



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

Cambridge University Libraries

## **Conservation Policy**

Cambridge University Library  
March 2024

Approved by: Leadership Team  
Review date: March 2025

# Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Legal and Ethical Framework	4
3. Collections Care Principles	5
4. Preventive Conservation	6
5. Remedial (interventive) Conservation	7
6. Research & Teaching	7
7. Approval and revision history	8
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix 1: Definitions	9
Appendix 2: Legal, Ethical, and Standards Framework	10

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Statement of Purpose

The Conservation Policy (the Policy) addresses all aspects of conservation at Cambridge University Library (CUL). It acts as a framework to ensure the safety of physical collection objects and their prevention from harm through known agents of deterioration.

### 1.2 Mission statement

The mission of the University of Cambridge is *to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.*

The Conservation Policy complements and supports the Flagship Goals and strategic priorities set out in the Cambridge University Libraries Strategy 2034.

Specifically, we will:

- **Liberate the power of libraries and collections** through access and research.
- **Harness the power of digital and open** collections with exemplary practice and innovation.
- **Celebrate the power of diversity and advance sustainability** by supporting the diverse talent of our team and adopting sustainability in our practices.

In addition to this, the Policy is underpinned by the University Library's duty to ensure *an exceptional physical library experience and outstanding preservation* in its capacity as both a Legal Deposit Library and member of Research Libraries UK (RLUK).

See, **Appendix 1: Definitions.**

An annual Strategic Implementation Plan outlines the in-year objectives, actions, and targets for the Conservation Department. Objectives, actions, and targets will vary annually depending on the business needs of the University Library.

The Leadership Team at CUL is responsible for approving the Policy in accordance with its own internal policies, and in compliance with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) 'Benchmarks in collection care for museums, archives and libraries,' and the minimum professional standards set by the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

### 1.3 About this Policy

The Policy supports the University Library's ambition to take a leading role in conservation, both nationally and internationally, through the development of expertise, implementation and dissemination of approved standards and best practices, and engagement with professional bodies.

**1.4** The Conservation Policy is part of the Collections Management Framework which includes:

- Cambridge University Libraries Risk Register
- Collection Development Policy—see, Donations Policy
- Disaster Control and Recovery Procedures
- Incident Management and Business Continuity Plan (formerly the Emergency Action Plan December 2022)
- Business Impact Analysis (formerly Continuity Planning June 2023)
- Collections Management Policy
- [Collections Development Policy for Cambridge University Library: Archives and Modern Manuscripts](#)
- Cambridge University Archives Collection Policy
- [Cambridge University Libraries Special Collections Security Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Cambridge University Libraries Digital Preservation Policy](#)
- [Cambridge University Library Donations Policy](#)
- [Cambridge University Library Ethical Policy](#)
- [Cambridge University Libraries Health and Safety Policy](#)
- Access policy: Archives and Modern Manuscripts
- Collections information policy for Archives and Modern Manuscripts
- [Policy for replacement of items lost or damaged by readers | Cambridge University Libraries Intranet](#)
- [Damaged books and other potential withdrawals | Cambridge University Libraries Intranet](#)

**1.5** In addition, the Conservation Policy is supported by a range of plans and procedures including:

- COSHH,
- Integrated Pest Management Plan,
- Analytical Examination Request.

The Conservation Department is committed to contributing to all aspects of Library life, through participation in service delivery alongside Facilities Management and Security.

## **2.0 Legal and Ethical Framework**

The Policy has been developed in accordance with relevant standards, or international best practice where standards are not available, and informed by model policies from the archives and library sectors.

**2.1 Legal framework includes:**

- The University Library Governing Documents,
- Charities Act 2022,
- Legal Deposit Libraries Act of 2003.

As the custodian of large and unique collections, the University Library recognises its ethical responsibility to work within the parameters of the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* and the UK Museum Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums*.

- 2.2** As a member of Comité Européen de Normalisation/ European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) the United Kingdom is bound by definitions set out in European Standard EN 15898:2019 ‘Conservation of cultural property - Main general terms and definitions.’

The following definitions are adopted here:

- **Collection care:** preventive conservation applied to a collection.
- **Conservation:** measures and actions aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage while respecting its significance, including its accessibility to present and for future generations.
- **Preventive conservation:** measures and actions aimed at avoiding or minimising future damage, deterioration and loss and, consequently, any invasive intervention.
- **Remedial conservation:** actions applied directly to an object to arrest deterioration and/or to limit damage.

Further details of the legal, ethical and standards frameworks under which Cambridge University Library operates can be found in **Appendix 2: Legal, Ethical, and Standards Framework**.

## 3.0 Collections Care Principles

- 3.1** Cambridge University Library aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the long-term preservation of the collections and the provision of access. The principles that govern the Library’s approach to collections care and conservation are informed by:

- Compliance with relevant legislation,
- Risk management,
- Sectoral professional standards and best practice,
- Staff knowledge and experience,
- Research and analysis,
- Sustainability,
- Emergency/business continuity plans,
- Effective staff training,
- Communication of collections care and conservation issues to employees and relevant stakeholders.

