

Collection Care Guidance for Museums and Historic Properties during the Covid-19 Crisis

Guidance note prepared by Claire Fry ACR, Preventive Conservation Consultant
Spencer & Fry

There are many guides online and on social media at the moment about positive things you can do at this time. Here are some suggestions for caring for your historic collections. However, please put your health and wellbeing first. Only visit your museum if it is safe to do so and within the latest government guidance. Highlighted actions can possibly be carried out at home.

If possible and the current Government Guidance allows, a regular check should be made of the museum or historic property to check the collection is ok and all security and environmental control measures are working. If this requires lone working, put measures in place to make this safe. (Notify someone where you will be, carry a mobile phone etc.)

Measure	Resources
Check security <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Check all display cases and stores are locked and keys stored appropriately.- Consider moving objects to store for additional security if this can be done safely.- Ensure alarms and CCTV are working.- Ensure all entry and exit points are secured, including windows.- Consider signage to point out the site is secured and monitored.	Collections Trust Page with the ACE Security Audit Tool https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/the-security-audit/ ACE Museum Security Tool kit https://326gtd123dbk1xdkdm489u1q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/TheMuseumSecurityToolkit_02.pdf Collections Trust Page with many resources to assist with security concerns from padlock specifications to GIS specification, scaffolding security and CCTV requirements https://collectionstrust.org.uk/?s=security

<p>Reduce light exposure on light sensitive objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Close shutters, blinds or curtains to reduce natural light entering rooms with collections. - Where blackout is not possible close books on display, return light sensitive objects to store or cover with Tyvek or other museum safe material. 	<p>Museum and Galleries Scotland information on control and monitoring of light https://326gtd123dbk1xdkdm489u1q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Conservation-and-Lighting-Musums-Galleries-Scotland.pdf English Heritage guidance on managing natural light. https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/collections-advice--guidance/managing-natural-light-in-historic-properties.pdf</p>
<p>Check insect pest traps and prevention measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove any food and rubbish to reduce possible insect and rodent infestations. - Change traps (if not done recently). - Quarantine any object with a possible infestation. - Check the latest trapping data and research insects found. Plot the data on a plan of the building. 	<p>Whatseatingyourcollection.com. A website to help with identifying and recording museum pests http://www.whatseatingyourcollection.com/ EH poster https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/science/serpentine/insect-pests-historic-houses-poster.pdf English Heritage Guidance and information on IPM https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/ Guide on how to plot insect data on floor plans https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/collections-advice--guidance/2019-eh-guideline-recording-insect-pest-data-floor-plans.pdf</p>

Review Environmental Data

- Download dataloggers – some systems can be checked remotely.

-If you are shutting the museum remember to keep on heating if it is controlling the humidity.

- Ensure that the environmental monitoring system is working and plugged in, ensure anyone who might check on the museum understands that this equipment must remain plugged in during any closure period. Label plugs if necessary.

- Change silica gel/ prosorb etc in display cases and storage boxes.

- Empty dehumidifiers if required.

- Review the last 12 months of environmental data.

Resources from the Collections Trust for measurement and control of Relative Humidity and Temperature

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/collections-care-and-conservation/monitoring-and-controlling-environment/>

British Library Guide to Manage the library and archive environment (PDF format)

<https://www.bl.uk/conservation/guides>

Information on calculating silica gel requirements

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/>

<p>Start/ finish or update your Emergency Plan and check appropriate measures are in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check all contact details are up to date for staff and suppliers. - Check priority cards are up to date. - Hold a table top exercise using video conferencing. - Check all rubbish is removed to reduce fire loading. - Check electrical devices not required for environmental monitoring/ control or security are unplugged. Do not unplug freezers if they are being used for the storage or treatment of objects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remove any unnecessary flammable items from site, ensure any flammable materials are stored correctly, e.g. in a flamm cupboard. - Ensure taps and unnecessary water supplies are turned off to reduce the risk of flood (NB heating systems should be left on if controlling the humidity or needed for frost protection.) 	<p>Historic England Guidance for emergency planning, salvage and fire precautions https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/emergency-and-fire/ Museum of London emergency planning e-learning tool https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Resources/e-learning/emergency-planning-tool/ Museum of London Pocket Salvage Guide https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/application/files/9414/5615/4887/pocket-salvage-guide.pdf Collections Trust links to making and implementing emergency and salvage plans https://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/collections-care-and-conservation/emergency-planning/</p>
<p>Update/ check the inventory and labelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out data management and data cleaning. - Label objects. - Consider making the inventory digital. 	<p>SHARE Museums East youtube video demonstrating what should be in an object marking kit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osEIQsqG3CU SHARE Museums East youtube video demonstrating how to label textile objects https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zCXNphTvOU SHARE Museums East youtube video demonstrating how to label paper objects https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF2olxg1hmc Collections Trust pages on digitising collections https://collectionstrust.org.uk/digital-isnt-different/</p>

