



SOCIETY OF
ANTIQUARIES
OF LONDON

Society of Antiquaries of London Collections Care & Conservation Policy

for Museum Collections at Burlington House

Governing Body: Council (The Society of Antiquaries of London)

Policy approval date: 14 December 2023

Policy review procedure: This policy will be reviewed at least once every five years. All policy reviews and associated changes must be communicated to, and approved by, the Library and Collections Committee and Council.

Policy review date: 14 December 2028

Version: 1

This policy will be shared with internal and external stakeholders via email and will be published on our website to ensure availability to users and potential users.

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1. Mission, Vision, and Strategy

Our Royal Charter from 1751, which acts as a mission statement, encapsulates the Society's purpose:

The encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries.

This mission statement informs the Society's vision for 2023-2033:

To understand how people live and think through the places they live and the things they create.

This vision drives the Society's strategic aims, objectives, and priorities, which are arranged into four pillars: 1 Nourish our current and future communities, 2 Stimulate our sector, 3 Excite the world, 4 Organise to deliver. The strategy for the Library, Archive and Museum falls into pillars 2 and 3:

Pillar 2	Stimulate our sector
Strategic Aim	The global independent forum on heritage
Long term priority	Offer catalysing resources through our library and collections
Mid-term priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress digitisation and cataloguing programme to ensure that collections and documents are fully accessible, globally 2. Ensure our collections are relevant, reviewed regularly and cared for appropriately to inspire the curious and support research 3. Create an ecosystem with our community whereby research is supported and encouraged through our collections 4. Ensure our professional standards support our ambitions as a key contributor to the sector
Pillar 3	Excite the world
Strategic Aim	The place where exciting new ideas are shared first
Long term priority	Open up our places by opening up BH to the public and expanding our work at KM
Mid-term priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase our engagement with new audiences as well as Fellows and Affiliates to create a diverse and thriving community 2. Amplify recognition as a key player in the sector through exhibitions and loans to museums and galleries worldwide 3. Ensure all our communications (tone of voice) and engagement are increasingly modern and inclusive and support the diverse audiences in our community 4. Actively collaborate with like-minded organisations to support our strategic aims

The care of collections remains central to the Society's purpose, alongside dissemination of knowledge, encouragement of research and public engagement.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy guides the Society of Antiquaries of London in the field of collections care and conservation and provides a framework around which current and future Collections Care and Conservation plans are shaped.

This policy aims to strike a balance between long term care and preservation of the collections, and continuing improvement of access to the collections, both physically and remotely, and within the limits of the museum's resources (both financial and staffing). This balance is primarily achieved through risk management and preventive conservation measures.

The importance of ensuring all staff are aware of the Society's responsibilities towards the collection is also fully acknowledged.

3. Standards

As an Arts Council England Accredited Museum service¹, the Society recognises its responsibility towards the care of its collections, and the importance of retaining a holistic balance between access and preservation. Care of the Society's collections will be coordinated through preventive and remedial conservation measures, although the main focus will always be the use of preventive conservation measures to minimise risk.

- 3.1 Our aim is to carry out care and conservation of the Society's collections in compliance with best practice standards and guidelines, including but not limited to: *Museums Association Code of Ethics* (2015); the *Code of Conduct for the Institute of Conservation* (2014); *Conservation Register* (ICON); *SPECTRUM 5.1 standard*; *BSI Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections* (PAS 198 : 2012); *BSI Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management* (PAS 197:2009); *BSI Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials* (PD 5454 : 2012). In addition, the Society's care and conservation of collections is guided by the Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) and COSHH Regulations (2002).
- 3.2 *Benchmarks in Collections Care 2.1* (2018) will be used to assess and evaluate current standards of collections care. This process of self-assessment will assist with planning, monitoring and budgeting for the care and conservation of the Society's collections as reflected through its *Strategic Plan for the Library, Archives, and Museums of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 2023/24 to 2024/25*; will ensure regular assessment of performance; will record improvements in standards and will

¹ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme>

determine priority areas for improvement in line with best practice, all of which will be balanced against available resources.

- 3.3 The Society has established basic standards for physical care, preventive conservation and environmental monitoring of its collections. Preventive and remedial conservation programmes, maintenance and monitoring schedules are designed to alongside:
- the access and operational requirements of both Fellows and members of the public
 - the physical and environmental restrictions presented by Burlington House, which is a listed property.
 - the research and exhibition needs of the collection
 - funding and staff resources (both in the present, and in light of long-term future planning)
 - the urgency of care required

The on-going use of some historic objects from the collection as part of the fabric of the Society's governance and operations, i.e. the regalia used for ceremonial purposes, and the role of Burlington House as a historic building open to visitors, both necessitates a carefully balanced approach. However, the conservation and care of the collections will always take precedence.

