



Care and Conservation Policy

The Policy was approved 01.02.16 by Sybil Crouch, Head of Cultural Services, Taliesin, Swansea University

It will be reviewed and reapproved once every 5 years

Policy statement

Preservation of the collection is one of the three core roles identified in the Egypt Centre's Forward Plan (2013):

Preservation of the collection and thus collection management is the basis of any museum. Without the collection there would be no museum. Collections are fundamental to the defining and workings of a museum. The Collection Development Policy, conservation strategy and documentation are central to this and are a requirement of accreditation.

The collection is valuable in terms of monetary value but 'academically' priceless.

The effective management of the collection is important within the University as the collection attracts students to the University (information from Egypt Centre student questionnaires); two academic modules are built upon the collection and others are heavily dependent upon them; it is important to the prestige of the University; it may affect the University's future plans in terms of funding. Outside the University, the collection is among the top in the UK, it is therefore an ACCES partner (<http://www.acces.org.uk/>). It is the largest Egyptology collection in Wales and enjoyed by visitors and scholars locally and nationally. Much of the collection is on loan (see Collections Development Policy) and the museum has a duty of care to those loaning the collection.

Museum Internal policies and plans directly related to preservation of the collection are

- the Collection Development Policy
- the Documentation Policy
- the Documentation Procedural Manual
- the Emergency Plan
- the Egypt Centre risk assessment

External standards by which the Museum operates in Care and Conservation policy and plan include:

- SPECTRUM
- *Benchmarks on Collection Care for Museums Archives and Libraries, A self Assessment Checklist*, MLA 2011, updated 2014¹
- BSI PD5454 'Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents'

Organisational structure and roles

Care of the collection is one of the core roles of the curator, though all staff and volunteers have a duty of preventative conservation. As the museum does not have a trained conservator, outside contractors are used.

¹ Can be downloaded from: <http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/benchmarks-in-collections-care-resources/item/691-benchmarks-in-collection-care-for-museums-archives-and-libraries/download/benchmarks2-updated-oct-2014-pdf>

Any conservator or conservation practice that is contracted to provide advice or services is included on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation (ICON) and, where available, a professionally accredited conservator is used.

Conservation activities undertaken by the Egypt Centre staff include:

- ensuring that artefacts are displayed or stored so as to minimise deterioration
- handling, moving and packing artefacts so as to minimise deterioration
- monitoring and recording of objects to assess deterioration
- where necessary and resources all employing external specialists
- alerting relevant persons or groups where risk to the collection cannot be managed by Egypt Centre staff
- planning for emergencies with the help of the University Emergency team (The Centre has an Emergency Plan which is reviewed once every 5 year)

Care and Conservation Plan

Standards of collections care

Collection care is carried out according to SPECTRUM standards. Specifically:

- all conservation information is accessible via the object number, and is up-to-date
- appropriate authorisation is received prior to conservation taking place
- details of all interventive conservation work and preventive conservation measures are recorded, with the name of the person who performed the work, the organisation to which they belong and the date on which it took place
- catalogue records are updated if any new information is established or information lost as a result of conservation
- after conservation treatment, call-back condition checks or periodic care activities are scheduled by date

Volunteers are all trained in preventative conservation. All volunteers attend an induction which includes a preventative conservation element. This is backed up by questions which they must answer in a training workbook. Gallery supervisors also attend an additional preventative conservation course.

Outside conservators are chosen from the ICON list of accredited conservators used:

<http://www.conservationregister.com/>

In September 2015, The Centre carried out a self-assessment exercise based on the document *Benchmarks on Collection Care for Museums Archives and Libraries, A Self Assessment Checklist*, MLA 2011, updated 2014. As a result objectives for 2016-2020 were drawn up:

The greatest areas of concern are the stores where there are no environmental controls and space is inadequate. Boxes are not marked to indicate contents (though this could easily be carried out with a computer catalogue printout. Additional, the movement of objects from stores to the museums when they are required by external or internal researchers is a danger to artefacts. Stores should either be adjacent to the museum display, or, there should be adequate space for study of artefacts adjacent to stores.

The second most important concern was the audit checks and ministering. These are carried out though need to be continued and if possible increased.