- 3.2** This policy refers to the conservation and care of collections while:

- On display as part of an exhibition or loan,
- In storage,
- In use within the Library,
- In transit between sites or to other venues,
- Undergoing research, treatment, or analysis, both onsite and off-site.

- 3.3** This Policy covers collections within the University Library including:

- Designated Special Collections,
- Research collections,
- Legal deposit collections,
- Circulating collections,
- Historic fittings and furnishings,
- Collections on deposit—where specified in the terms of their deposit.

- 3.4** The policy does not include replicas or items primarily used for events or in connection with corporate hire. Digital surrogates of physical collection items are not covered by this Policy.

- 3.5** The University Library’s approach is to apply preventive conservation measures in preference to interventive conservation wherever possible. However, the Library endeavours to ensure that collection items are accessible and safe to handle, which may involve interventive treatment.

- 3.6** The care of the collections is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the University Library. This policy applies to all staff and users who interact with CUL's collection materials. All staff at the Library assist in implementing the Policy as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

## **4.0 Preventive Conservation**

- 4.1** Cambridge University Library will apply preventive conservation measures to care for collection items retained in perpetuity and on deposit, as resources permit.
- 4.2** Library staff should follow the agreed procedures, guidelines and training for preventive care, handling, cleaning, storage, transportation, acquisition, display, lending and disposing of collection items.
- 4.3** Where possible and practical physical materials are acquired and preserved in their original format, respecting the integrity and authenticity of the original artefact as well as the information that supports it (including descriptive information and metadata).
- 4.4** It will be ensured that display materials/methods, and storage systems/materials used for, or in proximity to, collection items are appropriate for use.
- 4.5** Any item known or suspected to contain a hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal regulations and best practice.
- 4.6** The Library is committed to reducing the environmental impact and overall costs of caring for the collections, through the adoption of sustainable approaches, where possible and appropriate. A Sustainability Plan for the Department is in development.
- 4.7** A quarantine procedure, as appropriate, is implemented for new acquisitions and incoming collections.
- 4.8** Preventive conservation measures include:

### **Library building and storage areas**

- Collaborating with colleagues in Facilities and Estate Management as necessary to ensure appropriate management of building fabric, fixtures and their inspection, cleaning, and maintenance schedules.
- Evaluating and managing activities taking place in collections areas to reduce the risk of damage, deterioration, or loss.
- Ensuring wherever possible that objects are kept in buildings that can support and sustain suitable environmental conditions necessary for collection care, monitoring, and management.
- Regularly reviewing storage areas to prioritise measures to achieve improvements in the buildings and collection environment for all collections.
- Managing and monitoring the potential for risk of pest damage to the collection through an Integrated Pest Management programme.
- Good housekeeping.

### **Environmental conditions**

- Implementing 2014 Environmental Guidelines – IIC and ICOM-CC.
- On-going environmental monitoring of collections areas to identify potential agents of deterioration relating to relative humidity, temperature, visible light, ultraviolet radiation, and atmospheric pollutants as appropriate.
- Responding to issues identified during environmental monitoring in a timely fashion to address their causes before damage to collections can occur.
- Providing appropriate lighting while minimising deterioration to vulnerable collections.

## 5.0 Remedial (interventive) Conservation

- 5.1 The University Library's guiding principle is to minimise the amount of intervention required. Remedial treatments will adhere to conservation principles of minimum intervention and respect the integrity of the collection item.
- 5.2 Conservation treatments will be undertaken by a conservator with the appropriate skills and expertise to carry out the work, in line with sectoral standards, best practice, and the ethical guidelines of European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organisations (ECCO).
- 5.3 University Library conservators will supervise any conservation work carried out by interns, art handlers, work placement students, volunteers, and external contractors.
- 5.4 Conservators will develop a clear treatment proposal and agree a detailed methodology for all work to be carried out with their line manager. This will be shared with the relevant Curator before work is undertaken.
- 5.5 Complex or innovative treatments, and work by contract conservators, will be agreed with the assigned conservator and relevant Curator, and approved by the Head of Conservation & Heritage. Other senior colleagues will be invited to discuss treatment plans on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.6 All treatments will be appropriate to the proposed use, intrinsic nature and significance of the item, and the resources available to properly carry out the treatment.
- 5.7 Priority will be given to objects required for display, loan or publication, research or at risk of active deterioration. Conservation in advance of Digitisation will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.8 Treatment methods will use stable and tested materials that, as far as possible, are reversible and do not compromise the intrinsic nature of the object, future treatment, or use.
- 5.9 For 'at risk materials' on unstable carriers (including optical media, magnetic tape, film, and portable data storage devices) where no preservation solutions are available, CUL will endeavour to transfer the contents and create digital surrogates, using suitable approaches and standards in accordance with the **Cambridge University Libraries Digital Preservation Policy** (including as data transfer or digitisation), depending on significance and a risk-based assessment.
- 5.10 Conservation treatment reports will be produced by conservators, filed, and made available upon request.
- 5.11 The Library does not provide advice to the general public on how to undertake conservation or recommend any one particular specialist. Enquiries should be referred to the Institute of Conservation 'Find a Conservator,' [webpage](#).

