Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries

A Self-assessment Checklist
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Resource provides the strategic leadership, advocacy and advice to enable museums, archives and libraries to touch people’s lives and inspire their imagination, learning and creativity.

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www.resource.gov.uk

Copies of this publication can be provided in alternative formats. Please contact Resource Publications on 020 7273 1458.

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Museums, archives and libraries aim to provide the greatest possible level of access to their collections. In order that their use and enjoyment are assured well into the future, it is crucial that these collections are cared for properly. This is, however, a complex and sometimes daunting task, particularly when resources are tight and members of staff have to meet the changing needs of users in many other ways. It is important to realise that providing effective care for the collections is an element of almost every aspect of managing the institution.

Resource has built on earlier work and developed a benchmarking scheme that is simple to use but not simplistic, and which can be applied to all three of its domains. In so doing, it recognises that stewardship is central to the development and use of collections, and is the foundation for its ambition to ensure sustainable access to the cultural heritage.

As well as being a basic planning tool, the scheme will help to raise awareness and enable information to be gathered against clearly defined benchmarks that are common to all. Above all, it seeks to encourage users by highlighting areas where significant achievements have already been made, as well as those which may need more attention.

I am confident you will find Benchmarks in Collection Care clear and practical, and that it will make an important contribution to the long-term care of your collections.

Peter Winsor, Resource
This handbook aims to set out clear and realistic benchmarks for the care of museum, archive and library collections. Benchmarks in Collection Care will help institutions identify how well they are caring for their collections, give an indication of where and what improvements might be needed, and provide a practical framework for measuring future progress.

What are Benchmarks for Collection Care?

A wide range of standards, guidelines and benchmarks has evolved to assist in assessing preservation needs and measuring levels of collection care. Most have been developed within the context of the individual domains, but recognition of similarities and key issues has led to a high level of collaboration and sharing of expertise.

Benchmarks are standards of practice that have developed from a review of a wide range of institutions and then codified to provide others with an indication of what can be achieved at various levels.

How the Scheme works

The benchmarks are at three distinct levels and are presented within three separate columns. Each change in level builds on the preceding one and generally subsumes it. The three levels of collection care are:

- **Basic Practice**
  A minimum level of practice which all museums, archives and libraries should be able to achieve.

- **Good Practice**
  A standard that is achievable by the majority of institutions. This level represents a consensus of current professional good practice, tempered by realistic expectations.

- **Best Practice**
  The highest standard to which a museum, archive or library can aspire. It reflects a consensus of professional practice, much of which is enshrined in published standards, such as BS 5454:2000 Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents or the Museums & Galleries Commission's Standards in the Museum Care of Collections series (still in print).
These three levels are used to evaluate the quality of practice in nine broad areas:

- Policy
- Buildings
- Storage
- Housekeeping
- Handling and Use of Collections
- Environmental Monitoring and Control
- Conservation
- Surrogate Copies and New Media
- Emergency Preparedness

The benchmarks describe the quality and breadth of collection care activities. They are not dependent on the size or type of institution, the nature of the collections or on staffing levels, although these factors inevitably influence how individual institutions approach collection care.

We believe that the highest level should be aspired to and achieved by any well-managed institution.

Resource welcomes comments on this scheme. Please write to Peter Winsor at Resource, 16 Queen Anne’s Gate, London SW1H 9AA.
Why carry out an Assessment?

The aims of the benchmark scheme are to raise awareness of the range of collection care issues and to indicate defined steps to achieve best practice. Working through the columns will enable current and future levels of achievement for your institution to be identified.

The outcome can be used, for example:

- as part of the forward-planning process;
- in initial work for development grant or project funding applications;
- to make a case for additional resources from the governing body; or
- in highlighting the importance of collection care within an institution.

Scope of the Scheme

The benchmarks are intended to guide an institution on the steps that need to be taken to make improvements. Other documents set out in detail the standards that directly relate to collection care, for example BS 5454:2000 Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents. The benchmarks are a management tool and should be used in conjunction with the standards and technical specifications listed in the Resources section.

There are other issues that overlap with collection care, such as health and safety, procurement or outreach, which are beyond the scope of this handbook. However, they must also be taken into account when considering the stewardship of the collection.

Institutions also need to consider factors such as the significance of the collections, the way the institution uses them and the varied needs of users.

How to use the Scheme

This handbook has been designed as a self-assessment checklist. The staff of the institution should work through the three separate benchmark columns to assess the current levels of achievement.
The checklist can be used for the institution as a whole or for separate collections or buildings. In each section a series of entries is listed for each of the three practice levels. Each entry should be evaluated to establish whether or not the institution matches this level of practice. If it does not, the institution will need to consider if it wishes to improve practice and achieve a higher level of collection care. What is important is that the organisation identifies where it currently is in the scheme and where it wants to be.

These benchmarks are designed for use by a wide variety of institutions and it is hoped that they will be equally useful to all. Although every institution should aim to achieve and maintain best practice, this may not be practicable or achievable in every area. The institution should use the assessment to help set its priorities for improvements and to identify areas where improvements can most readily be made.

Who should do the Assessment?

Clearly, an evaluation of collection care will be most useful if key members of staff are included; to be effective, the work should be done by, or at least in consultation with, all key staff involved.

Those carrying out the assessment should have access to all policy statements and other documentation relating to the management of the collections. They should represent all relevant interests and different levels within the institution. The working group should ideally include staff responsible for conservation and preservation, and a representative group of other staff, including those with responsibility for areas such as buildings, finance, personnel or cataloguing. Private sector conservators could also be contracted in to assist with the assessment.

A more formal assessment might be required to meet the organisation's needs, or as part of a local or regional assessment programme. This may involve the use of an independent adviser.
How long will it take?

The length of time needed to carry out an initial evaluation varies, and is dependent upon the size of the collection(s) and the number of people participating in the evaluation.

The scheme will be most successful if the assessment is seen as a periodic activity; to review current practice at regular intervals and monitor any progress.

How to implement the Scheme

After an agreed copy of the self-assessment has been completed, you should produce an action plan outlining areas that need attention and detailing recommendations for the short, medium and long term. The action plan should include a summary of achievements or examples of good practice identified by the assessment, and prioritise deficiencies identified by the basic benchmark practice level. Progress should be reported regularly to the management committee.

Once an action plan has been produced, the institution may wish to send a copy of it to a similar institution for peer review. By seeking another institution’s views, you may gain useful insights into errors or omissions, or create the opportunity to discuss common concerns.

Most importantly, seeking independent comments on your self-assessment may help to validate the assessment in the eyes of funding bodies if the results are used to inform a grant application.

Finding out more

This handbook provides details of organisations, books, leaflets and other resources that you may find useful. Most of the organisations listed provide free information leaflets which are often available on their websites. You will also be able to consult many of the standards documents in public libraries.
How to use the Checklist

The checklist has been designed as a toolkit for periodic self-evaluation. Pages may be photocopied and handed to all those taking part in the assessment.

Each entry is followed by a ‘check-box’, an area for the assessor’s comments and staff ‘action’ initials (marked A). The boxes may prompt a suitable mark – such as:

✓ or ✗ or ☞

Once an agreed copy has been completed, the three columns will enable all participants to see at a glance where the institution is – or wants to be. An example of a completed section is shown overleaf.

Should every entry be completed?

