

4.6 Conservation and Preservation Policy

This policy establishes the principles and practices involved in the conservation and care of all collections at Gladstone's Library (GL). Care of collections is the responsibility of all who work in the Reading Rooms or use the collections.

The aim of this document is to provide staff, GWE and volunteers with guidance on the necessary methods and standards to care for collections and maintain access to them.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Mission Statements (4.1.1 and 4.1.2);
- Collections Development Policy (4.3);
- Disaster Plan (1.4);
- Reading Room Regulations (4.2);
- Conservation, Preservation, Copyright (Section 10);

Benchmarks and Standards

The following documents have been used in the preparation of this policy:

- Collections Trust. *Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives, and Libraries 2.1* (2018) <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/benchmarks-in-collections-care-2-0/>
- South-West Museum Development Trust. *Care and Conservation Policy Template* (July 2019). This template document is recommended by the Collections Trust in relation to their *Benchmarks* guidelines: <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/care-and-conservation-policy-template/>
- University of Liverpool Library, Special Collections & Archives. *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* (2018). This has been used to benchmark policy provision at GL against a major regional institutional department: <https://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/library/sca/policies>
- Alison Cullingford, *The Special Collections Handbook*, 2nd ed. (London: Facet, 2016).

Gladstone's Library is committed to meeting as far as possible the principles established in British Standard 4971: 2017 *Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections*. Over the lifecycle of this policy (3-5 years) steps will be taken to realise the implementation of this standard as closely as possible.

Definition of Terms

Collections Care: This defines all activities, including conservation and preservation, that contribute to the effective custodianship or safeguarding of the collection. Activities include managerial, technical, financial decisions, storage, staffing, policies, and approaches involved.

Conservation: Any intervention to repair or alleviate the effects of damage on an item. Interventions in, and changes to, the fabric of the item will vary.

Preservation: Any activity intended to prolong the life of an item while making as few changes as possible to the original item. Activities include environmental monitoring, storage conditions, disaster planning, digitisation (Digital Gladstone), accessibility (including through metadata), robust handling conditions and secure access policies.

People

All **permanent staff** are trained in the correct handling of all collection items (print/archive). Any concerns regarding the care and conservation of library collections and spaces should be addressed to permanent Reading Room staff, who will raise it immediately with the full Reading Room team.

GWE and **volunteer** positions are restricted as to which collection items they can access and handle. In the probationary period any work with collection items is closely supervised with associated training. As experience is gained, greater access and training can be negotiated.

Users are given free, on-shelf access only to the Main Collection (as of 2021). Access to restricted items (archives and special collections) must be applied for in advance. Handling training is given and access fully supervised by a member of the Reading Room team.

Storage Facilities

All spaces where collections are housed are environmentally *monitored*. Owing to the historic fabric of the building, all of our collections are housed in storage settings where *control* and *regulation* of temperature and environment (e.g. humidity, light) is not yet possible.

The main Reading Rooms (Theology and History Rooms) have filmed windows and are a UV-free environment. Adding film to all store windows is a stated aim (see Conservation and Preservation Strategy, **Section 10**). Lux, humidity and temperature are all potential environmental hazard in the main Reading Rooms.

As part of the Library's commitment to greater preservation, as of 2021 the majority of nineteenth-century items were removed to the Annex closed store, including the Gladstone Foundation Collection. Any items which are flagged as potentially harmed by being part of the Main Collection can be removed to closed store. Maintaining a closed store is an effective security measure, helping to minimise risk of damage or theft of these increasingly valuable items.

Item Storage

Though the Library's natural focus is the nineteenth-century it is important to note that early twentieth-century items are themselves over a century old. Age-related preservation measures are therefore in place for the majority of the Library's collections.

Printed Items: The oldest items (pre 1800) are stored in Closed Access with minimal light ingress; many nineteenth-century items are stored in Annex closed store with light prevention measures.

Many nineteenth-century Main Collection printed items remain stored on open-shelves and the library is committed to providing sustainable and cost effective housing for items in custom-made phase boxes for items deemed most in need.

It is not possible given current space capacities to store all items in ways appropriate for each item, especially large folio items. Efforts are always made to store items in conditions as close to ideal as possible where this is practical.

Archive Items: All archive items are stored in archive-quality housing, upgraded to the latest standard wherever possible. Brass paperclips and other archival preservation measures are taken. All archive items are held in either closed store or workspaces accessed only by staff.

Environmental Monitoring

The library is committed to monitoring temperature and humidity levels in all main collection storage areas. The system used to gather, monitor, and record environmental data (Hanwell Synergy) was installed in 2017 with an anticipated 5-10 year lifespan (including bi-annual calibration of hardware and periodic updates to software as required). Data loggers are placed in each main collection area.

