

Bolton Library and Museum Services

Conservation and Collections Care Policy



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Date approved:	V1 Dec 2014
Date uploaded to intranet:	
Next Review date:	Jan 2028
Key words:	Museum, Archives, Aquarium, Collections, Conservation, Care

Version control

Version	Author of changes	Date (Month, Year)	Revisions from previous issues	Circulation
1.0	Pierrette Squires	Dec 2014	New policy implemented & approved	Old Bolton Museum website
2.0	Pierrette Squires	Dec 2017	Updated job titles changed	Via Museum Procedural Manual to all Library & Museum service staff
3.0	Pierrette Squires	May 2023	Updated to include Archives & update Job titles	To Museum Collections team
3.1	Pierrette Squires	Dec 2023	Put into standard policy template	To Museum Collections team
3.2	Pierrette Squires	April 2024	Updated to cross reference other policies	To Museum Collections team
3.3	Pierrette Squires	Nov 2024	Final edit for Museum Accreditation 2025 NB less than 10% change new approval not required.	To Museum Collections team
3.3		Jan 2025		Published online

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1. Introduction

This Policy outlines the standards expected in relation to collections conservation and care for Bolton Council collections. The Policy applies to all Bolton library, museum, archive, and aquarium staff, including those with temporary contracts, students and agency workers when working in Bolton Council premises and when working on behalf of the Council.

It sets out the expectations of Bolton Council in relation to ongoing conservation and collections care related activity. This policy is necessary in order to ensure adherence to SPECTRUM and accreditation standards.

The Council considers conservation and collections care to be of significant importance.

2. Purpose of the Document

The aim of this policy is to facilitate access to the museum & archive collections whilst striving for best practice in collections care and helping the service to achieve its statutory duties and public commitments.

Where there are any issues in complying with this policy, they must be discussed with the line manager, and reasonable steps taken to respond sensitively to concerns with revisions made and approved where necessary.

3. Terminology and Definitions

The term 'Staff' relates to any person working in the Council on any form of contract, it also includes people who are on Council premises providing a service.

The Conservation & Collections Care policy applies to all items acquired by Bolton Library & Museum Service as part of the permanent collections and to those objects under temporary care of the service. This policy covers the management and documentation of care of collections, the conservation (interventive and preventive) of objects ('objects' in this policy is being used as a catch all term for all non-live collections).

Interventive conservation: practical work undertaken on an object, for example sticking two broken parts back together or cleaning.

Preventive conservation: work to prevent deterioration of an object or collection of objects.

4. Duties and Responsibilities of Individuals and Groups

It is the responsibility of individual employees, students, and managers to ensure compliance with the standards set out in this Policy.

5. Policy Implementation

Service Managers

The Service Managers are responsible for raising with staff any concerns relating to the policy and implementing/monitoring action plans produced by Team Managers in response to incident reports associated with lack of compliance with this policy by staff within their area of responsibility.

Service Managers/Senior Staff

Team managers are responsible for ensuring all their staff adhere to this policy. Managers are responsible for ensuring team members understand and are conversant with the policy.

All Staff

All staff are responsible for complying with this policy.

6. Guidelines Applicable to Staff

6.1 Interventive Conservation

Interventive conservation will be considered when:

- Objects are found to be actively deteriorating.
- Objects are broken or damaged and are required for loan or display.

Objects will normally be conserved with the minimal amount of intervention necessary to make their condition stable. Restoration will be considered according to the requirements for display and interpretation.

Where possible, interventive conservation work will be reversible and/or distinguishable from the original material.

Objects which are actively deteriorating and required for display or loan will be given priority.

If an object is a Loan In, no interventive conservation work will be undertaken without the prior written permission of the owner.

The Team Leader Museum Access will either outsource to external specialists or, where objects fall within their area of specialist knowledge, carry out interventive conservation treatment in-house on objects belonging to Bolton.

Treatment proposals will be agreed with the Museum Access Team in line with this Conservation Policy and the needs of the collection/project/object being the priority.

A treatment report and photographic record of all objects conserved in-house will be retained.

Treatment reports and photographs will be recorded within or attached to the museums database (TMS) record for each object, enabling the information to be readily accessible.

6.2 Preventive Conservation

The Team Leader Museum Access is responsible for ensuring the implementation of preventive conservation measures and the delivery of associated training to service staff and volunteers.

