Collections Care Guidance during the Covid-19 Crisis

Conservation specialists Spencer and Fry have pulled together some suggestions on how to care for your museum collections during the Covid-19 crisis.

1. Please put your health and wellbeing first. Only visit your museum if it is safe to do so and is within the latest government guidance.
2. Highlighted actions can possibly be carried out at home.
3. 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 okay, and all security and environmental control measures are working. If this requires lone working, put measures in place to make this safe (like notifying someone where you will be, and carrying a mobile phone.)

Check security

➢ 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.

Resources

• Collections Trust with the ACE’s Security Audit Tool
• ACE Museum Security Toolkit
• Collections Trust has many resources to assist with security concerns from padlock specifications to GIS specification, scalding security and CCTV requirements

Reduce light exposure on light sensitive objects

➢ 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.

Resources

• Museum and Galleries Scotland information on control and monitoring of light
• English Heritage guidance on managing natural light
Check insect pest traps and prevention measures

➢ 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.

Resources

• Whatseatingyourcollection.com helps with identifying and recording museum pests
• English Heritage pest poster
• English Heritage Conservation Guidance and information on IPM
• English Heritage guide on how to plot insect data on floor plans

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/ pro sorb etc in display cases and storage boxes.
➢ Empty dehumidifiers if required.
➢ Review the last 12 months of environmental data.

Resources

• Museums Galleries Scotland’s advice on monitoring temperature and humidity
• British Library Guide to Manage the library and archive environment (PDF format)
• English Heritage information on calculating silica gel requirements

Start/ finish or update your Emergency Plan and check appropriate measures are in place.

➢ 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.
➢ Remove any unnecessary flammable items from site, ensure any flammable materials are stored correctly, e.g. in a flam 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.)

Resources

- Historic England guidance for emergency planning, salvage and fire precautions
- Museum of London’s Emergency Planning e-learning tool
- Museum of London’s Pocket Salvage Guide
- Collections Trust links to making and implementing emergency and salvage plans

Update/ check the inventory and labelling

➢ Carry out data management and data cleaning.
➢ Label objects.
➢ Consider making the inventory digital.

Resources

- SHARE Museums East youtube video shows what should be in an object marking kit
- SHARE Museums East youtube video shows how to label textile objects
- SHARE Museums East youtube video shows how to label paper objects
- Collections Trust on digitising collections

Deep clean

➢ Carry out high level/ deep clean.
➢ Update cleaning schedules.
➢ Plan for how the museum might be cleaned for reopening in line with decontamination guidance.

Resources

- Guidance about decontamination in non-healthcare settings
- Historic England advice on cleaning history surfaces

Update collection care policies

➢ Update hospitality guidelines.
➢ Update filming guidelines, etc.
Resources

• AIM’s Guide to Corporate Hospitality and Successful Venue Hire
• English Heritage – Hospitality Events in Historic Houses

**Update your Health and Safety policies**

Resources

• Collections Trust Guidance on COSHH
• HSE on COSHH
• Museum of London’s Hazards in Collections
• Collections Trust’s How to guide: hazards in museum collections by Norfolk Museums and Archaeological Service
• HSE Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
• HSE guidance on asbestos and Asbestos Awareness Course
• Carriage of Dangerous Goods Act - this could affect you if you are moving or loaning objects that potentially contain hazardous materials
• UK Government Controlled Drugs Regulations
• UK Government guidance on commonly encountered controlled drugs
• HSE guidance about control of radiation
• HSE advice on implementing the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
• The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
• Share Guidance on completing Risk Assessments

**Check collection care equipment**

- 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.

Resources

• To donate PPE, please contact bethany.reynard@nationalmuseums.org.uk

**Carry out a benchmark assessment** and/or condition check the collections

Resources

• Collections Trust ‘Benchmark’ self-assessment audit
• Collections Trust guidance on condition reporting with examples and a crib sheet
• Condition reporting tool from The Scottish Conservation Studio

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.

Resources

- Conservation Register

**Read up on Collection Care/Preventive Conservation**

Resources

- [AIM Guide to Successful Collections Care](#)
- [Collections Trust's Signposts to Collections Care: a self-assessment pack for museums](#) was written by South West MLA and offers advice on how prevent damage to your collection by preventive conservation
- [Museum and Galleries Scotland guidance on improving stores](#)
- Read the [National Trust Manual of Housekeeping](#) (purchase)
- [English Heritage Conservation and Collections Care Advice and Technical Papers](#)
- [ICON page on further resources including links to online journals](#)

**Undertake online learning**

Resources

- [IIC paper conservation](#)
- [Future Learn History and Creative Arts](#)
- [Historic England Online Training Resources](#)
- [Historic England E-learning courses](#)
- [Cambridge University Press](#)
- [National Art Library](#)
- [Getty Library](#)
- [British Museum online journals and publications](#)
- [UDEMY](#)