



# CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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## **Collection care and conservation policy**

### **Contents**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Purpose**
- 1.2 Mission statement**
- 1.3 Nature of the collections**
- 1.4 Context**
- 1.5 Risk-based approach**
- 1.6 Definitions**
- 1.7 External role**
- 1.8 Use**

#### **2 Policy statements**

- 2.1 Preservation principles**
- 2.2 Standards**
- 2.3 Storage and accommodation**
- 2.4 Exhibition and transportation of collection material**
- 2.5 Security**
- 2.6 Open shelf material**
- 2.7 Disaster control planning**

#### **3 Communication and review**

- 3.1 Communication and Implementation**
- 3.2 Review**

#### **Appendix A: Policies and guidelines consulted**

#### **Appendix B: Glossary**

#### **1. Introduction**

##### **1.1 Purpose**

The Collection care and conservation policy (the Policy) is the framework outlining the principles that guide the care and conservation of Cambridge University Library's (CUL's) collections. It covers CUL's collections of physical material; for CUL's digital collections, a Digital Preservation policy is in draft.

## 1.2 Mission statement

The Policy complements and supports the vision and objectives set out in CUL's Strategic Plan (Cambridge University Library Strategic Plan, 2015–2018: [http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.lib.cam.ac.uk/files/strategic\\_plan\\_2015-18.pdf](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.lib.cam.ac.uk/files/strategic_plan_2015-18.pdf)). Specifically, it aims to support CUL's cultural heritage role as a national research library of international significance.

Underpinning the Policy is the assumption that CUL has the formal responsibility to preserve and expand its world-class collections, a responsibility that is supported by CUL's Collection Development Policy Framework (2014) and Strategic Plan (2015–2018). Furthermore, CUL acknowledges that access to information is fundamental to academic life and that the role of acquiring, managing and providing scholarly access to its collections is essential; the size, scope and importance of these collections are distinguishing characteristics of the Library. Ensuring the authenticity, integrity, provenance, longevity and continued accessibility of CUL's collection materials is key to providing appropriate access to current and future users.

CUL is committed to managing, preserving and securing this unique cultural heritage for future generations.

## 1.3 Nature of the collections

CUL's collections of physical material are varied and extensive, and include, but are not limited to, manuscripts on parchment, paper, papyrus, birch bark and palm leaf; printed books, journals and newspapers; works of art on paper, Chinese oracle bones, pottery, metal, ivory, horn, stone and jewels, maps; as well as photographic materials in various formats, audio-visual materials, optical media and floppy disks.

Through Legal Deposit, CUL acquires almost every book published in the UK or Ireland, irrespective of its academic level or intended readership. Consequently, the Library has extensive holdings of material of all ages and across most media, necessitating a variety of approaches to conservation and preservation. More detailed descriptions of the Library's collections can be found online (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections.htm>).

Digital surrogates of physical collection items are not covered by this Policy.

## 1.4 Context

The purpose of the Policy is to state and communicate the principles that guide the preservation activities of the Library. The Policy is a general statement, which is complemented by CUL's other policies and frameworks, including:

- Collection Development Policy framework
- Digitisation Strategy (in draft)

- Digital Preservation Policy (in draft)
- Ethical Policy
- Disaster Control Plan and Emergency Action Plan
- Exhibition loan agreement

The Policy has been developed in accordance with relevant standards, or international best practice where standards are not available, and informed by model preservation policies from the archival and library sectors. The standards, policies and other relevant sources that informed this policy are listed as Appendix A.

### 1.5 Risk-based approach

The Library recognises its responsibility to ensure the continued availability of material that it holds in trust for present and future generations. Given the unique and irreplaceable nature of the Library's collections, CUL has adopted a risk-mitigation approach to managing its collections, with the intention of removing or minimising intentional or unintentional damage or deterioration, whether during storage or while in use.

### 1.6 Definitions

In the context of the Policy, the terms 'Collection Care' and 'Conservation' are defined as:

- Collection Care is the use of passive or non-interventionist methods for the protection of material within the collection in which no physical or chemical treatment is used. This is achieved by providing appropriate conditions, storage facilities and employing safe methods of handling.
- Conservation involves the protection of the material within the collection by direct physical treatments designed to resist any further deterioration and to make it available for use. Any treatments are carried out in accordance with recognised standards, and do not alter the integrity of the material.

Further definitions used in this document are listed as Appendix B.

### 1.7 External role

CUL aims to take a leading role in conservation and collection care, nationally and internationally. This includes the development of expertise and the development, implementation and dissemination of approved standards and best practices. CUL takes part, where possible, in scientific and technical research to address problems encountered in the acquisition, creation and preservation of library and archival material.