6.3 Environment

Temperature and humidity will be monitored in all stores and display areas at all sites run by the service (including Bolton Museum & Archives, Hall I' Th' Wood, Smithills Hall and The Chadwick Resource Centre) At rented stores environmental monitoring will be put in place by the service if not provided by the storage company.

The long-term aim of the Service is to achieve a gentle rate of fluctuation in environmental conditions in all of its stores and display areas with no more than a +/-5% fluctuation about a set point in a 24-hour period whilst acknowledging that HITW, Smithills and Le Mans Crescent are all historic buildings with limited options for control.

Large or sudden fluctuations in temperature and/or humidity will, where known, be investigated by the Museum Access Team and, where possible, steps will be taken to eliminate and/or manage the causes.

When objects are put on display, the Museum Access Team will assess or seek external expertise to assess stability of objects and consider adjusting their display location, duration of display and mounting to reflect risks from temperature, relative humidity, vibration, pollution risks and light levels in the display area.

During the redevelopment of stores or display areas, a Conservator will advise on conservation grade materials and environmental control systems.

Humidifiers/de-humidifiers will be employed in stores and display areas where the humidity levels are unsuitable for the objects stored/displayed there.

6.4 Light

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation or direct sunlight will be minimised. Light levels are flexible dependent on length of exhibition with the aim of achieving the broad parameters detailed below:

Light sensitive material will be displayed in restricted light levels within a range of 50-80 lux or if higher for very limited time periods.

Other organic material will be displayed in light levels of no more than 300 lux. Inorganic material will be displayed in light levels of no more than 600 lux. Or if higher for very limited time periods.

UV radiation must be no more than 75 microwatts per lumen in museum galleries; this may be relaxed in the historic houses or for very limited time periods.

6.5 Pests & Environmental pollutants

The Museum Access Team will implement the Integrated Pest Management Plan in all stores and display areas at all sites. Regular surveying is in place to detect activity and manage infestations. It is the responsibility of the Access Officer managing each collection to regularly survey for pests at minimum once per year for each area.

In order to minimize the risk of damage to objects and to remove food sources for pests, eating and drinking are prohibited in areas where museum or archive collections are

stored or used behind the scenes, except for drinking water in sealed non-leak containers to be consumed in an area away from objects.

Food and drink may be consumed in gallery areas where suitable cleaning and protective measures are put in place and agreed in advance to ensure the safety of the collections within.

Smoking & Vaping is prohibited in all council buildings. Materials with minimal off gassing will be used near collections.

6.6 Conservation Cleaning

General public and some staff spaces across the service will be cleaned by the contracted council cleaning services. The Museum Access Team will advise the cleaning services on products and materials suitable for use in collections areas.

Objects on open display will be cleaned by the Museum staff using cleaning kits put together under advice of a Conservator. The museum access & customer services teams will receive training in the correct use of the cleaning kits.

Areas out of access to the council cleaning services such as secure stores will be cleaned by the Museum Access Team on a regular basis; the team leader will ensure spaces are kept clean and tidy to reduce the risk of dust build up, pest infestation & mould.

Once a year a 'deep clean' will be carried out at Hall I' Th' Wood and at Smithills Hall. This will include the waxing of wooden furniture/paneling and the vacuuming of textiles as needed.

6.7 Training

The Team Leader Museum Access will provide or procure training & advice to Bolton Library & Museum Service staff on a regular basis, including sessions on condition checking, object packing & movement, pest checking, conservation cleaning and marking & labeling.

The Museum Access Team will provide training in basic preventive conservation cleaning to Customer Services staff & volunteers and collections care guidelines will be provided to new members of staff & volunteers.

6.8 External Conservation

Objects requiring interventive conservation which fall outside the areas of specialist knowledge of the Bolton Library & Museum Service staff will be sent to external conservators as appropriate.

External conservators' professional standards will be verified by establishing that they are accredited, examining previous examples of their work, and/or requesting references.

The type/extent of the treatment will be agreed between the external conservator and the Museum Access Team, in line with this policy and the needs of the collection/project/object.

All external conservation work must be approved by the Museum Access Team.

All external conservation work will be managed by the Team Leader Museum Access.

All external conservation work will be subject to a legal contract to be signed by a member of the collections team this is the **Conservation Agreement** and replaces a loan agreement where items are sent off site.

The Team Leader Museum Access or a member of the Museum Access Team will act as the point of contact between external conservators and Bolton Library & Museum Service.