Some of the entries in the checklist relate specifically to certain types of collection material in an institution. An icon denotes that an entry relates specifically to: museum M, archive A, or library L. Institutions should consider if they hold more than one type of material, for example some museums collect archives.

Institutions should offer a consistent level of care for all their collections and so should consider whether or not the specific points in the handbook are relevant to them. Where they are satisfied that they have no material of the type indicated, it is not necessary to work on the relevant items. Equally, some activities are not carried out by every institution, for example undertaking microfilming projects or organising exhibitions. In these cases there is no need to work through these items.
### 3.2 Storage Furniture

*(Sample entries)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1</td>
<td>All shelving is stable, well-fitted and strong enough to take the required load.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2</td>
<td>Material can be reached from the highest shelf safely or, if not, appropriate equipment is available for the safe retrieval of material from high shelves or racking.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.3</td>
<td>Clear instructions for the use of mobile shelving are displayed.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.4</td>
<td>The acceleration and braking of mobile shelving is such that items cannot slide or fall off shelves.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.5</td>
<td>All collection items stored on mobile shelving are housed completely within the depth of the shelves.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.6</td>
<td>The height of cabinets and plan chests does not impede the retrieval or replacement of material.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.7</td>
<td>Information is sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the design, construction and composition of storage furniture.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.8</td>
<td>All shelving is deep enough to support stored items fully.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.9</td>
<td>Similar-sized (unusual format) books are stored together.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.10</td>
<td>All shelving is deep enough to support stored items fully.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.11</td>
<td>Storage arrangements allow air to circulate freely.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.12</td>
<td>Anti-tip devices are fitted to ensure that sudden braking, acceleration or uneven loading of mobile shelving does not cause them to tip.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.13</td>
<td>There is sufficient space between the floor and the lowest shelf or pallet to reduce the risk of damage from flooding, and to allow for cleaning.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.14</td>
<td>Shelving and drawers are padded to prevent damage to objects.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.15</td>
<td>Shelving provides safe and effective storage for the whole of the collection, regardless of size or shape.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.16</td>
<td>Find out more about inert materials and report at next team meeting 06/01.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.17</td>
<td>All storage furniture and materials have been tested to ensure that they are as inert as possible and do not give off vapours which are harmful to items in direct contact or close proximity.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note items in Bay 3 are overhanging - to tidy up, due by 05/02.*

*Note items in Bay 3 are overhanging - to tidy up, due by 05/02.*
3.2.1 All shelving is stable, well-fitted and strong enough to take the required load.

3.2.2 Material can be reached from the highest shelf safely or, if not, appropriate equipment is available for the safe retrieval of material from high shelves or racking.

3.2.3 Clear instructions for the use of mobile shelving are displayed.

3.2.4 The acceleration and braking of mobile shelving is such that items cannot slide or fall off shelves.

3.2.5 All collection items stored on mobile shelving are housed completely within the depth of the shelves.

3.2.6 The height of cabinets and plan chests does not impede the retrieval or replacement of material.

3.2.7 Anti-tip devices are fitted to ensure that sudden braking, acceleration or uneven loading of mobile shelving does not cause them to tip.

3.2.8 Shelving and drawers are padded to prevent damage to objects.

3.2.9 Information is sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the design, construction and composition of storage furniture.

3.2.10 All shelving is deep enough to support stored items fully.

3.2.11 Storage arrangements allow air to circulate freely.

3.2.12 Information is sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the design, construction and composition of storage furniture.

3.2.13 There is sufficient space between the floor and the lowest shelf or pallet to reduce the risk of damage from flooding, and to allow for cleaning.

3.2.14 Shelving provides safe and effective storage for the whole of the collection, regardless of size or shape.

3.2.15 Review storage needs of collection and carry out survey. Discuss at next planning meeting 10/02, to include in next year’s job plans.

3.2.16 Similar-sized (unusual format) books are stored together.

3.2.17 All storage furniture and materials have been tested to ensure that they are as inert as possible and do not give off vapours which are harmful to items in direct contact or close proximity.

3.2.18 Wherever appropriate, archive material is stored according to format.

3.2.19 N of applicable

3.2.20 Not possible at moment - no action

3.2.21 Find out more about inert materials and report at next team meeting 06/01.

3.2.22 N of yet - guidelines to be drawn up soon - due by 05/02.

3.2.23 Note items in Bay 3 are overhanging - to tidy up, due by 05/02.

3.2.24 Note items in Bay 3 are overhanging - to tidy up, due by 05/02.

3.2.25 Note items in Bay 3 are overhanging - to tidy up, due by 05/02.
This handbook is based on the work of four key individuals, who between them have produced three distinct benchmark documents, for the museum, library and archive domains.

Peter Winsor first developed Levels of Collections Care: A self-assessment checklist for UK museums, which used the Museum Registration Scheme as its framework. This was published in 1998 by the Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC) and distributed to museums throughout the UK by the network of Area Museum Councils. This work was the inspiration for the Library and Information Commission (LIC) to fund a project to develop a self-assessment scheme for library collections. Helen Lindsay and Nancy Bell worked on the scheme, published in 2000 as the LIC Report 55: Benchmarks in collections care for UK libraries and presented at a National Preservation Office conference in April of the same year. At the same time, the MGC merged with the LIC to create a new cross-sector organisation called Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. Recognising the value of the self-assessment benchmarking methodology, Resource commissioned Jonathan Rhys-Lewis to develop a version for archive collections.

Initially, Resource planned to standardise the format of the three domain-based versions and publish them in a single volume. Nancy Bell, Helen Lindsay and Jonathan Rhys-Lewis did much work to create such a document. However, it was decided that since there were so many common threads running through the three schemes, a single scheme that was applicable to all three domains was feasible and should be developed. Jane Henderson was commissioned to synthesise this single cross-domain self-assessment framework and the new text was edited by Susan Hughes and Peter Winsor.

This handbook, therefore, represents the work of these individuals, but they in turn acknowledge the help given by many other professionals who contributed their time, enthusiasm and expertise. The following list contains the key contributors and their employing institutions at the time that their advice was given.
Jane Arthur  West Midlands Regional Museums Council
Toby Bainton  Standing Conference of National and University Libraries
Wilma Bouwmeester  Scottish Museums Council
Valerie Bott  Museums & Galleries Commission
Rosemary Bower  East Midlands Museums Service
May Cassar  Museums & Galleries Commission
Simon Chaplin  Prism Grant Fund
Liz Chapman  Taylor Institution Library
Richard Childs  West Sussex County Archives
Helen Cox  Yorkshire and Humberside Museums Council
Janet Davies  MGC/V&A Purchase Fund
Laura Drysdale  Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries
Stephen Douglass  Hertfordshire Museums
Susan Edwards  Glamorgan Record Office
Martin Elliot  Museum consultant
Dr Helen Forde  Public Record Office
Richard Golland  Imperial War Museum
Jane Henderson  Council of Museums in Wales/Independent conservator
Mark Hingley  Society of Archivists’ Preservation and Conservation Group
David Hill  South West Museums Council
John Holmes  National Library of Wales
Alison Horsbaugh  National Archives of Scotland
Jill Hughes  Taylor Institution Library
Susan Hughes  Independent researcher and editor
Hugh Jacques  Dorset Record Office
Norman James  Historical Manuscripts Commission
Deborah Jenkins  London Metropolitan Archives
Iwan Jones  National Library of Wales
Steven Jones  Public Records Office
Serena Kelly  Victoria and Albert Museum
Lesley Anne Kerr  West Midlands Regional Museums Council
Val King  Museums & Galleries Commission
David Knott  Reading University Library
C R Lally  Putney Public Library
Emmeline Leary  Museums & Galleries Commission
Canon Iain Mackenzie  Worcester Cathedral Library
Christina Mackwell  Lambeth Palace Library
Vanessa Marshall  National Preservation Office
Simon Matty  Library and Information Commission
Carole Milner  Museums & Galleries Commission
George Monger  Independent conservator
Adrienne Muir  Library and Information Commission
Deirdre Mulley  South Eastern Museums Service
Diana O’Sullivan  Horniman Museum
Ylva Player-Dahnsjö  University of Dundee
Crispin Paine  Committee of Area Museum Councils
Phil Parkes  Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments
Linda Ramsay  National Archives of Scotland
Liz Ritchie  Northern Ireland Museums Council
Helen Shenton  British Library
Sarah Slade  Scottish Museums Council
Vanessa Trevelyan  Museums & Galleries Commission
Alison Walker  National Preservation Office
Jerry Weber  Warwickshire Record Office
Penny Wilkinson  North of England Museums Service
Chris Woods  Dorset Record Office
### Terminology

