



Policy for the Conservation and Care of the Collections of The Hunterian, University of Glasgow

Policy Name	Hunterian Conservation and Care Policy
Approved by	Hunterian Strategic Development Board
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1. Conservation and Collections Care at The Hunterian

Our Mission - As an integral part of the University of Glasgow, The Hunterian preserves and develops its collections and expertise for innovation and engagement, to create meaning, value and relevance with academic, museum and civic communities.

Our Vision - The Hunterian aims to be an ethical and accessible museum organisation that engages critically with its historic legacy for the benefit of all of its stakeholders and audiences, in support of the University's effort to positively affect society.

The Hunterian acknowledges the following definitions as set out in the British Standard PAS197:2009 'Code of practice for cultural collections management'¹:

Collections care (Preventive conservation): the range of activities intended to safeguard a collection. Note: these can include organisation policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning.

Conservation: interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of the item and to ensure its continued availability for exhibition and study.

In 2016 the Hunterian along with partners Glasgow Life and the National Library of Scotland began moving collections into a purpose-built collections store and study centre in Kelvin Hall. This represents a major improvement in collections access, use, care and conservation in The Hunterian.

2. Aim of this Policy

The aim of this Policy is to outline preventive and interventive collections care principles that will allow for the continued access, use, research and display of the collections for present and future users. The Conservation and Collections Care plan will allow for the delivery of the statements made in this policy.

This policy should be used as part of the Collections Management Framework and used in conjunction with the following policies: Collections Development Policy, Documentation Plan, Conservation Plan and Policy, Collections Management Procedural Manual, Loans Policy, Human Remains Policy, Repatriation Policy.

3. Ethics

All conservation carried out in the Hunterian will be carried out in compliance with the sector guidance laid out in the Institute of Conservation (ICON) Ethical Guidance 2020.² The Museum Association code of ethics³ and the ICOM code of ethics.⁴

Where possible we will consult with originating communities around conservation proposals of culturally significant objects.

4. Standards

¹ PAS197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management, BSi (2009)

² <https://www.icon.org.uk/resource/icon-ethical-guidance.html>

³ <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/ethics/code-of-ethics/>

⁴ <https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/code-of-ethics/>

We will aim to meet the following standards in our preservation and conservation procedures:

The Institute of Conservation (ICON) Professional Standards ⁵

B/560 of the British Standards Institution Conservation of tangible cultural heritage ⁶

The National Conservation Science Benchmarks in Collections Care ⁷

We will also aim to meet the guiding principles of The Bizot Green Protocol 2023. ⁸ These principles are already met with our Kelvin Hall store and will be considered as part of future redevelopment planning.

5. Collections Care and Conservation Principles

Caring for the collections is a fundamental duty for all museums. Our policy for the care of the collections is based on a combination of preventative and remedial conservation, both designed to ensure the use and the long-term preservation of the collections.

The Hunterian takes a risk management approach to collections care. We aim to provide suitable, stable and sustainable environmental conditions for the collection that achieves a satisfactory balance between accessibility and use, and the long-term preservation of the objects and specimens.

Conservation treatments are prioritized within the framework of available resources and the requirements of use of the collections in exhibition programmes, teaching and research, external loans, or where condition requires urgent action to prevent loss. Approval of all conservation requirements and treatments is the responsibility of the Conservation Manager.

All conservation carried out on objects, whether by Hunterian staff or external contractors, is fully documented in the collections management system and attached to the relevant object catalogue record in accordance with the documentation procedural manual.

Collections care is the responsibility of all staff. The Hunterian employs professional conservation, collections management and curatorial personnel and provides appropriate training, risk assessments and standard operating procedures for them when working on collections. Where skills are not available in-house for a particular treatment or material, resources will be sought for external expertise; such resources may be dependent upon grant applications.

6. Preventive measures

Preventative conservation covers the measures necessary to reduce, or to check, the risk of deterioration of objects and specimens. The necessary preventative measures are based on a thorough understanding of how objects and specimens react to their environment and deteriorate physically or chemically. Preventive conservation requirements seek to balance access and use of the collection with the need to preserve collection items. A preventive conservation strategy is the primary objective in the Hunterian's approach to collections care, supported by interventive approaches where necessary.

