

Practical Collections Care: A Syllabus

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Editors: Alex Dawson, Collections Trust; Susanna Hillhouse, Museum Consultant; Natasha Hutcheson, Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

The publishers would like to thank the following for their advice about the content of this syllabus: Renaissance Regional Conservation Officers Sarah Norcross Robinson, Libby Finney, Robert Entwistle, Deborah Walton

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1. Introduction

This syllabus provides a framework for designing a practical course in the care of museum collections.

A course based on this syllabus would be suitable for both entry level learners and anyone wishing to refresh their knowledge of specific areas of basic collections management practice. Students may be museum practitioners who care for museum collections, or people who are learning to care for collections. Students may be volunteers or in paid employment.

This syllabus:

- Describes the activities which form the basis of curatorial knowledge and expertise in collections care.
- Encourages a pragmatic and proportionate approach to collections care during the lifecycle of a museum object. The syllabus is framed in the context of three key museum standards (see 2. Collections Care below), all of which encourage a planned approach to the application of collections care standards with reference to organisational goals, and the assessment of risk to collections
- Can be used by anyone designing collections care courses for entry level learners. It can be used as the basis for a self directed course, or integrated into courses created by training providers.



2. Collections care

Collections Care: definitions and concepts

Caring for collections is central to the work of every museum. The term 'collections care' refers to the activity of caring for the collections by appropriate management and procedures, with the long term aim of preserving the collections so that they can continue to be used by the public. Collections care encompasses activity ranging from service-wide strategies, such as emergency planning and assessments of conservation needs, to more hands-on tasks such as handling, packing, and cleaning the museum.

The term 'conservation' is also used in relation to the care of collections. Specifically this term covers the management of the environment surrounding collections ('preventive conservation'), which is practiced widely at a curatorial level, and the treatment of individual objects ('remedial conservation'), which is usually only practiced by trained conservators.

Collections Care: standards

This syllabus is underpinned by three published standards which inform much of the practice which lies at the heart of the curatorial care of collections. The three standards are described below and should appear as key reference publications on a reading list for a collections care course. In some syllabus topics, elements from each of the standards are suggested as resources for students, however, although an entry level museum practitioner should be aware of each of the standards, and familiar with their layout, structure and key concepts, it is not expected that they should have an in depth knowledge of each one.

The three standards are:

1. Publicly Available Specification 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural heritage collections management, (2009), British Standards Institute (PAS 197)

<http://www.bsigroup.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/How-we-can-help-you/Professional-Standards-Service/PAS-197/>

PAS 197 was developed by the Collections Trust with the BSi. A Publicly Available Specification or PAS, is a first step towards developing a full BSi standard. PAS 197 was developed with UK museums libraries and archives, and aims to codify a holistic approach to the management of cultural collections by setting out a series of recommendations relating to good practice in cultural collections management. PAS 197 covers the provision, implementation and maintenance



of a collections management framework, including policies, processes and procedures for:

- Collections development
- Collections information
- Collections access
- Collections care and conservation

This syllabus draws on sections b) and d) of PAS 197, however it is the key underlying principles of PAS197 which are important for the entry level learner. These principles are that:

- Collections management policies, procedures, processes and plans flow from the organisational mission statement
- The good application of collections care standards is proportionate, in relation to individual organisational aims and resources
- The planning cycle is a perpetual cycle of improvement, with audit and review of activity feeding back into policy and planning

It is unlikely that an entry level student would need to engage directly with PAS197, although it is desirable that they would have knowledge of the 'PAS principles'. **Collections Management: a practical guide**, (2009), Collections Trust, offers a very accessible and practical 'way in' to PAS 197 thinking, and it is suggested that this is easier to assimilate than the BSi specification.

2. SPECTRUM: the UK Museum Collections Management Standard, version 4.0 (2011), Collections Trust

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1000-spectrum-40>

SPECTRUM 4.0 is the UK museum collections management standard and is constantly reviewed and updated by the museum community. It contains many of the procedures involved in managing a museum collection, and represents those procedures in workflow format. At entry level the syllabus expects a practitioner to acquire an understanding of the 8 SPECTRUM Primary Procedures, which deliver a basic accountable collections management system.

The Appendix to SPECTRUM 4.0, (SPECTRUM: the UK Museum Collections Management Standard, Appendix 1, Information Requirements), lists the 'pieces' of information which are collected during museum collections management activities. Entry level practitioners should have a broad awareness of the concept of data gathering, and the kinds of data collected when managing collections, however, SPECTRUM 4.0 Appendix 1 is too detailed for this level, and is more applicable to the design of software collections management procedures.



3. Accreditation: the UK Standard for Museums and Galleries, (2011), Art Council England, (The Museum Accreditation Scheme)

<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-museums/accreditation-scheme/>

The Museum Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK. There are currently just under 1,800 museums participating in the scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment and benefit of users. The scheme is administered by Arts Council England in partnership with CyMAL: Museum, Archives, Libraries Wales; Museums Galleries Scotland and the Northern Ireland Museum Council. The Accreditation standard is divided into three sections:

- Organisational health
- Collections
- Users and their experience

For each requirement, the expectations vary for museums of different types, sizes and scopes.

The principles of PAS 197 and the eight primary SPECTRUM procedures are embedded in the Collections section of the Accreditation standard.,

For the purposes of this syllabus students need to develop an awareness of the Accreditation standard, and understand that it is one way in which museums can demonstrate that they meet best practice, and improve their standards of collections care.



3. The structure of the syllabus

The Modules

The syllabus is divided into *Module A* and *Module B*. Module A sets the theoretical context for the practical topics covered in Module B.

The Topics

The two modules contain a number of *Topics*, each of which covers a discrete area of curatorial practice.

Each topic contains an introduction, which sets out the aim of the topic under the heading of *This Topic supports the student to understand*, followed by a section headed *Context to this Topic* which gives an explanation of the parameters and context of the topic, and refers to key concepts.

Underneath this text, learning goals are identified for each topic, under *All students should be able to*, as well as *Suggested resources* which can be used to meet the learning goals.

The *Suggested resources* have been selected following an audit of existing resources suitable for entry level students. For some topics the existing literature is scarce, for others it is plentiful. The publishers of this syllabus have worked with collections care specialists to identify, and in some cases create, resources which are appropriate for entry level learners.

