



The University of
Nottingham

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**UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
MANUSCRIPTS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**Preservation and Conservation Policy
2022**

1. Purpose and scope of policy

The manuscripts and special collections held by the University of Nottingham are unique and precious resources. The printed collections include the oldest and rarest books within the University, and the manuscript and archive collections include some of national and international significance; the Portland (London), Portland of Welbeck, Newcastle of Clumber, and DH Lawrence collections have been designated as Outstanding Collections by the former Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

These collections are valuable historical resources, which will be retained in perpetuity. Their care and preservation for the use of present and future generations is the principal responsibility of Manuscripts and Special Collections.

This preservation policy is intended as a public statement of the principles and procedures which underpin all aspects of collection care from acquisition to reader access. It aims to explain to users the standards that we follow and the procedures which are necessary to protect the materials in our care, to ensure their continued availability and authenticity.

The policy covers the traditional physical formats currently held by Manuscripts and Special Collections: paper, parchment, photographs and slides, maps, bound volumes, microfilms. Digital formats are covered by the Digital Preservation and Access Policy.

2. Definitions used in this document

Use of the terms "preservation" and "conservation" can be confusing; the following definitions are used in this policy.

Conservation is the use of active physical measures to prevent the further deterioration of material (by using chemicals and professional repair techniques). All measures are carried out to at least the minimum required standard (see Section 4. Standards) and do not alter the integrity of an archive.

Preservation is the use of passive or non-interventionist measures for the protection of material. This is achieved by providing appropriate environmental conditions, storage facilities, employing safe methods of handling and suitable packaging materials.

3. Operational Context

Mission

We support the University of Nottingham by acquiring, preserving and developing archives, manuscripts and rare books to enrich and inspire the student experience, teaching, learning and research excellence, and to widen access through public engagement.

Strategic Priorities

2. To preserve collections according to national standards

(Manuscripts and Special Collection Forward Plan 2020-2025)

Manuscripts and Special Collections is part of the University of Nottingham Libraries Department at the University of Nottingham. Its collections contribute to the University's international reputation and support its research, teaching and learning programmes. Curators work closely with library colleagues and members of academic staff in developing the collections and encouraging their use.

Within the wider national context of archives and library provision, Manuscripts and Special Collections seeks advice from professional organisations such as The National Archives (TNA) and

the British Library. We aim to be compliant with the guidelines, standards and procedures laid down by these bodies.

4. Standards

The principal standards, guidelines and tools which are employed include:

British Standards Institute, *Conservation and care of archive and library collections* (BS 4971:2017)

British Standards Institute, *Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for locations, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections* (BS EN 16893:2018)

The National Archives, *Archive Service Accreditation Standard* (2018)

National Conservation Service, *Benchmarks 3.0 Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries and Museums* (2021) National Preservation Office, *Basic preservation guidelines for library and archive collections* (2006)

5. Preservation and Conservation principles

It is only through preservation that continued availability and access to items in the collections can be maintained. Preservation is therefore an integral part of all our functions, and the following principles underlie strategic planning:

- Where possible, materials are preserved in their original format, respecting the physical integrity and authenticity of the original artefact.
- Active conservation is employed when appropriate to prevent further deterioration or damage to an item, or to enable access to be given.
 - All preservation and conservation treatment will be reversible and employ materials which are both distinguishable from, and yet compatible with, the original and aesthetically acceptable.
 - All materials used for the conservation of archives must be chemically inert and of approved archival quality. They should be purchased from approved suppliers and (if appropriate) data sheets obtained. If there is uncertainty about a material, it should be tested before being used.
 - All preservation and conservation treatment will be fully documented both as to the materials used and the processes employed. The resulting records will be kept indefinitely. If appropriate a photographic record will be kept of the archive before and after treatment
- Appropriate conservation measures will take into account the needs, value, significance, and usage of the item in question, and be within the constraints of budgets, staffing and other resources.
- Surrogates will be created where appropriate to protect the original and to allow wider access to the content. Surrogates will not replace the original, which will still need preservation.

6. Collection care

All staff are made aware of the paramount importance of preservation, and are trained in safe handling of documents, books and other archival materials. All activities, from acquisition to

access, are informed by the need to ensure that collections are in a fit state to be handled and that the risk of their deterioration over time is minimised.

