

# OXFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY SERVICES PRESERVATION POLICY STATEMENT

The Preservation Policy will next be reviewed in 2008 by the Head of Conservation and Collections Care. This policy statement was written in 2004.

## OULS Preservation Objectives and the Role of the Preservation & Collections Care Service - Summary

### 1. Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 This policy statement is intended to cover the collections of all OULS libraries, which have a range of different needs. The objectives set out here represent OULS' preservation strategy, intended to achieve sustainable access to all of its collections.
- 1.2 The range of all preservation-related skills and activities in OULS is a matter for continuous monitoring and review, starting with the OULS Establishment Review, and is intended to articulate effectively with the other OULS functional Services. Advancements in technology and the increasing use of IT and electronic sources will continue to be taken into account in monitoring efficiency and appropriateness of operations and skills.
- 1.3 This process of continuous review will determine the role of the Preservation & Collections Care Service so that it can most effectively contribute to delivering the OULS preservation strategy. In defining its role, the Service should seek to maintain a suitable and effective range of functions and services.
- 1.4 The OULS vision for preservation of its collections can be summarised thus:  
  
*'All the information held in the collections of Oxford University Library Services is accessible and sustainable. All the collections are protected by an ethos and an infrastructure that recognise the respective purpose, significance and vulnerability of each of the different collections and meet the needs of all their current and future users.'*
- 1.5 In setting out this vision we acknowledge that there are two principal facets of our core purpose: that we are a resource for users in a world class research environment and that we have the responsibility to care for an important part of the world's written heritage. Taken together, the OULS collections are its greatest asset. Responsibility for the care of these collections informs our vision, is translated into our strategic plans and is overt in many of our day-to-day operations.
- 1.6 The principal objectives of the OULS Preservation & Collections Care strategy are:
  - i. To foster and maintain a protective ethos of care for all our library assets;
  - ii. To make the best and most efficient use of all OULS skills and resources towards achieving our aims;
  - iii. To raise the profile of the OULS' role of 'archive' for some of the world's most significant written heritage;
  - iv. To maximise the use of preventive and protective measures for whole collections as well as remedial conservation of single items;
  - v. To promote a common high standard of care across all OULS libraries and their collections.

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1.7 To deliver these objectives, the Preservation & Collections Care Service must maintain an appropriate role and poise within OULS, encompassing an agreed balance of executive responsibility and service provision.

**2. The Role of the Preservation & Collections Care Service**

2.1 Establishing and maintaining the optimum role for the Preservation & Collections Care Service is key to the success of the OULS preservation strategy. The Service is an integral part of the library service, shaping and implementing preservation policy in partnership with other parts of OULS. The following are essential features of this role:

- i. A highly visible presence in support of all aspects of our library services' operations, actively helping to make collections available and accessible;
- ii. Sufficient authority at relevant levels to carry through the agreed objectives set by OULS and to establish OULS-wide preservation policies;
- iii. Taking responsibility for managing all preservation-related resources and activities throughout OULS;
- iv. Advocating and leading a more 'collection-wide' approach to preservation and conservation programmes, in addition to item-by-item operations;
- v. Sharing leadership in the prioritisation of collections projects across OULS and in developing external funding applications for such projects;
- vi. Informing and being informed by agreed collections management policies, as set out in the Collections Management Statement, and sharing responsibility for the outcome of these policies;
- vii. Leading OULS staff development activities in areas directly affecting the care of collections, enhancing the role of conservators to become teachers and guides for all staff (in partnership with the OULS Staff Development team);
- viii. Sustaining and enhancing essential conservation skills at all necessary levels.
- ix. Developing and promoting self-sufficiency for library staff teams in key collections-care operations.

2.2 To do all of these things effectively, Service staff must be visible supporters of library service delivery with a stake in success, rather than simply 'backstairs' people providing a service when required. The role that they are perceived to play may also change in the process.

2.3 The role of collections care as one of the core purposes of OULS needs to be recognised by all OULS staff. Staffs' understanding of the term must be inclusive – for instance, replacement of non-copyright stock is, where relevant, as much a means of preserving access to information as repairing a damaged book. Equally, protecting and caring for library assets is as valid in a lending library as in a special collection.

2.4 To maintain the optimum role for the Service, its staff structure and range of job roles must be carefully designed and monitored. A staff development plan will be drawn up and reviewed periodically, including the means of assessing and appraising development and performance.

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- 2.5 The Service must identify and maintain the most appropriate and efficient range of functional operations. This must involve consideration of common best practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as what is needed by the OULS libraries to meet its agreed strategy.
- 2.6 The terms of an initial and fundamental review of the Service, its staffing and operations, is set out in the following appendix. Further, more specific studies into the different sections of the Service will follow as their review stages are completed.