Under *Suggested resources* the publishers have summarised the rationale for choosing each resource, indicating its potential use to a student.



4. Using the syllabus

The Modules and Topics are presented as standalone units, and it would be possible to construct standalone courses for each topic.

However, the topics in Module A consist of underpinning concepts that need to be applied by the student in Module B. A course designed from this syllabus could blend the topics from both modules, so that the practical activities in Module B are integrated with those in Module A.



5. The Syllabus

MODULE A: the Context for Collections Care

Topic 1 - Collections care and policy

This Topic supports the student to understand:

- The importance of a strong organisational mission and the role of strategic planning in delivering improvement in collections care
- The respective roles of policy, planning and procedure within a museum
- The place of collections care activity within an overall framework of integrated collections management
- The importance of linking and complementing collections care policy to policies in other collections management areas to deliver improvement

Context to this Topic

Effective use of resources and ongoing improvement within any organisation is easier when all staff and stakeholders have a clear idea of the purpose and direction of the organisation. This topic explores the importance of setting collections care work within a coherent management framework guided by a clear mission.

Guidance on establishing a coherent framework is provided in key sector standards such as the Museum Accreditation Scheme and the PAS197. The Museum Accreditation Scheme now requires museums to have a *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and expects this policy to reflect the overall mission of the organisation and to complement other key policies in the areas of Collections development, Collections documentation and Access.

This approach to collections care as part of an integrated framework involves:

- Allocating resources for collections care with regard to an analysis of the risks to the collections and the needs of users and other aspects of collections management
- Applying collections care standards in a proportionate way that is appropriate to the size and type of organisation
- Considering collections care and conservation concerns and costs as part of other key collections management decisions such as exhibitions, loans and acquisitions



Topic 1 - Collections care and policy

All students should be able to:

- Summarise the concept of the Collections Management Framework as described in PAS 197
- Compile a list of the essential elements of a Collections Care and Conservation Policy with reference to PAS 197 and the Museum Accreditation Scheme.
- Explain how a Collections Care and Conservation Policy links to other collections management policies

Suggested resources:

Collections Management: a practical guide, (2009), Collections Trust.

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/shop/publications/collections-management-a-practical-guide-detail>

This guide is an interpretation of PAS 197 and for entry level students provides an excellent introduction to PAS 197 principles and terminology. It is preferable for students to use this introduction rather than the BSi standard. Most relevant chapters for this topic are:

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 3: The Collections Management Framework
Chapter 7: Collections care and conservation

Accreditation Guidance Sheet 1: Collections Management Framework, (2011), Collections Trust.

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/1087-collections-management-framework-guidance-sheet-1>

This guidance sheet provides an introduction to the PAS 197 concepts of the Collections Management Framework, and the Cycle of Improvement in the context of the Museum Accreditation Scheme. See Figure 1 for a diagram illustrating the interrelated nature of different types of collections management policies, and their link to the organisational mission.

Accreditation Guidance Sheet 2: Collections Management Policies, (2011), Collections Trust.

http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a563/f6/FactSheet2_Collections_Management_Policies.pdf

This guidance sheet explains what is meant by a Collections Management Policy and provides a guide to the principle of the integrated Collections Management Policy set out in the PAS197.

Accreditation: Guidance for section two – collections. Section 2.4, Care and Conservation Policy, (2011), MLA

http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a615/f6/accreditation_guidance_section_two_vDec2011.pdf

This document provides guidance to Museum Accreditation Scheme applicants. Accreditation requires that, 'the museum must have an approved policy statement to guide its approach to collections care and conservation.' Section 2.4 in this document gives guidance on Care and Conservation Policies, what the scheme expects them to contain, and how they relate to the resources of the museum. **Conservation and Collections Care Policy**, (2008), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

<http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC082577>

Although this policy does not link explicitly to the NMAS mission (a mission is implied in the opening sections), it does refer to other areas of collections management activity and how they are supported by the policy. The policy takes a risk assessment approach to the conservation and care of the collections.



Topic 2 - Risk assessment and management

This topic supports the student to understand:

- the principles of risk management in a collections care context

Context to this Topic

Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing and controlling risks to people and property. Museums, just like other organisations, have to assess and manage risks in all aspects of their work, including the collections. This topic focuses on risk assessment in collections care, rather than the wider business or organisational risks within the museum.

The Museum Accreditation Scheme requires that museums develop a *Collections Care and Conservation Policy* and increasingly museums are using a PAS 197 risk management approach when defining their policy for collections care policy. The long term preservation of collections depends on a balance being achieved between the use of an object and the risks associated with the use of an object. A risk management approach to policy and planning allows for a systematic assessment of risk, and informed prioritisation of resources.

In museums, a risk management approach to collections care involves:

- The identification and assessment of all potential threats to objects in the collection
- An assessment of the risk those threats pose to the collection
- Identifying strategies for reducing or removing risks
- Planning and prioritising collections care work in ways which reduce identified risks, taking account of the needs of users of the collection.



Topic 2 - Risk assessment and management

All students should be able to:	Suggested resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain risk assessment and risk management principles - Explain what is meant by a 'risk management approach to collections care' and its importance within a collections management framework 	<p>Assess and manage risk in collections care: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2012), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service. http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_125.pdf</p> <p>A short, practical guide to the assessment and management of risk in the care of museum collections which provides a good introduction to key risk assessment and management topics for collections care.</p> <p>Risk Management and Disaster Planning for Museums, (undated), S-Tech Insurance Services Ltd. http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/890-s-tech-guide-to-risk-management-for-museums</p> <p>A short overview of risk management principles written by a commercial company selling insurance to museums. This document also links risk management to emergency planning ('disaster recovery planning') and insurance.</p> <p>Policy for the management of risk to and from objects, (2003), Royal Air Force Museum. http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/documents/policies/Policy_for_the_management_of_risk_to_and_from_objects.doc</p> <p>A useful and concise approach to risk management. This document illustrates potential risks or threats, and then sets out a risk register which identifies areas of the collection at risk, and what action needs to be taken. The policy addresses the whole process of risk management (rather than just addressing emergency planning) and integrates the museum's response into daily activities, such as training, collections care procedures and staff communication.</p> <p>National Parks Museum Handbook, Part I, Chapter 9: Museum Collections Security and Fire Protection (2002), National Parks Service http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/MHI/Chapter%209.pdf</p> <p>The National Parks Service (NPS) in the USA is responsible for national parks, monuments and historical properties across the country, and the protection of museum collections housed in their properties. NPS have produced many collections care publications, and although many are now dated, they are still useful. In this publication, Section C of Chapter 9, Measuring the Effectiveness of a Security System describes a risk management approach to security</p> <p>Risk Management and Care of Collections in the Balkans (2010) http://www.e-conservationline.com/content/view/916/307/</p> <p>An interview with the project manager of Collections Care Co., a private company offering preventive care services in the Balkans. The interview describes the emergence of a planned approach to collections care centered around risk management, and emphasises that preventive collections care is not necessarily expensive or high-tech.</p>



