

Theatre Collection**Date Approved:** 17.06.2020

– Theatre Collection Management Committee (TCMC)

Review Date: Annually by TC**Renewal Date:** June 2025**Theatre Collection: Care & Conservation Policy****Policy Statement**

Caring for our collections, which are Designated as outstanding, is a core function of the Theatre Collection (TC). Effective curation of our holdings to best protect and enable access to them underpins a wide range of our activities. We are committed to safeguarding the collections now and in the future. We will use the resources available to us in-house and seek external support whenever appropriate.

Purpose

- To delineate our strategic approach to the preservation of the collections in the care of the TC.
- To explain how we use preventative and remedial conservation measures, and the times when we need to refer to specialist conservation services and/or advice.
- To outline the safe use of and access to the collections, within the limits of the Theatre Collection's resources.

Context

The TC aims to improve the care and conditions of all its collections in accordance with BS 4971:2017, BS EN 16893:2018, Benchmarks in Collections Care¹, Signposts² and Spectrum 5.0³. It undertakes regular reviews of its collections and the conditions under which they are stored, accessed and exhibited. It also abides by the Museums Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums*⁴.

The safety and preservation of the collections will be considered as a key concern when developing any plans to alter their display, accessibility, and storage, or when modifying the buildings that house them.

¹ <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/benchmarks-in-collections-care-2-0/>

² http://swfed.highersites.co.uk/images/resources/Collections/Signposts_to_collection_care.pdf

³ <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/>

⁴ <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>

In all aspects of collections care and conservation, the TC's Environmental Sustainability Action Plan and the University's Sustainability Policy⁵ will be respected.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Care & Conservation Plan, Emergency Plan, Integrated Pest Management Policy, Cultural Collections Digital Preservation Policy, Collections Development Policy and Forward Plan.

Personnel

The care of the collections is the responsibility of everyone who works in the TC. The TC trains all staff and volunteers in the importance of high standards of collections care and how to handle the collections safely. No untrained personnel are allowed to handle items from the collection.

The TC will always consult relevant specialists before carrying out any work of a non-routine/preventative conservation nature. Remedial conservation will only be undertaken by professionally qualified conservators.

Collections care and conservation issues will be discussed at monthly TC staff meetings and referred to the TC Management Committee if appropriate.

Researchers or other visitors working with the collections will be briefed on how to handle items and will be supervised at all times, in accordance with the Reading Room Rules & Regulations which they are required to abide by when registering. Handling Guidelines are available on request.

Conservation

All preventative and remedial conservation will be undertaken according to the needs and priority of the collections assessed holistically. The TC also has the flexibility to respond rapidly to individual conservation issues in response to demand.

Most preventative conservation work will be carried out by staff, but some basic measures such as repackaging may be undertaken by trained and supervised volunteers, where appropriate.

The TC has access to the regional Conservation Development Officer (CDO) for regular advice regarding all conservation matters. (See Care and Conservation Plan for current post-holder's contact details). Any problems or concerns relating to the care of the collection are referred by the Director: Theatre Collection to the CDO or another appropriately qualified conservator.

⁵ http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/green/documents/policy/UoB%20Sustainability%20New%20Policy%20Document_v2.pdf

The TC will check the suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register will normally be chosen, and references and examples of previous work may be required during the selection process.

No item in the collections will be modified or altered until advice has been obtained from a suitably qualified conservator, to whom written guidelines will be provided by the Director of the Theatre Collection. Only suitably trained and/or qualified conservators will carry out interventive treatment on objects.

The museum will keep detailed records of all treatments carried out on objects, including the name and contact details of the person or company, photographs of the work carried out and details of materials used. Conservation reports will be required from contracted conservators. This information is linked to the Collections Management System and will form part of the document's record in the Collections Management System.

The Buildings

The University recognises that the maintenance of its buildings is fundamental to the preservation of both the building and collection and endeavours to keep the buildings in a suitable condition. The TC's holdings are stored and displayed in the three buildings – the 21 Park Row (shared building with the Theatre Department), the TC: Langford Store and the University of Bristol Library Services Research Reserve. The 21 Park Row and the TC:Langford Store buildings are owned by the University of Bristol (on a freehold basis) and Maintenance Services are responsible for their upkeep.

The University of Bristol's Estate Office supports the University's vision for the future by developing, servicing and managing the University estate to meet the institution's high standards. Under this remit they manage a programme of planned maintenance, repair and upgrade projects across the University's estate that includes both TC sites and their plant/equipment.

The University and TC carries out regular inspections of these buildings and notifies Maintenance Services about any remedial or maintenance work required. Any immediate problems or concerns are reported to Maintenance Services for resolution:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/Depts/Bursar/BuildingServices/index.htm>.

The University of Bristol Library Services Research Reserve is owned and maintained by Safestore. Staff have quarterly meetings with the landlords and report problems directly to the site manager who is on site five days a week. There is a regular cleaning and pest-checking programme. Fire risk assessments and a priority salvage plan is in place.

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The Collections

The TC is aware of the risks to the collection from environmental factors, poor handling, storage, display of materials and working methods. It is also aware of the need to monitor and record the condition of the collection. The TC recognises the different needs of the media types held within the collection (e.g. paper, textiles, AV, ceramics, photographs, digital, objects and props etc). It endeavours to provide the necessary conditions for each category as far as possible within the constraints of the buildings and storage areas. It recognises that some items will require individually tailored care; while others, like programmes, may be treated generically. The TC cares for its collections in store, on display, and whilst being consulted with equal care and diligence. It will loan its collections to other museums and/or organisations providing they can demonstrate equal or higher standards of collections care.

Digital media will be cared for in line with the Cultural Collections Digital Preservation Policy.

All the TC holdings are stored in environmentally controlled rooms (temperature and RH, controlled and monitored) most with UV filtered lights, VESDA fire or smoke detectors and intruder alarms and a high level of security. There is a regularly reviewed Emergency Plan in place which is accessible by key University personnel and a priority salvage plan.

Cleaning and Pest monitoring programmes are in place and there is an Integrated Pest Management Policy to deal with the unlikely eventuality of infestation.

Care and conservation of our holdings is integrated within all our activities. Key areas are reflected in the following documents:

Care & Conservation Plan:

- monitoring and improving environmental conditions to provide a stable environment, including temperature, relative humidity, light and dust
- safe handling
- housekeeping and cleaning
- appropriate storage materials and methods.

Care & Conservation Plan & Exhibition Guidelines:

- appropriate display materials and methods.

Care & Conservation Plan & Documentation Procedural Manual:

- transport/movement methods.

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Documentation Procedural Manual:

- documentation of the condition of the collection and of any treatments carried out on objects.

Environmental Sustainability Policy & Action Plan

- Energy management and sustainable procurement.

Integrated Pest Management Policy:

- managing the threat from pests

Emergency Plan

- safeguarding our collections.

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