

# Newcastle University Library Special Collections Preservation Policy

## 1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles that are integral to the preservation activities of Newcastle University Library's Special Collections department. The policy is intended to define preservation responsibilities, and provide guidance to staff who engage in activities which may impact on collections.

### 1.1 Context

This preservation policy is a high-level statement, which is complemented by the following documents:

- Collection Development Policy
- Digitisation Policy
- Digital Preservation Policy
- Disaster Plan
- Document Handling Guidelines
- Loan Conditions (Exhibitions)
- Reading Room Regulations
- Retention Policy

### 1.2 Definitions

*Preservation* can be defined as 'all managerial, technical and financial considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of (collection) materials to ensure their continued availability'.<sup>1</sup> *Conservation* is the use of interventive treatments to improve the physical, chemical and visual conditions of items.

### 1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

All Special Collections staff and Robinson Bequest Students are responsible for implementing the preservation policy, as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

The Head of Special Collections & Archives is responsible for co-ordinating preservation activities.

## 2. Special Collections Mission

Newcastle University Library supports the University's learning and teaching, research, innovation and engagement by providing resources, high quality services and professional expertise to enable the effective discovery and use of information, and the development and communication of knowledge. The Special Collections department accomplishes this by collecting, preserving, promoting and facilitating access to often rare or unique primary source material and historic secondary texts in order to support the teaching and research needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, academic staff and researchers outside the academic community. It seeks

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<sup>1</sup> P. Eden, et al. *A model for assessing preservation needs in libraries* (London: British Library Research and Innovation Centre, 1998)

recognition of the regional, national and international significance of important collections and its activities include collection development, exhibitions and outreach services.

### **3. Preserving Special Collections Materials**

Special Collections material are rich and varied: we have rare books and other printed works, such as pamphlets and Parliamentary papers; manuscripts; photographs; maps; ephemera, such as playbills, posters, state of the poll election figures and political cartoons; oral history recordings; music scores; illustrations and even museum objects.

These materials are subject to natural deterioration, the rate of which is accelerated by handling.

#### **3.1 Preservation Principles**

Preservation of its collections is a core function for the Special Collections department. The main aims of the preservation strategy are to preserve the collections and facilitate access to them, consistent with usage requirements and current physical conditions. The Special Collections department recognises that different items and collections may need different levels and types of care. In all of its preservation activities, Special Collections applies high standards of care and seeks external professional advice, where appropriate. The Special Collections department also recognises the need for adequate documentation and metadata to support effective planning, informed decision making and to shape future strategic objectives.

The Preservation Advisory Centre's Preservation Assessment Survey was completed in 2006. This analysis of our preservation needs and measures informed the prioritisation of actions to improve the condition of collections, such as the creation of a new storage facility which was completed in September 2009. Special Collections maintains active professional relationships with external organisations in order to share best practice and, as far as possible, achieve collections care benchmarks.

### **4. Preservation Aims**

Through its preservation strategy, the Special Collections department aims to:

- Assess and minimise risks to the collections.
- Stabilise damage so that the material can continue to be accessed.
- Repair significant damage that prevents material from being accessed.
- Provide surrogates of heavily-used materials.

### **5. Specific Preservation Activities**

#### **5.1 Acquisition**

Special collections and archival material is acquired in accordance with the Special Collections **Collection Development Policy**. The Library considers preservation and conservation costs when making decisions about potential additions to its Special Collections holdings.

#### **5.2 Security**

Terms of access will have security measures built-in to protect the collections from theft, vandalism, and accidental damage when in use. The Reading Room is equipped with CCTV. The Reading Room

and storage areas are protected by controlled keys and codes, as well as an alarm system. All maintenance work in Special Collections areas is supervised.

### **5.3 Storage**

Special Collections will house its collections in secure, environmentally controlled and monitored storage areas that conform, as far as possible, to the British Standard for Archival Storage, BS 5454:2000. It is the responsibility of Special Collections staff to inform the Bookstock, Stores, Support Services, Communications and Buildings Manager of building defects and to ensure that the building continues to meet specifications. The Bookstock, Stores, Support Services, Communications and Buildings Manager liaises with the Estate Support Service to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

As part of a regular maintenance programme, material will be cleaned using a soft brush or Museumvac, as appropriate. Initial training will be provided to all staff who clean the collections, the work will be supervised by the Head of Special Collections & Archives, and written guidelines will be provided.

Best practice workflows will be followed for long term storage of electronic data, including secure backup and recovery arrangements, for which the Information Systems Manager will have ultimate responsibility.

### **5.4. Disaster and Emergency Preparedness**

Special Collections will maintain a **Disaster Plan** to protect its collections by responding to threats posed by fire, flood and pests. It will also maintain a list of salvage priorities.