The following definitions are based on those devised by consultants who advised Resource in the preparation of its Stewardship Framework document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benchmark</td>
<td>A defined level of performance set by consensus or peer review as a recommended mark of attainment. Benchmarking may be used to establish a set of procedures or to define levels of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection</td>
<td>A body of acquired objects or items, together with associated information, held in title by the collecting organisation; or the accumulated items held by a collector. In UK archival terminology, commonly used as an alternative to fonds. As well as material held within the building, a collection may include the building itself or the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection care</td>
<td>A broad concept that encompasses a range of activities that have an impact on the preservation of a collection. In the context of a museum, archive or library, these may include: institutional policies as they relate to the protection and care of the collections, buildings, security, storage, training, cleaning, preservation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, the provision of surrogate copies and disaster planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection care assessment</td>
<td>A descriptive evaluation of performance. In the context of a museum, archive or library, a collection care assessment is used to evaluate the overall provision of collection care by examining the policies, practices and conditions of the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection management</td>
<td>All activities related to the care of a collection, from the time a digital or physical document or object is acquired until its eventual disposal. Collection management covers documentation (registration, accessioning, cataloguing); digitisation; handling (storage, conservation, display); loan and disposal/deaccession of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>Hands-on intervention techniques applied to the physical forms of museum, archive and library materials and objects to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation, in order to extend their useful life and ensure their continued availability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservator</td>
<td>A person with specialist training and experience in conservation to the level required for professional practice by the conservation professional bodies. Internationally referred to as Conservator-Restorer for the sake of clarity, as national nomenclature varies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition survey</td>
<td>An analysis of the overall condition of a collection. The survey can be a sample-based analysis or a full item-by-item survey that assesses the condition of individual items. For a large collection, a statistically valid sample may be the most effective means of gathering information. The results can be used to help decide how best to direct resources or to prioritise conservation programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courier</td>
<td>A member of staff or professionally trained person responsible for the transport of collection materials between institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>A term describing electronic media used to generate, store, display, manipulate and deliver textual, numerical and graphical data. Increasingly used to denote electronic as opposed to paper-based documents and images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency preparedness</td>
<td>Being prepared to implement practices that will speed the response and recovery phases after a disaster or emergency. More generally, refers to the entire process of planning and equipping for a potential disaster. It includes anticipating the types of incidents that might occur and having procedures in place to deal with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Normally, the body which holds the legal title to collections and refers to these in its statement of purpose. Collections may be held by institutions for which the holding and preservation of collections is not their central function, for example universities. In this case, the term ‘institution’ refers to the specific unit with responsibility for the collections, for example a university library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>All managerial, financial and technical considerations applied to retard deterioration that prevent damage and extend the useful life of materials and objects in collections to ensure their continued availability. These considerations include monitoring and controlling appropriate environmental conditions; providing adequate storage and physical protection; establishing exhibition and loan policies and proper handling procedures; providing for conservation treatment, emergency planning and the creation and use of surrogates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoration</td>
<td>Procedures intended to return material or objects to a known or assumed state, usually with the addition of non-original material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>Documents containing technical specifications or precise criteria to be used as rules, guidelines, or definitions of characteristics, to ensure that material, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>The whole range of demands and responsibilities associated with the management of cultural heritage collections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>The physical housing of all collections, whether on public display or in non-public stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>All those who may derive benefit from the services provided by a museum, archive or library.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organisations

UK BODIES OFFERING ADVICE AND INFORMATION

The Conservation Register
c/o UKIC
109 The Chandlery
50 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7QY
Tel: 020 7721 8246
Email: ukic@ukic.org.uk
Website: www.ukic.org.uk
A selective listing of conservators and conservation practices.

Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC)
Quality House
Quality Court
Chancery Lane
London
WC2A 1HP
Website: www.hmc.gov.uk
HMC provides advice on matters relating to archives’ preservation, care, cataloguing and accessibility for research. Its website has an archives resource page and many useful links.

mda (formally the Museum Documentation Association)
Jupiter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2JD
Tel: 01223 366097
Website: www.mda.org.uk
Advice, publications and training on information issues related to managing museum collections.

National Preservation Office (NPO)
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London
NW1 2DB
Tel: 020 7412 7725
Website: www.bl.uk/services/preservation
The NPO provide free leaflets, publications, videos, posters and advice.
The Public Record Office provides advice and guidance to records managers across central Government. This covers the entire life cycle of public records, in whatever format, from creation through to destruction or transfer to the Public Record Office. The website also contains a section devoted to information for archives and archive professionals.

Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries
16 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AA
Tel: 020 7273 1444
Website: www.resource.gov.uk

IN SCOTLAND

National Archives of Scotland
HM General Register House
Edinburgh
EH1 3YY
Website: www.nas.gov.uk/

IN WALES

The Convenor
Cyngor Archifau Cymru: Archive Council in Wales
Details of the current contact can be obtained from the local record office or from the Historical Manuscripts Commission.

IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
66 Balmoral Avenue
Belfast
BT9 6NT
Website: www.proni.nics.gov.uk/

INTERNATIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI)
Website: www.cci-icc.gc.ca
Leaflets, publications and general information can be found on the website.

Conservation on Line (CoOL)
Website: www.palimpsest.stanford.edu
Full database of articles and reports on conservation and preservation. Extensive links to related organisations and conservation professional bodies.
Publications and information available, much of it free.

North East Document Conservation Centre (NEDCC)
Website: www.nedcc.org/plam3/manhome.htm, with additional information leaflets at www.nedcc.org/leaf.htm
This site includes Preservation of Library and Archive Material: A Manual, a comprehensive, 433-page tome that can be searched online or downloaded using Adobe Acrobat.

Smithsonian Centre for Material Research and Education
Website: www.si.edu/scmre/collcare.html
The Smithsonian’s site has a Guidelines section that contains a large number of factsheets.

