

Archives & Special Collections Collection Care and Conservation Policy

Statement of purpose

The intention and purpose of Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) is to collect, care for and make accessible unique and distinctive collections for the core function of supporting the work of Liverpool Hope University (LHU) in all its aspects and also provide a valuable resource for the wider scholarly community. This remit is further defined in the *A&SC Collection Development & Management Policy*. Moreover, many of these collections represent a resource held in trust for the benefit of present and future generations.

This policy aims to provide a comprehensive statement of intent and framework for the care of the collections entrusted to Liverpool Hope University and to communicate the principles that guide the conservation activities of Archives & Special Collections.

Scope

This policy covers archives, manuscripts and printed collections and existing digital collections, such as microfilm, microfiche and compact disks, managed by A&SC. It does not cover such material held elsewhere in the University. It does not cover the management of born-digital material.

Context

This Collection Care & Conservation Policy is complemented by detailed documents as follows:

- A&SC Collection Development & Management Policy
- A&SC Access Policy
- A&SC Salvage Plan
- Preservation Assessment Survey
- Library Development Plan
- Collection Management Policy
- Reading Room Regulations and Handling Guidelines
- Liverpool Hope University Major Incident Plan

Standards and guidelines

The following standards and guidelines provide a benchmark against collection item condition and best conservation management practices to effectively identify strengths and weaknesses and to help prioritise actions to ensure the long-term accessibility of the collections.

- British Standards Institution (2017). *BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections*¹
- British Standards Institution (2009). *PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management*²

Information from the following organisations was used in the preparation of this policy:

- British Library - Collection Care Preservation guides³
- Collections Trust - Collection care and conservation⁴
- Harwell Restoration – Priority User Services⁵

Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following key terms⁶ used to describe activities within A&SC have been defined to ensure common understanding.

Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) – the collecting body that collects archive and library material intended for long term preservation.

archive – collection of archive and library material intended for long-term preservation. In this context ‘archive’ does not refer to the institution carrying out archiving activities

conservation – measures and/or actions aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage while respecting its significance, including its accessibility to present and future generations

preservation – retention and protection of different formats of archive and library materials and/or their information content in order to maximize their useful life

¹ British Standards Institution (2017). *BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections*. Available from:

https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail?pid=00000000030343305&creative=491031716872&keyword=bs%204971%202017&matchtype=p&network=g&device=c&gclid=CjwKCAjw47eFBhA9EiwAy8kzNDdnicj2_iMVwwlELcSyN7biM_7VgVPgYyvWGxAcwS8c94dt0EjYRBoCsYUQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds [accessed 16 June 2021]

² British Standards Institution (2009). *PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management*.

Available from: <https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=00000000030175180> [accessed 16 June 2021]

³ British Library Conservation (2021). *Preservation guides*. Available from:

<https://www.bl.uk/conservation/guides> [accessed 16 June 2021]

⁴ Collections Trust (2021). *Collection care and conservation*. Available from:

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/accreditation/managing-collections/collections-care-and-conservation-managing-collections/> [accessed 16 June 2021]

⁵ Harwell Restoration (2021). *Priority User Service*. Available from:

<https://www.harwellrestoration.co.uk/priority-user-service/priority-user-benefits> [accessed 16 June 2021]

⁶ Terms and definition from: British Standards Institution (2017). *BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections*. Available from:

https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail?pid=00000000030343305&creative=491031716872&keyword=bs%204971%202017&matchtype=p&network=g&device=c&gclid=CjwKCAjw47eFBhA9EiwAy8kzNDdnicj2_iMVwwlELcSyN7biM_7VgVPgYyvWGxAcwS8c94dt0EjYRBoCsYUQAvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds [accessed 18 June 2021]

preventive conservation - indirect measures and/or actions aimed at avoiding and minimizing future deterioration, damage and/or loss

remedial conservation – actions applied to an object to prevent or arrest damaging processes. Also known as interventive conservation.

Roles and responsibilities

The Special Collections Librarian takes responsibility for co-ordinating all conservation activities in A&SC. It is imperative to keep up-to-date with developments in the sector in order to maintain the highest level of awareness in conservation practice, materials and procedures.

Library staff and volunteers working in A&SC receive comprehensive training in handling archives and special collections. Collections care is an integral part of all library activities therefore every member of the library staff, key academic staff, temporary placements, interns and volunteers all receive the same training, delivered by the Special Collections Librarian. This encourages an atmosphere of due diligence and care amongst all users of special collections and archives.

Philosophy of preventive conservation

A *Preservation Assessment Survey*, undertaken in 2015-16, combined information on access, significance, use, condition and preservation measures already in place, to determine conservation needs and priorities. The report advised much of the collection would be adequately cared for if given appropriate secondary protection and minimal intervention was suitable to retain the collections history and original design. Based on this recommendation and the lack of in-house conservation facilities and expertise, a philosophy of preventive conservation was adopted by A&SC. Conservation work will be outsourced and carried out by an accredited conservator, funded by donation or income generation.