All external conservators will be required to supply the museum with full documentation of work undertaken, including detailed treatment proposals, method statements where necessary and treatment reports (as specified in the contract) in digital format, including photographic/digital images illustrating the object before, during and after treatment. The documentation will be passed onto the Museum Access Team who will add it to the database as for in-house items.

6.9 Health & Safety

The Museum Access Team overseen by the Team Leader Museum Access will manage all conservation & collections care related health & safety and documentation, including:

- Monitoring
- Manual Handling
- COSHH
- Fire Safety
- Risk Assessments
- Method Statements
- Radiation Protection
- Working at Height
- Poisons, Toxins & Zoonotic Diseases

If a Health & Safety hazard is discovered during the course of conservation treatment or object movement, a full risk assessment of the object will be carried out by the Museum Access Team or external specialist before work continues.

6.10 Conservation Ethics

The Team Leader Museum Access will keep up to date with new developments in the conservation profession to ensure that the collections of Bolton Library & Museum Service are treated in line with current thinking. The Museum Access Team will keep up to date within their specialist areas.

Best practice will be strived for, adhering to professional guidelines and standards as listed in references below.

6.11 Sustainability

Sustainability issues will be considered in all work undertaken and the use of sustainable conservation methods & reduction in use of finite resources will be encouraged across the service as detailed in the Sustainability Policy Statement.

6.12 External collections care support and technical help

All external specialists brought in to work on site to support conservation & collections care at Bolton Library & Museum including technicians, mount makers and others will be expected to work to this policy as per conservation contract document. Specialists may be managed by Bolton's Team Leader Museum Access when working on collections care/conservation projects and or other members of the Museum Access Team when working on exhibitions/more design-based work.

Bolton Council maintains Membership of Harwell Priority User Service for all collections and membership of GMCRO for conservation & collections care support for archives, ephemera, and local studies.

6.13 Interns, student placements & Volunteers

The Museum Access Team will mentor any student placements, interns or volunteers working on the conservation and collections care of Bolton's collections all will be expected to work to this policy. Bolton's Team Leader Museum Access & the Museum Access Team will train all collections staff and ensure all students, interns and volunteers are trained before they begin work covering:

- Projects they will be working on
- Object handling
- Object packing & moving
- Pest identification

All student placements, interns or volunteers are instructed to inform collections team members if they see anything of concern.

6.14 Freelance Collections care professionals contacted or renting space in Bolton's Conservation Laboratories & workshops

Individuals renting space will be expected to adhere to this Conservation & Collections care policy. Objects brought into Bolton's facilities for treatment will need to be covered by insurance this may be provided by the freelancer, the owners of the items or under Bolton Councils insurance where negotiated with the senior management. A copy of the insurance document proving cover for the items will need to be filed with museum management.

Personal and Public liability insurance will also need to be held by any freelancers working on Bolton's sites.

A contract will be drawn up between Bolton Library & Museum Service and freelancers renting space to cover the following areas:

- Security & Access to premises
- IT provision
- Use of conservation lab space
- Use of lab equipment
- Use, storage and replacement of consumable conservation materials
- Availability and cost of support from BLAMS staff for example Technician assistance
- Insurance
- Confidentiality

6.15 Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments will be made, modifying this policy to suit individuals' access needs where possible, as and when required.

6.16 Allowance on the grounds of religious or cultural beliefs

Allowance on the grounds of religious or cultural beliefs will be made, modifying this policy to suit individual needs where possible, as and when required.

7. Monitoring and Review

- Managers are responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy.
- This policy will be subject to regular review, usually every 3 years or sooner in line with any new guidance that may be published.

8. References

Relevant standards and frameworks. The following is a list of current standards and frameworks to which BLAMS endeavours to align its preservation practices, procedures and guidance. This list will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Standards and codes of practice of the following professional bodies:

- The Institute of Conservation's Code of Conduct and Professional Standards
- The Museums Association (MA) code of ethics
- The National Archives
- Natural Sciences Collections Association (NatSCA),
- the International Council of Museums (ICOM),
- the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (ECCO)
- the International Institute for Conservation (IIC).

British standards:

- BS ISO 11799:2015 – Information and documentation – Document storage requirements for archive and library materials
- ISO/TR 19814:2017 – Information and documentation – Collections management for archives and libraries
- BS 4971:2017 – Conservation and care of archive and library collections
- BSI PAS 198:2012 – Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections
- BS ISO 14721:2012 – Space data and information transfer systems. Open archival information system (OAIS). Reference model
- BS EN 16893:2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections

Appendix 1 Conservation Agreement