## 6.0 Research & Teaching

- 6.1 Cambridge University Library aims to take a leading role in conservation and collection care, both nationally and internationally. This includes the development of professional expertise in-house as well as innovation, implementation and dissemination of approved standards and best practices.
- 6.2 Conservation staff will continue to take an active role in research contributing to initiatives with the University Library Research Institute, and through meaningful collaborations with peer-groups and professional bodies locally, nationally, and internationally.
- 6.3 Continuing professional development through skills-sharing and teaching will be encouraged, as well as contributions to relevant conferences and publications. Opportunities for in-house internships, apprenticeships, and volunteering will be considered where resources allow.

- 6.4 Researchers or other visitors working with the collections will be briefed on how to handle the items they are working on and will be supervised as necessary.
- 6.5 Scientific investigation and technical examination of objects from the collections is carried out to better understand an object’s history, technology of manufacture, nature of materials, support research, and to inform and improve conservation treatments.
- 6.6 Requests by external parties to undertake analytical examination of University Library collections are subject to an **Analytical Examination Request** submitted to the relevant Curator and Head of Conservation and Heritage. Work is subject to approval by a working group, assigned on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.7 Destructive analysis involving sampling of objects is usually discouraged. It remains subject to a written proposal submitted to the relevant Curator and Head of Conservation & Heritage, and approval by a working group, assigned on a case-by-case basis.

## 7.0 Approval & Revision History

This Conservation Policy is version 1, it was formally approved by the CUL Leadership Team on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Research Collections Team, while a full revision will take place every five years.

Document Name: **Conservation Policy**  
 Author: Kristine Rose-Beers  
 Approved by: CUL Leadership Team  
 Revision cycle: 5 years

Version	Date	Author	Rationale
1.0	March 2024	Kristine Rose-Beers	



## Appendix 1: Definitions

Cambridge University Library Collections Management framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes, and appropriate sectoral standards.

### A Legal Deposit Library

Cambridge University Library is one of the six libraries entitled under the Legal Deposit Libraries Act of 2003 to receive material published in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Legal deposit has existed in English law since 1662. It helps to ensure that the nation's published output, and thereby its intellectual record and future published heritage, is collected systematically and preserved for future generations. Legal deposit material is made available to readers within the designated legal deposit libraries.

The Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013 extended the right to collect, preserve and make accessible digital publications and websites that were created within the UK domain.

### B Research Libraries UK (RLUK)

Research Libraries UK (RLUK) is a consortium of the leading and most significant research libraries in the UK and Ireland

Their purpose is to shape the research library agenda and contribute to the wider knowledge economy through innovative projects and services that add value and impact to the process of research and researcher-training.

They contribute to the health of society through the preservation and sharing of knowledge: one of the pillars of an open society.

## Appendix 2: Legal, Ethical, and Standards Framework

Cambridge University Library Collections Management framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes, and appropriate sectoral standards.

### A Legislation

- Charities Act 2022.
- National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997.
- Legal Deposit Libraries Act of 2003.
- Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013.
- BS 5454:2000 'Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents.'
- BS 4971: 2017, 'Conservation and care of library and archive collections.'
- PD 5454:2012 'Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.'
- BS4971:2002, 'Repair and allied procedures for the conservation of documents.'
- BS EN 15898:2019 'Conservation of cultural heritage. Main general terms and definitions - European Standards (en-standard.eu).'
- BS 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.'

### B Conservation sectorial standards and ethics

- ICON (The Institute of Conservation) Professional Standards and Judgement & Ethics, June 2020  
Icon launches updated Professional Standards and Ethical Guidance
- E.C.C.O. (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations) Professional Guidelines (I) The Profession ECCO\_professional\_guidelines\_I (ecco-eu.org)
- E.C.C.O. (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations) Professional Guidelines (II) Code of Ethics Microsoft Word - ECCO professional guidelines II.doc (ecco-eu.org)
- E.C.C.O. (European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations) Professional Guidelines (III) Education ECCO professional guidelines III (ecco-eu.org)
- Environmental Guidelines – IIC (International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works) and ICOM-CC (International Council of Museums Conservation Committee) Declaration, Melbourne 2014 6972-2014-iic-icom-cc-environmental-guidelines.pdf (iiconservation.org)

### C Sectorial standards

- National Preservation Office, 'Basic preservation guidelines for library and archive collections,' (2006).
- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Handling and Storage of Audio and Video Carriers.
- International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Safeguarding the Audio Heritage: Ethics, Principles and Preservation Strategy.
- Library of Congress Recommended Formats Statement.
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), 'Benchmarks in collection care for museums, archives and libraries: a self- assessment checklist,' (2002).
- Spectrum 5.1 Collections Trust collection management standard (2022).
- The Bizot Green Protocol Latest refresh: September 2023.