Topic 3 - Collections care, planning and prioritising

This topic supports the student to understand:

- Organisational planning structures and cycles in collecting organisations
- The link between collections care planning, risk assessment and organisational planning structures.
- The application of *Benchmarks in Collection Care* to assess the collections care priorities for a collection

Context to this Topic

This topic explores the importance of planning and prioritising collections care activity to ensure the best use of staff, resources and time available to deliver the most effective collections care.

Planning is an activity that takes place at a variety of levels within a collecting organisation. No two organisations will have the same approach to planning but it is common for museums to have:

- A strategic plan identifying a number of top-level key aims for the organisation (typically a three to five year planning cycle)
- A forward plan for the whole organisation (typically a one year planning cycle).
- Departmental plans, individual staff work plans and project plans

Collections care plans may, therefore, come in a variety of formats: embedded into a forward plan for the whole organisation; as part of a collections management plan; or written as a standalone document. Whatever format a collections care plan is presented in, it is important that the priorities identified in the plan should refer to, and help to deliver, specific key aims identified in the strategic or forward plan. In this way, the collections care plan is used to deliver the key aims of the organisation. A *Collections Care and Conservation Plan* is now a requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme: the Accreditation Standard and Applicant Guidance contain detail of required components.



Topic 3 - Collections care, planning and prioritising

All students should be able to:

- Summarise the function of planning in the museum and the relationship between strategic planning and planning at an operational level
- Identify the role that risk assessment plays in the planning and prioritisation of collections care activity
- Assess the collections care needs and priorities of a collection using *Benchmarks in Collection Care*, or a section from it

Suggested resources:

Planning and prioritising collections care: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2012), NMAS
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_124.pdf

A short, practical guide to the planning of collections care in museums providing a good introduction to key planning topics for collections care.

Accreditation Guidance Sheet 3: Collections Management Plans and Procedures, (2011), Collections Trust
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a562/f6/FactSheet3_Collections_Management_Planning_and_Procedures.pdf

This guidance describes the role of planning and plans within a Collections Management Framework as defined in PAS 197. Useful for defining terminology used in the museum planning cycle, and for setting planning within the context of the Museum Accreditation Scheme.

Introduction: Benchmarks 2.0, (2011), Collections Trust
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/benchmarks-for-collections-care/752-introduction-to-benchmarks-20>

Carrying out a Benchmarks 2.0 Assessment, (2011), Collections Trust
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/benchmarks-for-collections-care/755-carrying-out-a-benchmarks-20-assessment>

Benchmarks 2.0 Checklist, (2011), Collections Trust
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/benchmarks-for-collections-care/691-benchmarks-in-collection-care-for-museums-archives-and-libraries>

Benchmarks is a self assessment checklist which defines standards of collections care. It is used by museums, libraries and archives to measure levels of collections care in areas such as storage, housekeeping, and environmental monitoring. The user is able to assess collections care at Basic, Good and Best levels and use the resulting assessment to plan and measure improvements. Introduction: Benchmarks 2.0 and Carrying out a Benchmarks 2.0 Assessment should be read before attempting a collections assessment using the Benchmarks 2.0 Checklist.

The Moray Council Museums Service Collections Management Collection Care Strategy and Plan, (2008), MCMS
<http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file84007.pdf>

A concise collections care strategy and plan which is useful for setting collections care planning and policy making in context in a real life scenario. The strategy is set in the context of the museums mission and strategies for other collections activities. The plan identifies specific activities with responsibilities and completion dates.

The Collections Management framework is illustrated in *Collections Management: a practical guide*, (2009), Collections Trust. Page 11. Figure 1. - This diagram is taken from PAS 197:2009 Code of Cultural Collections Management, (2009), BSi and illustrates the link between museum mission, policy, planning, measurement and improvement. This is the framework of policies that underpin most museums collections care and development.



Topic 4 - Emergency planning and salvage

This topic supports the student to understand:

- Emergency planning in the wider context of museum collections care activity
- The composition of an effective Emergency Plan

Context to this Topic

The emergency planning process is wider than just producing an Emergency Plan. It encompasses a thorough analysis of risks to the collection with a view to eliminating risks as far as possible and impacts on many other activities. All museums are required to have an Emergency Plan for the Museum Accreditation Scheme.

‘Emergency planning’ is a comprehensive planning process which includes:

- Identifying threats
- Assessing risks
- Planning measures which prevent, remove and reduce risks
- Writing an Emergency Manual
- Planning for disaster recovery should an emergency occur.

Threats to collections include:

- Fire
- Water caused by flooding, drainage overflow, plumbing problems
- Criminal activity, theft and vandalism break in and arson
- Services failures, Power failure and gas leaks
- Pests

‘Salvage’ is defined as providing for the safe handling, packing, freezing, specialist treatment and conservation of salvaged objects and records.