Standards

British Standards Institute (BSI)
Group Headquarters
389 Chiswick High Road
London
W4 4AL
Tel: 020 8996 9000
Fax: 020 8996 7400
Website: www.bsi-global.com

BS 5444:1983
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1, rue de Varembe
CP 56, CH-1211
Geneva 20
Switzerland
Telephone: 41 (22) 749 0111
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Society of Archivists
Handle with Care
Benchmarks in Collection Care – Checklist
Identification Information

Institution

Collection(s) and location(s)

Collection Status
- Owned by institution
- On loan
- Deposited
- Legal deposit
- Uncatalogued
- Closed
- Documented
- Other

Assessor
Name, Position, Institution (if different)

Date
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1
Policy

Preservation planning is about informed decision-making. Having policies in place makes this easier.

1.1
Collection Care

1.1.1
The institution’s statement of purpose makes a commitment to the preservation of its collections.

☐ 

1.1.2
The institution is planning to write a preservation policy within one year.

☐ 

1.1.4
The institution has a written preservation policy.

☐ 

1.1.9
Preservation priorities are included in the aims and objectives of all forward planning.

☐ 

1.1.5
A collection assessment has been carried out to identify preservation priorities and these are used to inform a preservation programme.

☐ 

1.1.10
Those responsible for preservation are included in the decision-making team of the institution.

☐ 

Basic

Policy

Good

Best
1.1.3 BS 5454:2000 is used as the basis for the development of a preservation policy for archival and library special collection material.

1.1.6 Those responsible for preservation are consulted about relevant policy-making decisions.

1.1.7 There is an action plan to carry out the priorities identified as necessary to improve collection care within a specified time period.

1.1.8 The institution is working towards achieving standards set out in BS 5454:2000 for the care of archival and library special collection material.

1.1.11 There is an annual review of collection care strategy, which contributes to the revision of policies and programmes, ensuring a planned approach to improvements in overall collection care.

1.1.12 The governing body/management committee receives a written five-yearly report on the general condition of the collection, which includes a description of areas of concern or specific problems and an action plan containing recommendations on how the situation can be improved.
1.2.1 The institution has a written policy covering acquisition, retention, accessioning, de-accessioning or disposal and which includes a review mechanism. This policy states any limitations on collecting, imposed by factors such as inadequate staffing, storage (quality or capacity) or conservation resources.

1.2.5 The preservation needs of material acquired for permanent retention are assessed prior to acceptance or immediately on accession.

1.2.9 The institution has a system in place for monitoring the use of its collections. This information is used to inform preservation and conservation planning.

1.1.13 The standards of BS 5454:2000 are met or exceeded for archival material.

1.1.14 Objects are cared for in accordance with recommendations in the relevant MGC Standards in the Care of Collections series (where applicable).
1.2.2 Records are kept of the use/status of items in the collection.

1.2.3 Non-core material in the collection, which would not now be collected by the institution, is identified, and its retention is assessed and reviewed.

1.2.4 The preservation needs of non-core material in the collections have been assessed by an appropriate specialist, at least once in the last five years. The assessment includes information on specialist storage, conservation, packing and transportation.

1.2.6 Advice is sought from a conservator or collection care adviser when drafting or revising a policy related to acquisition, retention, accessioning, de-accessioning or disposal.

1.2.7 Only items that the institution has the resources to care for in the long term are collected or accepted on loan.

1.2.8 The institution has a written policy on the use of objects for handling/schools loan collections, the provision of non-accessioned objects and use of surrogates or replicas.

1.2.10 The institution, in revising its acquisition and disposal policies, addresses any inadequacies in conservation and collection care that have been identified.

1.2.11 The use and status of objects is reviewed periodically and any change approved by the governing body/management committee.
1.3.1 The institution receives regular advice from a conservator or collection care adviser on all aspects of its collection care activities.

1.3.2 Staff employed to conserve collections, either in-house or contracted, have been trained in conservation practices and are aware of up-to-date conservation techniques.

1.3.3 The institution supports published professional standards for staff qualification, accreditation and CPD and this is reflected in the recruitment policy.

1.3.9 The individual(s) assigned responsibility for collection care activities have these duties identified in their job description(s).

1.3.10 All consultants working on collection care related issues have a written brief.

1.3.11 The institution has a written policy on the use of volunteers for collection care activities.

1.3.13 The institution has assessed the need for conservation staff and has made arrangements to meet this need in full.

1.3.14 All contracted-out conservation work is undertaken on the basis of Guidelines for competitive tendering and professional practice.
1.3.4
Any conservator or conservation practice that is contracted to provide advice or services should normally be included on the Conservation Register and, where available, a professionally accredited conservator is used.

1.3.5 – 1.3.7
There is at least one member of staff responsible for the following activities. Identify by name.

1.3.5
• Preservation of the collections.

1.3.6
• Co-ordinating activities relating to the storage of collections.

1.3.12
Specifications for externally contracted work, such as binding, re-packaging or boxing, are drawn up in consultation with a conservator or collection care adviser.
1.3.7
- Monitoring and controlling the environment.

1.3.8
Either a member of staff within the institution or the identified contractor’s contact is responsible for undertaking or supervising the production of surrogate copies. *Identify by name.*

1.4.1
Staff training needs in the field of collection care are assessed regularly.

1.4.8
Current and future collection care training, education and awareness-raising needs are identified.

1.4.14
Training needs and provision are reviewed as part of the institution’s planning cycle.
1.4.2 All members of staff are aware of security procedures and guidelines.

1.4.3 Collections are only cleaned by staff or volunteers who have received appropriate training.

1.4.4 Staff responsible for the storage of collections are aware of the risks to the collection from inappropriate environmental conditions.

1.4.9 Information on collection care practices is available to all staff in the form of regular practical training sessions, published literature and in-house documentation.

1.4.10 Staff or contract cleaners who clean storage areas and storage furniture have received training.

1.4.11 Staff are able to recognise the signs of infestation, dampness and mould and act promptly according to agreed procedures when these are discovered.

1.4.15 The institution has in place guidelines on the behaviour of contractors/service providers on site.
1.4.5 All new staff receive training in the handling and transportation of collections as part of their induction training.

1.4.6 Staff who handle collections have received training in the handling and transportation of collections, including unusual and delicate items, at least once in the last five years.

1.4.7 Staff responsible for exhibitions and loans understand the importance of following agreed guidelines for the display of collections.

1.4.12 Relevant staff receive training in exhibition and loan procedures.

1.4.13 Repository and curatorial staff receive regular training in preservation packaging procedures.
| 1.5.1 | The institution has identified resources for preservation and conservation. |
| 1.5.2 | The institution has identified resources for collection care related training. |
| 1.5.3 | The institution has identified resources for maintenance of buildings, plant and equipment. |

**Budget**

| 1.5.6 | The institution's budget makes annual provision for: |
| 1.5.7 | • The preservation and conservation of its collections. |
| 1.5.8 | • Financial support of staff CPD and specialisation. |
| 1.5.9 | Resources are made available to carry out improvements identified in: |
| 1.5.13 | An annual review of the institution’s resources, facilities and activities is used to identify and prioritise collection care projects. |

The institution has resources in place for a comprehensive operational and maintenance programme for its buildings, services and plant.
1.5.4
The institution has identified resources for cleaning and housekeeping.

1.5.5
The institution has reviewed the resources needed for insurance cover.

1.5.9
- Environmental monitoring and control assessment reports.

