

TŪHURA OTAGO MUSEUM

CONSERVATION AND COLLECTIONS CARE POLICY

Policy title:	Conservation and collections care
Scope/Audience:	Tūhura Otago Museum Trust Board members, staff and volunteers
Intent:	To outline the standards and practices applied to all collection items ensuring they are stored, displayed, handled and conserved within professional standards and in accordance with all relevant legal and ethical obligations. To articulate appropriate pest management, environmental monitoring, disaster planning, staff training and remedial treatment strategies.

Background

Tūhura Otago Museum (the Museum) has been collecting items from nature, culture and science since its inception in 1868. There is an estimated 1.5 million items within the collections, held in trust for the benefit of the people of Otago, New Zealand and the world. They provide irreplaceable references, or records, against which we are constantly building and modifying our knowledge and understanding of our natural and cultural worlds.

Under the Otago Museum Trust Board Act 1996 the Museum will collect, preserve, act as a regional repository for, research, display, and otherwise make available to the people of the present and the future, material and information relating to the natural, cultural, and scientific heritage of the peoples of the world.

Policy statement

Museum collections are cared for and maintained in conditions intended to preserve and extend their physical integrity. The Museum aims to achieve an appropriate balance between the use of, access to and preservation of collections. The principles that govern the Museum's approach to conservation and collections care includes risk management, compliance with relevant legislation, following appropriate sector standards and best practice, and the effective training, and communication of conservation and collections care issues to Museum staff and relevant stakeholders.

Title: Conservation and collections care	Position responsible: Museum Director	Date approved: 29 April 2024
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CONSERVATION AND COLLECTIONS CARE POLICY

CONDITION OF THE COLLECTIONS

The Museum's conservation and collections teams monitor the Museum's collections, documenting changes in condition, identifying objects for conservation assessment etc.

Sensitive, vulnerable or hazardous objects will be actively identified, recorded and flagged. All Museum staff, Honorary Curators, interns and volunteers comply with all procedures and guidelines relating to the handling, display, transportation and care of flagged items.

The Museum accepts that use of the collection in gallery displays, exhibitions, touring exhibitions, loans and scientific research may result in some change in condition. Risk to the collection will be minimised through the use of specified standards for display materials, mounts, packing cases, transportation, destructive sampling and through staff training and compliance with international best practice.

RISK MANAGEMENT

All activities which involve the use of collection items, such as handling, transportation, display, and access for research carry a potential risk to the longevity and condition of the collection.

The Museum aims to manage and mitigate the risks to the collection to a level which is acceptable when balanced against the need to ensure the collections are accessible and interpretable. Maintenance of the appropriate balance is the responsibility of the Museum Director, following consultation with the relevant conservation and collections staff.

Collection risk management activities include but are not limited to providing staff with appropriate training, monitoring the conditions in which the collection is housed, ensuring procedures are in place to document changes in the condition of items and the maintenance of a plan to safeguard the collections in the event of unforeseen incidents, disasters or emergencies.

PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION

The Museum recognises that a preventive conservation approach is the most cost and resource-effective way to care for collections in the long term. This includes measures to reduce damage or deterioration associated with known risks to the collection.

The environmental conditions specified by the Museum's conservation staff comply with the PAS 198 Guidelines as well as national and international standards and guidelines.

All collection items are housed in conditions as prescribed by the Museum's Environmental, Storage and Display Operational Guidelines, and in line with national guidelines published by the New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials (NZCCM). Any movement of a collection item must result in the item being placed in matching or improved conditions.

All material used in association or close proximity with collection items must be of an appropriate standard to prevent damage or deterioration. The testing of new materials are actively undertaken by conservation staff.

Collection items are assessed and categorised according to their sensitivity to light. Light levels and exposure time are minimised to manage the rate of irreversible fade/change.

Display and storage of collections ensure no unnecessary radiation (such as ultra-violet) other than visible light should fall on objects.

The risk to collections from dust and pollution are managed through a combination of good housekeeping, display design, filtration of circulated air and building maintenance.

The Museum accepts that there will be a level of pest presence across the site. This is managed through a combination of good housekeeping and mandatory quarantine procedures, in accordance with best Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices. All Museum staff, Honorary Curators, interns and volunteers have a responsibility to inform conservation staff of immediate and potential pest problems affecting the Museum.

Collection items within the Museum are protected from vibration or shock, whilst on display, in storage and during transportation.

The Museum optimises the space and capacity of all collection areas, through the use of cost-effective systems to provide flexible, safe and appropriate storage for all collection items.

