

Oxford Brookes University Library – Special Collections Preservation Policy

1 Introduction

The Special Collections' mission statement is to curate unique collections for teaching and research. This preservation policy sets out what the Special Collections does to achieve its duty of preservation - in order to maintain and promote access - both currently and in the future.

The Library also recognises the importance of preserving the corporate memory of the University (and its predecessors) through the permanent retention of certain records produced by the institution, as recommended by the University's Records Management Policy.

1.2 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, Oxford Brookes University Library has adopted the following definitions:

1.2.1 "archive material"

Material within the special collections that is not in book, journal or pamphlet format, and that is catalogued on CALM as opposed to the library catalogue, e.g. documents, photographs, ephemera, audiovisual material, digital material.

1.2.2 "conservation"

"Specific practices taken to slow deterioration and prolong the life of an object by directly intervening in its physical or chemical make-up. Examples would be repairing damaged bindings or deacidifying paper."

1.2.3 "preservation"

"A broader term than conservation. It includes all managerial and financial considerations including storage and accommodation provision, staffing levels, policies, techniques, and methods involved in preserving library and archive materials and the information contained therein."

1.2.4 "zone 1"

Storage and user areas within the main Library building. These areas have a general level of security. All stock bears electronic triggers to deter theft. The zone is not temperature or humidity controlled and has no fire suppressant system but is protected by the University's fire and smoke detection system. The zone is cleaned as part of the Library's cleaning programme.

1.2.5 "zone 2"

Special Collections Reading Room, storage and user area. This area has a greater level of security than one 1. Users are required to present an appropriate form of identification. The room is supervised by staff during use and users can browse the special collections held in this zone freely. The zone is temperature and humidity controlled (21°C and 45% RH), with the temperature higher than zone 3 for user comfort. The zone is protected by an Inergen fire suppression system and the University's fire and smoke detection system. The zone is cleaned on a regular basis.

1.2.6 "zone 3"

Special Collections Archive Room, storage area. This area has greater levels of security than zones 1 and 2. Access to zone 3 is limited to staff with appropriate card clearance. Only staff can retrieve

special collections from zone 3 at a user's request. Material from zone 3 can only be viewed by the user in zone 2. The zone is temperature and humidity controlled (18°C and 45% RH). The zone is protected by an Inergen fire suppression system and the University's fire and smoke detection system.

2 Strategic objectives for the preservation of the collections

Oxford Brookes University Library will ensure that the management of its collections, their security, safe housing, documentation and care are sufficient to meet the requirements of the collections and their users according to agreed priorities and responsibilities.

2.1 Accommodation, security and environment

The Library stores the majority of its special collections in conditions which meet PD5454:2012, the current professionally approved standard at the time the building opened. All storage areas are safe and secure so as to minimise the risk of theft or malicious damage to collections. The Library currently has three storage areas, zones 1-3. Book, journal and pamphlet collections will be stored in zone 1 when there is a practical need (e.g. greater flexibility required for browsing, under agreement with the depositor). The majority of book, journal, and pamphlet collections will be stored in zone 2, under controlled conditions, for ease of browsing. The most valuable and rare book, journal and pamphlet collections, and all archival material will be stored in zone 3 for maximum security.

Relative humidity and temperature levels in zones 2 and 3 are recorded by the building management system and independent monitors within the zones. General maintenance of the building is undertaken by the University's Directorate of Estates and Facilities Management.

Where practicable, appropriate archival packaging is used to store archival material and fragile published material.

2.2 Handling

The Library recognises that preventative measures to preserve its collections as a whole are the most effective means of conservation. Book support pillows and weighted book snakes are available in zone 2 to help minimise damage to materials. Documents deemed to be at serious risk of damage through use will be withdrawn from public use but the Library will endeavour to provide a surrogate.

2.3 Copying

Photocopying/scanning of special collections stored in zone 1 may be undertaken by users themselves, subject to current copyright law or individual item exclusions. A mediated scanning and photography service is available for material held in zones 2 and 3. Users are permitted to use personal cameras (without a flash) to photograph special collections held in zones 2 and 3.

Photocopying guidelines are available for staff in zone 2. Fragile or damaged items, tightly bound volumes, and oversize items that would have to be manipulated excessively to obtain a complete image will not be scanned but may be photographed at the discretion of appropriate Library staff.

Where appropriate, material will be selected for substitution, e.g. digitisation, to limit unnecessary handling of originals and to facilitate access. Readers are encouraged to use surrogates where these are available.

2.4 Selection for conservation

Direct intervention in the physical or chemical make-up of an object is not normally carried out unless the item is unusable in its present condition or in danger of imminent decay or destruction. Minor

conservation work (e.g. removal of staples, cleaning of dry mould, basic book repair) will be undertaken by appropriately trained Library staff. External conservation services may be approached in order to seek advice on best practice, and to undertake more complex or extensive conservation work.

Criteria for selecting items for conservation include:

- the physical condition and format of the material;
- the significance/value/rarity of the material;
- the amount and type of usage;

2.5 Digital preservation

Please see the Special Collections Digital Preservation Policy.

2.6 Pest management

Appropriate measures are taken to minimise the risk of infestation. Insect traps have been placed in zones 2 and 3 and are checked regularly for signs of infestation. All new accessions are assessed for physical condition and cleaned if necessary. If infestation is detected, appropriate pest control measures will be taken to eradicate the problem.

2.7 Needs assessment

A preservation survey will be carried out periodically (minimum every five years), using the MLA's *Benchmarks in Collection Care*, to assess the existing provisions for preservation and identify potential areas of improvement.

2.8 Risk management

Replacement and/or restoration values for the Special Collections will be submitted annually as part of the University's insurance renewal declaration. The insurance status of collections will be reviewed regularly (minimum every five years).

If material from any of the special collections is loaned out for external exhibitions, an additional risk assessment will be undertaken and adequate insurance cover arranged. The Library will also seek assurance that all items will be packaged, dispatched and displayed in accordance with appropriate preservation guidelines. Loans of material must be approved by the Special Collections Group in accordance with the Loans Policy.

2.9 Disaster preparedness

The Learning Resources Incident Response Plan covers Special Collections and the Library. The Special Collections Reading Room and Archive Room are identified as priority areas for recovery.

Disaster boxes containing equipment and materials for use in the event of a disaster are available in the University's Library buildings, including one in the Special Collections Archive Room.

The Library has an ongoing subscription to the Harwell Document Restoration Services (HDRS) Priority User Service which will provide emergency resources in the event of a disaster.

2.10 Budgeting

No separate Library revenue budget heading is identified for special collections preservation. Ongoing revenue needs are supported from appropriate Library budget headings e.g. Equipment or

Stationery. Budgetary needs for specific projects would need to be identified in advance and a case and application made to appropriate internal or external funding bodies.

3. Bibliography

The following documents have been used in the compiling of this policy and provide points of reference for standards, guidelines and benchmarks for best practice.

BS5454:2000, *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents* (2000).

IFLA, *Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material*.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Benchmarks in Collection Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries: a self-assessment checklist* (2002).

National Preservation Office, *A national preservation strategy for library and archive collections in the United Kingdom and Ireland: principles and prospects* (2001).

National Preservation Office, *Good handling principles and practice for library and archive materials* (2000).

National Preservation Office, *Preservation Policies: Glossary*.

April 2007

Last modified October 2021

Next review due October 2024