

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 This procedure aims to define some of the main preservation and conservation actions undertaken by the University of Malta Library, most particularly those undertaken by the Special Collections Department
- 1.2 In order to remain relevant the Special Collections Department keeps abreast of current literature on the subject and maintains a close working relationship with local professional paper conservators and with their counterparts in other local institutions, including the *National Library of Malta* and the *National Archives of Malta*.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Anoxia Treatment: Anoxia is a treatment used in conservation to kill insects by way of oxygen deprivation. This treatment is free of chemicals and kinder on the material and, moreover, presents no health risks to staff and users.
- 2.2 BS: British Standard: the specification of recommended procedure, quality of output, terminology, and other details, in a particular field, drawn up and published by the British Standards Institution.
- 2.3 Conservation: Treatment and repair of individual items to slow down decay or to restore to a usable state.
- 2.4 DDT: Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane is a modern synthetic insecticide developed in the 1940's, which was in the past widely used as a pesticide. DDT was canceled in 1972 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- 2.5 IR: Institutional Repository
- 2.6 Metadata: Data that serves to provide context or additional information about other data. Title, subject, author and, place and date of publication are examples of metadata fields that constitute information about a document.
- 2.7 PO Purchase Order
- 2.8 Preservation: Set of non-interventive activities undertaken "to anticipate, prevent, stop or retard deterioration" in order to extend useful life of a record

and relevant metadata to ensure continued availability. Preservation measures are more cost-effective than intervention measures.

- 2.9 RH: Relative humidity
- 2.10 SC: The Special Collections (SC) is composed of library and archival materials that cover a kaleidoscope of subjects and material types. The material that makes up SC serves to enhance institutional prestige and imparts a distinct character to the Library that helps to distinguish its collections from those of its peers. Included among the works found here is material of importance to Malta's "collective memory" (Samut-Tagliaferro, 7).
- 2.11 SCD: The Special Collection Department. The material is mainly housed in two departments located in the Main Library building, which fall under the aegis of the SCD, namely the *Melitensia* Department, which since 2011 enjoys selective legal deposit status, (Malta Libraries Act No. VII of 2011, Art. 10:1), and the Archives & Rare Books Department. Not all of SC is housed in these two departments as some of the Department's artificial collections are housed in the branch libraries namely: *Faculty of Arts Library* and *Laws and Theology Library*, (both of which are located on the main campus, Msida), and *Valletta Campus Library* (located in the Old University Building, Valletta) (Samut-Tagliaferro, 7).
- 2.12 UV: Ultraviolet light
- 2.13 UML: University of Malta Library

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the Manager of Reader Services

- 3.1.1 The Manager of Reader Services is responsible for organising good housekeeping of the material under his care by keeping the books, shelves and the area where they are held clean and free of dust in order to discourage insect infestation and thereby prolong the material's useful life.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Special Collection Manager

- 3.2.1 The SC Manager is responsible for the preservation and conservation of the *Archives & Special Collections* under her care as well as for the conservation of some of the older and more valuable material on the Open Floors.

- 3.2.2 The SC Manager is responsible for organising good housekeeping of the material under her care by keeping the SC material, shelves and the areas where it is held free of dust in order to discourage insect infestation and thereby prolong the material's useful life.
- 3.2.3 Ensures that appropriate fire extinguishers are available in the various spaces where SC material is held and reports to the Director of Library Services. Overall responsibility for appropriate fire extinguishers in all areas of the Library falls on the Director of Library Services.
- 3.2.4 Identifies material as being good candidates for the Library's digitisation programme. This can include material that is fragile and in frequent demand i.e. create a digital surrogate in order to better preserve the original.
- 3.2.5 Teaches staff how to create customized acid-free pamphlet boxes for housing archival material in order to create a micro-climate free of dust and other contaminants.
- 3.2.6 The Library's anoxia programme falls under the responsibility of the SC Manager.
- 3.2.7 Staff training to introduce a preservation/conservation culture in the organisation such as: a) how to handle fragile material sensitively in order not to cause any harm to the material; b) how to recognise signs of insect infestation and mould, iii) how to avoid cross-contamination by setting aside material for treatment, and iv) introducing alternative methods to avoid damaging or disfiguring rare books when affixing classification labels and library book plates.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 Appropriate fire extinguishers are available in all the various spaces where Library material including SC material is held.
- 4.2 The cleaning of "dirty books" held in the SC, (including incoming donations), can expose staff to insects and their excrement, mildew, as well as, on very rare occasions, to DDT, a banned insecticide but widely used in the past.
- 4.3 Problematic books and other material which may present a health risk are shown to a professional conservator. Once a quote is received and the necessary 'go-ahead' given these are then packed and sent to a professional conservator for treatment.
- 4.4 Surgical gloves, dust masks and lab coats are supplied by the Library with the Manager of SC regularly ordering these supplies in order to ensure that these items are always kept in stock.
- 4.5 The need for a proper working space and 'quarantine area' where preservation and conservation needs can be properly assessed prior to developing a treatment plan to reduce the risk of contra-contamination in the case of incoming donations is greatly felt.

- 4.6 The SC Manager has introduced anoxia treatment as the preferred method for treating insect infestation as this poses no health risk either to the staff or to the researchers consulting the material. This method has replaced fumigation.

