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Swansea University  
Prifysgol Abertawe

## **The Egypt Centre Care & Conservation Policy & Conservation Plan**

**Name of museum:** The Egypt Centre

**Name of governing body:** Special Collections Executive Group, SU Libraries, Swansea University

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** 31 Oct 2019

**Approval given by:** Steve Williams, Head of Libraries, Archives, Culture, and Arts

**Policy Review Procedure:** The Care and Conservation Policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years

**Date on which this policy is due for review:** 31 Oct 2024

# Conservation and Care Policy

## 1. Introduction

This Policy sets out the principles governing the care and conservation of objects held by the Egypt Centre, Swansea University. It should be viewed in conjunction with the Conservation Procedure and Plan (see below), which detail how the statements in this policy will be delivered. The policy is one element of the Egypt Centre's wider collections management framework.

It should be read in conjunction with the documents contained in the Egypt Centre Collection Development Policy, Documentation Policy, Documentation Procedural Manual, and Emergency Plan.

## 2. Mission Statement

*The Egypt Centre aims to collect, interpret and care for Egyptian archaeological material and related documentation in order to enhance the education and cultural life of Wales and beyond, now and in the future.*

The Egypt Centre, Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, is situated on the Singleton campus of Swansea University. The collection of c. 5,600 objects was founded in 1971 on material mainly from the Wellcome Institute, contains the largest collection of Egyptian antiquities in Wales and is an important UK collection, attracting academic and public interest from across the UK and further afield. The museum was formally opened to the public in 1998 and receives c. 22,000 visitors a year providing a range of services, including the preservation of the collection, educational activities for schools and visitors, and support for academic teaching and research. The Preservation of the collection was one of the three core roles identified in the Egypt Centre's Review and Outline Planning (2013–2017).

## 3. Guiding Principles

- 3.1. Caring for collections is a fundamental duty of all museums. This policy covers a combination of preventive and remedial conservation measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation.
- 3.2. We will care for and preserve our collections for future generations by achieving the highest standards of conservation practice through the use of professional, qualified staff, and good quality materials.
- 3.3. Preventive conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects, as well as specimens and structures.
- 3.4. Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it up to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.
- 3.5. This policy demonstrates how we will care for the collections using a combination of preventive and interventive conservation, aimed at ensuring preservation and maximizing access.

## 4. Ethics, Legislation, and Standards

4.1. The Egypt Centre is guided in its care and conservation work by the following legal, ethical, and standards framework:

- Museums Association Code of Ethics (2015).<sup>1</sup>
- The Institute of Conservation's Code of Conduct (2014).<sup>2</sup>
- PAS 198:2012. *Specification for Managing Environmental Conditions for Cultural Collections and the Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines*.
- The SPECTRUM 5.0 standard, as developed by the Collections Trust.<sup>3</sup>
- *Benchmarks on Collection Care for Museums Archives and Libraries, A self Assessment Checklist*, MLA 2011, updated 2018.<sup>4</sup>
- BS5454:2000. *Recommendations for Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents*.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.<sup>5</sup>
- Fire Precautions Act 1971.<sup>6</sup>
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.<sup>7</sup>
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended).<sup>8</sup>

## 5. Approach: Preventive Conservation

The Egypt Centre will use *Benchmarks in Collections Care* to enable it to work towards best practice in the care of collections.

The Egypt Centre will:

- 5.1. Ensure that all staff and volunteers carrying out preventive conservation tasks have appropriate skills and training.
- 5.2. Ensure that all objects are condition checked before being put on display, moved, or loaned.
- 5.3. Ensure that loan agreements include conditions for lenders to meet best practice for environmental monitoring and control.
- 5.4. Regularly monitor the environment in which artefacts are located for temperature, relative humidity, light levels, and pest infestation.
- 5.5. Maintain and analyse a record of environmental conditions.
- 5.6. Carry out regular audits and condition survey work to monitor objects and determine the best course of action for their long-term care and conservation.
- 5.7. All materials used in association or close proximity with the collections must be of an appropriate standard to prevent damage or deterioration to them.
- 5.8. Assess risk and implement measures to ensure the security of collections.
- 5.9. Ensure, where possible, that the fabric of the buildings housing collections is structurally sound and regularly maintained for both the long-term conservation of the building itself and also the collections they house, in line with their own conservation management plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Available at [https://icon.org.uk/system/files/documents/icon\\_code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](https://icon.org.uk/system/files/documents/icon_code_of_conduct.pdf) (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum/> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://326gtd123dbk1xdkdm489u1q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/Benchmarks-in-Collections-Care-2.1-1.pdf> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Available at [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/40/pdfs/ukpga\\_19710040\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1971/40/pdfs/ukpga_19710040_en.pdf) (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1999/3242/contents/made> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Available at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/123.pdf> (accessed 15 Oct 2019).

