



CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION POLICY FOR MATERIALS IN THE VAUGHAN WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

1. Introduction

The EFDSS is the guardian of a multimedia heritage, for which it undertakes responsibility for preservation and conservation, recognising a duty of care out of respect to the past and in anticipation of the future. This preservation policy sets out its plan to achieve its duty of preservation for the future, while maintaining and promoting access in the present.

According to the National Archives:

‘Libraries and archives contain an irreplaceable accumulation of human knowledge and experience. The written and documentary heritage which they house provides the raw material that allows us to try and understand, explain, order and enjoy the visible and invisible world. Access to the past enables us to understand and locate ourselves in the present and gives us the opportunity to inform the future... in preserving our shared past we are preserving the collective memory for future generations’.

A National Preservation Strategy for Library and Archive Collections in the United Kingdom and Ireland: Principles and Prospects (National Preservation Office, January 2001)

2. Definitions:

For the purposes of this policy, VWML adopts the following definitions of preservation and conservation:

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.

Conservation: Conservation is taken as direct intervention to prevent/make good damage to materials.

3. Scope:

This policy covers principles and practices to be observed in all preservation and conservation. It aims to outline the key considerations for dealing with archives and related materials.

4. Principles:

The conservation of all media materials requires skills acquired by training and experience. These must be exercised with professional judgement at all times. It is the responsibility of those who administer archive collections, to ensure that the highest standards are met. The following principles will be adhered to where possible:

- a. all methods used should be reversible.
- b. All materials used should be of the highest archival standards.
- c. No process should remove or conceal the written/visual evidence of the document.
- d. Over-repair is unacceptable.
- e. All conservation methods should use compatible materials.
- f. No attempt should be made to complete missing text/image, or to restore to a perceived original state.
- g. All binding methods should reflect where possible the original style (if known) or which is most suitable for conservation and usage.
- h. No binding method should restrict access to the text.
- i. All conservation work carried out must relate specifically to the needs of the object.
- j. A detailed record of all materials and methods should be kept.
- k. All materials should be stored in conditions, which meet current, professionally approved standards, and to maintain those conditions. Account will be taken of the physical nature and condition, intrinsic value and use of the material, and of the binding, boxing and packaging needed. For further details refer to BS 5454:2000 and *Standard for Record Repositories* (National Archives, 2004).
- l. to do everything possible to minimize damage from use, promoting good practice in handling
- m. To provide means of access to the originals in ways which minimize the risk from handling.
- n. To provide suitable equipment to protect the originals while in use.
- o. to train and develop staff appropriately in preservation techniques
- p. To provide surrogates copies (e.g. microform or digital) where current or anticipated high demand, or poor condition, or both, make the originals unsuitable for production. Readers will be encouraged to use surrogates where the originals are so fragile that using them will cause further damage.
- q. to undertake preservation work on documents which are deemed to have particular priority (e.g. intrinsic worth, exceptional historic, symbolic or physical value or interest)
- r. to withdraw documents from public access if they are deemed to be at serious risk: these can then be assessed for inclusion in a prioritized published preservation programme
- s. to keep technical developments in the preservation and conservation fields under review, and to utilize those which are suitable and incorporate them into the strategy to provide added benefits and more cost effective operations
- t. to promote and encourage good practice in records management
- u. to promote best practice amongst staff and readers in seeking to ensure the security of the material which has been selected for permanent preservation
- v. Condition surveys will be carried out periodically to assess the general physical condition of the collections, thereby quantifying needs and providing the basis for more precise preservation planning, including cost projections.

All processes for archival conservation should conform to current standards recommended by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

5. Level of Conservation

The appropriate level of conservation treatment should be determined by a systematic procedure in which due consideration is given to the views of a conservator and users. This should take account of:

- i. Condition of material and required treatment.
- ii. Importance of material - archival significance.
- iii. Expected level of use.

The librarian and a conservator should jointly review conservation priorities.

6. Risk assessment

Risks to the collections can be classified as follows:

- Natural Routine Risks: Relative humidity, temperature, light, pollution, pests
- Natural Extreme Risks: Fire, flood, earthquake
- Man-made Routine Risks: Handling, wear and tear
- Man-made Extreme Risks: War, civil unrest, vandalism and theft

The management of risk takes into account the local context of the library buildings, which are in central London, with high levels of air pollution, traffic noise and crime.

8. Pest management

Storage areas and collections are cleaned on a regular basis and checks made for possible infestation by harmful rodents and insects. When infestation is detected, pest control is alerted to eradicate the problem. Materials least attractive to such pests are chosen for furnishings wherever possible.

9. Disaster Planning

EFDSS will maintain and update as necessary a comprehensive Disaster Plan, to include subscription to recovery agencies such as Harwell Document Restoration Services.