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## 1. Organisational context and purpose

Durham University (DU) has a series of policies relating to collection management within libraries, museums and archives and special collections, underpinning its general strategy. These documents are all available at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/about/>.

Culture Durham, established in January 2016 brings together Durham University's archives, museums, special collections and cultural engagement services. Collections-centred and audience focussed, its ambition is to use these cultural assets and team expertise in bringing together researchers, communities and organisations in order to create and disseminate knowledge in new and relevant ways and to forge new routes to learning. It is the intention that all policies relating to the museums, archive and special collections will be reviewed and combined into a service-wide policy under the new integrated Culture Durham Structure.

The preservation policy below relates to archives and special collections and covers every area of these collections including Local Studies. It is informed by the acquisition and retention policies, and covers material collected by Durham University, by donation, deposit, or purchase; and also material collected by Durham University on behalf of Durham Cathedral.

Culture Durham aims to:

- store its archives and special collections in the best available conditions for both reader access and appropriate preservation. External standards such as PD 5454:2012, National Archives standards, *Benchmarks in Collection Care* are followed where appropriate.
- maintain the historic buildings in its care.
- provide appropriate security, fire precautions and cleanliness in its buildings.
- carry out both preventive conservation and remedial conservation by the most appropriate means and maintain a conservation department with professionally-trained staff.
- have a disaster and business recovery plan.
- provide appropriate access to its collections in controlled conditions.
- become a centre of excellence in preservation and conservation and to take a lead role in these areas in the North East region.

### 1.1. Definitions

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

**Conservation** is the interventive treatment of an object to inhibit the progress of deterioration.

## 2. Preservation Principles

Durham University holds collections of archives, manuscripts and printed books dating from the late medieval period to the present day in two separate locations: Palace Green Library

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and 5 The College. These are of historic and research interest and have special preservation needs. The general collecting policy is available at via the link at:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/library/about/policies/> That for the Local Studies collection is at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/resources/heritage/local/> Included in these collections are materials in many formats such as paper and parchment manuscripts, printed books, photographs, maps, prints, moving images, museum artefacts etc. The policy covers all of these. The long-term preservation of all these items is of paramount concern to the staff who care for these collections. To achieve this they:

- preserve the collections in the care of Durham University for current and future access.
- ensure that collections are stored in the optimum environmental conditions within the limitations imposed by historic buildings.
- pursue preservation and conservation strategies that serve the long-term purpose of Durham University to support educational opportunities and the pursuit of research and scholarship for the academic and wider community.

To achieve these objectives conservation staff will:

- monitor the environmental conditions of the collections with the aim of maintaining a status quo as near to PD 5454:2012 as current resources allow.
- ensure that collections are packaged according to their individual requirements which will provide for their long term preservation.
- ensure that the highest standards of conservation are maintained and codes of practice adhered to (e.g. BS 4971:2002, standards of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organisation).
- maintain preservation awareness amongst all staff and stakeholders in the collections.

### 3. Preservation management for archives and special collections

#### 3.1. Lines of responsibility



#### 3.2. Monitoring

- All health and safety issues and buildings matters are monitored by the Health and Safety committee.
- All staff are asked to be aware of their environment at all times and to report problems to their line manager who then reports to the Deputy Librarian.
- Any environmental problems affecting collections are reported to the Head of Conservation.
- The monitoring of environmental conditions and storage areas is carried out regularly by Conservation Unit staff who report to the Head of Conservation. Important issues are raised immediately with the Head of Archives and Special Collections.

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- The Head of Archives and Special Collections reports on preservation matters within archives and special collections in regular meetings with the Director of Culture and the Senior Culture Management Team.
- A Conservation Planning Group meets regularly and a report on the work of the Conservation Unit is presented as part of the Library and Culture Annual Report.

### 3.3. Funding

- Funding for building repairs is managed by University Estates & Buildings Directorate; funding for equipment and preservation materials including emergency response supplies are part of the general Durham University library equipment budget.
- Durham University supports the maintenance of a Conservation Unit with a minimum of three full time permanent staff and, where possible, secures external funding for other staff.
- A conservation budget is administered by the Head of Conservation which covers the purchase of conservation materials. A budget is also provided for archival packaging.
- The main University Library budget provides funding for minor binding and book repairs, equipment and building repairs.
- Durham University actively pursues opportunities to gain external funding to support its preservation policy.

