

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP CONSERVATION AND COLLECTIONS CARE POLICY 2023

This Policy is part of the Science Museum Group's Collections Management Policy framework, which consists of:

- SMG Collection Development Policy
- SMG Collection Information and Collection Access Policy
- SMG Conservation and Collections Care Policy

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GOVERNING BODY:	BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM
DATE:	OCTOBER 2023
DATE FOR REVIEW:	OCTOBER 2028

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Science Museum Group's vision is of a society that 'celebrates science, technology and engineering and their impact on our lives, now and in the future'.
- 1.2 This policy provides the framework for the preservation and conservation of the Science Museum Group Collection on display, in transit, on loan and in storage.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to the collections of the Science Museum Group.

3. PURPOSE

- 3.1 The National Heritage Act 1983 requires the Science Museum Group to care for, preserve and add to the objects in the collection, exhibit them to the public and make them available for study and research; and to promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of science and technology, and of the development of those subjects.
- 3.2 The purpose of conservation and collections care is to minimise deterioration and damage to the collection, and through these activities enable access to it and its use for research, display, learning and enjoyment.*

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The following definitions are set out in British Standard 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':

Preventive conservation – measures and actions aimed at avoiding or minimising future damage, deterioration and loss and, consequently, any invasive intervention.

Conservation – measures and actions aimed at safeguarding cultural heritage while respecting its significance, including its accessibility to present and future generations.

- 4.2 The Science Museum Group aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the use of, access to and preservation of the collection. The principles that govern the Group's approach to preservation and conservation are informed by:

- Risk management
- Compliance with relevant legislation
- Conservation/heritage science, research and data
- Following appropriate sector standards and ethical guidelines
- A fit-for-purpose approach
- Sustainability
- Effective training and communication of conservation and collections care issues to employees and relevant stakeholders

5. PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION POLICY

Preventive conservation requirements seek to balance, as far as possible, access to and use of the collection with the need to preserve collection items. Measures are taken to prevent damage and minimise the risk of deterioration of items wherever they are stored, handled, displayed, exhibited, operated or loaned.

*This policy takes account of relevant standards and frameworks, such as 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' and BS 4971:2017 'Conservation and care of archive and library collections'.

It is the policy of the Science Museum Group that:

- 5.1 The museums will apply preventive conservation measures to care for collection items over their life span, following a risk management approach based on material type and significance.
- 5.2 Any item known or suspected to contain a hazardous material will be assessed and managed in line with legal requirements and best practice.
- 5.3 Activities involving collections will be risk-assessed and managed to minimise the risks to original and/or significant material of deterioration, damage or loss.
- 5.4 All colleagues working near and with collections are responsible for the care of collections. Museum staff, interns, contractors and volunteers are to follow the agreed procedures, guidelines and training relevant to their work with collections.
- 5.5 Display materials and methods used for, or in proximity to, collection items will be appropriate for their intended purpose.
- 5.6 Building improvements and new builds to store collections will take into consideration the care of collections and sustainability.
- 5.7 The risk of damage to the collection by pests is reduced by implementing and maintaining a comprehensive integrated pest management programme across the entire museum estate.
- 5.8 The Group will take a risk management approach to environmental requirements for collection materials, balancing the needs of the collections with the demands of sustainability.

6. CONSERVATION TREATMENT POLICY

Conservation of the collection will follow a fit-for-purpose approach. The Science Museum Group's guiding principle is to minimise the amount of intervention required, with the exception of works required for working/operating objects.

It is the policy of the Science Museum Group that:

- 6.1 Conservation treatments will be undertaken by qualified or accredited experienced conservators, who will also oversee any work carried out by interns, technicians, work placement students or volunteers, in line with sector standards, best practice and ethical guidelines.
- 6.2 The conservation of collection items required for display, loan or study, or where condition requires urgent action to prevent loss, will be prioritised over conservation of items that are stable but not required for immediate use.
- 6.3 Treatment methods use safe, stable, tested materials that, where possible, compromise neither further conservation treatment or scientific examination, nor the authenticity of the object.
- 6.4 Where an item is approved for working/operational use, the treatment may require a higher level of intervention. Treatment will follow historically accurate methods where appropriate, preserve the integrity and original fabric of the item as far as possible, and may be detectable while not necessarily conspicuous. Please refer to 'Procedure for selecting and reviewing operating or working collection objects'.
- 6.5 Conservation treatments will be documented fully in the collections management database.
- 6.6 The Group does not provide advice to the general public on how to undertake conservation or recommend any one particular specialist. Enquiries are referred to the Institute of Conservation's Conservation Register.

7. RESEARCH AND SAMPLING

- 7.1 Scientific and technical examination and analysis will be used to identify materials, to inform conservation treatments and priorities, and to maintain and improve the preservation and understanding of the collections. Examination and analysis (including destructive sampling for research purposes) are undertaken following the Science Museum Group's procedures.