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Policy for Preservation and Collection Care

2017-2020

National context

The national statement of Conservation Principles for the Cultural Heritage of Wales declares that

Our cultural heritage belongs to the people of Wales; it creates our identity, shapes our future and marks our place in the world. We are committed to preserving the evidence of our vibrant cultural heritage as it was written, created and lived to ensure the sustainable use of our nation's collections for all

This statement is supported by seven national conservation principles, which state that those responsible for our cultural heritage will

- act as advocates for the value of preserving cultural heritage
- contribute to, promote and employ current standards and best practice
- manage collections based on an understanding of their significance and condition
- put sustainability at the core of conservation
- develop skills and share knowledge
- seek the resources needed for the care of collections
- promote inclusive and responsible public access

National Library of Wales policy

The principles listed above are articulated through this Library policy which describes our approach to conservation and collection care. The Library's Charter declares that the Library's aim is to 'collect, preserve and give access to all kinds and forms of recorded knowledge'. Preservation is a core function of the Library and is one of its charitable objectives, as it supports this aim and enables sustained access to the Library's holdings.

The Library's collection includes a wide variety of media types, including paper, linen, parchment, vellum, plastic, wood, metal and audio-visual collections, as well as an increasing quantity of digital material. The Library's approach to collection care is to enable the usability of the collections for as long as possible, through an integrated programme of preventative and interventive conservation. The Library is operating within a context of reduced resources and must ensure that it undertakes collection care in a responsible and strategic manner.

Preservation actions

The Library will

- undertake regular condition surveys to assess collection needs and condition
- prioritise and plan conservation activity, according to agreed criteria which takes note of significance and condition
- contribute to, promote and employ current standards and best practice
- manage the digital assets as an intrinsic part of the collection, with reference to the aligned Digital Preservation Policy
- undertake conservation treatment, with minimum intervention, where necessary
- undertake preventative conservation to minimise damage and deterioration of collection items
 - through the effective management of storage areas
 - ensuring that environmental conditions meet standards appropriate for the storage and display of collection materials,
 - cleaning and protecting items through appropriate packaging
 - careful handling
 - monitoring of pests
- record conservation actions and monitor the condition of items which have been displayed or loaned
- promote the use of surrogates, according to the Principles of Access to Collection Items document
- develop skills by providing appropriate training to conservation staff
- enhance awareness amongst the staff and users of best practice for preservation and collections care
- identify and mitigate risks to collections
- undertake regular stocktakes and collection audits
- ensure the security of the collection items
- ensure that collections care forms part of Emergency and Business Continuity Plans

Access

The Library will

- provide free and unrestricted access to the vast majority of Library collections in the reading rooms and online.
- provide specific reading room areas consulting particular types of items
- actively promote the use of surrogates, in place of handling the originals
- place additional safeguards in place for access to particularly valuable (old, unique, rare) items and those of high cultural significance, or those items which have a poor physical condition and the risk of damage by handling or exposure to environmental change is significant
- promote good practice in handling and use

Partnerships and Advocacy

The Library will

- encourage the promotion of collection care to recognized standards by means of cooperative programmers and professional collaboration
- support programmes for training, outreach and awareness by professional bodies, international organizations and co-operative preservation organizations
- collaborate on shared projects and activities
- support conservation in Wales and beyond by sharing skills and knowledge and providing training and support to trainees and volunteers
- enhance awareness of best practice for collection care and preservation

Sustainability

The Library will

- proactively manage storage areas, ensuring the best use of space through strategic planning
- build in seasonal changes and gradients to the environmental controls to conserve energy
- promote knowledge and skills transfer
- seek funding sources to support collection care activities
- exploit business opportunities for charging for services, equipment and expertise, where appropriate
- consider the on-going costs of collection care when developing the collection

Governance and Review

The Library will

- align the collection care activities with the Library's corporate strategy
- hold a quarterly meeting of the Collection Care committee and report issues to the meetings of the Collections and Public Programmes Directorate
- record risks to the collections in the Risk Register
- review the policy every three years