



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

Approved by: Hunterian Strategic Development Board, University of Glasgow

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1. The Mission of The Hunterian

The overall strategic objectives of The Hunterian are aligned in support of the University of Glasgow's Strategic Plan *Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision* and address the key actions of 2020:

- To deliver excellent research
- To deliver excellent student experience
- And to enhance global reach and reputation
- To create the infrastructure that will deliver these goals

These objectives also reflect and align to objectives and performance measures set by the Scottish Funding Council for its Museums, Galleries and Collections Grant funding. These require The Hunterian to provide:

- An appropriate level of collections care and management
- A service to the wider research community
- A high-quality teaching and learning experience to the wider HE community
- Contribution towards SFC's widening participation objective

The Plan aims to deliver a new mission for The Hunterian as a facilitator and contributor to the research and learning objectives of the University of Glasgow and as a cultural asset with national and international reach. The Hunterian will make a tangible contribution to the University of Glasgow's mission to provide an intellectually stimulating learning environment. Drawing on our encyclopaedic historical collections, we will support and engage with University of Glasgow ambitions for interdisciplinary approaches to research, teaching and knowledge exchange.

To this end, we will focus on our core mission to care for and develop our collections and share and communicate our knowledge about them.

2. Aim of this Policy

The aim of this Policy is to outline preventive and interventive collections care measures that will maximise access to the collections for present and future users.

3. 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 long-term preservation and use of the collections.

The Hunterian takes a strategic, risk management approach to collections care. The Hunterian strives to provide an appropriate climate of temperature, relative humidity and light levels in a pollution and pest-free environment that achieves a satisfactory balance between the long-term preservation of the objects and specimens, and accessibility to staff, researchers, students and external users.

Conservation treatments are prioritized within the framework of available resources and the use of the collections in research, teaching and exhibition programmes, including external loans and exhibitions. All treatments carried out on objects, whether by Hunterian staff or external contractors, are fully documented in the collections management system.

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 and for properly supervised volunteers when working on collections. Where skills are not available in-house for a particular process or material, resources will be provided for external expertise; such resources may be dependent upon grant applications.

4. Preventive measures

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

The Hunterian will provide sufficient secure space in a suitable condition to store the collections. Access to stores will be limited to Hunterian staff, suitably trained volunteers, and essential maintenance personnel. Where access is necessary for the latter, this will be supervised by Hunterian staff. Where access is impracticable, or will involve unacceptable risk of damage to collections, external users will be granted supervised access to the stores. Cleaning of display and storage areas will be undertaken by, or overseen by, Hunterian staff.

Objects will be displayed and stored in an environment that minimizes their rate of deterioration. Accordingly, all stores, display areas and galleries will be monitored continually for temperature and relative humidity (and if necessary, UV light and pollution).

Appropriate storage materials will be employed, for example, acid-free boxes, etc. (as recommended by ICON (www.icon.org.uk)). Pest control measures will be deployed, and pest risks monitored. Hazardous material will be segregated and appropriate risk signage displayed.

Measures will be taken over above those necessary for the day-to-day protection of our collections to provide emergency arrangements and facilities in the event of disastrous damage to the collections, as detailed in the *The Hunterian Emergency Plan*, with which all staff will be familiar.

We will pursue 'best practice' in our preservation and conservation procedures as established in such documentation as BS 5454 'Recommendations for Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents', and the MLA Benchmarks in Collection Care.

5. Interventive measures

Interventive 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 research, teaching, internal exhibition programmes and external loans. External funding will be sought for treatment that is beyond existing resources. Only suitably qualified and experienced accredited external professionals will be engaged to assess and treat the collections.

6. Collections Use and Movement

All use of the collections will be risk assessed and standard procedures followed for common functions. All research, teaching and exhibition use, including condition assessments, treatments, and total exposure times, will be recorded in the collections management system.

Standard handling and storage procedures will be developed and followed when specimens are used for research, teaching and exhibitions within Hunterian wherever feasible. Users will be provided with relevant equipment (for example, gloves, book-rests) and information (for example, handling guidelines and risk assessments) to minimize risk of damage during use.

Material may be withdrawn from use if deemed at risk (in which case, resources will be sought to address these conservation needs as a priority). In such circumstances the generation of surrogate copies, either physical or digital, will be considered wherever possible to ensure continued access.

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. 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, will be quarantined where necessary. The Hunterian will not carry out work on any objects/specimens without securing prior written permission from the legitimate title holder.