Staff work to ensure the seamlessness of data monitoring and gathering in collaboration with our hardware/software provider, IMC, given the high likelihood that the historic fabric of the building will cause irregular issues with gathering and transmission of data.

Security

The Reading Rooms have operated for many decades on a system of trust between staff and a few well-known, largely residential users. The past decade has seen a huge rise in Day Readers as well as residents, leading to an increase in collection use outside of staff supervision. Gladstone's Library is committed to protecting our collections for the nation as well as maintaining access for researchers and scholars.

To that end, rare and irreplaceable items – archives, special collections, the Gladstone Foundation Collection – are freely available if requested in advance. Otherwise they remain secure in closed store.

Theft and vandalism of restricted items is mitigated as far as possible through invigilation at all times. Security cameras also operate in this room, the entrance, and main reception foyer.

Anyone using the Main Collection is reminded not to reshelve books themselves or remove them from the building.

Access & Handling

Access and handling training are high priority for all staff and users. Gladstone's Library is committed to best practice in handling collections and continually reinforces this message with staff and users.

All staff and users must abide by the Reading Room regulations which govern appropriate use of both collections and reading room spaces.

Users of items from restricted areas are provided with clear guidance on handling and using items. This guidance is informed by best practice in the field, such as the British Library/Preservation Advisory Centre booklet *Using Collections* (2013).

Copying & Reproduction

Photocopying is discouraged for any bound item in the collection, and entirely prohibited in the case of any pre-1950 text. If users wish to copy an unsuitable text a variety of options are available: self-service photography, staff scanning, or application to license an image for reproduction.

Users are able to apply for a Self-Service Photography Permit, allowing them to take photographs using their own devices of print and manuscript items rather than request these items are reproduced on their behalf. Before submitting, the applicant signs the SSPP, committing themselves to the copyright restrictions on re-use of images taken by users.

Gladstone's Library has invested in a robust copyright and rights management procedure, in consultation with Naomi Korn Associates. Rights clearance is now an integrated element of digitisation and reproduction procedures. Gradually the Library is building a picture of the rights inherent in administering the Library's collection.

Displaying and Loaning Items

All collection items (print and/or archive) intended for display in the History Room cabinet will be assessed for suitability by the Assistant Librarian and/or Archivist before installation. Best practice in displaying items will be followed, for example: National Library of Scotland, *Exhibiting the Written Word* (2011).

Gladstone's Library does not routinely grant permission for external loan of collection items. Requests for the loan of collection items nationally and internationally must be approved by the Director of Collections following assessments of the suitability of the item by the Archivist and/or Assistant Librarian. All loan requests should follow the standardised procedure of a completed request form. Any decisions on loans will be made in line with internal Exhibition Loans Conditions Guide.

Guidance will be followed on packing items to ensure best practice, for example: Caroline Bendix, *Moving Collections* (British Library Preservation Advisory Centre, 2013).

Housekeeping

Housekeeping staff undertake weekly cleaning of public and staff spaces. Library staff are committed to keeping public and staffed spaces clean and tidy outside of scheduled housekeeping maintenance. Restricted spaces will also be maintained regularly by either housekeeping or library staff.

Dusting of collection items is the remit of library staff (paid and volunteers) rather than internal housekeeping.

Conservation

A small budget is maintained each year the purchase of correct supplies and equipment in support of conserving items. Any and all conservation tasks and equipment will be formally assessed to measure and mitigate risks involved. All supplies and equipment must comply with COSHH (2002).

For printed items on open shelves and restricted areas, a regular programme of basic dusting will be undertaken throughout the year. This work is suitable for paid staff, Graduate Work Experience placements, and volunteers. Appropriate training will be given.

Any conservation work requiring wet treatments must take place in a well-ventilated space that does not interfere with the working conditions of other staff (paid/volunteer). All conservation work beyond (basic cleaning) deemed essential for the stability of collection items should be conducted by an external accredited conservator where funds allow.

Given the limits on funding available for conservation, items will be assessed using the following criteria:

- Historical significance (national/international)
- Institutional significance
- Level of damage, and likelihood of advanced further deterioration
- Estimated demand for item

All conservation work conducted internally should follow best practice as established in guide such as: Jane Thompson Webb, *Successful Basic Conservation: A Do-it-Yourself Guide* (Association of Independent Museums, 2014); Caroline Bendix and Nicholas Pickwood, "Books," in *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping: Care and Conservation of Collections in Historic Houses* (Swindon: The National Trust, 2011), pp. 475-487.

Document Control

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Author: Gary Butler

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Revision Policy

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v. 1	30/08/2019	Policy document created, awaiting approval from LY, DR.
v.2	12/09/2019 -	Additions, alterations, changes.
v. 3	October 2020	Reviewed: renumbered to 4.6 and renamed to Preservation and Conservation Policy'; absorbed 4.8 Storage Policy.