Topic 4 - Emergency planning and salvage

<p>All students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify potential hazards to a collections and be able to assess the risk of the hazard impacting on the collection - Identify which potential hazard could be eliminated or mitigated through a planning process - Construct an outline for a basic museum Emergency Manual. 	<p>Suggested resources:</p> <p>Assess and manage risk in collections care: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2012), NMAS http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_125.pdf</p> <p>A short introduction to risk assessment in a museum collections context.</p> <p>SPECTRUM 4.0 Risk Management Procedure, (2012), Collections Trust http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1000-spectrum-40 (NOTE: SPECTRUM is available as a free download on Collections Link. To download it, you need to register as a Collections Link user. This link will take you to a Log In page - from here you can Log In if you are already a registered user of Collections Link, or create a Collections Link account if you are not.)</p> <p>As an illustration of a the wider topic of risk management the workflow diagram in the SPECTRUM 4.0 Risk Management Procedure is not as comprehensive as it might be, however, it is very useful for the steps involved in emergency planning.</p> <p>Be Prepared: emergency planning toolkit for museums, (2008), Renaissance East of England http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_116.pdf</p> <p>An Emergency Plan template, produced by Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service to assist museums to prepare an Emergency Plan, which has been widely repurposed by UK museums. In fact this publication is far more than just a template plan and pro forma guidance on salvage and recovery – the appendices are particularly useful in that they guide the user through the process of producing a plan, with an emphasis on risk assessment and all staff communication. Appendices 5, 6, 7 and 8 also contain excellent advice on planning for salvage after an emergency.</p> <p>Expert planning: Emergency Planning http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeBK1FIqvlw&feature=channel</p> <p>Jane Thompson-Webb, Head of Conservation at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, discusses preparing an Emergency Plan in the context of the Museum Accreditation Scheme. Good advice on making plans relevant, current and accessible to all staff.</p>
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Topic 5 - Insurance of collections

This topic supports the student to understand:

- The insurance of museum collections within the context of the assessment and management of risk
- The lifecycle points for museum objects when risk increases and the role played by insurance in those instances

Context to this Topic:

Insurance is a vital risk management component for museums, as it is for all businesses. It is a safety net for instances when the various risk management procedures in place fail and it compensates the museum against events.

Although insurance is relevant to many areas of museum activity, this topic is only relevant to the insurance of museum collections. Different museums take different approaches to insurance as a way to mitigate against risk and it may be that some collections, or some objects within collections, are not insured at all. The decision to insure, or not to insure, and how that decision is arrived at, is an important part of controlling risk to the museum collection.



Topic 5 - Insurance of collections

All students should be able to:

- Summarise the different types of insurance policy that a museum might buy
- Describe the different levels of insurance for museum collections
- Summarise the reasons why museums might take different approaches to the insurance of their collections and collections on loan to them

Suggested resources:

Insuring museum collections: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2011), Collections Trust
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_121.pdf

A concise introduction to the insurance of museum collections, with a brief overview of insurance generally. Contains references to decisions different curators have taken about insurance of collections.

Insurance for Museums, (2004), MLA
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/440-insurance-for-museums>

Although published in 2004, this is still the most comprehensive guide to museum insurance. For an entry level student it may provide more information than necessary, but is a useful reference as a complement to *Insuring Museum Collections: a Collections Care How To Guide*

SPECTRUM Procedure: Insurance and Indemnity Management, (2012), Collections Trust
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1000-spectrum-40> (NOTE: SPECTRUM is available as a free download on Collections Link. To download it, you need to register as a Collections Link user. This link will take you to a Log In page - from here you can Log In if you are already a registered user of Collections Link, or create a Collections Link account if you are not.)

A workflow diagram illustrating the steps to take when insuring museum collections, and claiming against insurance.

Risk Management and Insurance for Museums, (2007), Association of Independent Museums
<http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/downloads/5aba76d8-dd7d-11e1-bdfc-001999b209eb.pdf>

Short summary of all aspects of museum insurance, not dealing specifically with insurance of collections.

Government Indemnity Scheme, web page
http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/cultural_property/3294.aspx

Information about the Government Indemnity Scheme, and further links.



Topic 6 - Working with professional conservators

This topic supports the student to understand:

- When to seek conservation advice
- Working with a conservator

Context to this Topic:

All conservation work always takes place within the context of the museum's aims and resources, and as a result of the assessment of risk to the object.

As a result, there are occasions when museums employ the services of a professional and qualified conservator. Knowing when the services of a conservator are required is an expertise which grows with time and experience, and it is important at the beginning of a museum career to always seek advice if in doubt, before undertaking any collections care measures which are beyond 'basic' and moving towards 'interventive' or 'remedial'.

This topic will familiarise the student with the requirements of registration on the Conservation Register, and how and when a museum might find and contract a conservator for a particular project.



Topic 6 - Working with professional conservators

All students should be able to:

- Broadly describe the principles of conservation practice and locate the codes of ethics under which conservators practice
- Assess the skills and experience required for a particular conservation project
- Demonstrate practical awareness of the Conservation Register and use it to find a conservator for a particular conservation problem

Suggested resources:

Expert Series: the Conservation Register, (2010)

<http://www.museum-storage.co.uk>

video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbA1KSWR9Hs&feature=related>

Jane Henderson, Tutor of Conservation at Cardiff University, provides an introduction to the ICON Conservation Register: who is on the register, their qualifications and expertise, and how to use the register.

Conservation Register, web site

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

The Conservation Register is maintained by The Institute of Conservation (ICON), and is the recommended route for finding and contracting conservators in the UK and Ireland. All conservators on the register have met the requirement of ICON.

Guidelines for Choosing and Working With a Conservator-Restorer,

<http://www.conservationregister.com/PIcon-WorkingWithAConservator.asp>

Guidelines from ICON on finding and contracting a conservator.



MODULE B: Practical Care of Museum Objects

Topic 7: Housekeeping

This topic supports the student to understand:

- the central role played by basic, regular and non-interventive housekeeping practice in collections care.

Context to this Topic:

In the context of museum collections care, 'housekeeping' refers to all of the general activity surrounding the cleaning and maintenance of the museum building, with the aim of preserving museum objects, and records about objects. Consistent housekeeping in museums contributes to the preservation of museum objects, and forms the basis of a Collections Care Policy. It is essential to maintain a regime of cleanliness in all areas where museum objects are stored or displayed. Good housekeeping methods also provide an opportunity to monitor for pests, inspect for deterioration in buildings and check objects.

Museum housekeeping includes the following activities:

- Building and site care
- Cleaning and dusting
- Vacuuming
- Observation of museum objects, displays, stores and buildings
- Monitoring for pests
- Cleaning and replacing light fittings
- Cleaning and replacing filters in air handling units

Good housekeeping practice at an organisational level includes:

- Planning housekeeping activity so that it takes place regularly, and identifies appropriate techniques which are not damaging to people or collections
- Training personnel to understand the need to carrying out housekeeping activity using appropriate methods
- Using housekeeping activity as an opportunity to observe conditions in the museum building



Topic 7 - Housekeeping

All students should be able to:

- Identify the role of museum housekeeping in the care of collections, and the importance of planning, procedures and training in housekeeping practice
- Describe appropriate cleaning methods for a particular situation or type of collection.