1.5.10 – 1.5.11
Resources are made available for the costs involved in:

1.5.10
- Emergency preparedness.

1.5.11
- Monitoring and periodic migration of digital information.
The institution has identified a budget, if required, for insurance costs.

☐
2 Buildings

A suitably constructed, well-maintained building is fundamental to the protection of collections.

2.1 Fabric

2.1.1 The building is of robust construction and all floors, especially in storage areas, can safely support the load.

2.1.2 Buildings used to house collections are regularly inspected. All potential threats to collections from, for example, leaky roofs, poor wiring, internal pipework, blocked gutters and ill-fitting windows or doors, are identified and assessed.

2.1.5 The building in which the collection is housed is wind-proof and watertight, and can provide basic protection for the collection.

2.1.6 A schedule for the routine maintenance of buildings and utilities is in place.

2.1.10 A building management plan has been drawn up and is frequently reviewed to update priorities and track progress on implementing recommendations.

2.1.11 Reports on the condition of the building are used in planning improvements or major developments, and in revising forward plans.
2.1.3 Plant and equipment is inspected periodically by staff.

2.1.4 Buildings that are unoccupied for parts of the year are visited and inspected regularly.

2.1.7 An architect, surveyor or other competent person produces a regular report outlining the state of the buildings, and an action plan is in place to implement recommendations.

2.1.8 Potential access points for vermin, insects and dust, including pipes, cracks and electrical/air ducts, are identified and sealed.

2.1.9 Staff responsible for collections are notified in advance of any building works, to enable them to brief contractors working on site.

2.1.12 Records are kept of all building work, maintenance and inspections.

2.1.13 A preservation advisory panel or advisory service is consulted in planning any building work.
### Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Security procedures and guidelines are in place and enforceable.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.2</td>
<td>A security assessment is made at regular intervals and all risks, particularly to the perimeter of the building, are noted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.3</td>
<td>All access points to the building such as doors, lifts, staircases, skylights, windows and ventilation risers can be made secure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.8</td>
<td>Access to keys and security codes is strictly controlled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.9</td>
<td>An intruder detection system is in place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.10</td>
<td>An annual security assessment, including recommendations for improvement, is presented to senior managers and kept under review to determine whether recommendations have been implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2.11</td>
<td>Intruder detection alarms are linked to the police or other appropriate monitoring service.</td>
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</table>
2.2.4
All doors with access to storage areas are strongly constructed, close-fitting and equipped with locks for which the issue of keys can be controlled.

2.2.5
Doors leading out of closed-access areas are fitted with locks that may be opened from the inside without a key, but can be opened from the outside only with a key.

2.2.6
Access to storage areas is restricted to relevant staff and other authorised persons accompanied by them.
2.2.7
Arrangements exist for maintaining appropriate levels of security while external contractors are working on site, especially outside normal office hours.

☐
______________________________
______________________________
______________________________ A ___
3 Storage

Keeping storage areas clean, well-organised and pest-free, and protecting collections with appropriate packaging, is the most cost-effective way of reducing physical damage to collections.

3.1 Storage Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1.1</th>
<th>A conservator or collection care adviser has given advice on the storage of all collections within the last five years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1.12</th>
<th>There is a plan near the entrance showing the layout of the store.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1.17</th>
<th>There is sufficient space to accommodate current and projected storage requirements.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1.18</th>
<th>Items with special preservation requirements have been identified, and appropriate environmental conditions provided.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3.1.3 There is sufficient space to carry and move items in aisles and between bays.

☐

3.1.4 Items are not placed directly on the floor.

☐

3.1.5 Collections are kept tidy on shelves and in cabinets.

☐

3.1.9 Storage areas for archival or library special collection material meet or exceed the requirements of BS 5454:2000.

☐
3.1.6
Storage areas designated for collections are used solely for that purpose and do not have non-collection material stored there.

3.1.7
A clear, flat workspace is available in storage areas for working with items.

3.1.8
Books and volumes are not stored on their fore-edge or spine.

3.1.16
Oversize books are stored flat, where possible, and stacked no more than two high.
3.1.9 Books are not kept stacked in piles for prolonged periods.

3.1.10 Storage areas provide the minimum standard conditions appropriate to the material stored, as set out in the PRO’s advisory documents.

3.2 Storage Furniture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Best</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 All shelving is stable, well-fitted and strong enough to take the required load.</td>
<td>3.2.9 Information is sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the design, construction and composition of storage furniture.</td>
<td>3.2.15 Shelving provides safe and effective storage for the whole of the collection, regardless of size or shape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.2 Material can be reached from the highest shelf safely or, if not, appropriate equipment is available for the safe retrieval of material from high shelves or racking.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.3 Clear instructions for the use of mobile shelving are displayed.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.4 The acceleration and braking of mobile shelving is such that items cannot slide or fall off shelves.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.10 All shelving is deep enough to support stored items fully.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.11 Storage arrangements allow air to circulate freely.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.12 Anti-tip devices are fitted to ensure that sudden braking, acceleration or uneven loading of mobile shelving does not cause them to tip.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.16 Similar-sized (unusual format) books are stored together.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.17 All storage furniture and materials have been tested to ensure that they are as inert as possible and do not give off vapours which are harmful to items in direct contact or close proximity.

☐

☐

☐

3.2.18 Wherever appropriate, archive material is stored according to format.

☐

☐

☐

25
3.2.5
All collection items stored on mobile shelving are housed completely within the depth of the shelves.

3.2.6
The height of cabinets and plan chests does not impede the retrieval or replacement of material.

3.2.7
Cabinet and plan chest drawers are not overfilled and are able to open freely without risk to the material they hold.

3.2.13
There is sufficient space between the floor and the lowest shelf or pallet to reduce the risk of damage from flooding, and to allow for cleaning.

3.2.14
Shelving and drawers are padded to prevent damage to objects.
3.2.8 Large objects are stored on racks or pallets.

3.3.1 Supplies of archival quality packaging are readily available in a range of sizes.

3.3.2 Containers used for physical protection are strong enough to withstand handling and the weight of the items they contain.

3.3.7 There is a packaging programme to provide storage enclosures for collections and/or individual items identified as requiring physical protection.

3.3.8 Rolled documents and textiles are supported by being rolled around a rigid cylinder made from, or covered with, archival quality material.

3.3.14 The institution has a continuing programme to replace non-archival quality folders and boxes with archival-quality enclosures, if required.

3.3.15 All materials, regardless of format, receive appropriate physical protection.
3.3.3
Boxes and folders fit the items they contain.

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3.3.4
Archival quality linen tape is always used to secure rolled materials in at least two places, incorporating a label, and wrapped around the roll without causing creasing.

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3.3.5
Documents are not folded or otherwise modified to fit their enclosure.

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3.3.9
Rolled documents and textiles are protected by archival-quality rigid containers or bags.

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3.3.10
Rolled documents and textiles are stored no more than two high.

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3.3.11
Small objects, such as loose seals or coins, are contained in boxes or trays.

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3.3.6 Rolled items are protected from dust.

3.4.1 Labels at the end of bays and shelves are clear and accurate.

3.4.6 All bays, cabinets, shelves and boxes are clearly numbered and labelled with light- and water-resistant ink.

3.3.12 Large books stored next to small ones are protected by a folder, book-shoe, sleeve or box.

3.3.13 The special requirements for storing photographic media have been identified and the appropriate conditions and materials are available.

