CARE & CONSERVATION POLICY

Theatre Collection

**Date Approved:** 24 October 2012
– Theatre Collection Management Committee (TCMC)

**Review Date:** Annually by TC (February)

**Renewal Date:** October 2017

**Theatre Collection: Care & Conservation Policy**

**Policy Statement**

Caring for our important and significant collections is a central concern to the Theatre Collection (TC). Effective curation of our holdings in order to best protect and enable access to them is a core purpose and underpins a wide range of our activities. We are committed to safeguarding the collections’ future. We will use resources available to us in house and seek external support whenever appropriate.

**Purpose**

- The preservation of the collections and buildings in the care of the Theatre Collection.
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections and the times when we need to refer to specialist conservation services and/or advice.
- The safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of the Theatre Collection’s resources.

**Context**

The TC aims to improve the care and conditions of all its collection in accordance with PD5454:2012, Benchmarks in Collections Care¹ and Signposts². 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*³.

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

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² [http://swfed.highersites.co.uk/images/resources/Collections/Signposts_to_collection_care.pdf](http://swfed.highersites.co.uk/images/resources/Collections/Signposts_to_collection_care.pdf)
In all aspects of collections care and conservation, the TC’s Environmental Sustainability Policy Statement and the University’s Sustainability Policy will be respected.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Care & Conservation Plan, Emergency Plan, Integrated Pest Management Policy, Acquisitions and Disposal Policy and Forward Plan.

**Personnel**

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

The TC will not carry out interventionist conservation. It will always consult the relevant specialists before carrying out any work of a non-routine/preventative conservation nature.

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

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

**Conservation**

All preventative and remedial conservation will be undertaken according to the Conservation Priority Plan. Some basic preventative conservation measures may be undertaken by trained and supervised volunteers where there is deemed to be undue risk to the collection e.g. repackaging.

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.

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 of 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 will be recorded in a 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 two buildings – the Drama Department and the TC: Langford Store. These 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:


The Collections

The TC is aware of the risks to the collection from environmental factors, poor handling, storage, display materials and working methods. It is also aware of the need to monitor and record the condition of the collection. The TC also recognises the different needs of different media types held with 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 collection care.
Digital media will be cared for in line with University policies and procedures. Steps will be taken wherever possible to prevent obsolescence through sustainable storage such as that provided by the University’s Research Data Storage Facility (RDSF).

All the TC holdings are stored in environmentally controlled rooms (temperature and RH, controlled and monitored) with UV filtered lights, VESDA smoke 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.

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 of 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.

**Documentation Procedural Manual:**
- documentation of the condition of the collection and of any treatments carried out on objects.

**Environmental Sustainability Statement**
- Energy management and sustainable procurement.

**Environmental Sustainability Action Plan**
- Energy management and sustainable procurement.
**Integrated Pest Management Policy:**
- managing the threat from pests

**Emergency Plan**
- safeguarding our collections.