

ual:

University Archives and Special
Collections Centre

Collection Care and Conservation Policy

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1. Introduction

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre aims to ensure that risks to collections in its care are assessed and removed or mitigated. To achieve this, specific collection care standards have been developed and policies put into place to support and maintain them.

2. Mission Statement

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre supports the Library Futures Vision of our Services.

At our heart is a commitment to offer an outstanding service to our students, facilitating and supporting student enquiry and discovery throughout the whole student journey.

[Library Futures 2023](#)

Library Futures is our ambitious plan to undergo a radical process of transformation of services and processes, to be fully connected and aligned to the University's ten year strategy:

We achieve this through our core values of:

- Putting students' needs at the heart of everything we do
- Committing to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility in all our interactions and practices
- Treating everyone with respect, kindness and compassion
- Developing through professional enquiry, critical reflection and continuous improvement
- Collaborating to achieve our full potential

2.1 Policy alignment

This policy is part of Library and Student Services Collection Management Policy framework and it aligns with the following approved UAL policy documents:

- Library Services Collection Development and Management Policy
- Art Collection Management and Development Policy
- Archives, Museums and Special Collections Acquisition Policy
- Archives, Museums and Special Collections Disposals Policy
- UAL Archives, Museum and Special Collections Digital Preservation Policy
- Web Archiving Policy
- ASCC Loans Policy

It aligns with key UAL governance strategies:

UAL Strategy (2022-32)

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This outlines the challenges and opportunities that are most important to UAL and its future. Three guiding policies respond to each of these issues in turn.

- Guiding policy 1: [To give our students the education they need to flourish in a changing world.](#)
- Guiding policy 2: [To bring a high-quality creative education to more students than ever before.](#)
- Guiding policy 3: [To change the world through our creative endeavour.](#)

Research Strategy (2023-2028)

Changing the world through our creative endeavour

2.2 Customer Service Standards

In line with Library and Student Services Customer Service Excellence award, standards are applied to the service offered by ASCC:

- Enquiries will be answered in 3 days
- Items will available for a researcher within 72 hours

3. Governance

University Archives and Special Collections Centre sits under the governance of the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services. The Associate Director (Content and Discovery) has overall responsibility for collection development and management and line manages the Archives and Special Collections Centre Manager.

Also within the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services sits the London College of Fashion Archives Manager and collection management teams within each of the six libraries of UAL. Central Saint Martins (CSM) has an accredited museum, which is governed by CSM College.

The Archives and Special Collections Centre Manager convenes a Community of Practice for archives, museum and special collections managers across UAL, which facilitates a diverse exchange of knowledge and skills between members; provides guidance on issues related to the development and management of archives, museum and special collections and encourages consistent professional practice following recognised standards within these professions.

The UAL Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board, on behalf of the University, maintains an oversight of the care, development and exploitation of the University's archives, museum and special collections in order to maximise their potential to support and enhance teaching, learning and research activities across the University.

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It provides strategic guidance on policy matters and facilitates collaboration and resource sharing where this is appropriate. It acts as an essential communication channel for those involved in managing, curating and using collections. It reports to University Research Committee and is chaired by an Associate Dean of Research.

4. Resources

The Archives and Special Collections Centre is financed by allocated staffing and non-staffing budgets from the Directorate of Library and Student Support Services. These cover substantive staff posts to deliver the services of the Centre and non-staff costs such as annual maintenance and ongoing development and conservation costs.

The ASCC does not have an acquisitions budget other than to develop the Art Collection. Other collections are acquired through donations. See the Acquisitions Policy for details.

Since 2018, ASCC has been in receipt of Research England Higher Education Museum and Galleries Fund. This has been renewed and increased for the period 2024/5 for a further five years.

5. Storage

5.1 On-site

The University Archives and Special Collections Centre was built in 2007-8 to comply as closely as possible with PD5454 *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*.

It has been maintained to this standard and the subsequent recommendation of newly developed British Standards:

BS EN 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archive and library collections*

BS EN 16893:2018 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections*

These standards are currently being applied to the plans to develop a new site for the LCC, which will hold a dedicated space for the ASCC, due to be completed in 2026/7.

