

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
SPECIAL LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES
PRESERVATION POLICY

PURPOSE

Preservation is a fundamental responsibility by which Special Libraries and Archives ensures the continuing care, availability and authenticity of the rare books and archival records that it holds in trust for present and future generations. The Department recognises that preservation is a pervasive function and will ensure that it is integral to all archive activities from acquisition through to access and that every staff member will play a part.

PRINCIPLES OF PRESERVATION PLANNING AND STRATEGY

Preservation strategies will be produced that will direct the course and standards of preservation practice. This policy, in combination with preservation strategies, will be used to guide practical preservation actions. We will use this policy and the preservation strategies to guide the allocation of resources in our forward planning.

PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT OF COLLECTIONS

The Department adheres to the British Standards and professional standards that encompass various elements of preservation management. Appropriate accommodation includes environmentally controlled and monitored space, enclosures that conform to archival standards, security, pest management, and disaster preparedness. In this, the Department adheres to British Standards:

- BS 5454: (2000) 'Recommendations on the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents'
- BS 7799: (2000) 'Code of Practice for Information Security Management'
- BS 6266: (2002) 'Code of Practice for Fire Protection for Electronic Data Process Installations'
- BS 7083: (1996) 'Guide to the Accommodation and Operating Environment for Information Technology (IT) equipment'
- BS 1153: (1992) 'Recommendations for Processing and Storage of Silver-gelatine-type Microfilm'
- BS 4783: 'Storage, Transportation and Maintenance of media for use in Data Processing and Information Storage'
- BS 4971: 'Repair and Allied processes for the Conservation of Documents'

The Department also adheres to the National Council on Archives: Public Quality Services Group 'A Standard for Access to Archives', 2008.

All members of staff will be trained in methods of preservation and will attend refresher and professional development sessions when required.

Documentation of preservation activities such as preventive preservation, conservation treatments, surveys, surrogates and loans will be maintained and recorded as part of the collection catalogue and record file.

STORAGE, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENT

We will seek to ensure appropriate and secure accommodation for all collections wherever they are stored, processed and used, subject to the limitations of current accommodation. Where possible, these conditions will comply with the environmental recommendations set out in BS 5454 (2000). Automated monitoring of temperature and relative humidity is in place in all storage areas and a VESDA fire detection system is installed throughout the Department. The buildings have CCTV installed at key points and are protected by a VESDA fire detection system. All material in the care of Historic Collections is covered by the University's insurance.

Conservation supplies for the housing and secondary protection of material will be of archival grade and a programme of re-housing and re-packaging is in place to replace non-conservation grade supplies. After treatment, items that undergo active conservation treatment will be housed in appropriate archival-grade packaging.

All types of records will be valued according to their specific qualities and worth, rather than the nature of their media and will be preserved in a manner appropriate to their technical characteristics. Different preservation considerations apply to the storage of digital records, where a distinction must be made between the intellectual content of the record and its technical manifestation. Long-term access to a particular technical manifestation cannot be guaranteed, due to its dependence upon specific technologies that will become obsolete over time. We will therefore maintain digital records in varied formats and put in place procedures for ensuring their long-term integrity including migration to new technical manifestations.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

A written disaster plan is in place and regular desk top exercises are carried out to ensure the currency of the plan and staff familiarity with procedures. The aim of the plan is to provide procedures and guidelines to be followed in the event of emergencies such as fire, flood, power failure, pest infestation, growth of mould, vandalism and accident. The Department, in conjunction with the University Estates Department and appointed specialist contractors, will lead recovery actions. The Department will ensure provision for the backup of its digital collections, including the provision of offsite and maintained security copies and the technical infrastructure required to access the material.

REPROGRAPHICS

Self-copying of material from the collections by readers is not permitted. A photocopying, scanning and reprographic service is in place for items in good condition and will be carried out by Special Libraries and Archive staff. Suitability will be assessed on an individual basis. Preservation copying will provide surrogates where material is in high demand or too vulnerable for production.

With regards to digital records, the concept of originals and copies does not apply in the same manner. The copying of records will not necessarily present risk to the original and so copying may be carried out to meet requirements concerning security, disaster recovery and access.

PRESERVATION

A programme of routine collections-monitoring and good housekeeping, including cleaning and re-housing, is in place. The Department will undertake active preservation measures; firstly, the assessment of the condition of documents and volumes in its care and the determination of their levels of anticipated use and, secondly, by taking preventive action to preserve the material by cleaning, re-packaging and re-housing.

CONSERVATION

A 10-year Conservation Strategy has been formulated, drawing on the recommendations from Preservation Assessment Surveys carried out on the archive and rare book collections, and as part of the planning for the building of the new Library, Special Collections Centre and Conservation Studio.

The Department will engage with professional conservators when invasive techniques are required. Any actions taken on behalf of the Department will be in accordance with nationally recognised and agreed ethical and technical standards.

For paper-based records, a minimal intervention policy will be adopted. Interventive conservation will seek to stabilise and halt further deterioration of or damage to an item, whilst ensuring that the maximum degree of evidential value is recovered. All examinations and treatments will be recorded as part of the item or collection record.

ACCESS

A primary purpose of preservation and conservation is the facilitation of safe access to collections. An Access Policy is in place which sets out the Department's approach to balancing its aim of providing access to the collections to as wide a range of users as possible with its curatorial duty of collection care.

All material will be catalogued onto the relevant library and archive systems using appropriate cataloguing standards. The catalogue record should state where conservation actions or significant preservation measures have been employed. The public access catalogues will describe the physical format of material and should seek to highlight whether items have preservation or conservation considerations which may affect access.

We will advise users on correct handling techniques. Appropriate equipment and handling and support aids are provided for use in the Reading Room. All new staff will be trained in good handling practice and refresher sessions will be offered to existing staff.

EXHIBITIONS AND LOANS

Preservation considerations will assist in determining the selection of material and the frequency and duration of their use for exhibition purposes. This applies to objects displayed within the University and those loaned for exhibition to other institutions. Material will be prepared for exhibition and displayed in accordance with accepted national and international standards, specifically BS 5454: 2000. Condition of Loan agreements will be exchanged with borrowing/loan institutions.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL CONNECTIONS

The Department maintains active professional relationships with and participation in the UK and international archive and library communities. Best practice conservation advice is sought from professional bodies, notably The Society of Archivists, the National Preservation Office,

the National Archives of Scotland, The National Archives and the British Library Sound Archive. Members of staff are encouraged to attend relevant external training events relating to preservation and conservation practice, after which information and best practice are cascaded through the Department.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be communicated to all staff and made publicly available. All staff will have a responsibility to implement preservation policies. The Department will review this policy on an annual basis.