



# **Collections Care and Conservation Policy**

Produced: May 2024

Adopted: June 2024

Date of Review: June 2029



# Collections Care and Conservation Policy, The Chapter of York

This Collections Care and Conservation Policy is for the museum, library and archive & manuscript collections of the Chapter of York, the governing body of York Minster. It includes collections material on the Inventory of the Chapter of York, which is subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020.

**Name of service:** York Minster Undercroft and Treasury (Museum Accreditation No. 293); York Minster Library (YML); and York Minster Archives (ARCHON code: 195).

**Name of governing body:** The Chapter of York, Registered Charity Number 1201499, of 8-10 Minster Yard, York, YO1 7HH.

**Date on which this policy was approved by the governing body:** June 2024

**Policy review procedure:** The Collections Care and Conservation Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time by the Chapter of York, at least once every five years.

**Dissemination:** collections staff and volunteers, Senior Executive Team (SET), Works Department, Learning & Participation team, and other relevant staff, consultants, conservators and contractors working with the collections or on the associated buildings, exhibition and storage areas.

## **1. Purpose of Policy**

The purpose of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework, within the limits of the institution's resources, for:

- The care and preservation of the collections of the Chapter of York, now and to secure them for future generations.
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections.
- The safe use of and access to collections.

This policy has been written in accordance with the Statement of Purpose for the Collections and the Collections Development Policies for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections and the Library Collections of the Chapter of York. The associated Collections Care and Conservation Plan (CCC Plan) sets specific objectives. Both the policy and plan should be read in conjunction with the Strategic Plan of the Chapter of York, the Forward Plan for the Collections, the Access Policy for the Collections, the Information Policies for the Collections, the Conservation Management Plan for York Minster, the Emergency Plan and Business Continuity Plan, and any other plans affecting the collections and associated exhibition areas, stores and facilities.

## **2. Context and Legal Framework**

### The Charitable Purpose of the Chapter of York

The charitable purpose of the Chapter of York is—

- (a) to advance the Christian religion in accordance with the faith and practice of the Church of England, in particular by furthering the mission of the Church of England;
- (b) to care for and conserve the fabric and structure of the Cathedral Church building;
- (c) to advance any other charitable purposes which are ancillary to the furtherance of the purpose referred to in sub-paragraph (a) or (b).

*Extracted from Constitution of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.1, Article 3(1)*

### Statement of Purpose for the Collections

The museum, library and archive services seek to preserve, develop, interpret and make accessible to all the collections of the Chapter of York, supporting Chapter's mission and charitable purposes, and enriching people's lives through enabling participation, learning, understanding, inspiration and enjoyment.

### Statutes of York Minster

The Collections are referred to in the *Statutes of York Minster, revised with effect from 29 September 2022, p.17, Article 40 (1)-(4)*

**40.** (1) The Chapter shall maintain a Library and Archives whose purpose shall include the promotion of sacred learning.

(2) The Chapter shall make appropriate provision for the direction and oversight of the Library and Archives and for the care and conservation of the historic and working collections of the Cathedral.

(3) Where it may in the opinion of the Chapter assist the Chapter in fulfilling requirements imposed upon it by the Measure or by the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 or where it may otherwise further the Chapter's charitable objects as set out in the Constitution, the Chapter may at its discretion operate an Accredited Museum, as defined by the applicable Arts Council England national quality standards, within the Cathedral or within such other precinct property of the Cathedral as the Chapter may from time to time determine.

(4) The Chapter may enter into agreements with the University of York ... or any other institution of Higher Education concerning the management and administration of the Library and Archives and concerning the care and use of the historic collections of the Cathedral.

### Legislative Framework

As a cathedral collection, the Collections are subject to the legislative framework of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020. Objects (including library and archive material) deemed by the Fabric Advisory Committee (FAC) to be of 'architectural, archaeological, artistic or historic interest' must be recorded on the cathedral's Inventory. Material works relating to care, conservation, repair or development of the cathedral fabric or collections are subject to advice and consent from the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England (CFCE) (in the case of collections, for items designated of 'outstanding interest' on the Cathedral Inventory) or the cathedral's own Fabric Advisory Committee (for all other collections items on the Cathedral Inventory).

