

Special Collections preservation policy, 2019-21

1. Purpose and scope of the Special Collections preservation policy

The Foyle Special Collections Library holds the oldest, rarest and most valuable library collections of King's College London. The long-term preservation of these items is the single most important duty of the Foyle Special Collections Library and its staff.

The Special Collections preservation policy aims:

- To act as a public statement of the preservation policies of the Foyle Special Collections Library
- To give guidance to Special Collections and other Libraries & Collections staff on preservation and conservation issues, as they relate to material held in the Foyle Special Collections Library
- To explain to users of the Foyle Special Collections Library the overall collection care policy that lies behind all aspects of the Library's service delivery.

The Special Collections preservation policy covers all physical formats currently represented in the collections housed in the Foyle Special Collections Library (printed books, manuscripts, typescripts, maps, microfilms, audio-visual material, photographs and slides). It does not cover born-digital material.

While the Special Collections preservation policy addresses the specific needs of the collections housed in the Foyle Special Collections Library, it is appreciated that many sections of the policy will be applicable, either broadly or in detail, to other parts of the collections held at King's. It is also appreciated that the preservation needs of the collections held at King's cannot be determined in isolation but must be assessed in the wider local, national and international library context.

The distinction between the terms 'preservation' and 'conservation' sometimes causes confusion. In this document the following definitions have been applied:

'Preservation: All managerial, financial and technical considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of library materials to ensure their continued availability. These considerations include appropriate environmental conditions and storage, physical protection, exhibitions and loan policies, proper handling procedures, emergency planning, the use of surrogates and the application of conservation treatments. ...

*Conservation: Intervention techniques applied to the physical form to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of library materials to ensure their continued availability.'*¹

2. Preservation principles

The Foyle Special Collections Library houses collections of rare and in some cases unique material. The collections are of local, national and international significance. The underlying preservation principle of the Library is therefore to aim to preserve all material held within it in perpetuity, in its original format. In some instances the creation of a surrogate copy may be deemed appropriate for preservation and / or dissemination purposes (see also section 10, *Surrogacy*); the creation of a surrogate does not remove the need to preserve the original, in its original format, where this is possible. Every precaution is taken to avoid damaging or interfering with an item's physical integrity and historical authenticity.

In general, our policy is one of preventive preservation, in preference to active conservation. The Foyle Special Collections Library follows British Standard PD5454:2012, *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*, in its storage and consultation practices. It has also conducted an overall preservation needs assessment, using the British Library Preservation Advisory Centre's *Preservation assessment survey* model, and a benchmarking exercise, following the Collections Trust's *Benchmarks in collection care* model, to ensure continued excellence in preservation practices.

Active conservation measures are only taken when an item is already (or will otherwise become) unavailable for consultation as a result of its physical condition. In such cases the physical state and likely deterioration of the item, together with its intrinsic value, any special value it may have to King's, its rarity and its likely level of future use, are all considered and a decision taken as to the priority of conservation treatment.

3. Acquisition and retention policy

All items acquired for the Foyle Special Collections Library are expected to meet the criteria of the Special Collections collection development policy, available at: www.kcl.ac.uk/library/archivespec/documents/SCcolldev2019-21.pdf

¹ Paul Eden, Naomi Dungworth, Nancy Bell and Graham Matthews. *A model for preservation needs in libraries*. London: British Library Research and Development Centre, 1998, p.4

Wherever possible, the physical condition of an item is ascertained prior to its acquisition by the Foyle Special Collections Library, so that its preservation and / or conservation needs can be assessed. While it is generally the policy of the Foyle Special Collections Library to acquire only items that are in good enough condition not to require active conservation treatment, there may be occasions when the importance of acquiring the item overrides this consideration, for example, if an item is of exceptional rarity and desirability or if it forms part of and is integral to a larger collection whose acquisition has been deemed desirable, such as a major gift or bequest.

In general, items acquired for the Foyle Special Collections Library are acquired for permanent retention. Occasionally, collections may be acquired on deposit; these remain the property of the depositor.

4. Security

All material held in the Foyle Special Collections Library is housed in closed access storage areas. Access to these storage areas is limited to Special Collections staff. Cleaners and external maintenance contractors are accompanied at all times when working in the storage areas.

Material held in the Foyle Special Collections Library is consulted, under staff supervision, in the Special Collections Reading Room, in the Foyle Special Collections Library. Readers are asked to provide current and valid identification and those coming from outside King's are advised to contact the Foyle Special Collections Library prior to making a visit. No coats are to be taken into the Reading Room and readers are asked to place bags in lockers. No reader is left unsupervised at any time. Any breaches of security are reported and action taken to prevent their repetition.

