



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The
University
Library.



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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT

Care and Conservation Policy

Introduction

The University Library's mission for its Special Collections Department is to collect, conserve, preserve, develop and exploit materials which are of special importance to:

- the University's strategic objectives in research and teaching
- its place in the contemporary life, history and heritage of Sheffield, its region and the UK
- its international reputation as a centre of excellence in research and scholarship.

We are committed to ensuring that the material in our care is preserved for access by present and future generations, both within the University and in the wider community.

We comply with recognised standards for preservation and conservation as far as possible, and we have a programme of conservation work to be carried out according to agreed priorities and available resources.

Storage

The University Library ensures that Special Collections have appropriate conditions for the storage of archives and rare books, working to comply with the appropriate standards. Smoke detectors are located throughout the building, and linked to the University's Control Centre and thence to the local Fire Service. One of the store rooms also includes a fire-retardant gas system which is serviced on a quarterly basis.

Security

The University Library is committed to ensuring appropriate levels of security for these unique and distinctive collections, both physical and digital.

Access to the storage areas is restricted to appropriate staff and is controlled by swipe cards, keys and fobs as required, and the building is locked and alarmed out of hours.

Visitors both to the building and to the Special Collections area are required to provide photo ID and to sign in and out. There is surveillance by CCTV cameras in the Library in general and

in the Special Collections reading room specifically. We provide lockers for visitors to secure their personal possessions, and do not permit bags in the reading room.

Environmental monitoring and control

The environment in all areas where rare books and archives are stored and consulted is continually monitored, and is managed by the Library's building management system. The data collected is retained to enable analysis and to prompt action where required.

Packaging

To protect our archival holdings, we use acid-free boxes and folders, polyester sleeves, unbleached tape and brass paperclips. Rare books are enclosed in bespoke packaging and/or unbleached tape if their physical state requires it.

Housekeeping

New accessions are inspected for dangers such as mould and pests before being placed in the main storage areas. Affected items may be quarantined, treated externally or removed from the collections as appropriate.

Handling

Visitors consult archives and rare books in our invigilated reading room: they are provided with equipment to enable good handling such as foam supports, cushions, weighted snakes, and are given advice and guidance on appropriate handling practices. Fragile items are identified and may be withheld from public access. Where resources and physical state permit, digital copies may be made available.

Exhibition

Exhibitions in Western Bank Library are mounted in secure display cabinets according to recognised standards. Environmental conditions are monitored, as are light levels, and the exhibition cases are alarmed. Material may be loaned to other libraries, archives, museums and galleries if the appropriate facilities and insurance can be provided and if the physical condition of the material requested is sufficiently robust.

Conservation

Wherever possible, the preventive preservation actions described above help to minimise the need for active conservation treatment of physical items. When this is required, we use an external conservator working to recognised professional standards.

Risk assessment and management

Risks to the rare books and archives are managed through the provision of appropriately qualified staff, secure and environmentally-monitored storage and consultation areas, preservation equipment and handling guidance, as described above.

The building is the responsibility of the University's Estates & Facilities Management Department whose brief includes inspection and maintenance.

The University Library maintains a Business Continuity Plan, which incorporates a disaster response plan providing procedures and basic guidelines to be followed in the event of an emergency to minimise damage to buildings and holdings. The Library subscribes to Harwell Document Restoration Services.

Digital Preservation

There is a separate document currently in draft which details our Digital Preservation Policy.