- 3.4 A formal audit and assessment of objects in store at Burlington House will be carried out at least every 5 years. A combination of sampling and audit rotas will be used to condition check, assess and monitor objects. This exercise will inform the Conservation and Collections Care Plan of future conservation priorities.

4. Expertise

The Society's Library and Collections Committee members are elected based on the selection criteria as outlined in the Society of Antiquaries of London *Committee terms of reference* document. This selection criteria ensures that all members of the committee fulfil one or more of the following requirements:

- Experience in the management of an historic library and/or archives
- Experience in the management of a museum collection (either single site or across several sites)
- Conservation experience in a relevant specialism, eg; book and paper-based materials, manuscripts, paintings, 3D objects
- Knowledge and experience of the development of IT applications for library and museum collections, eg: digitization
- Experience of fundraising for capital projects for a library or museum
- Experience of planning and implementing a library refurbishment project

- Antiquarian interests and active research that match the Society's historic library collections

In this way, the Society's experienced collections staff and volunteers have regular access to the advice and support of other conservation and collections care experts.

- 4.1 Collections care and conservation will be undertaken by, or in consultation with, recognised specialists in accordance with current best-practice guidelines and standards (see section 3.1)
- 4.2 The advice of a conservator will be sought, if considered necessary by the Museum Collections Manager (based on previous condition assessments), prior to acceptance of a loan request. This advice will be communicated to the Library and Collections Committee and to Council and will inform any decision made with regards to inward and outward loan objects.
- 4.3 Collections specialists will be consulted at the earliest opportunity in the event of planned building or structural development, repair programmes or changes of use to ensure cost-effective, sustainable and practical measures are taken for the maintenance, care and conservation of the collections.

5. Specialist Collections

For a full description of the collections see the 2023 BH & KM Museum Documentation Policy. For planning and procedures for care and conservation see the BH Collection Conservation & Care Plan.

- 5.1 All paintings displayed at Burlington House are subject to an annual dusting and monitoring programme as a part of the Society's preventative conservation programme. Dusting and monitoring of the Society's paintings will be carried out by an ICON accredited frames conservator and ICON accredited paintings conservator and their report will inform the Collections Care and Conservation Plan priorities.
- 5.2 The Society's horological collection of eight clocks is subject to an annual conservation survey carried out by ICON accredited clock conservation specialists. The clock conservation survey will guide the Society's rolling programme of remedial clock conservation and will inform the Collections Care and Conservation Plan priorities.
- 5.3 Items of Society regalia are both registered museum objects and 'working objects', which continue in use at the Society's Ordinary Meetings and ceremonies. It is recognised that this use presents a degree of risk. The risks and benefits have been

carefully evaluated, and risk to the objects is mitigated, where possible, with relevant training for involved parties, and regular monitoring of active regalia.

- 5.4 Any movement of large or awkward objects will be pre-planned and risk assessed to ensure correct arrangements and resources are available in order to minimise risk to objects and staff. Specialist contractors will be used to handle and transport large, heavy or fragile objects and may be expected to present a risk assessment and method statement prior to any move, packing, handling or transportation taking place.

6.Communication

- 6.1 Collections care and conservation issues will be communicated to Trustees through the appropriate Committees, and to staff via Staff Meetings, and through the appropriate Committees. Collections care and conservation issues will be communicated to Fellows, volunteers, researchers and members of the public through printed and online resources, and through events, talks and meetings wherever possible and practical to do so.
- 6.2 Staff and volunteers involved either directly or indirectly with the museum collection will be made aware of policies and procedures – their development and introduction – through regular briefings. Appropriate guidelines, procedures and training will be provided to all staff, visitors, volunteers and researchers actively engaging or working with the collections.
- 6.3 An Emergency Plan exists for the site and is regularly re-assessed and updated by a working group formed of the Building and IT Manager, Head of Library and Museum Collections, and the Museum Collections Manager. The Society will provide annual refresher training for all staff outlining disaster response and responsibilities and will practice the plan every two years.
- 6.4 The Society will seek ways to open up the conservation and research process in order to engage the wider public.
- 6.5 All collections policies will be made available to access, view, or download via the Society's website.

7.Preventative conservation

Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects and structures.

The Society recognises that all activities involving collections, such as handling, display, and transportation, carry the potential risk to reduce both the quality and condition of the object, its potential longevity and quality of preservation. Please see section 10 below, Risk management and security for risk mitigation measures.