## **6. Approach: Remedial Conservation**

In cases where interventive conservation treatment is required, the Egypt Centre will:

- 6.1. Ensure that conservation work will be planned and carried out in consultation with the relevant curatorial staff.
- 6.2. Ensure that interventive conservation work will only be undertaken by an appropriately qualified person, or under the supervision of an appropriately qualified person.
- 6.3. Ensure that conservators contracted to work on Museum items are included on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation (ICON) and that all references and professional accreditation will be verified where relevant.
- 6.4. Ensure that any treatment that could prejudice the future research value of an item must be justified and considered by the relevant conservator and curator.
- 6.5. Ensure that reversible treatments will be used wherever possible.
- 6.6. Ensure that accessioned collections will only be treated using proven conservation materials.

# **Conservation Procedure and Plan**

The Egypt Centre is committed to a programme of responsive and background conservation.

## **1. Initial Assessment**

When works are examined during condition checks, a member of the technical team will make an initial assessment and make recommendations should conservation work be required. All issues should be raised with the Curator.

## **2. Appointing Conservators**

The Egypt Centre works with ICON registered freelance conservators or those who have excellent references from trusted galleries or studios. The Curator or Collections Access Manager will oversee all conservation undertaken on behalf of the Egypt Centre. One or more conservators, in line with University procurement policy, will be asked to provide a quote and summary of works, which will be reviewed and approved by the Curator before any conservation work can begin.

## **3. Condition Checking**

Condition reports are carried out on the collection by the Collections Access Manager with the help of supervised volunteers. These reports will be undertaken at the following times:

- 3.1. Before objects are moved from storage to display.
- 3.2. Before and after objects are used for handling sessions or by researchers.
- 3.3. Before and after objects are loaned to other institutions.

## **4. Preventative Conservation**

Egypt Centre staff and volunteers undertake preventative conservation as part of their daily routine. These measures include, but are not limited to:

- 4.1. Ensuring works are stored in a controlled environment with limited fluctuations in light, humidity, and temperature.
- 4.2. Pest management.
- 4.3. Basic object cleaning and dusting.
- 4.4. Following object handling guidelines.
- 4.5. Ensuring works are returned to their home location or are repacked as soon as possible.
- 4.6. Storing objects in acid-free boxes and tissue paper.
- 4.7. Ensuring works are stored in non-toxic materials.
- 4.8. Enacting security procedures to protect works from theft or vandalism.
- 4.9. Protecting works from accidental damage from drinks, food, pen ink or other contaminants.

## **5. Storage**

The Egypt Centre objects are stored in a number of ways bespoke to the needs of the work. They include, but are not limited to:

- 5.1. Open access drawers, which are lined with Plastazote.
- 5.2. Acid-free boxes.
- 5.3. Acid-free tissue.
- 5.4. Melinex sleeves.

5.5. Acid-free paper coin collection envelopes with flap.

Storage conditions will be reviewed as part of the five-yearly audit with the aim of improving those conditions.

## **6. Handling and Movement**

Egypt Centre works will only be handled by members of the team who have undergone in-house handling training. The below procedure is adhered to before any objects are handled.

6.1. Collection items used for research, study, or handling will be assessed as to their suitability for such use and a risk assessment undertaken where required.

6.2. We will ensure that anyone who may handle or move an item does so in accordance with best practice procedures and where required under supervision from a trained member of Museum staff.

6.3. Items may be withdrawn from public use if they are identified as at serious risk of damage, are hazardous, or where their security is deemed to be compromised. Wherever possible, alternative arrangements such as access under supervision will be facilitated. (See Egypt Centre Access Statement).

6.4. All collection item movements will undergo a risk assessment to ensure that the correct arrangements and resources are present, in order to minimise the risk to the item and to staff.

6.5. Any permanent movement of a collection item should result in its being placed in matching or improved environmental conditions.

## **7. Security**

7.1. We will maintain the physical security of all items in our collections in accordance with standards set by the National Security Adviser, Arts Council England.

7.2. Our storage and display conditions will provide all collections with an appropriate level of protection and security.

7.3. We will ensure that no items are transported without being packed and deemed fit for travel and that anyone removing an item from a site has signed authority to do so.

7.4. We will undertake regular reviews of the storage of digital data to ensure they are fit for purpose and that digital collections and collection information is appropriately safeguarded against potential future obsolescence of the systems (also see Documentation Procedure Manual).

## **8. Emergency Planning**

We will take measures over and above those necessary for the day to day protection of collections, to provide emergency arrangements and facilities in the event of disastrous damage (as from flood, fire etc.). These measures include:

8.1. Developing and maintaining salvage plans, including priority salvage lists.

8.2. Provision of appropriate training in disaster protection and response.

## **9. Training**

9.1. The Egypt Centre is committed to training and to raising awareness of collection care. By promoting these to the wider community of users including staff, volunteers, and researchers, they will communicate the message that safe handling and use of the collections will preserve them for the future and in doing so allow access to them for longer.

9.2. All staff and volunteers are required to undertake training in preventative conservation and safe handling.