Preservation work is supported by professional conservation expertise. Since 1990, significant resource has been invested in preservation programmes, involving the steady upgrading of collections originally processed in the mid-20th century, and an extensive reboxing and packaging exercise. The *Preservation Assessment Survey*, which was undertaken in 2015, has helped to establish future priorities.

The Conservation Workshop's programme of active conservation is limited by capacity. It is determined by agreed priorities and projects, informed by the known needs and usage of the collections. Programmes of conservation work on specific collections and project plans are contained in internal operational and training documents.

When deemed appropriate, certain elements of both preservation and conservation are outsourced to suppliers who meet the relevant standards.

7. Security

With the exception of the East Midlands Collection, all collections held by the department are housed in closed access storage. This store is accessed only by staff of Manuscripts and Special Collections. Where others exceptionally need access (for cleaning, maintenance etc), these personnel are accompanied.

All manuscripts and special collections materials are consulted under supervision in the Reading Room. Before using materials, all readers are required to register with Manuscripts and Special Collections and provide proof of identity.

8. Storage and accommodation

Environmental conditions in the storage area are controlled and monitored in compliance with BS 4971:2017 and BS EN 16893:2018. Shelving is of suitable dimensions and strength for the different formats of material. All new packaging and enclosures conform to archival standards.

Regular cleaning is undertaken, supervised by Manuscripts and Special Collections staff, and regular checks made for possible infestation by harmful insects or rodents. New material taken into collections can be isolated in a separate room for physical assessment before being introduced to the main store.

9. Access and Handling

Readers are required to observe the procedures laid down in the Reading Room Regulations, and are given guidance and help in consulting books and archive materials safely. The Reading Room Regulations are available online.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/readingroom/regulations.aspx>

Supports such as cushions, book wedges, foam pads and other handling equipment are provided in the Reading Room and other areas for use by readers and staff.

Occasionally an item is deemed to be so physically fragile that production in the Reading Room would cause damage to it. In these circumstances access will be refused. Readers will then be advised whether early treatment is possible, to enable access to the original, or if a surrogate can be created.

10.Surrogacy

Surrogate copies of items are made where appropriate, to limit handling of the originals. This will normally be for reasons of heavy demand, exceptional fragility, potential future degradation or deterioration, or in response to particular teaching or research needs. Surrogates may be created in a range of formats -photographic, photocopies, digital, or microfilm - depending on what is most appropriate in the circumstances. Generally, where surrogates exist they must be used by readers and staff in the first instance.

11.Reprographics

The department receives many requests for copies of items in its collections. The preservation of the document is the first consideration, and this determines whether a copy can be made and what type of copy is offered, as different equipment presents different handling risks. Copying is also subject to the legal restrictions imposed by copyright and ownership. Therefore all copying has to be approved by staff, and is ultimately at the discretion of the Keeper. Details of our reprographics service are available online.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/reprographics/introduction.aspx>

12.Exhibitions and loans

Manuscripts and Special Collections runs a regular programme of exhibitions in the Weston Gallery, Lakeside Arts, on the University Park campus.

Exhibitions provide a valuable form of access, but present risk for the physical preservation of books and documents, including light damage and physical strain on binding structures. Therefore the duration of an exhibition, its security, the frequency with which individual archives are displayed, and the format and type of material to be exhibited are always considered. In cases where there is felt to be any risk to an item a surrogate is used in place of the original.

Exhibitions are mounted in accordance with the recommendations of BS 4971:2017 and BS EN 16893:2018. Environmental conditions in the gallery are continually monitored. The gallery is supervised, alarmed and equipped with CCTV.

Loan of original materials to external institutions for the purposes of exhibition will only be granted if the institution can meet satisfactory standards of display fixtures, environment and security.

13.Emergency Planning

Manuscripts and Special Collections has an Emergency Plan for service recovery, which is revised annually and subscribes to Harwell Restoration as a Priority User.

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			Resources Senior Management Team
3.0	Nicola Wood	09-09-2022	Minor updates to Section 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13 to reflect changes to names, titles and legislation.

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