5. PROCEDURE

5.1 Preservation

- 5.1.1 In order to prolong the life of the material, the SCD undertakes various precautionary measures. For example surrogates are created to reduce the handling of the original material and enhance access. This is done by digitizing and uploading the material on the IR. Digital images are also the preferred option when the SCD's reprographic services receive requests for copies.
- 5.1.2 Other precautionary measures include inserting material in acid-free sleeves to reduce handling and the appropriate housing which includes the boxing of material to create a micro-climate free of light and dust. Other measures include the presence of appropriate fire extinguishers, provision of reading-room rules and security, good housekeeping to reduce the risk of insect infestation and the use of snake weights and supports to cradle books.
- 5.1.3 Maintaining stable temperature and RH is highly important for the preservation of material and a unit has been installed in the Archives to reduce harmful fluctuations. A stable temperature and RH is maintained at levels in accordance with BS4971:2017. This is a British Standard which provides recommendations for the long-term preservation of archives and library collections.
- 5.1.4 Stable temperature and RH is only present in the *Archives & Rare Books Department*. The rest of the collections, due to a surge in growth in the last six years, are occupying temporary spaces spread throughout the building, including the Library basement.
- 5.1.5 Blinds are installed on windows and lights are switched off when area is not occupied to reduce harmful UV light.
- 5.1.6 The overall conditions of the library material is well maintained thanks to regular monitoring and inspections and the taking of appropriate action when needed.

5.2 Conservation

- 5.2.1 The SC Manager assesses the conservation needs of the material in her care and when in doubt consults a professional conservator for advice. Assessment is done

on a continuous basis as part of the house-keeping routine. Occasions when a professional conservator may be contacted can include: a) when material requires intervention or b) to enhance preservation conditions in order to avoid future costly conservation treatment e.g. changing the place where material is kept within the building if this is judged to be kinder towards the material in question.

- 5.2.2 To date the conservators consulted have mainly been paper conservators but this is likely to extend to other specialists in the future as the collections continue to grow and incorporate other types of material. (Particularly sensitive material such as audio-visual material is held in the Archives as this is the only room with stable temperature and RH but other types of material are not always this fortunate).
- 5.2.3 The SC Manager develops a preservation and conservation plan within the limitations of the building and consults a professional conservator when necessary.
- 5.2.4 The SC Manager chooses with the aid of a conservator when necessary appropriate preservation and conservation measures:

Examples:

- a) Where conservation treatment is needed such as for broken spine due to poor handling of rare book material in the past, a professional conservator is contacted for advice and a quote for treatment is sought.

Where a book is located on the open floors (i.e. not SC material), and therefore subject to more wear and tear and is less valuable, it is likely to be: i) replaced by a more recent edition; ii) repaired by inhouse staff before being replaced by a more recent edition, iii) sent to a professional conservator for conservation treatment, should it be judged that the work is worth the expense involved and, in which case, a quote is sought.

- b) Where material is fragile and in high demand, the decision may be taken by the SC Manager in consultation with the Director of Library Services to digitise material to reduce handling and increase visibility. Depending on fragility of material, digitisation can be undertaken either using a flat-bed scanner, or where appropriate, a digital camera (without flash) may be used. Where material is still in copyright, an attempt is made to seek copyright clearance. When in doubt, the SC Manager consults the services of the UM Legal Services Advisory on copyright issues.

- c) Anoxia treatment in the case of insect infestation

SOP NUMBER	SOP TITLE
ZSD-OP-001-01	PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION

5.3 Anoxia treatment procedure:

- 5.3.1 Infected material is initially isolated, listed and boxed.
- 5.3.2 Boxes are then numbered and clearly labeled with the name of collection (e.g. *Godfrey Wettinger Bequest*) and of institution (i.e. UML), sealed with tape and box measurements. This is necessary information for when a quote needs to be taken.
- 5.3.3 The conservation laboratory is contacted and asked to provide a quote as well as to inform SC Manager of when the next anoxia cycle is scheduled to commence.
- 5.3.4 On receipt of quote the SC Manager sends quote to the Director's Personal Assistant who is responsible for obtaining a PO.
- 5.3.5 When this is approved, the labeled and numbered boxes holding infected material are transported by Library support staff using the Library van to the specific laboratory where anoxia treatment takes place.
- 5.3.6 At the end of anoxia month-long-cycle, the conservation laboratory contacts the SC Manager in order to send staff to collect the material.
- 5.3.7 Material is collected and counted to ensure that nothing is left behind.
- 5.3.8 A disinfestation guarantee, together with invoice, is issued by the laboratory and handed to support staff who on arrival pass it on to the SC Manager.
- 5.3.9 On arrival, material is unpacked and checked against listings and a note placed in pencil on each item recording the treatment received, (e.g. anoxia treatment July 2017), as per 'good practice' dictum.
- 5.3.10 The invoice is checked and passed on by SC Manager to Director's Personal Assistant for payment. Whole exercise is supervised and co-ordinated by SC Manager who copies in Director of Library Services in all correspondence.

6. REFERENCES

- 6.1 Bendix, Caroline, and Alison Walker. British Library Preservation Advisory Centre: Cleaning. 2011. 12 p. 9 Nov. 2017
<https://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/cleaning_books_and_documents.pdf>
- 6.2 BS 4971:2017 Conservation and care of archive and library collections.
- 6.3 Henderson, Jane. British Library Preservation Advisory Centre: Environment. 2013. 20 p. 9 Nov. 2017.

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<www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/managing_library_archive_environment.pdf>.

6.4 Samut-Tagliaferro, Mary. *About Special Collections and Archives at the University of Malta Library*. BookMark : University of Malta, Junior College Library. 12 (Apr/May) 2017. 7-8 p. 9 Nov. 2017. <<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/17965>>.

6.5 Walker, Alison. British Library Preservation Advisory Centre: Basic Preservation. 2003 rev. 2013. 10 p. 9 Nov. 2017.
<www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/collectioncare/publications/booklets/basic_preservation.pdf>.

7.0 LIST OF APPENDICES/WORKSHEETS

7.1 N/A