

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
Reduce light exposure on light sensitive objects <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.	Museum and Galleries Scotland information on control and monitoring of light https://326gtd123dbk1xdkdm489u1q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Monitoring-light-and-UV.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>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-and-guidance/2019-eh-guideline-recording-insect-pest-data-floor-plans.pdf</p>
<p>Review Environmental Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. 	<p>Museum & Galleries Commission – Relative Humidity and Temperature Pattern Book https://326gtd123dbk1xdkdm489u1q-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Museums-Galleries-Commission-Relative-Humidity-and-Temperature-Pattern-Book-2000.pdf SHARE – The Museum Environment http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Environmental-Monitoring-1.pdf 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>
<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. 	<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</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 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.) 	<p>https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/application/files/9414/5615/4887/pocket-salvage-guide.pdf</p> <p>Collections Trust links to making and implementing emergency and salvage plans https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum-resources/risk-management/</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</p> <p>SHARE Museums East youtube video demonstrating how to label textile objects https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zCXNphTv0U</p> <p>SHARE Museums East youtube video demonstrating how to label paper objects https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF2olxg1hmc</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>English Heritage – Hospitality Events in Historic Houses</p>

	https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/conservation/collections-advice-and-guidance/
Update your health and safety policies	<p>Collections Trust Guidance on COSHH https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/the-control-of-substances-hazardous-to-health-regulations-2002/</p> <p>HSE webpage on COSHH https://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/</p> <p>An e-tool that can help with learning about common health hazards found in museum collections. https://hazardsincollections.org.uk/</p> <p>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/</p> <p>Link to HSE Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/regulations.htm</p> <p>Link to HSE guidance on asbestos and Asbestos Awareness Course https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/training.htm</p> <p>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/</p> <p>Link to the UK Government Controlled Drugs Regulations https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-about-controlled-drugs-regulations</p> <p>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</p> <p>Link to HSE website page about control of radiation https://www.hse.gov.uk/radiation/</p> <p>HSE advice on implementing the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 https://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm</p> <p>The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents</p> <p>Share Guidance on completing Risk Assessments http://www.sharemuseumeast.org.uk/resources-2/share-resources/</p>
Check collection care equipment	To donate PPE, please contact bethany.reynard@nationalmuseums.org.uk

<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>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>Consider 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>
<p>Links to help working remotely - Ensure you are working safely and securely online – cyber-attacks have increased and it is important to protect your data and software. Consult your IT team or contractor to ensure all appropriate measures are in place. - Be aware of the current data protection law and how this may impact your work.</p>	<p>Government Guide to GDPR law https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-meetings-making-decisions-and-voting</p>

<p>- If you are holding meetings online it is worth considering the legal impact of teleconferencing on any decisions made. If you are working from home and making decisions online there are legal restrictions.</p>	
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