The Society uses a range of preventative conservation measures:

7.1 Environmental monitoring and control

7.1.1 The Society will monitor the environment in all areas used for the storage and display of collections and will measure and record relative humidity (RH), temperature, visible light and ultraviolet radiation (UV).

7.1.2 Where collections are stored or displayed, the Society will continuously monitor these areas using a Hanwell electronic system. On occasion, additional instruments may be deployed in areas where closer monitoring is required. It is acknowledged that the normal climatic characteristics and changes within Burlington House will be better understood through continuous recording and monitoring over sustained periods of time.

7.1.3 Data from all electronic monitoring systems will be checked on a monthly basis and added to a log archived both digitally and as part of hard-copy records. Every year, a summary report will be produced providing an overview of environmental standards and conditions at Burlington House and an analysis of priorities for planning purposes.

7.1.4 Light readings will be taken at Burlington House higher in risk areas identified using benchmarks or according to conservator advice. These will be recorded and added to a log archived both digitally and as part of hard-copy records. Natural and UV light levels will be included in a summary report providing an overview of environmental standards and conditions at Burlington House.

7.1.5 The Society will utilise environmental data to ensure stable and appropriate conditions for collections wherever practically possible, adding into forward planning any necessary actions or longer-term improvements needed.

7.1.6 All environmental control systems will be covered by service contracts and will be inspected periodically by both internal staff and service contractors to ensure continued performance and maintenance.

7.1.7 Functional testing of UV films on windows at Burlington House will be carried out and routinely tested as part of future Collections Care and Conservation Plans.

7.1.8 Additional mobile de-/humidifiers can be occasionally utilised in specific areas to assist with environmental control. Spot checks of these mobile systems must be carried out daily when in use and these checks are recorded and necessary actions taken as a result.

7.2 Integrated Pest Management and housekeeping

7.2.1 Regular cleaning and pest inspection programmes are in place to ensure acceptable standards of housekeeping and pest monitoring.

7.2.2 Pest management specialists carry out annual inspections and reviews of Housekeeping Procedures and IPM at Burlington House. The resulting reports and recommendations are passed to the Head of Library and Museum Collections and the Museum Collections Manager and are used to inform both the Collections Care and Conservation Plan and Forward Plan.

7.2.3 Areas containing collections, and any other areas considered vulnerable, will be monitored using insect traps (both blunder and pheromone) which will be checked every 6-8 weeks. If pests are detected, advice may be sought from a pest management specialist prior to trap contents being recorded, the areas monitored to locate and eradicate the source, and items quarantined /isolated from other collections as necessary.

7.2.4 Dedicated cleaning kits are made available in key areas at Burlington House, ensuring a reduced risk of potential cross-infestation and to ensure cleaning equipment is readily available.

7.2.5 Contract and office cleaning regimes will be checked at least annually to ensure rubbish is being appropriately disposed of; food waste is not presenting a pest risk; and dust in general areas is being effectively controlled. Contract cleaners will be trained, where appropriate, in conservation cleaning procedures.

7.2.6 Cleaning programmes will be assessed annually against the *Benchmark in Collection Care* framework.

7.3 Object storage

7.3.1 The Society accepts that its storage facilities at Burlington House present challenges when it comes to the care of collections. The Society will however ensure that its stored collections are:

- Housed in a storage area that is kept clean, well-organised and well-managed, as far as is reasonably possible.
- Protected using appropriate conservation-grade packaging and systems, which are cost-effective and able to reduce potential damage from poor handling and environmental conditions.

7.4 Object handling and movement

7.4.1 Collections are at particular risk when being moved or handled, therefore *Object Handling Procedures* will be issued to researchers and volunteers working with, or directly accessing, the collection.

7.4.2 All collections that are due for transportation will be suitably wrapped and/or crated to give them the best possible protection. The Museum Collections Manager will decide when the services of professional object handlers are required.

7.4.3 Specialist contractors employed for the handling and transportation of objects will be requested to present their corporate H&S policy and proof of indemnity.

7.4.4 Object moves will take place wherever possible outside of public opening hours.

8. Remedial conservation

Remedial conservation refers to the active treatment of an object to stabilise, enhance, or improve its condition, or improve an aspect of its research, interpretation, or display potential.

- 8.1 Conservation work on the Society's collections will only be carried out by suitably qualified conservators, or under the direct supervision of an appropriately qualified person. Conservators accredited by the Institute of Conservation (ICON)² will normally be selected. All conservation work on objects in the Society's Museum collections will be expected to conform with the relevant standards as listed in section 3.1.

