

Yale University Library
Preservation Department
Preservation Policy

Preservation Mission Statement

The Yale University Library's Preservation Department is responsible for the immediate and long-term care of the rich and unique record of human thought and creativity contained in the Yale University Library collections. Preservation activities include but are not restricted to: education, outreach, research, repair, conservation, and reformatting of collections in all media; e.g., paper, leather, parchment, audio-visual, electronic and magnetic media.

Introduction

The collections of the Yale University Library support the teaching and research mission of Yale University and scholarly communities worldwide. The Yale University Library is a collection of over 12 million items in both general and special collections that offer holdings of great depth and diversity. These collections range from cuneiform clay tablets, one of the earliest forms of written documentation, through to 21st century electronic media of all types. As the steward of these rich resources, the Library is committed to providing a comprehensive preservation program consistent with the mission of the Library as one of the world's leading research libraries.

Policy Statement

A comprehensive preservation program includes a system of plans, policies, procedures, and resources required to care properly for and prolong the life of the Library's collections. An active preservation program conserves collections through the application of preventive and corrective measures and promotes respect for the Library and its holdings.

The Preservation Department leads the preservation program by establishing and implementing relevant policies and procedures. Preservation treatment decisions for Library materials are made by members of the Preservation Department in collaboration with relevant selectors, curators, and/ or bibliographers.

The Department is a leader in outreach and education for all staff regarding preservation of library materials. The success of the Library preservation program depends on all Library staff understanding, observing, and promoting good preservation practices. The Preservation Department guides this effort, but all departments should consider the inclusion of preservation processes when developing their operational policies and procedures. Key areas in which preservation planning should be incorporated include:

- Collection development and management,
- Construction or renovation of collection environments or storage,
- Cataloging and processing,
- Public and staff procedures for handling materials at all stages—acquisition, cataloging, shelf preparation, shelving, retrieval, scanning, and use (including photocopying).

Program Objectives

In the administration of the preservation program, the Preservation Department will:

- **Consult** and provide expertise throughout the Library on the full range of preservation issues and projects.
- **Advocate** for the maintenance of optimal conditions in which library collections are housed and maintain appropriate documentation and records with regards to the following:
 - Relative Humidity & Temperature
 - Shelving & Storage Furniture
 - Lighting
 - Collection storage areas
 - Exhibit areas
 - Housekeeping & Pest Control
 - Security Systems
- **Train** all Library staff directly involved in preservation activities.
- Set and maintain **standards and guidelines** for Library materials including, but not restricted to, the following areas:
 - Proper handling of library materials by patrons and staff
 - Protective enclosures and supports
 - Commercial Binding
 - Reformatting
 - Transporting
 - Exhibiting
- **Coordinate and direct** library emergency preparedness initiatives, training, and response.
 - Respond to Library emergencies and University emergencies as needed.
 - Maintain the emergency preparedness plan and the Flip Guide.
 - Maintain emergency preparedness supplies
- **Provide services** through the Department units:
 - Field Services
 - Special Collections Conservation
 - General Collections Conservation
 - Reformatting & Media Preservation

The Preservation Department staff will:

- Communicate regularly with stakeholders and each other to provide consultation for and/or assistance with preservation related issues and activities throughout the Yale Library system, the University community and the general public.
- Follow all appropriate codes of ethics, standards, and best practices.
- Maintain affiliations with appropriate organizations and keep abreast of the latest developments in preservation and conservation principles, techniques, and procedures.
- Consult with peers in the wider preservation/conservation field.

Financial

This Preservation Policy is administered centrally through the Preservation Department and as such the Department is responsible for allocating its resources for preservation of all library materials. Such activities require substantial, ongoing financial commitments over time and encompassing a wide variety of continuing costs.

Normal preservation activities may include several different continuing costs:

- Staffing (hiring, ongoing staff training (both general and specialized))
- Financial planning (seeking project grants, securing ongoing budget commitments)
- Outsourcing (preservation methods undertaken by outside vendors)
- Technical and physical infrastructure (conservation lab, media and digital preservation, and digital repository)

The administration of this policy through the Preservation Department of all Library preservation activities can result in overall cost reductions by integrating and reducing redundancy of activities and/or facilities. All Yale University Library staff are stakeholders in preservation and should be aware of the financial implications their activities have on the costs of preserving the collections. It is important for stakeholders to follow the policies and procedures related to preservation in an effort to help contain preservation costs.¹

Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated (as needed) each September by the Preservation Department. Such updates will be announced on the Department web site.

Definitions

Preservation is the process of managing resources to ensure the protection of historical and cultural materials. Preservation encompasses a host of policies, procedures, and processes that together sustain access and mitigate further deterioration to the materials we choose to save. Preservation encompasses such things as: good housekeeping, controlling temperature and relative humidity, instructions on care and handling, emergency response planning, and collection security; as well as the more traditional activities of reformatting, repairing and binding.

Conservation is the physical treatment of collection materials. It frequently refers to treatment or repair activities such as those that occur in General Collections Conservation and Special Collections Conservation.

Reformatting involves moving information from one medium to another—e.g. paper to microfilm, audio or video, or analog to digital.

Surrogates are copies made to be used in place of the original. They may repeat the look, feel, and function of the original as a preservation photocopy does for a book. The surrogate may be a different format from the original; such as, a book may have a microfilm or digital version, or a digital audio file might be a surrogate for an 8-track tape.

¹ Stakeholders might mitigate preservation costs through a number of measures; such as, understanding the financial implications of acquiring materials that are in fragile conditions or non-standard formats, whether paper or electronic, and better preparation of any digital resource for which long term preservation is desired.