### 1.8 Use

This policy applies to all staff and users who interact with CUL's collection materials.

The Senior Leadership Team of CUL is responsible for approving the Policy. All staff at the Library assist in implementing the Policy as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

## 2 Policy statements

### 2.1 Preservation principles

Collection care a specific activity aimed at slowing down the deterioration rate, reducing the risk of damage and preventing harm to collections. It is integral to the delivery of CUL's strategic aims. It is only through collection care that continued availability and access to items in the collections can be maintained. The following principles underpin the Library's approach to preservation:

- Most material added to the Library's collections is acquired with the intention that it will be retained in perpetuity.
- 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). This includes, for instance, dustjackets, loose maps, plans and illustrative matter, though these may be separated from and stored independently of the parent item, or attached to it through the agency of conservation and collection care staff if the parent item is to circulate freely.
- Orderly and tidy standards-based labelling will be applied.
- Where preservation, packaging and other mechanisms are not sufficient to stabilise an object, active conservation is employed, when appropriate, to prevent further deterioration or damage to an item, or to enable access to be given.
- Repairs are carried out where necessary for the continued use of the material applying minimal intervention techniques.
- Appropriate conservation and collection care measures, including encapsulation, enclosures, binding and other techniques, will take into account the needs, value, significance, and usage of the item in question and the measures taken will be within the constraints of budgets, staffing and other resources.
- In line with CUL's strategic priorities, conservation and collection care measures are prioritised to ensure that collection materials with high levels of use for research, teaching, exhibitions or loans are given appropriate and adequate levels of protection.
- Surrogates will be created where appropriate to protect the original and to allow wider access to the content; surrogates will not replace the original, which will still require preservation.
- Surrogates created or acquired will meet best practice or standards-based principles including, but not limited to naming, quality, descriptive and other information (including metadata) related to the item etc.
- The status of modern material in need of repair will be assessed and where digital surrogates or other equivalents exist such items may be withdrawn from circulation and stored on closed access.

- CUL employs a combined approach of preventative measures and conservation treatment.
- Best-practice and standards-based approaches are employed by all staff when handling collection materials. Suitable training and/or guidance is provided to all relevant staff and users to ensure that they possess the necessary skills for safe handling of collection materials.
- Photocopying can be a source of damage to printed materials. Restrictions therefore apply to the copying of at risk materials, and guidelines have been developed for the safe copying of other material.
- Staff will intervene when any potentially harmful practice to collection materials is observed.
- 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 (including as data transfer or digitisation), depending on significance and a risk-based assessment.

Collection care principles are applied at the collection and or item level, as required by the type and scope of material.

## 2.2 Standards

The principal standards, guidelines and tools that are employed by CUL for conservation and collection care include:

- British Standard, Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents (BS 5454:2000)
- British Standard, Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials (PD 5454:2012)
- British Standard, Repair and allied procedures for the conservation of documents (BS4971:2002)
- National Preservation Office, Basic preservation guidelines for library and archive collections (2006)
- Conservation treatments are in keeping with the professional guidelines of the Institute of Conservation (ICON)
- 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)

## 2.3 Storage and accommodation

CUL recognises that of all potential risks to its collections, inappropriate storage is potentially the most significant. Appropriate infrastructure will be maintained in order to safeguard the collections.

Environmental conditions in the storage areas adhere as far as possible to the PD5454:2012 standard. Shelving is of suitable dimensions and strength for the different formats of material. Organisation and labelling is orderly and tidy. All new packaging and enclosures for Special Collections material is of archival quality.

Regular checks are made for infestation by harmful insects or rodents. An isolation space is available for new material to undergo a physical assessment before being introduced to the main store.

CUL has an environmental monitoring system in the Special Collections areas, which is constantly monitored and managed. Modern material in the circulation and reference collections does not need to be stored under such stringent conditions. Analogue and digital materials held on carriers such as optical media, reel and tape etc are stored in environmentally suitable conditions, according to international standards (see the relevant IASA standards in 2.2 above).

#### 2.4 Exhibition and transportation of collection material

Conservation and collection care considerations are central when determining the selection of material and the frequency and duration of their use for exhibition purposes. This applies to material displayed within CUL and for material loaned for exhibition to other institutions. Material will be prepared for exhibition and displayed in accordance with accepted national and international standards and best practice. Where material is loaned externally it is expected that the borrowing institution will appoint a transportation agent, who must be approved by the Library. For more details see the Exhibition loan policy.

#### 2.5 Security

Readers are not permitted to bring large bags into the main CUL building and all personal possessions are subject to examination on exit. CCTV recording is in use throughout the building. Full regulations on the use of the Library can be found online (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library/joining-library/rules>). Additional exit checks are made in the Manuscripts, Maps and Rare Books reading rooms, and further restrictions apply to the use of the Manuscripts Reading Room, where no bags of any size are permitted. Guidelines for handling material in the Manuscripts Reading Room, Maps Reading Room and Munby Rare Books Reading Room can be found online (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/handling-guidelines>).