### 3.4. Staff training

The Head of Conservation and the other senior conservator will provide

- In-house training to junior conservators
- Document and book handling and other preservation training for Culture Durham staff
- disaster preparedness training

Conservation staff will attend external conferences and training sessions in order to maintain a high level of up to date technical knowledge.

## 4. Collections Care

### 4.1. Storage and environmental conditions

- Collections are stored in the most appropriate conditions possible given the limits of current buildings and funding.
- Appropriate security and supervision is in place to safeguard collections.
- A Disaster preparedness plan is in place.
- Risk assessments of the buildings are carried out on a regular basis.
- An incident book is maintained by staff.
- Durham University aims to achieve and maintain the standards of PD 5454:2012, *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*, in its storage and maintenance of environmental conditions. It has reached high enough standards in these areas to be approved as a repository for public records by The National Archives.
- Durham University has reached at least Good practice in *Benchmarks in collection care (MLA)* for its archives and special collections and aims to reach best practice in as many areas as practicable. A sufficient standard in collection care has been achieved to contribute to the Designation of two collections.

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- A preservation needs assessment is being carried out on the major early printed collections using the National Preservation Office's *Preservation assessment survey*.
- The temperature, relative humidity, lux and ultraviolet levels of the storage areas are monitored continually using radio loggers and thermohygrographs.
- The conditions in the storage areas are discussed regularly by the Director of Culture, the Head of Archives and Special Collections and the Head of Conservation and the data is used to inform decisions on building repairs and refurbishment.
- Fire detection systems are monitored and upgraded wherever possible.

#### 4.2. Security

- All material other than modern books is stored in closed access areas.
- All of these areas, including the conservation unit, are covered by an intruder alarm system which is regularly upgraded.
- Access to these areas is limited to Culture Durham staff.
- All staff wear ID badges.
- Access to keys is controlled by a secure electronic cupboard, to which only designated staff have access.
- Security procedures are revised annually and staff are part of a call out rota out of hours.
- Regular patrols are carried out by security staff.
- Estates and Buildings staff and external maintenance contractors are accompanied at all times when working in the closed access areas.
- All material is consulted by readers under staff supervision in the Search Room, in Palace Green Library or at 5 The College as appropriate. (For Search Room regulations see (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/about/using.htm/>))

#### 4.3. Housekeeping and building maintenance

- The storage environment is monitored daily and all staff including cleaners are encouraged to report any faults promptly.
- Housekeeping routines are in place and storage areas are cleaned regularly.
- There is an ongoing programme in place of book cleaning and checking for mildew etc.
- There is a programme of integrated pest management in place.
- Books and documents are reshelfed as soon as possible after they are finished with. Shelves are kept tidy and the location of collections clearly indicated by shelf and bay signs within the storage areas, as well as by in-house staff location guides.

#### 4.4. Packaging

Marking and labelling of items is kept to a minimum, while at the same time ensuring that the ownership and location of the item is clearly indicated. The correct conservation packaging for an item is identified and used.

##### ***For early printed books***

- care is taken to avoid obscuring bookplates, inscriptions or any part of the textblock.
- spine labels are not attached to items with historic bindings, instead bookmarks of acid-free paper bearing the location details are inserted between the pages.
- where appropriate, items are placed inside protective containers.
- books with loose boards are tied up with unbleached cotton tying tape.

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***For other formats***

- acid-free boxes, folders and other wrappings are used for packaging.
- items are stored within packaging of an appropriate format and specification size and are not overcrowded within boxes.
- items are stored on appropriate sized shelves.
- all archival collections are stored on powder coated metal racking.
- artefacts are stored on static padded shelves or in padded containers.
- photographs and films are stored in appropriate containers on static shelving.

**4.5. Handling and access**

Guidelines for the care and handling of books and documents conform to PD 5454:2012, PAS 197 and IFLA *Principles for the care and handling of library materials* and are used in regular training sessions for staff.

Book supports and other handling equipment are used in the Search Room and all readers are shown the *Guidance for handling material* on their first visit (<http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/about/using.htm/>).