Managing risks to the collections

Preventative measures have been put in place to reduce the risks to the collections, and are itemised in the A&SC Salvage Plan.

Buildings and storage

A&SC is located in The Sheppard-Worlock Library at the Hope Park campus. An environmentally controlled collection space, referred to as the vault, was purposefully built in 2012 to ensure all archives, manuscripts and rare books are housed in conditions which meet minimum standards appropriate to the nature of the material concerned. Other areas include an open access room, adjacent to the Reading Room, which has the capacity to be reconfigured to an environmentally controlled space. Both spaces have rolling rack shelving to maximise space, and many items are individually boxed. The Markland first floor is

another storage space with static shelving housing 20th–21st century mixed material. This space is also used as a study space so is maintained at a comfortable temperature. All storage areas conform, as far as possible, to guidelines stipulated in BS 4971:2017.

All buildings are maintained by the Estates Department and systems are in place for reporting issues to Estates and/or Security, as appropriate, for the remediation of any environmental problems.

Environmental control and monitoring

A system of temperature control, maintained by the University's Estates Department, is operational in all store areas. The vault is controlled by a separate system, with a control panel in the Reading Room, linked directly to systems which generate alerts in the case of malfunction. There is a stand-alone de-humidifier positioned in the vault to reduce peaks in humidity levels during warm and wet weather conditions. Temperature and relative humidity readings are monitored and recorded regularly by the Special Collections Librarian using two separate high-specification hygro-thermometers in the vault.

Security

Reading Room regulations and other safeguarding procedures are designed to minimise risks to the collections, such as theft and vandalism, and must be adhered to. Swipe card access to A&SC is in place, and is further protected by a separate alarm system from the main Library. Security cameras are in operation in all public areas and the vault protected by controlled keys.

Restricted personnel have authorised swipe-entry to A&SC and external contractors who require access for maintenance and cleaning, are supervised. Further security measures are covered by the Security team, details of which are not appropriate in a public document but are available as an internal document for relevant personnel only.

Disaster response and business continuity

The A&SC Salvage Plan provides the procedures and basic guidelines to follow in the event of an emergency, enabling staff to act swiftly to minimise damage to the collections. The plan is coupled with a risk management program to reduce the likelihood of an emergency incident. In the case of an incident the Library has a Priority User Service⁷ agreement with Harwell Document Restoration Services which provides 24-hour access for advice and support in emergency disaster recovery situations.

⁷ Harwell (2021). *Harwell's Priority User Service*. Available from: <https://www.harwellrestoration.co.uk/priority-user-service/priority-user-benefits> [accessed 28 June 2021]

Access

Archives and special collections are accessible to staff, students and other registered users of the library. Access will also be provided to visitors in accordance with the information available on our website.⁸

The British Standard code of practice for cultural collections management, PAS 197:2009, gives recommendations for the provision, implementation and maintenance of a management framework to encourage best practice for all cultural collections. These collections are used to educate, to inform and to entertain and provide a rich resource for research and innovation. A&SC uses this standard to strike a balance between the preservation of collections and the provision of access to them, so that they can continue to be accessible for future generations.

For some material the financial value, the fragile or sensitive nature of the material, or the history or special attributes of a specific collection require such items to be used in the controlled conditions of the Reading Room supervised by a member of staff. In support of this policy the *A&SC Access Policy* outlines the standards and processes involved in making the collections discoverable and accessible, and provides information on the nature of the different users and guidance to the services offered to them.

Use and handling

The main cause of damage to library special collections and archives is sustained through poor handling. A culture of good handling will ensure continued access to collections and help preserve them for future generations. All users have a responsibility for the care of the collections and are therefore required to follow the Reading Room Regulations and Handling Guidelines.⁹

All new users receive an induction which explains these regulations and the Special Collections Librarian demonstrates how to use the book supports and snake weights provided to help handle items carefully. Library staff are empowered to enforce the regulations and are encouraged to do so in a supportive way by explaining the unique qualities of individual items.

There are a few items that are very fragile and over-handling could damage them. An annual programme of preservation boxing using archival quality materials is in place for items identified as high risk, due to their physical condition or how often they are handled.

⁸ Library (2019). *Visiting the library*. Available from: <https://www.hope.ac.uk/library/visitingthelibrary/> [accessed 10 June 2021]

⁹ Special Collections: Access the Collections (2021). *Handling Collections*. Available from: <https://www.hope.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/accessthecollections/> [accessed 26 June 2021]

Surrogacy

Surrogacy is the reproduction of fragile originals in a new format, usually created digitally in-house, although they may be printed for ease of handling in the Reading Room. A preservation surrogate can help prolong the life of an original in poor condition or subject to heavy use by protecting it from over handling and repeated copying. Users will be encouraged to consult surrogate copies if they are available, however, it is acknowledged that the historic significance of the original format may be as important as the content it provides. In these circumstances access to the originals may be permitted at the discretion of the Special Collections Librarian.