Not every item on the Inventory is necessarily part of the Museum, Archive & Manuscript or Library Collections, and vice versa. This is discussed in greater detail in the Collections Development Policies. However, there is much overlap, and the legal requirements of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 2011 and The Care of Cathedrals (Amendment) Rules 2020 must be taken into account. The CFCE guidance *Cathedral Inventories, 2021*, acknowledges Museum Accreditation and Archive Service Accreditation standards and is designed to intersect with these.

### **3. Standards**

The institution aims to improve the care and conditions of its collections, within the limits of its resources, in accordance with professional and ethical standards including:

- Benchmarks 3.0 Conservation Planning for Archives, Libraries & Museums
- BS 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*
- BS EN 16790:2016 *Conservation of cultural heritage — Integrated pest management for protection of cultural heritage*
- The Government Indemnity Scheme standard
- Archive Service Accreditation
- Museum Accreditation
- Spectrum: The UK museum collections management standard
- The Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association
- Code of Ethics, Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland)
- Ethical Framework, CILIP (the library and information association)

The institution will comply with relevant Health and Safety legislation, including, but not limited to, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) and its enabling regulations including the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (2002).

The safety and preservation of the collections will be considered from the outset of any plans to alter the displays or storage, to modify the buildings or to allow access to any part of the collections.

Wherever possible, the organisation will seek to minimise the unnecessary use of energy and to reduce the environmental impact of caring for the collection, while upholding professional standards of collections care and management.

### **4. Staff and Expertise**

The collections are managed by professional staff, including the Head of Collections & Interpretation (an experienced museum / curatorial professional) and a qualified and experienced Librarian, Archivist and Curator.

All collections staff except the Library staff are employed by the Chapter of York. Library services are delivered through the Collaboration Agreement between the Chapter of York and the University of York, as described in the 'The Collaboration Agreement relating to the provision of Library Services based at the Old Palace, Dean's Park, York' summarised in the *York Minster Library Collections Development Policy*, Section 4, Library Management Arrangements. The Library collection and the Old Palace building in which it is housed (along with archive, manuscript and object collections, curatorial offices and the Reading Room) are owned and maintained by the Chapter of York. Collections care and conservation is fully integrated across the museum, library and archive & manuscript collections, under the leadership of the Head of Collections & Interpretation, including environmental monitoring, the integrated pest management system (IPM), buildings management, display conditions, etc.

All staff and volunteers working with collections are appropriately trained in their handling and management, including any health and safety risks. New and / or inexperienced staff and volunteers are supervised when handling collections, and training and CPD is supported.

Any concerns regarding the collections should be notified immediately to the Collections & Interpretation Department and escalated where appropriate to the Head of Collections & Interpretation, Librarian, Archivist or Curator. Procedures are incorporated into the Emergency Plan.

Researchers or other visitors working with the collections are advised on how to handle any material they are consulting and appropriately supervised. Consultation of archive and manuscript material, Library special collections and small, portable objects will normally take place in the Reading Room; or *in situ* in the cathedral, galleries or stores for larger or fixed items.

Professional curatorial staff are trained and experienced in preventative conservation techniques, with advice sought from external conservators and specialists where appropriate. Suitably trained and qualified external conservators are used for remedial conservation, unless the work lies within the professional skills, expertise and experience of the Chapter of York's Collections & Interpretation and Works Departments, including the York Minster Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management. There is a formal agreement and 20-year plan (2017-37) in place with York Glaziers Trust for the conservation of the stained glass of the cathedral.

The suitability, qualifications and experience of external conservators are carefully considered. A professionally accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register of the Institute of Conservation (ICON) will normally be chosen. Assessments are conducted and conservation plans agreed before remedial conservation is undertaken. Where work takes place off-site, planning includes arrangements for appropriate packing, transportation and insurance. Records are kept of all remedial conservation works.

## **5. Approaches to Conservation**

There are two types of conservation:

**Preventative conservation** seeks to minimise deterioration and damage by managing risks to items and collections. It is the most effective means of preserving the diverse range of objects and materials in the collections.

**Remedial conservation** involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

The organisation will aim to manage, handle, store and display the collections in such a way as to minimise the risk of damage and deterioration while facilitating access, enabling use and engagement while ensuring long-term preservation.

The preventative conservation approach cannot entirely eliminate the need for remedial or interventive conservation, as accidents or other incidents may occasionally occur and both existing collections and new acquisitions may already exhibit signs of damage.