### **5.5 Access**

Access to the collections will be provided in an invigilated reading room, where researchers will be provided with necessary equipment (book supports and chain weights).

Researchers must comply with **Reading Room Regulations** (Appendix 1) and will be advised of **Document Handling Guidelines** (Appendix 2) before they are issued with material.

Use of particularly fragile material may be restricted.

### **5.6 Packaging**

Special Collections will implement a programme of re-packaging to ensure that materials are housed in suitable containers, such as acid-free boxes, folders and envelopes where required to protect items.

### **5.7 Reproduction**

In order to ensure material is handled appropriately, material may only be photocopied by Special Collections staff or digitised by the Digital Images Assistant (subject to copyright and Data Protection legislation; and to the format and condition of the item). Where the risk of damage to the original item is too great, requests for photocopying and digitisation may be declined and researchers will be

offered surrogates, where available. Digitisation will be performed on a flatbed scanner or using an overhead camera and book supports depending on the format, size and condition of the original document.

Researchers must seek the permission of Special Collections staff but are allowed to use digital cameras to take photographs for private research. The use of flash photography is not permitted.

Material will be digitised to meet the needs of the Special Collections department according to the priorities identified in the **Digitisation Policy**, which makes provision for preservation digitisation.

### **5.8 Digital Preservation**

Special Collections recognises the importance of maintaining access to digital and other electronic items and has developed a **Digital Preservation Policy**, in accordance with guidance from the National Archives and in consultation with the IT Support and Development Officer.

### **5.9 Conservation**

Priorities for conservation are determined by the following criteria:

- Degree of damage and potential deterioration
- Historical significance
- Demand for access to the material (either demonstrated or projected)

Documents may be cleaned, de-acidified and re-packaged by appropriately trained Newcastle University Library Print Services staff. Other conservation activities will be carried out by an accredited conservator.

### **5.10 Exhibition and Loan**

The physical condition and preservation needs of items are considered when selecting material for display. Surrogates will be used whenever an item is deemed to be unsuitable for display. Best practice display methods will be followed, as set out in the Preservation Advisory Centre's *Guidance for exhibiting archive and library materials* (2000).

The loan of original material for exhibition must be approved by the Librarian, or Deputy Librarian, in consultation with the Head of Special Collections & Archives. Loan for exhibition will usually be approved only if it can be demonstrated that the standards of care in the temporary location satisfy the terms set out in the **Loan Conditions (Exhibitions)** document and on satisfactory completion of the **Application for Exhibition Loan** form.

### **5.11 Staff Training and Development**

Special Collections staff will be required to participate in relevant in-house and external training relating to preservation and conservation, as appropriate to their roles. Newcastle University Library has achieved Investors in People Bronze Accreditation.

Last revised August 2012

Approved by the Library Strategy Group, 03/08/2012

To be reviewed annually

## Newcastle University Library Special Collections Reading Room Regulations (Appendix 1)

Special Collections material must be consulted in the invigilated Reading Room, located on level 1 of the Robinson Library. (Full members of the University Library may consult items from the following collections anywhere in the library but may not remove items from the building: Gertrude Bell Collection, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Clarke Local, Clarke Medical, Clarke Miscellaneous, Merz, Ritchie and Ure.)

Observing a few rules and procedures in the Reading Room helps to keep our Special Collections intact, and allows staff to meet your needs effectively.

PLEASE:

Use the lockers provided for stowing coats, bags and other bulky items.

Switch off mobile 'phones & keep noise to a minimum.

Sign the visitors' sheet on entering and leaving and present some form of photographic identification.

Comply with any requests made by Special Collections staff.

Read the **Document Handling Guidelines** that are displayed at each reader place in the Reading Room.

**Do not** bring food, drink, pens or ink into the Reading Room.

## **Newcastle University Library Special Collections Document Handling Guidelines (Appendix 2)**

We ask for your help in trying to preserve our collections by taking care when using them.

### **PLEASE:**

Ensure your hands are clean and lotion-free before handling material.

Use the book supports and chain weights provided. (You may need to adjust the support so that it cradles the book properly.)

Keep loose items in the correct order, and in the right box or packet.

Where present, re-tie tapes around books and folders after use.

Close manuscript binders carefully and ensure that plastic pockets are lying flat within the binder.

Use pencil or a laptop for taking notes.

Ask a member of staff for sheets of Perspex when tracing.

When handling photographic material, use the nitrile gloves provided.

Report any damage you discover.

Seek permission to take photographs. (The use of flash photography is not permitted.)

Comply with Copyright and Data Protection legislation.

### **PLEASE DO NOT:**

Remove items from the Reading Room.

Mark, or make erasures, in any item.

Place open items face-down, lean, or rest anything on them.

Cut untrimmed pages: hand the item to the member of staff on duty.