3.4.11 A review is undertaken at least every five years to ensure that all labelling and marking is carried out to the required standard.
3.4.2
Boxes, bags and folders are clearly marked to indicate their contents.

3.4.3
A 2B pencil is used for all labelling and numbering of archival material.

3.4.4
Security stamping ink used on library material is not water-soluble.

3.4.7
Advice has been sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the use of an appropriate adhesive to stick labels to books and enclosures.

3.4.8
Advice has been sought from a conservator or collection care adviser on the least damaging and most durable attachment of security labels, such as bar codes and magnetic strips, to books and enclosures.

3.4.9
Bookplates used in books of special value, are made of lignin-free, alkaline paper and attached with a stable, reversible adhesive.

3.4.12
All items are labelled or marked according to mda guidelines.
3.4.5 All items held are labelled or marked with a unique number.

3.5.1 Items with special storage needs are identified.

3.5.2 Non-standard sized material can be removed and replaced easily and safely from all cabinets and shelving, with appropriate access equipment available if required.

3.5.3 Storage systems for oversize material are designed to facilitate access to the items they hold.

3.5.5 All oversize volumes are stored flat.

3.4.10 A programme of permanent marking to mda (Museum Documentation Association) guidelines is in place.
3.5.4
Non-standard sized items receive the same standard of care as the rest of the collection.

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4 Housekeeping

Effective management of pests and mould relies on early detection. Careful cleaning of collections, and the areas in which they are housed, will reduce the likelihood of pest infestation and damage to material from mould or from abrasive or acidic particles.

4.1 Housekeeping

4.1.1 All storage areas and storage furniture are cleaned and inspected regularly.

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4.1.2 Advice has been sought from a conservator or collection care adviser as to the appropriate techniques, materials and equipment to use when cleaning storage areas and storage furniture.

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4.1.7 All parts of the building are cleaned and inspected regularly.

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4.1.8 Storage areas are monitored for the presence of insects and rodents, and traps are regularly checked. Trapped insects are identified.

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4.1.13 A written cleaning specification for storage and display areas is in place.

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4.1.14 An integrated pest management programme has been implemented.

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4.1.3
The consumption, disposal and storage of foodstuffs are confined to areas well away from collections.

4.1.4
All items which show signs of pest infestation are kept isolated from the rest of the collection until treated.

4.1.5
All incoming material and acquisitions are examined for signs of infestation, dampness or mould. Remedial action is taken to deal with any problems identified.

4.1.9
Records of monitoring and treatments for pest infestation, whether of individual items, collections or buildings, are stored centrally.

4.1.10
A conservator or collection care adviser is consulted if pest infestation, dampness or mould is found.

4.1.11
Advice is taken from a conservator or collection care adviser before pest treatment is undertaken on items, collections or buildings.
4.1.6
Any pesticide treatment carried out complies with the relevant health and safety legislation.

4.1.12
All incoming items are placed in a quarantine area on arrival in the institution prior to inspection for pest infestation and mould, and any necessary treatment.
Handling and Use of Collections

Careful handling is a key element in collection care. Any handling can cause damage, while poor handling will rapidly lead to an item becoming unusable. Care taken when using the collections will ensure that they remain accessible to future users.

5.1 Handling and Moving Procedures

5.1.1 Written guidelines for safe handling and transportation of material are available to all staff.

5.1.2 All items taken out of a building are physically protected.

5.1.8 Protective enclosures, such as folders or boxes, are used when moving collections within the building.

5.1.15 Advice is taken from specialists when large or unusual items are to be moved.
5.1.3 Items from the collection which are to be moved off-site, including items travelling with a courier, are packaged so as to prevent damage.

5.1.4 Equipment is available for gaining access to and for moving heavy, bulky and less accessible items.

5.1.5 Trolleys used to transport collections are stable and easy to manoeuvre, and fully support the material they carry.

5.1.9 Information is circulated to all staff on the damage that can be caused to collections by the use of stationery products such as Sellotape™, gummed tapes, rubber bands, paper clips and Post-it™ notes.

5.1.10 A system is in place for recording damage to collections reported by staff, readers or researchers.

5.1.11 An assessment is made by a member of staff, or someone acting on the institution’s behalf, that the level of security is appropriate for any item to be transported or housed off-site.
5.1.6
All items sent off-site are handled, transported and housed in conditions no worse than those found in the home institution.

5.1.7
All mechanical apparatus used for moving material is fitted with an emergency stop mechanism.

5.1.12
Records are kept of all serious accidents resulting in damage to collections

5.1.13
Fragile or special items carried in a hoist or conveyor box are put into individual protective boxes or folders.

5.1.14
The bases of boxes or trays used to carry collections on a conveyor or hoist are padded.
5.2.1 Guidelines on good practice when handling collections are displayed prominently in reading-rooms and study areas.

5.2.2 Notices prohibiting smoking, eating and drinking in reading-rooms and study and storage areas are prominently displayed.

5.2.3 Areas where special collection and unique material is used are actively invigilated by trained staff.

5.2.4 A written notice of the penalties resulting from non-compliance with advertised practices is prominently displayed.

5.2.5 Procedures are in place for dealing with non-compliance with rules, and staff are trained to deal with difficult situations.

5.2.6 Book supports and weights, and instructions for their use, are available to all readers.

5.2.12 All new readers and researchers are given written instructions on handling collections and reading-room practices.
5.2.7 Readers are required to use pencils for note-taking when consulting library special collection or unique material.

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5.2.8 Items requiring special protection when being handled are clearly marked, preferably by a label on the protective enclosure.

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5.2.9 Researchers are provided with suitable gloves for handling any item identified as requiring this protection.

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5.3 Exhibitions

5.3.1 The condition of all material is noted before it is displayed and any changes are noted afterwards.

5.3.9 A programme is in place for routine checking of all items on display.

5.2.10 Researchers are required to use cotton or disposable gloves to handle photographs, unless the photographs are protected by a clear plastic sleeve.

5.2.11 Work surfaces are of adequate size to support the material fully while it is in use.

5.3.18 A conservator maintains responsibility for items included in exhibitions and for the display of all collections.
5.3.2
A programme to check the condition of vulnerable items on display is in place.

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5.3.3
Display cases are robust, secure and constructed from materials that will not harm their contents.

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5.3.4
Physical access by staff to items on display is kept as simple as possible without compromising security.

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5.3.10
A conservator or collection care adviser has provided written advice as to appropriate display techniques and materials, which is available to staff setting up exhibitions.

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5.3.11
Written condition assessments are made by, or in consultation with, a conservator or collection care adviser, for all material to be exhibited.

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5.3.12
A conservator or collection care adviser works with other staff to ensure that all items have individual specifications for appropriate support.

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5.3.5 Archive and library material is not on indefinite display. Where possible, facsimile copies are used.

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5.3.6 The weight of all items on display is supported evenly.

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5.3.7 Books are not displayed open at an angle greater than 30 degrees from the horizontal, and the angle of opening does not strain the binding structure.

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5.3.13 Materials and techniques used in the construction of exhibitions are approved by a conservator or collection care adviser as safe for the purpose, or have been tested by a recognised method.

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5.3.14 Exhibition areas are invigilated when open to the public.

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5.3.15 Access is possible to allow periodic cleaning and maintenance of ‘dead’ areas beneath and behind exhibition furniture.