⁵ <https://www.icon.org.uk/resources/resources-for-conservation-professionals/standards-and-ethics/icon-professional-standards.html>

⁶ <https://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/committees/50001857#published>

⁷ <https://www.ncs.org.uk/benchmarks3.php>

⁸ <https://www.cimam.org/sustainability-and-ecology-museum-practice/bizot-green-protocol/>

Objects will be displayed and stored in environments that minimizes their rate of deterioration. Appropriate storage materials will be used, for example, acid-free boxes, etc. Pest control measures will be used, and pest risks monitored. Hazardous material will be segregated, and appropriate risk signage attached to object and documented in collections management system. Cleaning of display and storage areas will be undertaken by, or overseen by, Hunterian staff.

In the event of a collections care incident the Hunterian Emergency Plan will be activated.

6a. Environmental Monitoring

As part of a regular environmental monitoring programme we will:

- Monitor the environment in storage and display areas, and measure and record relative humidity (RH), temperature, light levels (including UV light) and atmospheric pollutants where applicable.
- Collect environmental data using continuous recording systems and hand held meters.
- Collate, monitor and act upon data to provide stable and appropriate environments for collections.
- Monitor, manage and eradicate pests via an integrated pest management (IPM) system.

7. Interventive measures

Interventive conservation measures will be taken where there is clear and identifiable risk to the condition of any object.

Interventive measures will be prioritised where such work is necessary to fulfil the needs of use of the collections in exhibition programmes, teaching and research, external loans, or where condition requires urgent action to prevent loss. External funding will be sought for treatment that is beyond existing resources.

Only suitably qualified and experienced ICON accredited (or similar) external professionals will be engaged to assess and treat the collections.

8. Collections Use and Access

Access to the Hunterian collections will normally be provided in the Hunterian Study Centre facility in Kelvin Hall. All use of the collections will be risk assessed prior to use taking place and access will be supervised by Hunterian staff. All research, teaching and exhibition or loan use, including condition assessments, treatments, and total exposure times, will be recorded in the collections management system and attached to individual object catalogue records.

Standard handling and storage procedures will be followed when specimens are used within Hunterian. Users will be provided with relevant equipment (for example, gloves, book-rests) and information (for example, handling guidelines and risk assessments) about the use will be provided in advance to minimize risk of damage during use.

Material being used will be monitored for damage and may be withdrawn from use if deemed at risk (in which case, resources will be sought to address these conservation needs as a priority).

Appropriate and trained staff will undertake conservation reports, risk assessments and photography of material as required prior to acquisition, display and loans out. All incoming loans will be condition assessed upon arrival and compared with the lender's condition report. The Hunterian will not carry out work on any objects/specimens without securing prior written permission from the legitimate title holder.

Material may be withdrawn from the proposed use at any time (for example, the loan or acquisition rejected) if the risk of damage to the object is unacceptably high. Incoming material, including returning loans out and new acquisitions, will be quarantined and assessed following the Hunterian entry procedure.

9. Research and Sampling

All requests to carry out sampling and analysis of collections must complete the Hunterian Research sampling and analysis request application form detailing the research project and the proposed sampling methodology. All applications are subject to recommendation by the Collections Development Group and approval by the Hunterian leadership team.

10. Health and Safety

All hazardous materials within the collection will be identified and made safe where possible and stored and labelled appropriately in line with COSHH regulations. Hazardous material within the collection includes objects containing radioactive sources, asbestos and poisons such as arsenic, mercury and lead among others. This also includes collections stored in chemicals such as formaldehyde and industrial methylated spirits. Objects identified as hazardous or potentially hazardous will be documented as such in the collections management system.

Regular training on object handling and identifying and working with hazardous material will be provided for all staff who regularly work with the collections. Where identified by risk assessment appropriate PPE and equipment will be provided.