Risks are being identified and assessed, so that appropriate diligence is completed and any necessary mitigations are implemented, before moving the collections to the new site.

These standards also apply at the CSM Accredited Museum and the new LCF East Bank at Stratford, opened in 2023.

Collections at other location across UAL do not currently comply as closely as desired with these standards. These collections are managed within resource constraints and continuous improvement opportunities are sought, such as the development of new sites or the refurbishment of existing spaces to improve storage and access facilities. Conversations continue to seek solutions on the current estate, in liaison with site managers.

5.2 Off-site

The UAL Art Collection is stored off-site in a secure warehouse and gallery storage environment, where the application of the standards

BS EN 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archive and library collections*

BS EN 16893:2018 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections*

Is also a requirement.

Regular condition checks are carried out by the supplier and by the Curator (Co-ordinator) of the Collection.

6. Collection care and assessment

The ASCC holds materials in a variety of formats including paper, photography, art works, objects, digital carriers.

Assessments of archives and special collections are carried out by appropriately trained staff, using industry standard guidelines and models relevant to the collections, such as:

- Spectrum for museum objects
- Benchmarks for Collection Care
- The Digital Preservation Coalition's Rapid Assessment Model (DPC RAM), a benchmarking tool in Excel format that organisations can use to assess their own digital preservation capabilities.

These models inform the ongoing care and management of each collection and a professional preservation manager or conservator is consulted, if necessary. This professional expertise and advice is sought through UAL's membership of the National Conservation Service. A current and ongoing subscription to a disaster recovery service is budgeted and applied to the ASCC and all UAL sites that hold collections.

Environmental conditions are monitored through remote, radio-controlled data-loggers which record temperature and relative humidity at the ASCC and other sites where collections are held across the UAL Estate. These data are collected and used to inform collection management decisions.

A networked monitoring system is applied at ASCC, covering the temperature, relative humidity, fire and power supply. This system is available remotely. It will be implemented across sites, as resources allow.

Guidelines on handling physical collections are issued to all archive users at ASCC and at other UAL sites. These guidelines have been developed in line with national standards and are enforced through professional invigilation of the archive user in the Seach Room or other identified space.

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Reflection on changes to collection care practice, post-COVID, have highlighted some lasting effects on collection care, leading to more robust monitoring and efficient retrieval practices for users.

7. Conservation

All archives, museum and special collections are managed to ensure that they are protected by suitable packaging materials and shelving, which meet archival and Spectrum standards. Conservation materials are purchased from reputable conservation suppliers. An appropriate amount of the non-staffing budget is allocated for the purchase of conservation supplies, depending on the needs of the archives and special collections.

Pest management is achieved through setting traps and monitoring them regularly, recording the results. Where action is required, this is available with the support of the Estates team.

Collections for priority attention and conservation action are identified and audited, so that resources can be sought and allocated to their care.

8. Disaster planning and response

Library Services has a plan for business continuity which is supported by a contract with the disaster recovery company (Hanwell), with the aim of preventing, managing and recovering from any disasters affecting any of its physical collections.

The ASCC Strong Room is monitored 24/7 by UAL IT and alerts are issued to collection managers when environmental conditions are breached. A communication system is in place to facilitate on-site call-out of Estates staff, equipment engineers, collection managers or the disaster recovery company, as required, to attend to identified issues.

In the event of an identified disaster, large or small, the disaster recovery company will send in salvage experts who will advise and assist in the assessment of damage and the rescue and restoration of collections.

To support the disaster plan, the Finance Manager for Library and Student Services ensures that insurance schedules are kept up to date and where relevant, items or collections are named on the University's risk register, which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Disaster planning and response for digital collections is outlined in the UAL Digital Preservation Policy.

9. Approval

This Collection Care and Conservation Policy was approved by the Archives, Museum and Special Collections Advisory Board on 18th May 2021

10. Version Control

Review every 3 years

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Date	Version	Author(s)	Status
2021	1	Sarah Mahurter (Manager, ASCC)	Approved by AMSC Board May 2021
2024	2	Sarah Mahurter (Manager, ASCC)	Approved by AMSC Board November 2024