REMEDIAL CONSERVATION

Remedial conservation treatment may be undertaken to stabilise the collections, to enhance intellectual access and accuracy, and to improve visual appearance.

Treatments are intended to prolong and extend the useable 'life' of collection items and are undertaken in accordance with international standards and ethical guidelines.

Treatments are discussed with and agreed upon by the relevant curatorial staff, taking into consideration the purpose for which the object is to be used, the wishes of the original artist (if known) and all relevant Māori /Indigenous customs.

The Conservation Manager is responsible for final approval of remedial conservation treatments and ensuring that the resulting treatment and documentation meets the required international standards.

Where the necessary conservation skills or experience are not available within the Museum, external conservation staff may be engaged with the agreement of the Museum Director. The Conservation Manager is responsible for the organisation and oversight of all such contractors.

RESPONSIBILITIES

All Museum staff, Honorary Curators, interns and volunteers are aware of and comply with the requirements within this policy and related Operational Guidelines as they apply to their day-to-day activities. In-house training covering integrated pest management (IPM), disaster response and object handling will be provided by conservation staff at induction and at regular intervals thereafter as appropriate.

All collection items are handled and moved by staff who have undergone in-house training, are competent to do so and are aware of all relevant Māori / Indigenous customs.

All collection item moves are assessed prior to being undertaken to ensure that the appropriate resources and arrangements are in place, minimising the risk to both items and staff.

Conservation staff coordinate the delivery of preventive and remedial conservation programmes in line with the Museum's strategic plan and will facilitate and contribute to the investigation, research and display of the Museum's collections.

RESEARCH AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Museum continually improves its standards, efficiency and effectiveness in the conservation and care of its collections through a combination of staff development, in-house research and mutually beneficial partnerships with external individuals, institutions and bodies.

The Museum actively shares conservation and collections care expertise and knowledge with colleagues in the wider museum, heritage and educational sectors.

Conservation and collections staff provide expertise in conservation and collections care to support and assist in the development of the Museum's regional, national and international initiatives, resources permitting.

PROVIDING CONSERVATION AND COLLECTIONS CARE SERVICES TO THIRD PARTIES

Conservation staff, and where appropriate other collections staff, will respond to public enquiries concerning conservation and collections care. In accordance with the Museum's Charging for Admission, Access and Services Policy, all enquiries will be answered free of charge unless significant staff time or resources are required. Advice will be limited to preventive conservation and collections care.

Conservation staff, and where appropriate other collections staff, may provide conservation and collections care services, including remedial conservation, to third parties as requested, pending approval by both the Museum Director and the Conservation Manager prior to any agreement or contract being entered into.

Any activities undertaken in the service of a third party are subject to the same standards and codes of ethics as when dealing with the Museum's collections.

All agreements and activities undertaken in the service of a third party will adhere to the Museum's internal financial procedures and guidelines.

Advice, support or services will not be offered to a third party if doing so is likely to have a detrimental effect on the Museum's own activities or damage the standing or reputation of the Museum.

No remedial conservation treatment will be carried out by Museum staff on an item or group of items where there is reasonable cause to believe that the current holder is not legitimately entitled to retain the item(s) or that the item(s) have been stolen, illegally sourced, illegally exported or illegally imported.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Museum is committed to achieving standards of excellence as defined by national and international professional codes. This policy conforms to the relevant provisions of the following codes and standards:

Codes of ethics and practice

- [American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works \(AIC\), Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice, 1994](#)
- [American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works \(AIC\), Commentaries to the Guidelines for Practice, 2000](#)
- [American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works \(AIC\), 2003, defining the Conservator: Essential Competencies](#)
- [Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material \(AICCM\), Code of Ethics and Code of Practice, 2002](#)
- [Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property \(CAC\), Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice, 2009](#)
- [European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisation \(E.C.C.O\), Professional Guidelines I-III, 2004](#)
- [International Council of Museums \(ICOM\), Code of Ethics for Museums, 2013](#)
- [International Council of Museums \(ICOM\), Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums, 2013](#)
- [Institute of Conservation \(ICON\), Code of Conduct and Professional Standards, 2014](#)
- [New Zealand Conservators of Cultural Materials \(NZCCM\), Code of Ethics, 2006](#)