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5.3.8
Book supports are designed to fit the profile of the book at the display opening. Text block pages are restrained using a safe material such as polyethylene strips.

5.4.1
Items are assessed to establish their suitability for loan.

5.3.16
Light fittings can be reached without the need for access via the interior of the display case.

5.3.17
Items are exhibited only in areas designed or designated for that purpose, which can be isolated from other areas.

5.4.5
The institution has written procedures and agreements for loans.

5.4.9
A written condition report is made on all material after an exhibition.
5.4.2 A written condition report is made in consultation with a conservator or collection care adviser before the loan is approved.

5.4.3 A site report is received from the borrower before the loan is agreed. This should include details of handling and security in transit, flood risk and arrangements for environmental and light control, security and fire detection and suppression at the exhibition site and temporary storage areas.

5.4.4 Couriers are issued with written guidance before transporting items from the collection. All movements are documented and receipts are signed by authorised staff.

5.4.6 Photographic documentation for all material is included as part of the loan procedures.

5.4.7 A trained courier accompanies material that is to travel by road, rail, sea or air. On arrival, the courier confirms that all the loan conditions have been met.

5.4.8 The loan agreement for any item specifies the conditions under which it should be handled, transported, displayed and stored, and its condition is assessed and reported to the owner.

5.4.10 Where appropriate, the institution applies the conditions described in the Government Indemnity Scheme.

5.4.11 The institution applies the conditions described in the MGC Standard Touring exhibitions.
5.5 Operating or Playing Objects

5.5.1 No object is operated or played unless the governing body/management committee has formally approved this activity.

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5.5.2 The institution has a written policy on who can operate or play objects that have been designated as suitable.

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5.5.3 Information or instructions relating to operating or playing objects is retained in the object conservation file.

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5.5.4 A record is kept of all operating (playing, running or working) of objects.

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5.5.5 An individual operating/play log is maintained and kept with the object’s documentation.

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6.1.1 The bulk of the collection is housed to protect it from extreme environmental conditions. Any environmental data collected, such as spot measures of temperature and humidity, is recorded and retained.

6.1.2 Records are kept of all environmental monitoring and collated monthly. Records are maintained in a systematic way and retained for a minimum of five years.

6.1.5 A programme is in place to measure relative humidity, temperature and light levels (visible and ultraviolet) in galleries and stores.

6.1.6 The institution has determined the level of control of the environment (temperature, humidity, light and pollutants) it wishes to achieve for all areas housing collections.

General

Monitoring and Equipment – General

6.1

Monitoring and equipment can be damaged if they are kept in unsuitable environmental conditions. Monitoring the environment will alert staff to damaging conditions so that these can be improved.
6.1.3 Simple measures such as closing doors, moving lights, providing entrance mats and controlling temperature and light levels are taken to improve the environment.

6.1.4 Monitoring equipment is stored and calibrated as recommended by the manufacturer.

6.1.7 Controlled environments are established for some vulnerable items.

6.1.8 A record is kept of calibration and maintenance of all environmental monitoring equipment.

6.1.9 A maintenance programme for environmental control equipment (including UV filter replacement) is in place.

6.1.13 Environmental monitoring records are examined periodically and a summary prepared.

6.1.14 A record is kept of all special events held in the institution, including film-making, concerts or social events.

6.1.15 The environmental conditions of the display cases, exhibition and storage areas are kept stable within defined levels.
6.2.1 Material is displayed and stored away from heating, air-conditioning vents and windows.

6.2.2 The temperature and relative humidity levels in areas where collections are held are monitored and documented.

6.2.5 The temperature and RH requirements of different materials in the collections are met.

6.1.10 Staff have management control over operational settings of all environmental control equipment/plant.

6.1.16 Appropriate environmental conditions are established for all items according to their requirements.

6.1.17 The environmental monitoring and control needs of the collection are reviewed at regular intervals.
6.3 Light

6.3.1 The overall exposure of all light-sensitive material to light is reduced as much as possible.

6.3.4 Light levels are monitored through seasonal variations in all areas housing collections.

6.3.9 There is a central automatic or zoned switching system to ensure that lights are kept off in storage areas when unoccupied.

6.2.3 An evaluation has been made to consider the benefits of and the technical options for controlling temperature and relative humidity, with recommendations presented to senior managers.

6.2.4 Items arriving in the collection are allowed time to acclimatise gently in areas where they will be stored or exhibited.
6.3.2
Blinds, shutters, curtains and/or ultraviolet filters are used to reduce visible and ultraviolet light in all areas housing collections.

6.3.3
Sunlight does not fall directly on any light-sensitive material while on display.

6.3.5
Shutters or blinds in reading or research rooms are used by staff to regulate light levels.

6.3.6
Fluorescent tubes are fitted with ultraviolet filtering sleeves or low-UV fluorescent tubes are used. Tubes and sleeves are checked regularly and replaced when they become ineffective.

6.3.7
Potentially harmful electric light sources are not placed close to collections.

6.3.10
The overall exposure to light of collections during exhibitions is kept within defined limits.
6.4 Gaseous and Particulate Pollutants

6.4.1 Items in the collection are protected from excessive dust.

6.4.2 All windows and doors can be closed so that the building provides some protection from airborne pollutants, both gaseous and particulate.

6.4.3 An evaluation of the risks to the collection from airborne pollution has been made, with recommendations presented to managers.

6.4.4 All internal building surfaces are finished with a seal to reduce dust.

6.4.5 An assessment is made of potential atmospheric pollutants and a programme of spot checks is in place.

6.4.6 A programme of spot checks is in place.

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If the evaluation finds that air pollution is having a significant impact on the condition of collections, an air filtration system is installed or other measures are taken to protect collections.

Any technical improvements are developed in conjunction with an appropriately qualified engineer.

Products used by cleaning and maintenance staff exclude those which give off gas or fumes potentially hazardous to collections (e.g. chlorine, hydrogen peroxide) and this is specified in contracts if appropriate.
7 Conservation

Conservation makes an essential contribution to the continuing survival and accessibility of collections and aims to stabilise items both physically and chemically. Conservators examine, document and undertake both preventive and interventive treatments.

7.1 Programme

7.1.1 Priorities for conservation of the collections have been identified.

7.1.2 Items and collections requiring physical protection have been identified.

7.1.4 The institution has a written conservation programme based on defined conservation priorities for the collections.

7.1.5 Conservation priority setting is underpinned by condition assessments.

7.1.9 The conservation programme is regularly reviewed to set and monitor clear targets, and to check whether previous recommendations have been implemented.

7.1.10 The documentation procedure manual lists standard conservation and related procedures and provides guidance on recording.
7.1.3 Results of all inspections or surveys of collections are recorded.

7.1.6 Conservators work in conjunction with other staff to identify priorities for conservation treatments.

7.1.11 The institution has a programme to obtain any relevant conservation treatment records of objects not currently held in the collection.

7.1.7 Sensitive or vulnerable items in the collections are identified and this information recorded centrally.

7.1.8 The institution keeps records of collection care programmes such as re-boxing.
7.2 Implementation
(See also Section 1.3 Staff and Volunteers and Section 1.4 Training.)

7.2.1 Any commercial conservation/binding company undertaking preservation or conservation services is provided with written specifications and a contract.

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7.2.2 The institution keeps records, including photographs, of both in-house and external conservation or rebinding treatments.