A disaster management plan is in place to ensure that, as far as possible, the Foyle Special Collections Library is in a position to prevent, react to and recover from any natural or man-made disasters that may affect it.

5. Storage

All material held in the Foyle Special Collections Library is housed in accordance with British Standard PD5454:2012, *Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*. Close attention is paid to such features as the type and layout of shelving, the temperature and relative humidity of the storage areas, fire detection and suppression systems and lighting levels.

6. Collection maintenance and housekeeping

The storage environment is monitored daily and any faults are reported promptly. Periodic cleaning of the storage areas is arranged with the university's cleaning contractors and such cleaning is supervised by Special Collections staff.

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.

Marking and labelling of items is kept to a minimum, while at the same time ensuring that the ownership and location of the item are clearly indicated. Care is taken to avoid obscuring bookplates, inscriptions or any part of the text-block. Spine labels are not generally attached to items; instead strips or tabs of acid-free paper bearing the location details are inserted between the pages. Where appropriate, items are placed inside protective containers; for example, a pamphlet is placed in an acid-free envelope and a large and heavy volume may be placed in a solander box. Loose boards are tied with archival tape. Only materials supplied by recognised preservation equipment suppliers are used as protective containers.

The physical condition of items in the Foyle Special Collections Library is constantly monitored and items in need of conservation treatment are identified and flagged.

7. Conservation

An item is only selected for conservation treatment if such treatment is deemed necessary to ensure its continued availability for consultation. With the exception of cleaning, which may be carried out in-house, all conservation work is undertaken by specialist binders and conservators. No binder or conservator is engaged who does not have a proven track records in the conservation of rare and early printed books and manuscripts, whose techniques, materials and treatments are not in accordance with the highest professional practice and whose premises have not been visited and inspected.

Full written specifications are issued with each item selected for conservation and no work proceeds without prior approval by Special Collections staff. Care is taken to ensure that, as far as possible, all conservation undertaken is reversible, 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. Written reports are kept of all work undertaken.

8. Access and handling

All items held in the Foyle Special Collections Library are catalogued, as resources permit, for the online library catalogue. Care is taken to ensure that the catalogue record provides sufficient detail to ensure that potential readers are able to identify clearly the items they wish to see, so as to avoid unnecessary retrievals. Likewise, where a surrogate copy of an item is available, the catalogue indicates its presence, so that unnecessary handling of a fragile object is avoided.

The Foyle Special Collections Library and its collections are open to all members of King's, all registered external library users of King's and to anyone else who has a *bona fide* reason to consult the material held within it.

Special Collections staff are trained in the safe handling of items and all users are given guidance and help in consulting items safely; book supports, weights and other handling equipment are available in the Reading Room and no pens are allowed there.

Readers may usually take their own photographs of items, subject to preservation and copyright considerations, under supervision and at the discretion of Special Collections staff. The Foyle Special Collections Library also provides a digitisation service, for the supply of publication quality images.

9. Exhibitions

The Foyle Special Collections Library holds regular exhibitions of material from its holdings in the Weston Room, Maughan Library, where it has a number of exhibition cases. Each exhibition runs for a period of approximately three months.

All internal exhibitions are mounted in accordance with the recommendations of British Standard PD5454:2012 and the British Library Preservation Advisory Centre's *Guidance for exhibiting library and archive materials*. No item is included in an exhibition that cannot safely be displayed.

External institutions requesting the loan of items from the Foyle Special Collections Library for exhibition are required to meet the requirements of the Foyle Special Collections Library (this will involve the completion of the UK Registrars Group facilities report²) and to sign a condition of loan agreement with King's College London. 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. Further details on our policy on external loans are available at: www.kcl.ac.uk/library/archivespec/documents/loan-conditions-and-guidelines-2017.pdf

10. Surrogacy

If an item is of exceptional rarity or delicacy a preservation surrogate copy may be created in digital, microform and / or bound paper facsimile format. In such cases readers are expected to consult the surrogate, unless they have a valid reason for seeing the original.

All creation of surrogates is carried out in accordance with the laws of copyright and intellectual property.

² <http://www.ukregistrarsgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/UKRG-Facilities-report.pdf>

11. Funding

The Foyle Special Collections Library allocates funding every year to support preservation and conservation activities. It also actively pursues opportunities to gain external funding to support its preservation policy. The wishes of funding bodies and individual donors are respected, but do not influence the selection of items for conservation treatment.

12. Implementation, evaluation and review

The implementation and evaluation of the Special Collections Preservation Policy is integral to the daily work of the Foyle Special Collections Library and is the responsibility of all its staff. More formally, it is part of the annual planning cycle.

The Special Collections preservation policy is due for formal review in 2021. This does not preclude earlier review in the light of internal and external developments; it is a dynamic document and is kept under regular review.

Bibliography

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