Suggested resources:

The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping, (2005), National Trust
<http://shop.nationaltrust.org.uk/products/manual-of-housekeeping/236/>

This is an excellent introduction to common sense cleaning of both historic buildings and collections. It emphasises non-interventive and non-toxic techniques, which can be used by all museum employees.

Housekeeping Equipment Good and Bad Handout, (Undated), SHARE Museums East
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_73.doc

A training handout used by SHARE Museums East trainers to illustrate the contrast between appropriate and inappropriate cleaning equipment.

Expert Series: object cleaning, (2010)
<http://www.museum-storage.co.uk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKaKV1r9YzM&feature=channel>

A short video describing basic cleaning and more interventive cleaning. The basic cleaning is excellent advice for an entry level student, the more interventive methods described should be undertaken only with guidance from a professional conservator.

Housekeeping and Maintenance Checklist Calendar, (2009), SHARE Museums East
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_72.doc

This excel spreadsheet was produced by SHARE Museums East conservators in response to requests for a template which could be used to plan housekeeping activities, but also gives an indication of how often different housekeeping activities should take place.

Working with Substances Hazardous to Health, (2009), Health and Safety Executive
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/environmental-control/842-working-with-substances-hazardous-to-health-coshh>

Basic introduction from the HSE to working with hazardous substances, with advice that is relevant to anyone working with a museum collection

Hazards in museum collections: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2012) NMA
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_120.pdf

An introduction to the types of hazards found in museum objects, and advice on dealing with them on a day to day basis, and when to call in expert advice.



Topic 8 - Environmental monitoring and control

This topic supports the student to understand:

- The recommended parameters for environmental conditions for museum objects, and how they may vary according to the type of collection

Context to this Topic:

This topic explores the importance of the environment in which museum objects are stored and displayed and how the control of that environment contribute to their preservation. Environmental monitoring and control is closely connected to housekeeping in a museum context, but covers more wide ranging issues such as the effect of light, relative humidity and temperature on collections.

Environmental monitoring measures and records the quality of factors in the physical environment, such as pests, light, relative humidity (RH), temperature and pollution. Environmental monitoring requires a knowledge of the factors to be monitored and the ways in which monitoring can be carried out and recorded. Objects coming into the museum also need to be monitored and maintained to prevent adverse effects on permanent collections. This can include new acquisitions, or objects coming in for identification, which may have to be quarantined and observed before introduction to areas which contain permanent collections.

Environmental control describes the activities taken to control and alter the monitored physical environment so that damage to museum objects from environmental factors is limited. Much activity to control the environment is preventative rather than interventive: for example dust can be minimised by closing doors or using doormats, and objects can be displayed in a different location if the lighting is unsuitable. Where more interventive methods of control are required they may involve activity such as the regulation of heating to control humidity, which will require interpretation of data collected from environmental monitoring equipment.



Topic 8 - Environmental monitoring and control

All students should be able to:	Suggested resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe the effect of light, humidity, and dust on museum objects - Describe pests which can damage museum objects, and recognise the most commonly occurring pests, and their effects, such as silver fish, furniture beetle, and woodworm - Describe how to use common monitoring equipment and analyse the data - Identify a number of environmental control measures 	<p>The Museum Environment, (Undated), SHARE Museums East http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_55.pdf</p> <p>A very thorough introduction to environmental monitoring and control of the museum environment. This publication contains guidance on terminology, types of equipment, environmental parameters, interpretation of data collected and basic environmental control measures.</p> <p>Pest management: a practical guide, (2008), Collections Trust http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/pest-management/1149-pest-management-a-practical-guide</p> <p>This publication explores the implementation of an effective pest management programme in a museum, as opposed to simply reacting to pest problems when they arise. This idea of active detection and prevention of pests is central to the control of the museum environment, and at its most successful uses all aspects of collection care such as housekeeping, humidity and temperature control to prevent pest infestation. Also contains excellent photographs of common pests and guidance on their identification.</p> <p>Expert Series: Environmental Issues facing Conservators, (2010) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWwqGXUist8&feature=channel</p> <p>Jane Henderson, conservator, describes the prevention of damage to collections from light, relative humidity, temperature, pollution and insects. Aimed primarily at library and archive collections, but also applicable to museum collections on paper, and other types of museum collection.</p> <p>Collections Link Suppliers Directory, http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/suppliers?sid=1</p> <p>This directory links the user to websites of suppliers of conservation resources used by museums, for packing and moving. Useful reference to the range of materials and equipment available.</p> <p>Calibrating a dial hygrometer, (2012), NMAS; Calibrating a thermohygrograph, (2012), NMAS http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zq3xMMGMH8A http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKowgslE1L0</p> <p>Two short videos with Juliane Ovenden, illustrating the working and calibration of a dial hygrometer and a thermohygrograph.</p> <p>Summary of the common insect pests and damage found in museums, (undated), SHARE Museums East http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_172.doc</p> <p>A list of the most commonly occurring pests in museum collections and buildings, with pest name, damage caused and types of materials affected.</p>



Topic 9 - Condition checking

This topic supports the student to:

- Place condition checking within the context of other collections care activities
- Identify the different levels of condition checking, the skills required and their use in different circumstances,

Context to this Topic

The purpose of condition checking is to provide a record of the condition of a museum object at different stages of its lifecycle. This record can be used as:

- A descriptive record e.g. when an object enters a museum as a donation an assessment of its condition is usually made. This will often form part of the accession and catalogue records for the object.
- A baseline against which the object can be assessed at a later date e.g. in the case of a loan it is possible to measure any deterioration or damage to the object on its return to the owning museum
- Information to inform the use of an object e.g. in an exhibition a condition check might highlight particular environmental requirements for the display of an object
- Part of a recommendation for remedial conservation work to be carried out on an object
- Part of a wider Condition Assessment of collections

Each of the above scenarios demands a different level of expertise, and as a result, condition checking of different types is carried out by museum staff with varying levels of knowledge and training. More complex condition checks, for example in the case of remedial conservation work, are always carried out by a conservator, or under the supervision of a conservator.

