



Keats House Care and Conservation Policy

Statement of purpose

This policy has been written in accordance with the House's Statement of Purpose located in the Keats House Forward Plan and the Collections Development Policy. All staff (paid and volunteer) have read and agreed to abide by the policy. The Care and Conservation Plan sets out the way the policy will be put into action and should be read in conjunction with the Forward Plan, Emergency Plan, and any other plans affecting the collection and the House's buildings. These plans can be obtained through the Principal Curator.

An overview of current collections

The Keats collections consist of manuscripts, books, prints, paintings and small items of personal memorabilia relating to the poet John Keats (1795-1821), his work and his circle of family, friends and associates. Later 19th- and 20th-century material reflects the emergence of Keats as a major English poet and there are a few items from other Romantic writers such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley. The printed book collection continues these themes with periodicals, bibliographies and catalogues; and critical works on the Romantics of which a significant number relate to Keats, Shelley and Charles Lamb. The personal memorabilia consists most significantly of a small number of items from Keats, his family and circle and Fanny Brawne, his fiancée at the time of his death. The collection also has some items of interest, including a painting of Keats, by his close friend Joseph Severn.

The purpose of the Care and Conservation Policy is to set a framework for:

- The preservation of the collections and buildings in the care of the House;
- Preventative and remedial conservation of the collections; and
- The safe use of and access to collections, within the limits of the House's resources.

Review of the Policy

This policy was approved by the Culture and Heritage Committee in October 2016. A review of this policy will be taken every 5 years. The next review will be undertaken in August 2021.

Context

The House aims to improve the care and conditions of all its collections in accordance with Benchmarks in Collections Care, Signposts or other approved standards within the limits of its resources.

The safety and preservation of the collection will be considered from the outset of any plans to alter the displays or storage or modify the buildings.

Personnel

The care of the collections is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the House. Any concerns regarding the collections should be reported in writing to the Principal Curator. The Principal Curator may then refer this issue to an Interpretation Officer to action. The House undertakes to ensure:

- All staff and volunteers who handle the collections in the course of their work will be trained; no untrained personnel will be allowed to handle items from the collection;
- Researchers or other visitors working with the collections will be briefed on how to handle the items they are working on and will be supervised at all times;
- Continued access to conservators at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) and the Guildhall Art Gallery (GAG) for regular advice; staff will also work closely with their dedicated MDO officer on this issue.
- Any problems or concerns relating to the care of the collection will be referred by the Principal Curator, or an Interpretation Officer, to an appropriately-qualified conservator;
- The suitability of conservators chosen to work or advise on the collections will be checked, and a professionally-accredited conservator or a conservator listed on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation will normally be chosen – this will mainly be to undertake remedial work while regular advice on preventive conservation will be sought from GAG conservators;
- No item in the collections will be modified or altered until advice has been obtained from a suitably qualified conservator;
- Only suitably trained and qualified conservators will carry out interventive treatment on objects; and
- The House will keep detailed records of all treatments carried out on objects, including the name and contact details of the person or company.

The Buildings

The House recognises that the maintenance of its buildings is fundamental to the preservation of both the buildings themselves and the collections and endeavours to keep the buildings in a suitable condition.

The Keats House collection is displayed in Keats House.

There is a 20-year planned maintenance programme in place for major refurbishing and routine maintenance for the House, managed by the House's facilities management team in partnership with the City Corporation's City Surveyor's Department at Guildhall. There are dedicated specialists within this department who deal with the maintenance of heating and ventilation, structural engineering and electrical works. Contractors are retained on standby for emergency callout as well as routine repairs. Keats House has a Buildings Management Plan which gives an overall analysis for future improvements and

preservation issues. This plan is managed by the facilities management team in consultation with the Principal Curator.

The Keats House collection is stored at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

Keats House has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with LMA for the storage of their collection which is not on display. This is stored at their main building in Clerkenwell which conforms to BS 5454:2000. The building is cared for in partnership with staff from the City Corporation's City Surveyor's Department. The building has a Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system monitored and controlled by the City Surveyor team at Guildhall. The system aims to maintain a fixed point between 14°C and 19°C with a tolerance of 1°C on either side. LMA staff monitor the relative humidity with the aim of keeping the conditions between 40% and 55% RH with a tolerance of 5% on either side. LMA's Archive Preservation and Conservation Policy may be found at <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/about/Documents/archive-preservation-and-conservation-policy.pdf>.

Security

Items on display at Keats House

Keats House has fire detection and security alarm systems which are directly linked to the local fire brigade and Hampstead police station. Public access is monitored and public areas are closely supervised by staff and volunteers. The House also has CCTV which covers all rooms where the collections are on display as well as all exit points.

Items in Store at LMA

Public access into the LMA archive building is monitored and public use areas are closely supervised by staff. Access to storage areas is restricted to archive staff and other authorised persons by security swipe cards. The New Block (where iconics are stored) is entered via a walkway from the second floor of the converted building; the only other access points are fire exits at ground level and a delivery bay at first floor level which can only be opened from the inside.

All LMA entry points are secure and a strict closing procedure is enforced. The building exterior and interior are monitored by CCTV, there is a fire detection system linked to Mount Pleasant Fire Station and intruder alarms are connected to Islington police station.

The Collections

The House is aware of the risks to the collection from environmental factors, poor handling, storage and display materials and methods, and of the need to record the condition of the collection. It cares for the collections in store, on display and, by setting suitable requirements, on loan.

Care details are listed in the Conservation and Collection Care Plan and include:

- monitoring and improving environmental conditions including temperature, relative humidity, light and dust;
- managing the threat from pests;
- good housekeeping practices;
- conservation cleaning of objects on open display;
- documentation of the condition of the collection and of any treatments carried out on objects;
- the use of suitable storage materials and methods;
- the use of suitable display materials and methods; and
- good transport methods.

The House does not contain any working historic items.

Frankie Kubicki, August 2016

Senior Curator

Keats House



Keats House is provided by the City of London Corporation as part of its contribution to the cultural life of London and the nation