facility.
Repository Store(s)		A separate store for records protects them from the risks posed by human interaction and provides defence against environmental threat.
Staff Office		A staff office permits working practices, sometimes confidential, to be undertaken away from public and document areas.
Research / Enquiries Room		Such a space provides a harmonious environment to conduct research, undisturbed by staff activities, where measures to protect the record can be enforced.

1.5.2 Ancillary Rooms

The rooms that allow you to fulfil good archival practice

Room		**The Reason Why**
Document Reception		A room where records can be received, inspected and prepared for accession in to the repository.
Isolation Store		Where records posing a threat (e.g. mould) can be isolated pending treatment.
Conservation Suite		A room set aside for the analysis and treatment of records to improve their physical condition, with specialist equipment and hazardous chemicals, segregated from other staff areas.

Cataloguing / Staff Workroom		Such a room can provide a harmonious environment away from other busy areas, affording the opportunity to focus on the records with minimal distraction.
Acclimatization Room / Area		If the environment in a repository store differs greatly from the research enquiry room, it is advisable to have an interim zone where the record may adjust to the changes in temperature and relative humidity. In practice, even in purpose built archives, such a room is rarely found.
Plant / Technology Room / Hazardous Chemicals Store		Ideally your plant and core technology, including fire suppression system, should be located in a separate room. Some plant, and the hazardous chemicals store, are best isolated from the main building, though many archives opt to locate a chemical / fire safe in the conservation suite.
Reprographics Room / Area		Room specifically dedicated for reprographic work, analogue or digital. Possibly a public sharing facility.

1.5.3 Public Rooms

Further than a reception and research enquiry room the following public areas should also be considered.

Room		**The Reason Why**
Cloakroom		For the deposit of coats and bags, possibly incorporated with rest room and catering facilities.
Rest Room		An area away from the research / enquiries room providing a break from research, possibly incorporating the catering facilities.
Group Visits / Talks Room		A room set aside for groups for talks, displays, etc. other than the room where original documents are seen, possibly incorporating staff facilities.
Catering facilities		For the taking of refreshments, possibly incorporated in to rest room.

1.6 Room Design and facilities

Setting aside the four core rooms listed above, every museum will have need of a unique combination of facilities, simply to accommodate their individual collections. Each room always serves at least one purpose. New or existing, you need to think about how you use the room. Picture what it will look like and what people will be doing in this room. Note all these things and against each item consider what you need to have in place.

> **Example**: *If you picture a researcher looking at a document* - The table and chairs, the control of natural light and artificial light. *The researcher is making notes* – table with enough space for both documents and notetaking, the use of the computer and a power point. *The document is cumbersome to handle* – Book rests and weights to adjust the record's position, a guidance note available for consultation. *The researcher seeks further records* – finding aids, printed or computerised, side table, chair and bookshelves to accommodate the finding aids. *You have observed them* – staff point with desk and chair.

1.7 Repository Stores

The repository is the beating heart of any archive facility. If it isn't right then all the other facilities, and the activities therein, are compromised.

A good repository should possess these basic structural prerequisites

Four solid walls
A watertight roof
No windows
Single, lockable entrance.

Because people use the store it must be compliant with health and safety regulations.

Because records are stored there it must have a suitable variety of good storage options (shelving / cabinets).

Upon these basics you should develop a repository that meets the following criteria:

It must be secure from all threats:

People
Infestation (Insects and Mould)
Disaster

It must have climate control:

Passivhaus
Mechanical

It must be dedicated to task:

Minimal human activity
Multiple record format function

Passivhaus *– Where the environment is regulated by the building's structural composition.*

Mechanical *– Where you use environmental (Air conditioning) plant to regulate the environment*

Ideally, you should ensure, as far as is possible, that you and your architects, and the contractors, match the requirements of the following standards.

EN 16893:2018 - Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections

BS 4971:2017 - Conservation and care of archive and library collections

An anomalous aspect of each successive standard is that there has been no consistency in the record formats covered. Thus, for example, one standard may provide guidance on the storage of film whilst successive guidance might not. That said, collectively, standards covering this topic are comprehensive in their coverage of document formats.

The enclosed table, indicating optimum storage requirements for a variety of different document formats, is culled from various standards

1.8 Succession planning

The objective of succession planning is to ensure continuity through a period of transition. It may be a change of facilities or of staff. In order to ensure that you can continue both during and beyond a period of change you must plan for these possibilities.

When it comes to a change of facilities the traditional approach to army logistics should stand you in good stead. But it is worth following the guidance given above and, additionally, check:

That any commercial facility contracts (IT, photocopiers, etc.) ensure support during the process of relocation.

That you have contact arranged with public utilities.

That you have agreed work arrangements, in writing, with contractors, indicating requirements for all aspects of the transition.

When it comes to service provision, much of the practical guidance provided elsewhere in this workbook will support you during a period of transition.

In short -

Training and development: Make sure that training of staff and volunteers includes responses to unusual situations, including transition. In particular, encourage individuals to develop the ability to multi-task, both in terms of practical archival skills and records knowledge. In that way, should you lose a member of staff, you will retain the capacity to carry out tasks and provide guidance of your collections.

Of course, the process of training and development must be continuous, so that the service is in a position to continue even when the 'successor' is no longer in place.

Practical guidance manual: establish a manual where all of the day to day practical tasks and procedures are explained. (It's best to keep a copy offsite, too). In addition to being a training/ memory aid, this manual will support you during emergency situations, staff changes, and transition.

Archival activity documentation: always keep a record of what work has been done, including specific projects. If an individual leaves the service then there is a record of what work has been done to inform replacement staff. Maintaining such documentation also assists programme workflow where there are many people working at different times on the same project.

Record documentation: always maintain record information, including catalogues, for the benefit of those that follow. Where you have computer generated finding aids keep a second copy offsite. In this way you can retain documentation in the event of a disaster.

1.9 Further Information:

More detailed information on the design and layout of archive facilities -

The best source of information are those who have already been through the process of new build and refurbishment. This includes most local authority (borough and county) archives. Never be afraid to ask for guidance.

TNA facilitates a networking group, called **MAPLE** (Major Archive Projects Learning Exchange) that enables organisations to share information about planning and managing such projects. For more information about this group go to ….

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/major-archives-project-learning-exchange/

We have also produced some basic guidance on developing an archive facility:

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/memo2.pdf

TNA has consistently led on the development of storage standards and can advise on the development of repositories, environment and shelving. Please see our web pages at

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/running-your-organisation/assessing-environmental-impact/

Online Case Studies -

TNA: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/case-studies-and-research-reports/

Royal institute of British Architects has produced a Plan of Work Overview that may be downloaded from their website at -

https://www.architecture.com/-/media/gathercontent/riba-plan-of-work/additional-documents/ribaplanofwork2013overviewfinalpdf.pdf

Finally, a key published reference work is

Kitching, Christopher - *Archive Buildings in the United Kingdom*, 1993-2005 (ISBN 978-1-86077. 2007. Phillimore and Co. Ltd.)