Photography is an important tool in all condition checking. Smaller museums will often use photography as a means to record the condition of objects, particularly in the case of new acquisitions, but it also plays an important part in more complex condition checking activity.



Topic 9 - Condition checking

All students should be able to:

- Identify the most common instances when condition checking is required
- Identify the level of condition checking required at different points in the lifecycle of museum objects, and assess the consequent expertise required
- Recognise basic condition checking terminology in use by museum staff

Suggested resources:

SPECTRUM Procedure: object condition checking and technical assessment procedure, SPECTRUM 4.0, (2011) Collections Trust.

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1000-spectrum-40>

The *Object condition checking and technical assessment* procedure is one of 21 collections management procedures described in SPECTRUM 4.0, which are all presented in workflow format. This procedure presents the different steps involved in condition checking objects at different points in the lifecycle of a museum object.

Condition Report Anglo Saxon hanging bowl, (2005), Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service

http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_118.pdf

A condition report prepared by a conservator in preparation for the loan of a museum object.

Condition Report for Charles Keene painting. (2011), Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service

http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_119.pdf

A condition report prepared by a conservator in preparation for the loan of a museum object.

Condition Reporting Crib sheet. (2011) SHARE.

http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_117.pdf

A checklist prepared by Renaissance Regional Conservation Officers, identifying prompts for someone carrying out a condition check. It is important to establish the purpose of the condition check, so that it is carried out in sufficient detail, and by someone with the relevant expertise. This checklist is designed for an in depth check for example, for an object going out on loan, but could be tailored for a quicker check, say at acquisition.

Behind the Scenes - The Vincent Price Art Museum - Part 3

<http://www.youtube.com/user/VPArtMuseum#p/a/u/2/juv80i0gbEI>

A short film describing accessioning procedures at the Vincent Price Art Museum.

Jan Gossaert's Self Portrait: Preparing Art to go on Loan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcFpf2XXKbM>

A short film showing museum staff condition checking a painting at the Currier Museum, Manchester, New Hampshire, before the loan of the painting. The film illustrates condition checking in the context of other procedures that may take place during preparation of the object, such as creating a micro-climate to keep the painting safe, dusting, crating and shipping.

Newark Museum Official Registrar Condition Reports for Gustav Stickley exhibition, video

http://www.youtube.com/user/NewarkMuseum?blend=22&ob=5#p/u/4/ibSgS8I2_vA

A short film showing museum staff condition checking incoming objects on loan to the Newark Museum, New Jersey.



Topic 10 - Condition assessment of collections

Many museums incorporate condition assessments as a normal part of their collections care and conservation planning. Collection condition surveys are undertaken to assess the condition of collections as a whole, rather than the condition of a single object. In this topic the term 'collections condition assessment' is not used in its wider sense where it also incorporates an organisation wide assessment of collections care procedures: it is only used in the context of an assessment of the condition of the collections.

A collection condition survey will collect baseline information that will:

- Make definitive, quantifiable statements about the condition of the collections
- Compare the condition of different parts of the collection or collections in different locations
- Produce evidence about the damage to the collection and link it with the conditions in the museum
- Prioritise actions to improve the condition of the collection
- Estimate the cost and time to achieve the improvements needed

There are two types of condition survey:

- An in-depth survey of a small number of objects, involving a thorough examination of a number of individual objects
- A sample survey which involves a limited examination of a selection of objects from a collection

Condition Assessments are usually carried out by professional conservators.



Topic 10 - Condition assessment of collections

All students should be able to:	Suggested resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify the purpose and principles of collections assessments- Describe the role played by collections assessments in planning for collections care	<p>Collections Condition Surveys chapter in Working with Independent Conservators, (Undated), Museum and Gallery Commission http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a89/f6/000156.pdf</p> <p>Although this publication is dated it contains an excellent chapter on Collections Condition Surveys, which explains terminology used, gives definitions of different types of survey approached from the point of view of the non-expert who is working with professional conservators.</p> <p>Preservation Assessment Survey http://www.bl.uk/blpac/paslib.html</p> <p>Describes a paid for service from the Preservation Advisory Centre. The service provides access to a collections assessment sampling technique , widely used by libraries and archives. Although not used for museum collection specifically this is a good introduction to the sampling technique.</p>



Topic 11 - Documenting objects

This topic supports the student to understand:

- Summarise the role played by the documentation of museum objects in collections care
- Identify what constitutes a basic and accountable museum documentation system
- Be aware of different museum software products used for documenting objects

Context to this Topic

Museum documentation is the term applied to the activity of collecting, recording and maintaining information about all of the objects in museum collections, including acquisitions, loans and objects brought into the museum for identification. Museum documentation refers to all the records created by a museum, throughout the entire lifecycle of a museum object: it is more than just cataloguing.

By documenting collections, museums can manage, understand, interpret and use collections, now and in the future. Good documentation practice also ensures that a collecting organisation collects and retains information relating to the legal ownership status of an object. Museums use various systems for managing the data that is collected during the lifecycle of a museum object: most are at least partially computerised.

A museum object has valuable information attached to it. Broadly, this can be broken down into three categories:

- Information that is contained within the object itself:
 - What does it look like?
 - What is it made from?
 - What condition is it in?
- Information that the object has acquired during its life:
 - Who owned or owns it?
 - Who used it?
 - What as it used for?
- Information that the museum has added to the object as a result of its management and use:
 - Where is it displayed?
 - When was it acquired?
 - Has it been conserved?



