

Yale University Library  
Preservation Department  
Preservation Policy

### **Preservation Mission Statement**

The Yale University Library's Preservation Department supports the YUL mission by ensuring continued access to The Library's collections, through a program of specialized expertise, proactive stewardship and collaboration.

### **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 13 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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, bibliographers, and/or technical experts.

The Department is a leader in outreach and education for all Library 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 staff may assist with the incorporation of preservation planning 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
  - Long-term digital storage
  - 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
  - Format conversion
  - Digital preservation
  - 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:
  - Preservation Services
  - Conservation & Exhibition Services
    - Collection Conservation & Housings
    - Special Collections Conservation
    - Exhibit Production Support
  - Digital Reformatting & Microfilm Services
  - Digital Preservation Services

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.<sup>1</sup>

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually 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 format conversion, repairing and binding.

Conservation is an action or a set of actions taken to stabilize and/or redress damage or the effects of deterioration on physical objects. Conservation activities include examination, documentation, treatment, and preventative care. The primary goal of conservation is to maintain the integrity of collection materials

Digital preservation is the whole of the activities and processes involved in the physical and intellectual protection and technical stabilization of digital resources through time in order to reproduce authentic copies of these resources.

Format conversion or Reformatting involves moving information from one medium to another—e.g. paper to microfilm or digital, motion picture film and analog audio or video 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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.