² <https://www.conservationregister.com/>

- 8.2 In accordance with the Society's *Procurement Policy*, conservators may be selected through a formal tender process if the cost of the conservation project exceeds £50,000. Where we advertise, and the selection criteria will depend on the nature of the opportunity and the likely suppliers – this may include local, national or international trade press. The final purchasing decision rests with the General Secretary and written evidence of their decision is required.
- 8.3 Conservators, mount-makers and contractors will be expected to present Health & Safety and indemnity documents where appropriate. The Society may also request to see evidence of the quality of their work, such as testimonials or examples from other clients.
- 8.4 All conservation work will be preceded by submission of a method statement, treatment proposal and a formal quotation, and this documentation will be retained.
- 8.5 All conservation treatment will be photographed and documented as part of the treatment process, with conservation work culminating in the production of a treatment report or summary.
- 8.6 All conservation treatment will be recorded in the Object History Files and in the Conservation Treatment Files (see Society Collections Documentation Plan).

9. Loans management and conservation

- 9.1 The Society's *Policy and Conditions of Loan* will ensure risk management and a formalised approach to the management of loans.
- 9.2 When a loan request is received, conservation implications will be considered at the earliest stage and the advice of a conservator will be sought if necessary prior to acceptance of a loan request.
- 9.3 Objects from the collections will only be loaned to borrowers who can satisfy the appropriate conditions for their safe and secure storage, study, interpretation or display. The requirements of borrowers, and the Society's expectations and commitments as a lender, are outlined in the Standard Terms and Conditions for Loan of Objects document and are based the UK Registrar Group's Facilities Report and Display Case & Security supplements.³

³ <https://www.ukregistrargroup.org/resources/ukrg-docs/>

- 9.5 Objects both borrowed and loaned-out will be condition-checked and photographically recorded on arrival and departure.
- 9.6 Records will be kept of all loans in compliance with SPECTRUM 5.1 and procedures covered in the *Documentation Procedures Manual*.

10. Risk management and security

The Society aims to manage and mitigate risk as far as reasonably possible to levels that are acceptable and balanced against the need to ensure collections are still accessible, and able to be interpreted, researched and actively engaged with.

10.1 The Society's risk management approach comprises:

- Ensuring only appropriately-trained and competent staff and specialists are charged with the care and conservation of the collections.
- Ensuring handling guidelines and procedures are disseminated to staff, Fellows, researchers and contractors, with appropriate training and supervision provided where necessary.
- Use of conservation-grade materials (where appropriate) in the storage or transportation of collections to prevent damage or deterioration, and ensuring appropriate equipment is provided for handling and moving objects, or appropriate specialists used. A list of suppliers and approved materials forms part of the Society's *Documentation Procedural Manual*.
- Raising awareness of collections care issues among staff, researchers, volunteers and members of the public through training, regular meetings, appropriate Committees and through the use of display labels, website, social media, press releases and publications where appropriate.
- Monitoring the condition of objects both on display and in store through regular collections care programmes (condition checks, housekeeping activities, environmental monitoring and control measures, audits etc.)
- Implementation of a housekeeping routine and IPM Policy.
- An *Emergency Plan* to safeguard the collection in the event of a disaster, updated annually and communicated clearly with staff teams.
- Procedures specifying established methods of recording and archiving changes in environmental or object condition.
- Training and supervision (where appropriate) of all volunteers working directly with collections.
- The introduction of Standard Risk Assessments as part of the Museum's *Collections Care and Conservation Plan*, where appropriate.

- Ensuring that object moves take place wherever possible outside public opening hours, in order to reduce risk.

10.2 The Society ensures its buildings are secure, well-maintained and with appropriate and practical levels of care made to the building's fabric and structure, as the foundation for the security and protection of its collections.

10.3 The Society regularly assesses and maintains appropriate levels of security and insurance on its buildings. The Society utilises a variety of in-house security measures for the care of its collections at Burlington House and these are specified in its Security Risk Assessment, maintained by the Building and IT Manager.

Recommendations made as a result of the Security Risk Assessment will be reviewed and will inform future Collections Care and Conservation Plans and help determine security priorities.

References

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Strategic Plan for the Library, Archives, and Museums of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 2023/24 to 2024/25
- 2023 BH & KM Museum Documentation Policy
- 2023 BH Museum Care & Conservation Plan
- SAL Documentation Procedures Manual
- SAL Procurement Policy
- SAL Health, Safety and Welfare Policy
- SAL Emergency Plan
- 2023 BH Security Risk Assessment