

## Collections Care and Conservation Policy

### 1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 This policy has been written to define the responsibility of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (hereafter 'RCPE'), with regard to the preservation, conservation and safe use of its collections.

1.2 Risks to collections include those via:

- Pests (rodents and insects)
- Theft and vandalism
- Fire and flood
- Human forces (handling and movement)
- Incorrect environment (relative humidity, temperature, light and pollutants)

1.3 This policy has been developed as a part of fulfilling the RCPE's duties in accordance with our **Mission Statement**.

1.4 The principles of this policy are as follows:

- To provide guidelines for conservation and preservation of library, museum and archive material held by the RCPE which take a pragmatic risk-based approach - striking a balance between long-term preservation of collections and provision of access to these collections
- To uphold and raise over time the standards of care of these collections by establishing principles of care
- To outline preventative conservation strategies, and interventive treatments where necessary, in order to ensure continued access to the collections
- To support the allocation of funds from the budget to the preservation and conservation programme in a cost effective manner

### 2. Definitions

Collections care covers the range of activities which safeguard collections including organisational policies and procedures, building security and maintenance, exhibitions and loans and emergency planning.

Preventive conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of an item. It does this not via direct action on an item, but rather by addressing factors such as storage, item use and staff training.

Interventive, or remedial, conservation covers the treatment applied directly to an item such as re-binding, repairing tears etc. This action is only carried out where necessary, i.e. where inaction will result in further loss or damage to the item, as this form of conservation will often alter the appearance of an item and can impact on its historic integrity and value.

### 3. Collections Care Principles

The RCPE takes a strategic, risk management approach to collections care:

- The RCPE strives to provide an atmosphere of appropriate temperature, relative humidity and light levels that achieves an appropriate balance between the long-term preservation of materials and accessibility to staff and readers
- The RCPE strives to keep the environment in which the collections are held as pest and pollution free as is feasible
- Collections care is the responsibility of all library, museum and archive staff who should follow the agreed policies, procedures and guidelines for collection care and management. The RCPE understands the importance and responsibility for providing appropriate training and upholding care standards at a senior level. All staff within the team are experienced and qualified information management professionals. Volunteers will be properly trained and/or supervised when working on collections
- Where skills are not available in house to conserve or preserve a particular item, resources will be provided for external expertise
- Collections care needs, risks and activities will be communicated regularly and reported within the RCPE
- Library, museum and archive staff will work closely with RCPE colleagues, particularly the RCPE's Building Officer, on maintaining standards of building storage and security
- A **Collections Care and Conservation Plan** will be included in the **Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan**. Collection items required for display, loan or study will be prioritised for treatment

### 4. Ethical Framework & Guidance

The library, museum and archive will follow accepted standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including, but not restricted to:

Legislation

- Copyright Act, 1988 (including amendments)
- COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003
- Data Protection Act, 2018

Ethical Codes

- International Council on Archives, Code of Ethics, 1996
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Ethical Principles for Library and Information Professionals, 2004
- International Council of Museums, Code of Ethics for Museums, 2006
- Museums Association, Code of Ethics for Museums, 2015
- Archives and Records Association, Code of Ethics, 2020

#### Sector Standards

- British Standards Institute, BS4971: 2002
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (AACR2), 2005
- ISAD(g) – General International Standard Archival Description, 2007
- British Standards Institute, PAS 197: 2009
- Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.0, 2011
- Machine-readable cataloguing 21 (MARC21) standard, 2017
- NLM (National Library of Medicine) Classification, 2017
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), 2018
- SPECTRUM 5.1 – The Museum Collections Management Standard, 2022
- Library of Congress Classification
- MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)

#### 5. Preventative Measures

These measures are based on an understanding of how individual objects within the collections react to their environment and deteriorate. The RCPE aims to prioritise a preventative approach to collections care, using interventive methods as support where necessary.

- Sufficient space in which to store the collections without damage will be provided
- Access to items will be supervised by sufficiently trained members of staff
- Cleaning of display and storage areas will be undertaken or overseen by staff with appropriate training
- Where access to the stores is needed for maintenance purposes, appropriate professionals will be consulted and will supervise access
- Objects will be displayed and stored in an environment that minimises their deterioration
- Pest risks will be monitored and pest control methods deployed. Stores, display areas and galleries will also be monitored for temperature and relative humidity as detailed in the **Conservation and Preservation Procedure**
- Appropriate storage materials, such as acid-free boxes, will be provided
- The RCPE's **Collections Disaster Response and Recovery Plan** will be maintained, and RCPE staff will be made aware of the contents of this in order to control and limit potential damage in the event of a disaster

## 6. Interventive Conservation

- Designated funds for collection conservation will be included within the RCPE's annual budget allocation
- Appropriate safe facilities will be provided for hazardous material work
- External funding will be sought for high priority treatment that is beyond existing resources
- Only suitably qualified, accredited and experienced conservators will be engaged to treat the collections

## 7. Use and Movement

Use will be risk assessed and standard operating procedures followed for common functions.

- The RCPE recognises the potential for damage or deterioration of material in the event of exhibition and loan, and will take steps to ensure the item's security in line with the **Loans Policy**
- Users will be provided with relevant equipment, for example gloves and bookrests, to decrease the risk of deterioration during use
- Material will be withdrawn from use if deemed at serious risk. In the event of this, the generation of surrogate copies, either physical or digital, will be considered wherever possible to ensure continued access
- Material will be assessed before movement, and appropriate measures taken to protect the material and handlers
- Destructive techniques of study will only be undertaken when no suitable alternatives exist

## 8. Insurance

8.1 The RCPE's property held in the collection stores and gallery are insured for physical loss or damage up to £1,030,000. This does not cover items which are outside the stores or gallery at the time of the loss or damage.

8.2 When an item is loaned to another organisation, that organisation is expected to cover valuation and insurance costs for that item (see the **Loans Policy and Procedure**).

8.3 The RCPE does not offer valuations to members of the public or Fellows and Members for ethical reasons.

### Documentation

This policy should be viewed in conjunction with:

Collections Development Policy



Collections Information Policy

Learning and Access Policy

Conservation and Preservation Procedure

Digital Preservation Policy

Digital Preservation Procedure

Loans Policy

Loans In Procedure

Collections Disaster Response and Recovery Plan

Library, Museum and Archive Forward Plan

**Policy review**

This policy will be reviewed every four years.

Date approved by Council: 16 June 2023

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