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7.2.3 Conservation treatment records are linked to the institution’s main documentation cataloguing scheme.

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7.2.4 Conservators employed or contracted to work on collections are asked to show that the treatments and techniques they use are in line with current professional practice.

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7.2.5 A quality control system is in place to evaluate the work undertaken by commercial conservation or binding contractors.

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7.2.6 Any cleaning and minor repair of collections is carried out by conservators or others working under the instruction of a conservator.

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7.2.9 Conservation records are held and updated on a database.

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7.2.10 Records are produced to archival standards and are stored in an environment designed to ensure their long-term preservation.

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7.2.11 Conservation procedures are recorded as part of the MARC record.

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7.2.7

Records are kept of all commercial binding work, including details of the materials and techniques used.

7.2.8

Documentation records for condition-checking, conservation or other relevant procedures conform to *Spectrum: the UK museum documentation standard (mda).*
8
Surrogate Copies and New Media

Providing surrogate copies will reduce handling and thus reduce the risk of physical damage.

8.1 Procedures

8.1.1 The institution has assessed appropriate techniques and equipment for making preservation copies of fragile or heavily used material.

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8.1.2 The selection of items or collections for surrogacy includes an assessment of the level of current and potential use.

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8.1.10 Audio-visual machine-readable records (i.e. reel-to-reel, video) are not acquired unless the institution has, or plans to obtain and maintain, the necessary equipment to use them.

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8.1.11 The existence of surrogate copies is indicated by the retrieval system.

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8.1.15 The condition of master microfilms is checked every two years by inspection of a sample.

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8.1.16 The procedures, standards and innovations of digital preservation technology are regularly reviewed.

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8.1.3
A system is in place to provide users with surrogate copies rather than the originals.

8.1.4
All equipment used to produce surrogate copies, such as cameras or computers, is protected from dust.

8.1.5
Fragile items are assessed by a conservator or collection care adviser before surrogate copies are made.

8.1.12
Commercial contractors hired to produce surrogate copies can demonstrate good handling practices and quality control measures, and have been given written specifications.

8.1.13
A quality control check is made of all surrogate copies and collections returned from commercial contractors.

8.1.14
A surrogate copy is not produced by the institution if a surrogate created to preservation standards is available for purchase from another source.

8.1.17
The institution has a preservation microfilm programme.
8.1.6
The process of re-formatting is not undertaken if this is likely to cause damage to original material, such as further weakening of an already fragile binding structure. In such cases, preparatory conservation work is included as part of the filming programme.

8.1.7
The preparation and selection of items for surrogate copying is carried out by staff trained in handling and preservation awareness.

8.1.8
The production of surrogate copies is carried out by staff trained in quality control, handling collections and preservation awareness.
8.2 Photocopying

8.2.1 Written guidelines for photocopying and photocopying services are available to users.

8.2.2 The institution has identified material that can safely be photocopied by users.

8.2.4 Photocopying is carried out by staff trained in safe handling practices.

8.2.5 Photocopies made for permanent retention are printed on lignin-free, alkaline-buffered paper.

8.2.7 The frequency of copy requests for individual items is monitored and popular items are either produced as indexed master copies on permanent paper or prioritised for microfilming.
8.2.3 The institution does not allow self-service photocopying of fragile or light-sensitive material.

8.3.1 Only silver-gelatine, polyester-base 35mm roll microfilm is used for archival master negatives.

8.2.6 Books and items larger than the available copier platen are not photocopied.

8.3.6 Master negative copies are kept off-site.

8.3.7 All items filmed are included in the Register of Preservation Microforms at the British Library and the European Register of Microform Masters.

8.3.8 The existence of a microfilm copy is recorded on the catalogues and finding aids.

8.3.9 A master negative copy, a print duplicate negative and a user positive copy are produced for each preservation microfilm.
8.3.2  
Silver-gelatine, polyester-base film is processed to archival standards and tested to ensure quality control. Quality control includes testing to ensure that residual processing chemicals have been removed and inspection for blemishes, legibility and completeness.

8.3.3  
A master negative copy and a user positive copy are produced for each preservation microfilm.

8.3.4  
The institution has sought specialist advice about the storage of microfilm.

8.3.10  
Master copies kept off-site are stored in a facility that meets national environmental, security and access standards.

8.3.11  
All preservation microfilm is produced to archival standards.

### 8.4 Modern Media – CD-ROM, film-based media, computer and optical media disks, video, laser discs and audio cassettes

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<tr>
<td><strong>8.3.5</strong> Microfilm and microfiche readers are well maintained.</td>
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| **8.4.1** Information on the specific storage, environmental conditions, handling and labelling requirements of modern media has been made available to staff responsible for their storage. | | |
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| **8.4.2** Modern media for retention are security-protected against accidental and deliberate erasure, for example by removal of protective tabs. | | |
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| **8.4.3** The specific storage, environmental and labelling requirements of modern media are provided by the institution. | | |
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| **8.4.4** Current information on technological innovations relating to the preservation, storage and retention of modern media is regularly provided to staff working in these areas. | | |
| | | |
9

Emergency Preparedness

Advance planning is crucial to an effective emergency response and salvage of collections following a disaster such as flood, fire or other major incident.

9.1
Prevention and Recovery

9.1.1
The institution has a firm plan to write an emergency preparedness plan, which includes a strategy for prevention and risk assessment within one year.

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9.1.2
At least one individual or preferably a team is responsible for implementing the plan. Identify by name.

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9.1.8
The institution has a written emergency preparedness plan which includes strategies for disaster prevention and the salvage of collections.

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9.1.17
Emergency response rehearsals are carried out at least once a year.

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9.1.18
An early warning detection system has been installed in any building at high risk from water damage.

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9.1.9
Copies of all emergency details and contingency plans are kept at a separate, accessible location. Further copies are kept by relevant members of staff or departments.

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<td>9.1.3 Risk assessments have been made of hazards from, for example, water pipes, drains and inflammable materials, and priorities have been acted upon.</td>
<td>9.1.10 At least one member of staff is responsible for revising the plan on an annual basis. <em>Identify by name.</em></td>
<td>9.1.19 Staff have carried out joint familiarisation exercises with representatives of the emergency services.</td>
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<td>9.1.4 A security copy of the accession register/catalogue data files is stored at a separate building or location.</td>
<td>9.1.11 Automatic fire detection devices are fitted in reading/research rooms and storage areas.</td>
<td>9.1.20 Materials, paints, and coatings used for interior decoration or storage furniture are of a standard that will minimise the emission of harmful substances, including soot and smoke, in the event of fire.</td>
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<td>9.1.5 A report of any flood or fire, however minor, is made to managers together with any recommendations for improvement in prevention and response arrangements.</td>
<td>9.1.12 Staff are trained in emergency response procedures, including the use of fire extinguishers.</td>
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9.1.6 Areas used for display, including individual display cases, are protected against theft, vandalism, fire and flood.

9.1.7 Following any disaster or near disaster, Resource's Incident Report Form is completed and returned.

9.1.13 Floor plans are available which identify the key features of the building and its contents.

9.1.14 The local police and fire services have advised on emergency planning both verbally and in writing.

9.1.15 Disaster recovery equipment and materials are available.
The institution has details of suppliers of specialist equipment and services for use in an emergency.

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9.1.16

A __________