<p>Deep clean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out high level/ deep clean. - Update cleaning schedules. - Plan for how the museum might be cleaned for reopening in line with decontamination guidance. 	<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings https://historicengland.org.uk/coronavirus/cleaning-historic-surfaces/</p>
<p>Update collection care policies, for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update hospitality guidelines. - Update filming guidelines etc. 	<p>AIM Guide to Corporate Hospitality https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Successful-Venue-Hire-2017.pdf English Heritage – Hospitality Events in Historic Houses https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/</p>

Update your health and safety policies

Collections Trust Guidance on COSHH

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/the-control-of-substances-hazardous-to-health-regulations-2002/>

HSE webpage on COSHH <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>

An e-tool that can help with learning about common health hazards found in museum collections.

<https://hazardsincollections.org.uk/>

Link from the Collections Trust to How to guide: hazards in museum collections by Norfolk Museums and Archaeological Service <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/how-to-guide-hazards-in-museum-collections/>

Link to HSE Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/regulations.htm>

Link to HSE guidance on asbestos and Asbestos Awareness Course

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/training.htm>

Link to the Carriage of Dangerous Goods Act

This could affect you if you are moving or loaning objects that potentially contain hazardous materials

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/cdg/>

Link to the UK Government Controlled Drugs Regulations

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-about-controlled-drugs-regulations>

Link to the UK Government guidance on commonly encountered controlled drugs

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/controlled-drugs-list--2/list-of-most-commonly-encountered-drugs-currently-controlled-under-the-misuse-of-drugs-legislation>

Link to HSE website page about control of radiation <https://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/>

HSE advice on implementing the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm>

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents>

Share Guidance on completing Risk Assessments

<http://www.sharemuseumeast.org.uk/resources-2/share-resources/>

<p>Check collection care equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Audit what you have and if it is in working order. - Write a list of equipment required and cost. - Consider donating any unopened boxes of PPE to the NHS. 	<p>To donate PPE, please contact bethany.reynard@nationalmuseums.org.uk</p>
<p>Carry out a benchmark assessment and/ or condition check the collections</p>	<p>https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/benchmarks-in-collections-care-2-0/ Collections trust guidance on condition reporting with examples and a crib sheet https://collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-management/collections-care-and-conservation/condition-checking/ Condition reporting tool from The Scottish Conservation Studio https://www.scottishconservationstudio.co.uk/resources/condition-assess/</p>
<p>Commission conservation work- Consider sending objects for conservation if access to the object is possible and you can safely pack and transport the object. Some conservators will be able to work in their studios during this time.</p>	<p>https://www.conservationregister.com/</p>

<p>Read up on Collection Care/ Preventive Conservation</p>	<p>AIM Guide to Successful Collections Care https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Successful-Collection-Care-2017.pdf Collections Trust link to <i>Signposts to Collections Care: a self-assessment pack for museums</i> was written by South West MLA and offers advice on how prevent damage to your collection by preventive conservation https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/preventive-conservation/ Museum and Galleries Scotland guidance on improving stores https://www.museumgalleriesScotland.org.uk/advice/collections/creating-and-improving-stores/ Read the National Trust Manual of Housekeeping English Heritage Conservation and Collections Care Advice and Technical Papers https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/ ICON page on further resources including links to online journals https://icon.org.uk/icon-resources/links-for-conservators</p>
<p>Consider your online offer -You could put together a behind the scenes video or virtual tour of your museum as well as updating social media and blogs. (Make sure you are familiar with and comply with your organisation’s social media policy.)</p>	<p>Museum Association Article on how digital platforms can be used https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/19032020-how-digital-platforms-be-used-to-support-musems-during-covid-19-crisis https://www.youtube.com/user/EnglishHeritageFilm #MuseumHour on Twitter every week as well as #ArchiveHour</p>