Topic 11 - Documenting objects

All students should be able to:	Suggested resources:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify the 8 SPECTRUM Primary Procedures, and their role in museum documentation systems- Referring to the 8 SPECTRUM Primary Procedures, describe the lifecycle of a museum object- Describe the various paper and digital components of a museum documentation system, including Accession Registers and catalogue records, and, broadly, the types of data collected at various stages of the lifecycle- Describe the criteria used to make a decision about which software would be most suitable for your museum	<p>Documentation: a practical guide, (2008), Collections Trust http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/shop</p> <p>A guide to museum documentation systems, and their application in the management and use of museum collections. It summarises the 8 SPECTRUM Primary Procedures, which form the basis of a museum documentations system, and need to be in place in any system to ensure accountability for the legal status of the collection. It also contains fictitious examples of completed records from museum documentation systems, including an object Entry Form, an Accession Register and an object Exit Form, all of which illustrate the kinds of data collected.</p> <p>Introduction to SPECTRUM fact sheet, (2011), Collections Trust http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1097-introduction-to-spectrum-factsheet</p> <p>A very broad overview of the SPECTRUM standard</p> <p>SPECTRUM Advice fact sheets, (2011), Collections Trust http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/spectrum-resources/1222-spectrum-advice-factsheets</p> <p>A series of fact sheets which give advice about the application of the 8 SPECTRUM Primary procedures. If a museum implements these procedures they will have an accountable documentation system which enables them to record the objects in their collection, their provenance, and where they are stored.</p> <p>Forms and Registers http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/shop/forms-and-registers</p> <p>Examples of blank forms and registers which are used in many museum documentation systems, illustrating the kinds of data collected. Generally these forms and registers complement computerised systems.</p> <p>Collections Trust Software Survey http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/softwareysurvey</p> <p>Many collections management systems in museums use SPECTRUM as a basis for their structure. This survey lists and compares different software systems which are produced by software vendors who are licensed to use SPECTRUM in their software, and links through to the vendors' websites.</p> <p>Behind the Scenes - The Vincent Price Art Museum - Part 3 http://www.youtube.com/user/VPartMuseum#p/a/u/2/juv80i0gbEI</p> <p>A short film illustrating accessioning procedures at the Vincent Price Art Museum.</p>



Topic 11 - Documenting objects (continued)

	<p>Suggested resources continued:</p> <p>Behind the Scenes - The Vincent Price Art Museum - Part 1, video http://www.youtube.com/user/VPartMuseum#p/u/5/mwUEMHazXxg</p> <p>The photography of acquisitions at the Vincent Price Art Museum. At this museum, because of the nature of the collection, the photography of objects is an important part of the accessioning procedure. This will differ in other museums, where sometimes a description is adequate.</p>
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Topic 12 - Labelling and marking objects

This topic supports the student to understand :

- The purpose of the labelling and marking of museum objects
- The practical application of labels and marks to museum objects of different types

Context to this Topic:

In a museum every object, or group of objects, should have a unique identity number. If an object forms part of the museums permanent collections, this number is usually an accession number, but it may be another type of number, if, for example the object forms part of a replica collection.

In a museum, every object, or group of objects, must be labelled and/or marked with this unique identity number in a way that is as permanent as possible, but which does not damage or alter the object, and which can if necessary be reversed by the museum.

- The term 'labelling' describes attaching the number to an object using a label, or, depending on the type of object, sometimes to its packaging
- The term 'marking' describes applying the number directly onto an object using a variety of methods which are not damaging to the object, and which may be reversed.

There are many ways of labelling and marking museum objects: the choice of method depends on factors such as the material the object is made from, its size or its shape. Choosing the correct method and position is essential to prevent damaging the object, but to also ensure that the number remains in place until such time that it is removed by staff.

The object's unique identity number will also appear on the records the museum holds about the object. The number therefore provides a link between the information a museum holds about the object to the object itself.

Labelling and marking is an important and fundamental collections care activity in all museums: if the bond between the object and its documentation is broken, the consequences may be serious. At best, time will be wasted in tracking down documentation and re-establishing the link. At worst, the museum will not know how the object was acquired, or its significance. The number is not intended to act as extra security in the case of theft of an object.



Topic 12 - Labelling and marking objects

All students should be able to:

- State the reasons for labelling and marking, and when it takes place in the lifecycle of a museum object
- Identify the resources and products used in labelling and marking museum objects
- Identify the component materials of a variety of museum objects, and select appropriate labelling and marking techniques, and positions
- Recognise the Health and Safety implications of using some labelling and marking products containing chemicals, and select basic health and safety precautions.

Suggested resources:

Accessions in May 2010, (2010), Arkansas State Museum
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7rLN6sAwO8>

A short film listing all of the objects accessioned by the Old State House Museum, Arkansas in one month. The film illustrates many different types of object made from a variety of materials: appropriate labelling and marking methods would have been chosen for each of these objects.

Labelling and Marking Museum Objects Booklet, (2008), National Museums Liverpool and the Collections Trust.
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/programmes/museum-accreditation/926-labelling-and-marking-museum-objects>

A very comprehensive guide to the rationale for labelling and marking museum objects, with summaries of different techniques and positions for different types of object. The booklet also includes health and safety advice on using paraloid and acetone.

Guidelines on marking and labelling methods and positions, (Undated), National Museums Liverpool.
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a350/f6/000955.pdf

An internal document from National Museums Liverpool, which provides staff with guidance on labelling and marking objects from the collections. This document gives useful 'real life' examples of labelling and marking different types of object.

The contents of a museum labelling and marking kit, (2012), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osEIQsqG3CU>

A short video in which Juliane Ovenden, conservator, demonstrates the contents of a museum labelling and marking kit.

Labelling and marking paper objects in museum collections, (2012), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF2olxg1hmc>

A short video in which Juliane Ovenden, conservator, demonstrates the appropriate marking of photographs and books.

Labelling and marking textiles in museum collections, (2012), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zCXNphTv0U>

A short video in which Juliane Ovenden, conservator, demonstrates the marking of textile objects.

Marking museum objects using starch paste, (2012), Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XB30xTpYJ00>

A conservator demonstrates the appropriate marking of museum objects using the starch paste method. This is increasingly being used in museums to replace the paraloid and acetone ('paraloid sandwich') method, because it is quicker to apply and does not involve the use of chemicals.



Topic 12 - Labelling and marking objects (continued)

	Suggested resources (continued)
	<p>Working with Substances Hazardous to Health. 2009. Health and Safety Executive. http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/environmental-control/842-working-with-substances-hazardous-to-health-coshh</p> <p>A Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) fact sheet providing a general introduction to the health and safety implications of using chemicals at work. In the context of labelling and marking museum objects, health and safety concerns generally only arise with the use of paraloid and acetone – both of which are being replaced by the starch paste method in some circumstances. However, paraloid is still in use and health and safety guidance needs to be followed.</p>



Topic 13 - Handling, packing and moving objects

This topic supports the student to understand :

- The principles of safe handling, packing and moving of single objects and collections, with reference to minimising risk to objects and observing Health and Safety guidelines.

