

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION POLICY

1 Purpose

Preservation is a fundamental responsibility by which Special Collections ensures the continuing care, availability and authenticity of the rare books and archival records that it holds in trust for present and future generations. Special Collections recognises that preservation is a pervasive function and will ensure that it is integral to all curatorial activities from acquisition through to access and that every staff member will play a part. The aim of this policy is to outline the preventive and interventive measures that will maximize access to the collections for present and future users.

This policy, in combination with preservation strategies, will be used to guide practical preservation actions and the allocation of resources as part of forward planning.

2 Definitions

Preservation: the overall management of a collection in order to reduce deterioration, prevent damage and extend its life. Preservation includes establishing and implementing policies and procedures to manage all aspects of collection care including environmental conditions, physical protection, conservation treatment, digital imaging and surrogacy creation, integrated pest management and emergency planning.

Conservation: the use of active interventive measures, such as professional repair or chemical treatments, to prevent the further deterioration of an object.

3 Preservation management

A preventive conservation strategy is the primary objective in Special Collections approach to collections care, supported by interventive approaches where necessary. Special Collections strives to maintain a secure and environmentally-controlled storage facility for the collections in a pollution and pest-free environment, and to meet the highest possible standards for preservation and conservation.

Special Collections adheres to the British Standards, professional standards and codes of conduct that encompass the various elements of preservation management and conservation practice. The Department adheres to:

- PD 5454: 2012 'Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials'
- PAS 197: 2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management'
- PAS 198: 2012 'Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections'
- Collections Trust 'Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0'
- The Institute of Conservation's (Icon) Code of Conduct
- The Institute of Conservation (Icon) Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) Professional Standards

All members of staff and volunteers will be trained in handling. Training in Integrated Pest Management and emergency response procedures is available to staff. Conservation staff will

attend refresher and professional development training to maintain a high level of up-to-date technical knowledge.

A record of processes employed in preservation projects, surveys and production of surrogates will be kept. Full documentation of treatment and information relating to exhibitions and loans will be recorded in relevant catalogues.

4 Storage, security and environment

Special Collections aims to maintain appropriate and secure accommodation for all collections wherever they are stored, displayed, processed and used. The temperature and relative humidity in all storage areas, the Reading Room and Gallery is monitored using data loggers. The Special Collections Centre and Gallery have CCTV installed at key points and are protected by a VESDA smoke detection system and intruder alarm system. All material in the care of Special Collections is covered by the University's insurance policy.

Archival-quality material will be used for the housing and secondary protection of collection objects. A programme of re-housing and re-packaging is in place to replace non-archival grade housing. Items that undergo interventive conservation treatment will, after treatment, be housed in archival-grade enclosures as appropriate.

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.

5 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and housekeeping

Housekeeping routines are in place in the Special Collections Centre, ensuring that storage and exhibition areas are cleaned regularly. There is a programme of IPM in place. An ongoing programme of book cleaning and checks for mould and insect activity is in place. Special Collections is routinely inspected and faults reported to the University's Estates Department.

6 Emergency Response

The Special Collections Centre has a disaster store of emergency response supplies and also supplies boxes located throughout the Centre. An emergency response plan is in place and disaster response exercises are carried out to ensure the currency of the plan and staff familiarity with response supplies and 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. Where possible Special Collections, in conjunction with the University Estates Department and appointed specialist contractors, will lead recovery actions. The University IT Department routinely backs up Special Collection digital collections and facilitates the technical infrastructure required to access digital files. Special Collections has an annual contract with Harwell Drying and Restoration who specialise in disaster recovery.

7 Reprographics

Reproduction is an integral part of the activities of Special Collections. Provided that documents are in a format and condition suitable for copying, staff and researchers may make copies.

For further information see the Reprographics Policy.

8 Conservation Strategy

A 10-year Conservation Strategy is in place, drawn from the recommendations of the 2007 Preservation Assessment Survey of the archive and rare book collections. The Conservation Strategy is periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the wider priorities of the Special Collections Centre, Library and University of Aberdeen as a whole.

The conservation work programme, drawn from the strategy, consists of 6 strands:

- 1 Exhibitions and Loans
- 2 Preservation projects: day to day checking, cleaning, re-housing of accessions, and larger scale collection focussed preservation work
- 3 Large conservation projects: conservation of individual items or collections that will take anything above 5 hours to complete. These are prioritised for conservation treatment through a regular process of review by the conservation team and Head of Special Collections
- 4 Small conservation projects: conservation of items that have been prioritised for stabilisation and can be completed in less than 5 hours
- 5 Support for digitisation projects
- 6 Emergency conservation and preservation work

9 Access and use

A primary purpose of preservation and conservation is the facilitation of safe access to collections through the Reading Room, public programming and exhibitions. To facilitate safe access and use, researchers will be provided with relevant equipment (gloves, book rests) and information (handling guidelines). All new staff and volunteers will be trained in good handling practice and refresher sessions are available for existing staff.

Material will be withdrawn from use if deemed as serious risk, in which case it will be flagged for review during the quarterly meetings between conservation staff and Head of Special Collections. If prioritised for treatment it will be added to the conservation work programme. If it will remain inaccessible for some time, the generation of surrogate copies will be considered to ensure continued access.

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.

For further information see the Access Policy.

10 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 PD 5454: 2012. Condition of Loan agreements and facility reports will be exchanged with borrowing/loan institutions.

11 Professional Development and Accreditation

Special Collections supports Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR), the professional practice assessment for conservation professionals, and the achievement and maintenance of accredited status. Members of staff are encouraged to attend relevant external training events relating to preservation and conservation practice.

12 Responsibility and review

This policy has been approved by LSC&M Senior Management Team in January 2017 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.