**5. Conservation**

The physical condition of items is constantly monitored and items in need of conservation treatment are identified and entered on a prioritised list. Active conservation measures are only taken:

- when an item has suffered major damage or deterioration and is in danger of deteriorating further unless treated.
- is in such poor physical condition that readers are unable to consult it.
- when the contents of the documents can only be read or digitised if the item is conserved.

**5.1. Assessment and prioritisation**

The following criteria are used to prioritise items for conservation:

- the physical state and likely deterioration of the item
- its intrinsic value
- any special value it may have for research or teaching
- its rarity
- its likely level of future use

**5.2. Treatment and documentation**

Conservation treatment is undertaken within the Conservation Unit unless it is more appropriate to send the work out to an external workshop. Treatment is done to the highest ethical standards (following BS 4971:2002). Interference with the physical structure and appearance of an item is kept to a minimum and all physical features integral to an item's historic integrity are preserved.

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All items are photographed before the start of treatment and during treatment, if necessary. All details of condition and treatment of the items are recorded in the conservation database base.

## 6. Reprographics

### 6.1. Surrogates

In some instances the creation of a surrogate copy may be deemed appropriate for preservation or dissemination purposes. The creation of a surrogate does not remove the need for the preservation of the original format where this is possible and it is recognised that the creation of surrogates can be expensive in money and staff time. Where appropriate, external funding will be sought for this activity, especially if a large number of items is involved.

If it is possible a surrogate should be created if:

- an item is of exceptional rarity or fragility
- an item or group of items is heavily used by readers and likely to be damaged because of this
- there are a large number of requests for copies of an item or items
- it is appropriate to use a surrogate to promote its use or the use of the collections in general
- an item is to be exhibited in an area that does not conform to PD 5454:2012

Every precaution is taken to avoid damaging or interfering with an item's physical integrity and historical authenticity when the surrogate is made and all creation of surrogates is carried out in accordance with the laws of copyright and intellectual property. Surrogates are in microform or produced digitally. A master copy of the surrogate is kept in a building outside Palace Green Library and a further copy of it created from which subsequent copies are made. Wherever possible readers should use surrogate versions of original material unless they have a valid reason for seeing the original. Metadata on surrogates will be kept in a database or added to the Library catalogue records if appropriate. Preservation of digital surrogates will fall within the general digital preservation provisions of the Library.

### 6.2. Copies

Digital images, photographs and microform copies of materials can be supplied if the original will not suffer. These are subject to charges listed on the Library's web pages. The Head of conservation assesses all material for reproduction and supervises the work of the photographer if required. Photocopies can be made by Culture Durham staff of a limited amount of material subject to its format. All copying is subject to copyright and data protection legislation. (For further information see [http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/about/asc\\_copy.htm/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/about/asc_copy.htm/) )

## 7. Exhibitions

Culture Durham holds regular exhibitions of material from its holdings and from other collections in the exhibition galleries in Palace Green Library. Objects selected for exhibition are first assessed by the Head of Conservation for suitability on grounds of condition, and then condition reports and photography are carried out by the conservation team. Objects are displayed and mounted in environmental conditions suitable for their

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object type in accordance with the recommendations of PD5454:2012 and the National Preservation Office's *Guidance for exhibiting library and archive materials*.

### 7.1. Exhibitions and environmental conditions

- Continuous environmental monitoring is carried out with radiologgers.
- Galleries are air conditioned and all display cases are passively controlled with the use of ProSORB gel.
- Lighting in cases is fibre optic from LED light source and gallery lighting is LED, to eliminate UV.

External institutions requesting the loan of items for exhibition are required to meet the requirements of Durham University and to sign a condition of loan agreement. If the conditions provided by the requesting institution do not meet these requirements, it may be possible to provide a reproduction of an item for display.

### 8. Emergency planning and response

- Culture Durham recognises that advance planning, training and up-to-date plans are crucial for a competent response to any man made or natural disaster that might occur.
- Culture Durham has an emergency plan for archive and special collections, which is regularly updated and provides information to prepare staff for emergencies. There are also stores of disaster equipment in various parts of the two buildings with archives and special collections.
- A subscription is paid annually to Harwell Drying Services who specialise in disaster recovery.

### References

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