Standards and guidelines

- BS EN 15757:2010 Conservation of cultural property. Specifications for temperature and relative humidity to limit climate-induced mechanical damage in organic hygroscopic materials, 2010
- [BS EN 15946:2011 Conservation of cultural property. Packing principles for transport](#)
- BS EN 15999-1:2014 Conservation of cultural heritage. Guidelines for design of showcases for exhibition and preservation of objects - General requirements, 2014
- [BS EN 16085:2012 Conservation of Cultural property. Methodology for sampling from materials of cultural property. General rules](#)
- [BS EN 16095:2012 Conservation of cultural property. Condition recording for movable cultural heritage](#)
- BS EN 16141:2012 [Conservation of cultural heritage. Guidelines for management of environmental conditions. Open storage facilities: definitions and characteristics of collection centres dedicated to the preservation and management of cultural heritage](#)
- Collections Trust. 2011. Benchmarks for Collections Care 2.0

- [Environmental Guidelines – IIC and ICOM-CC Declaration, 2014](#)
 - Heritage Collections Council (Australia). 1998. Re Collections: Caring for Cultural Materials 1.
 - Heritage Collections Council (Australia). 1998. Re Collections: Caring for Cultural Materials 2.
 - Heritage Collections Council (Australia). 1998. Re Collections: Damage and Decay
 - Heritage Collections Council (Australia). 1998. Re Collections: Handling, Transportation, Storage and Display.
 - McKenna, G & Patsatzi, E (Eds). 2011, "SPECTRUM: The UK Museum Documentation Standard", MDA, Cambridge, 4th Edition
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1992. Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1992. Standards in the Museum Care of Biological Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1992. Standards in the Museum Care of Larger and Working Objects Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1996. Standards in the Museum Care of Photographic Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1998. Standards in the Museum Care of Costume and Textile Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 2004. Standards in the Museum Care of Geological Collections.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 2005. Standards in the Museum Care of Musical Instruments.
 - Museum & Galleries Commission. 1995. Standards for Touring Exhibitions.
 - [Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections \(SPNCH\), 1998, "Guidelines for the Care of Natural History Collections"](#)
 - Stollow, N, 1979, Conservation Standards for works of art in transit and on exhibition. UNESCO.
 - PAS 197:2009 Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management
 - PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections
 - PD CEN/TS 16163:2014 Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Guidelines and procedures for choosing appropriate lighting for indoor exhibitions, 2014.
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Definitions

- **Collections care** – The range of activities intended to safeguard a collection. This can include organisational policies, security, storage, cleaning, maintenance, handling, scientific investigation, environmental monitoring and control, exhibitions and loans, conservation, provision of surrogates and emergency planning.
- **Conservation** – Interventive techniques applied to an item to achieve a chemical and physical stabilisation for the purpose of extending the useful life of the item and to ensure its continued availability.
- **Conservator** - A professional whose primary occupation is the practise of conservation and who, through specialised education, knowledge, training and experience, formulates and implements all the activities of conservation, both preventative and remedial, in accordance with a defined code of ethics and professional guidelines.
- **Collection Manager** – A professional responsible for the documentation, inventory, management and care of collection items. The role supports collections access, exhibitions and events and coordinates the activities of researchers, interns and volunteers.
- **Preventive conservation** - All measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimising future deterioration or loss to collections. These measures and actions are indirect; they do not interfere with the materials or structures of the items and do not modify appearance.

Preventive conservation includes, but is not limited to, appropriate measures and actions relating to storage, handling, packing and transportation, security, environmental management (light, humidity, pollution and pest control) and disaster planning.

- **Remedial conservation** - All actions directly applied to an item or group of items to arrest ongoing damaging processes or to reinforce an item's physical structure as well as facilitating appreciation, understanding and use of the item now and in the future. These actions sometimes modify the appearance of the items but are based on a respect for the original materials and source cultural communities.

Related documents

- Collection Policy
- Collection Development Strategy
- Accidents Involving Objects on Display Operational Guidelines
- Cleaning of Display and Storage Areas Operational Guidelines
- Condition Reporting Operational Guidelines
- Destructive Sampling Operational Guidelines
- Events and Functions in Galleries and Public Spaces Operational Guidelines
- Hazard Management Operational Guidelines
- Integrated Pest Management Operational Guidelines
- Item Handling Operational Guidelines
- Item Packing for Storage or Transport Operational Guidelines
- Materials for Storage and Public Presentation Operational Guidelines
- Preservation Guidelines for Public Presentation of Collection Items Operational Guidelines
- Security and Access Operational Guidelines
- Securing External Conservation Assessments and Treatments Operational Guidelines

Legal obligations: • Otago Museum Trust Board Act 1996	Tūhura Otago Museum obligations: • Goal 1: Whakamarakatia te mana o te kohika taoka Upholding the mana of the collection 1.3 - We will care for our collection
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