Surrogates will be used where possible whenever an item is considered unsuitable for display, teaching use or research. Priorities for digitisation of collections are based on access requirements and physical condition. All materials required for any form of surrogacy will be assessed for their suitability by the Special Collections Librarian.

Photography and Reprographics

Users are permitted to take their own digital photographs, free of charge, using digital cameras, smart phones or other hand-held devices (without the use of flash) for private, non-commercial, research purposes only, and subject to staff approval. Permission will be refused if there is a risk to the material, or if it breaches legal or contractual restrictions. Users will be required to complete a *Use of Digital Photography Form*. A&SC also offers a copying service for readers and remote users, by digital scanning or digital photography, however, where the risk of damage to the original is too great, requests for copying will be refused.

The University's Reprographics Services can provide professional reproductions of images for academic publication or commercial venture subject to permissions obtained from rights holders, compliance with UK Copyright Law and any contractual restrictions. A charge for these services may be applied. Each request will be dealt with on an individual basis by the Special Collections Librarian.

Digitisation

A&SC is committed to investigating future development ideas in digitising the collections for collection care and conservation measures, and to disseminate and promote the information they contain more widely to users at LHU and beyond.

In the application of future digitisation projects, the selection of content is governed by the following criteria:

- To promote the use of special collections and archives to a wider audience
- The significance and value of the material

- The physical condition of the material
- The amount and nature of usage
- The exhibition of A&SC materials

The Library is aware of the potential risk of damage to special collections and archives and this will be considered in the event of a decision to establish a strategy for digitisation. A conservation survey is an intrinsic part of any digitisation project and appropriate conservation work needs to be costed into all projects. Digitisation can often increase demand for access to the original so every attempt must be made to protect its integrity and conservation may take place to support this. A&SC is committed to widening access to its collections via digitised content, as far as resources permit, and plans to actively seek opportunities to develop this area of activity.

Exhibitions and loans

A&SC has a dedicated space outside the Reading Room entrance with two moveable, standalone, flat-bed display cases of museum standard specifications, which provide a safe and secure environment suitable for rare and fragile materials. There are also two upright display cases for books, archives, objects, or surrogates that do not have conservation concerns. Best practice display methods are followed, as set out in the Preservation Advisory Centre's *Guidance for Exhibiting Archive and Library Materials*¹⁰, as far as possible. The duration of an exhibition, its security, the frequency with which individual items are displayed and the format and type of the material to be exhibited is always considered.

A&SC material is also exhibited externally, both locally and nationally. The loan of original material must be approved by the Special Collections Librarian, the Director of Library and Learning Spaces, and permission sought from the collection donor(s), as referenced in the *Collection Loan Agreement*.

A&SC also participates in projects and events organised by externally funded bodies with the aim of sharing our collections and innovative research with a wider audience. In the event of a collaboration with other partners on an external exhibition, original material would only be loaned if environmental conditions met our requirements and issues concerning security, insurance and other legal requirements were satisfied. The borrowing institution would be required to sign a standard agreement and it may be appropriate for A&SC staff to accompany materials in transit to the borrowing institution for insurance purposes.

¹⁰ Preservation Advisory Centre's *Guidance for exhibiting archive and library material* (2000). Available from: <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/guidance-for-exhibiting-archive-and-library-materials/> [accessed 15 June 2021]

Transportation

Appropriate handling and security measures will be in place for the movement of any materials outside of their normal collection space and specific and more controlled procedures will be followed. The risks of transport will be regularly assessed and appropriate measures, including security, implemented and regularly reviewed to reduce risk wherever possible.

Donations and new acquisitions

There is no provision for a quarantined area for new donations or acquisitions coming into A&SC, however, new material is not introduced to the closed access vault until a visual inspection has been made by the Special Collections Librarian. Wherever possible an inspection is made before an agreement has been formally accepted prior to transportation. If there is evidence of pest infestation or an outbreak of mould that could pose a threat to existing collections, the material will not be accepted. A survey will be undertaken as soon as possible after a new collection is received to record full details, in the *Collection Framework*, of the condition of the material on deposit.

Housekeeping

Ongoing environmental monitoring of the closed access vault will be undertaken to ensure the efficacy of existing controls and to inform preservation planning to include general housekeeping routines and a preservation cleaning programme. Good housekeeping is essential in reducing the risks from pests and the build-up of dust. All storage areas are cleaned on a rota system by the University Cleaning Services and monitored by the Special Collections Librarian.

Implementation of this policy

This policy sets out the fundamental principles for collections care in Liverpool Hope University's A&SC, and is approved by the Library Steering Group.

Future projects, drawn up by the Director of Library and Learning Spaces and the Special Collection Librarian, concerning collection care and issues of conservation will be embedded in the operational plans of all Library activities in the *Library Development Plan* and monitored annually.

Version & Policy review

This is the second version of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed by The Director of Library and Learning Spaces and the Special Collection Librarian in 2025-26 and approved by the Library Steering Committee.