#### 2.6 Open shelf material

CUL is unique amongst the UK's Legal Deposit Libraries in keeping a proportion of its modern material on open access and in allowing some categories of reader to

borrow from this collection. Regulations applying to the borrowing of books can be found online (<http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library/joining-library/rules#borrowing>). Where possible and practical, the same preservation principles are applied to both closed and open access material.

## 2.7 Disaster control planning

CUL takes its role in preserving and securing its unique collections for future generations seriously and maintains an annually reviewed disaster control plan and an emergency action plan.

## 3 Communication and review

### 3.1 Communication and Implementation

This Policy is available to all CUL staff via the staff intranet and is available to the public on the Library's website. All staff and volunteers are made aware of the policy and their responsibilities towards conservation and collection care. Additional training and guidance is given on induction to specific staff about the policy and how to implement it in their areas of responsibility. The training and guidance is updated in line with changes in the policy.

### 3.2 Review

The Policy is reviewed annually, along with CUL's risk register.

## Appendix A: Policies and guidelines consulted

Benchmarks in collection care for museums, archives and libraries: a self-assessment checklist (2002)

BS 1153:1992 Recommendations for processing and storage of silver-gelatine-type microfilm

BS 5454:2000 Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents

PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials

BS 4971:2002 Repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents. Recommendations

Building a Preservation Policy, Preservation Advisory Centre. First published January 2001 as Building blocks for a preservation policy. Revised May 2013 (accessed 17/11/2017)

[http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/building\\_a\\_preservation\\_policy.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/building_a_preservation_policy.pdf)

Churchill College Cambridge: Preservation Policy (accessed 17/11/2017)

Cambridge University Library: Collection Development Policy Framework (2014)

European Confederation of Conservators-Restorer's Organisations: E.C.C.O.

Professional Guidelines (II), Code of Ethics (2002) (accessed 17/11/2017)

Institute of Conservation (Icon): Professional Guidelines (2002) (accessed 17/11/2017)  
Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2013 (c28)  
National Preservation Office, Basic preservation guidelines for library and archive collections (2006)  
State Library of New South Wales: Preservation Policy version 2.0 (2016) (accessed December 2016)  
Wellcome Library: Preservation Policy for materials held in collections (2007) (accessed May 2015)

## Appendix B: Glossary

PD5454:2012: This British Standard gives recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival materials. Among other things, it specifies temperature and humidity ranges for document storage, shelving schemes and materials for document containers.

Collection: A designated set of materials in any format. The Library's collection, as a whole, is comprised of various individual collections.

Collection Care: The use of passive or non-interventionist methods for the protection of material within the collection in which no physical or chemical treatment is used. This is achieved by providing appropriate conditions, storage facilities and employing safe methods of handling.

Conservation: Conservation involves the protection of the material within the collection by direct physical treatments designed to resist any further deterioration and to make it available for use. Any treatments are carried out in accordance with recognised standards and do not alter the integrity of the material.

Legal Deposit: CUL 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. The other Legal Deposit Libraries are the British Library, the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, the national libraries of Scotland and Wales, and Trinity College Library Dublin. From 6 April 2013, Legal Deposit also covers material published digitally and online, so that the Legal Deposit Libraries can provide a national archive of the UK's non-print published material, including, but not limited to, websites, blogs, e-journals and CD-ROMs.

Preservation: Preservation is the use of passive or non-interventionist methods for the protection of material within the collection in which no physical or chemical treatment is used. This is achieved by providing appropriate conditions, storage facilities and employing safe methods of handling.

Special Collections: Special collections have characteristics that set them apart from other types of collections in libraries. These special aspects may include:



- **Rarity:** books, manuscripts and other materials that are old, scarce or unique.
- **Format:** photographs, slides, films, audio recordings, maps, artworks, artefacts and other objects that need special handling.
- **Comprehensiveness:** accumulation of materials that are individually not unique, but collectively make up an important resource because of their relevance to a particular topic or individual.

These characteristics also mean that special collections are not readily replaceable and require a higher level of security and special preservation environments to ensure their survival.

**Surrogate:** Manifestation of an object in another format, e.g., a digital image of a manuscript, which can be made more widely available than the object it represents, but does not replace the original.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Date of last review</b>	<b>Date of next review</b>
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Ed Potten</b>	<b>May 2015</b>	<b>May 2016</b>	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Ben Outhwaite, Jim Bloxam</b>	<b>November 2017</b>		<b>November 2018</b>