Context to this Topic:

Inevitably, using collections places them at risk of damage, in fact the primary cause of damage to collections is handling, either by the curator or by a user of the collection. This topic builds the students awareness of safe practices when handling, and the choice of appropriate materials and techniques for packing for storage. It makes reference to circumstances where specialist packing is necessary, when for example objects are being moved to a different site: this kind of packing is usually undertaken by specialist companies and requires different techniques.



Topic 13 - Handling, packing and moving objects

All students should be able to:

- Identify basic handling and moving techniques for different sizes and types of objects
- Identify basic packing techniques and appropriate packing materials
- Identify circumstances where specialist packing is required
- Recognise the Health and Safety implications of handling and moving museum objects

Suggested resources:

Packing museum objects: a Collections Care How To Guide, (2012), Norfolk museums and Archaeology Service
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_122.pdf

An introduction to basic packing and handling materials and techniques, with case studies, and photographs of well packed museum objects.

Signpost Factsheets 3 – Handling and Packing, (2006), South West Museums, Libraries and Archives
http://clbeta.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a268/f6/001260.pdf

A good follow on to *Packing museum objects: a Collections Care How To Guide*, containing specific guidance on packing particular types of collections including textiles

Collections Link Suppliers Directory

<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/suppliers?sid=1>

This directory links the user to websites of suppliers of conservation resources used by museums, for packing and moving, and provides a useful reference to the range of materials and equipment available.

Moving the Grant Museum

<http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/museums/2011/03/15/moving-the-grant-museum/>

A video with supporting blog, describing the packing and moving of the Grant Museum Collection, University College London, from one building to another.

Packing and moving library and archive collections, (2005), National Preservation Office
http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/media/com_form2content/documents/c1/a107/f6/000507.pdf

An in depth analysis of the issues involved in moving library and archival collections. Useful as an illustration of the planning and risk assessment needed before undertaking a major relocation of a collection.

Getting to grips with manual handling: a short guide, (2011), Health and Safety Executive.
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf>

An overview of HSE advice on manual handling. It is important that everyone in a museum is aware of basic manual handling guidance.



Topic 14 - Storage and display

This topic supports the student to understand :

- The importance of the use of secure and appropriate storage and display materials and techniques

Context to this topic:

All museum objects are either in use or in storage of some kind. 'In use' encompasses a variety of activities, but also includes display. Museum objects need to be stored and displayed in such a way that:

- They are easy to retrieve by museum staff
- They are secure from loss or damage
- The physical storage or display medium is appropriate for the type of object and its material
- They are not damaged by proximity to inappropriate materials

This topic deals with the physical storage and display of museum objects, such as shelving, and support materials in cases.



Topic 14 - Storage and display

All students should be able to:

- Identify the types of objects and materials which are most at risk from incorrect display and methods of correct support and mounting
- Describe the issues that need to be considered when displaying or storing museum objects made from a variety of materials

Suggested resources:

The effects of storage and display materials on museum objects, (2011), Museums Galleries Scotland
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/582-the-effects-of-storage-and-display-materials-on-museum-objects>

A fact sheet describing the damaging effects of storage and display materials on museum objects with special reference to collections of paper, photographic materials, bone, ivory, feathers, and rubber.

St Fagans Museum – Cardiff, (2009), St Fagans, National Museum Wales
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoO7QufdJCE&feature=related>

A curator describes a large storage project, and the experience of working with a storage company to arrive at a range of solutions for a variety of types of museum objects. Good illustrations in the film of different storage solutions.

Choosing Museum Racking with Jane Thompson Webb
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdzLpptyXk8>

This film is produced by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery with Metalrax, a specialist museum racking supplier – it contains excellent basic advice on museum shelving.

Materials and their interaction with museum objects, (2003), Victoria and Albert Museum Conservation Journal
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-44/materials-and-their-interaction-with-museum-objects/>

This resource is not primarily aimed at entry level students, however it is useful in that it covers storage and display materials from a conservators viewpoint, and is a good introduction to the terminology used in specifying storage and display materials.

Conservation and Lighting, (2009), Museums Galleries Scotland
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/site-information/581-conservation-and-lighting>

An advice sheet containing an accessible summary of the science of measuring light levels, with guidance on the lighting for conservation and display, and ways of reducing exposure to light and radiation in storage and display.



Topic 15 - Hazards in Collections

This topic supports the student to understand :

- risk in the context of hazardous materials in collections, and build an awareness of situations where advice is needed from a professional with expertise, such as a conservator, in dealing with hazardous materials and objects.

Context to this Topic:

Museum objects can be made from component materials which may be toxic or have the potential to become toxic over time. These materials include poisonous metals, radiation and asbestos. It is important that people working with museum collections are aware of the hazards that can be associated with different types of objects and materials, to allow them to manage the risk to other objects in the collection, and to users of the collections.

The purpose of this topic is to raise awareness of the topic of hazards in collections, not to build knowledge about interventive techniques, which in the case of many hazardous materials should only be undertaken by a professional. It is however important that the student is able to assess the possible risk in using or storing commonly occurring objects containing hazardous materials, and employ appropriate and safe collection care practices, such as in handling and packing. This has to be balanced with an ability to recognise situations where it is necessary to consult a professional for advice.



Topic 15 - Hazards in Collections

All students should be able to:

- List different types of hazardous material that might be found in collections of different types, and objects of different materials, and describe their associated risks
- Assess and implement basic preventive measures required for commonly occurring objects in collections which contain hazardous material, and recognise when to seek professional advice

Suggested resources:

Hazards in museum collections: a Collections Care *How To Guide*, (2012), Norfolk museums and Archaeology Service
http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/shares/resource_120.pdf

An introduction to the types of hazards found in museum objects, containing advice on dealing with hazards on a day to day basis, and seeking expert advice.

CoSHH does work, (2004), Victoria and Albert Museum Conservation Journal
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-46/coshh-does-work/>

A case study of a risk assessment at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which identified a risk from mercury salts contained in some hats in the collection, and a short term measure taken to minimise risk to visitors and staff, whilst further research was undertaken by specialist staff. The case study is at the 'specialist' end of the spectrum, but provides an insight into risk assessment and management, and the point at which specialist expertise is needed.

Working with Substances Hazardous to Health, (2009), Health and Safety Executive
<http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/discover/environmental-control/842-working-with-substances-hazardous-to-health-coshh>

Basic introduction from the HSE to working with hazardous substances, with advice that is relevant to anyone working with a museum collection.