The situation may be summarised as follows:

Buildings

Building condition is maintained and monitored by the Estates Department with the Egypt Centre having little control. However, the display areas and stores are all of watertight, solid construction. Floors are concrete. Alarm systems ensure that these are secure. There is a CCTV system in the display area. The display areas are environmentally controlled with no natural light and reduced artificial light. There is no natural light in the stores. There are no temperature and humidity controls in the stores. Stores and display areas are not adjacent to one another, but are in separate buildings. There is no provision for study of objects within stores and space is at a premium so that objects are stored too close to one another (making handling without damage difficult). The advice of a security advisor was taken for accreditation in 2012. The building was judged secure. No security changes have taken place since then.

Environmental Monitoring

Humidity and RH monitoring takes place in the display areas. Environmental monitoring of the stores has not taken place for some time.

Display areas are checked daily for pests and other problems (humidity, temperature, physical safety of objects, etc.). This is recorded. Stores are checked less frequently and this is not recorded.

Environmental Control

Because of the problems of environmental control of the galleries, as many items as possible are put on display (Objective 13 in Forward Plan 2013). It was decided that aesthetics were less important than the preservation of the collection.

The humidity and temperature of stores cannot be maintained, however, particularly sensitive material, for example metalwork, is stored in sealed plastic boxes with a suitable micro-environment.

Most artefacts are stored either in cases on display or are boxed in acid free boxes packed with acid free tissue paper. Large items in store are covered with deacidified tissue paper. Textiles and thin cartonnage pieces are stored, where possible, in melinex sleeves and placed in boxes.

Objects in boxes can be identified through the museum catalogue (every box is numbered and the contents can be seen on the catalogue). However, the Self-Assessment checklist advises that contents of each box should be more readily identified.

There are no commercial cleaning products used in stores or the galleries.

Audit Checks

Audit checks are carried out on the collection, objects photographed and repacked. These are done by the curator with the help of supervised volunteers. However, these are not carried out with sufficient frequency. In 2014, for example, only 600 audit checks were carried out. As there are over 5000 objects in the collection it would take 10 years to go through the whole group. Thus, it is suggested that the curator aim for 20 objects a week (1040) a year.

Objectives

- Continue to press the University for adequate storage space for the collection (ongoing)
- Curator's checklists in place (see below) (ongoing)
- £500 on conservation pa (to be used for general conservation advice and remedial conservation)
- Each box to be marked to indicate contents (December 2016)
- Heavy boxes to be put on lower shelves, better packing of boxes (to be done alongside audit checks)

Curator's Conservation Checklists

Weekly

| | | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Task | | | | |
| Check insect traps | | | | |
| 20 objects audited | | | | |

Audit

20 objects will be given an audit check each week. This will include checking the location of objects, photographing any that either do not have photographs or any that are being monitored and recording that the check was done on the computer database.

Any artefacts that appear unstable, fragile or are metalwork will be monitored every 6 months ideally, if not yearly. Monitoring involves photographing them, adding them to a monitoring database and noting any changes. If artefacts are deteriorating they may either be moved to more stable conditions, and/or the advice of an accredited conservator sought.

Monthly

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Task | | | | |
| Cleaning Wellcome store | | | | |
| Check and record insect traps and general condition of stores | | | | |
| Check alarms Wellcome store | | | | |
| Cleaning Room 8 | | | | |
| Thermohydrograph Room 8 | | | | |
| Thermohydrograph Wellcome Room | | | | |

The Egypt Centre possesses two thermohydrographs. While readings were carried out in both stores shortly before the museum opened and were found to be stable, the situation may have changed. Therefore, the thermohydrographs will be placed in stores 1st week each month over 1 year. It should be noted that there is at present no opportunity for more suitable stores. However, if stores are found to have fluctuating environmental conditions, sensitive artefacts should be moved out and put on display where conditions are more stable.

Yearly

| Display case cleaned and artefacts checked | Date | Date | Date | Date |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| HD gods | | | | |
| HD amulets | | | | |
| HD Domestic piety | | | | |
| HD mummification | | | | |
| HD cartonnage | | | | |
| HD coffins | | | | |
| HD provisioning dead | | | | |
| HD animals | | | | |
| HL metalwork | | | | |
| HL offerings | | | | |
| HL technology | | | | |
| HL stone | | | | |
| HL costume | | | | |
| HL pottery | | | | |
| HL maths and writing | | | | |
| HL Amarna | | | | |
| HL Predynastic | | | | |
| HL games | | | | |
| HL plants | | | | |
| HL body adornment | | | | |
| HL faience and glass | | | | |
| HL wood | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

The yearly checklist acts as an audit check on artefacts on display (see above).