The guiding principle for the remedial conservation of items in the collections is to minimise the amount of intervention required. Treatment methods will use stable and tested materials that are, as far as possible, reversible, and do not compromise the intrinsic nature of the object and its significance, or remove or diminish its evidential value. Some items in the collections are actively used in worship and services in the cathedral, the purpose for which they were originally obtained. Greater intervention, or 'restoration' may occasionally be required to maintain items in the living cathedral collection in active working order (for example clocks or vestments): treatment will follow historically accurate methods where appropriate, preserve the integrity and original fabric of the item as far as possible, and may be detectable while not necessarily conspicuous.

## **6. Collections Management**

The organisation is aware of the potential risks presented to collections by environmental factors, pests, handling, storage and display materials and methods, emergency situations (e.g. fire, flood, terrorist incident) and inadequate collections management or security. It aims to mitigate these risks through robust collections management.

The following systems and procedures are in place: further details are provided in the Collections Care and Conservation Plan.

### **i. Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**

The risk of pest damage and / or infestation is managed and monitored through an integrated pest management programme, including regular checks and housekeeping, and quarantining where appropriate.

### **ii. Environmental Monitoring, Control and Management**

Relative humidity and temperature are continuously monitored, and lux levels checked at regular intervals. Air quality control tests are conducted at six-monthly intervals. Environmental control measures include dehumidification in display areas and stores and silica in exhibition cases.

### **iii. Buildings Management**

Regular inspections and a programme of maintenance, including of storage and display areas.

### **iv. Storage and Display Facilities**

Identification of a programme of improvements, including where appropriate structural works, capital works and / or new facilities, to achieve well-designed storage and display facilities. Buildings, layout, materials and object containers and packaging (where appropriate) should provide protection from inappropriate environmental conditions, dust, pests and atmospheric pollutants; meet security standards; efficiently maximise storage space; and minimise unnecessary object movement and handling, while maintaining efficient access.

NB: Archive storage was constructed to BS 5454:1989, *Recommendations for Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents*, the then current standard. Storage developments will take account of BS 4971:2017 *Conservation and care of archive and library collections* and BS EN 16893:2018 *Conservation of Cultural Heritage*.

### **v. Collections Audits and Condition Checking**

Regular inspections of objects and preservation assessment surveys, for reasons of security, conservation and collections management.

### **vi. Programme of Preventative and Remedial Conservation**

Implementation of identified priorities for preventative and remedial conservation. Prioritisation is based on assessment of the urgency of the situation, the vulnerability of the object / collection, significance assessments, access requirements (e.g. for liturgical use, planned display or consultation by researchers) and available resources (financial, capacity of collections team / specialist conservators), within the framework and timescales of statutory consents including the Care of Cathedrals Measure.

### **vii. Object Handling**

Management of handling and moving to prevent damage through measures including staff training and protocols, including for packing and transport; minimisation of handling through arrangement of collections and stores; condition assessments and risk assessments; supervision of users and researchers; and mitigating measures including provision of book rests and physical and digital

surrogates for consultation where appropriate, and use of appropriate equipment for photography and copying of library and archive material.

**viii. Access and Use**

Management of access and use to provide opportunities for engagement while minimising risks to the collections, through assessments of exhibitions, events, reader services and other activities.

**ix. Documentation**

Documentation of the collections is carried out to professional standards, including Spectrum, in accordance with the Collections Information Policies for the Museum and Archive & Manuscript Collections and the York Minster Library Collections (also known as the documentation policies) and the associated documentation procedures, manuals and plans.

**x. Loans**

Suitable requirements for loans (in and out) including environmental conditions, security, transport and insurance.

**xi. Security, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning**

Assessment and mitigation of risks, with measures including training, identification of hazards, CCTV, on-site security, intruder and fire alarm systems, regular inspections and testing, and Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, including Harwell Conservation Priority User subscription. Access to secure collections areas is restricted, and contractors and visitors to these areas are accompanied by staff. Collections are insured in line with the Chapter of York's policy and procedures.

**xii. Digital records management**

Digital records of the Chapter and its associated organisations who share its IT arrangements are stored on onsite servers and a cloud-computing platform, which are managed by the Chapter's Finance & IT Department; while the archive service stores born-digital archives that it receives from external sources in a directory on a server. A strategic review of records management and associated systems infrastructure is planned by the organisation, incorporating further development of digital preservation systems and protocols.