

Sustainability and the RLUK/BL Preservation  
Advisory Centre learning programme

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As we all know, collections management is changing; this means that people need to build on their existing skills and knowledge so they can work through and beyond these changes in order to develop sustainable collections management policies. Preservation continues to have an important role to play in collections management but people will need to be able to advocate for preservation amongst other areas competing for resources.

The RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre learning programme can help people to build on their existing skills and knowledge, but we can't do this alone, we need to collaborate in order to deliver an effective and relevant programme.

In this presentation I will talk about

- Why the RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre programme was created;
- What the learning programme is aiming to do;
- How the learning programme is doing this and;
- Why collaboration is vital.

The RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre learning programme was conceived during the work to develop the RLUK strategic plan for 2008 – 11; a series of roadshows had identified the need for training and support in preservation for RLUK libraries. The point in focusing on preservation is that this enables continued and enhanced access to collections. RLUK and the British Library Preservation Advisory Centre are working together to develop and deliver a learning programme to meet these needs.

What are we aiming to achieve through the learning programme?

## **Aim of the learning programme**

**To support individuals to develop their existing attitudes to, skills in and knowledge about preservation so that they are able to:**

- **Communicate about preservation issues;**
- **Act on preservation issues;**
- **Embed preservation into the core processes of collection management and;**
- **Collaborate with others on preservation projects and initiatives.**

The aim of the programme is

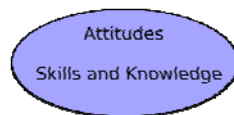
To support individuals to develop their existing attitudes to, skills in and knowledge about preservation so that they are able to:

- communicate about preservation issues;
- act on preservation issues;
- embed preservation into the core processes of collection management and;
- collaborate with others on preservation projects and initiatives.

This came out of the initial research (through focus groups and an online survey which I will discuss in more detail shortly) that was conducted at the start of the programme.

What does this aim actually mean in practice? Let's break it down:

## Aim of the learning programme

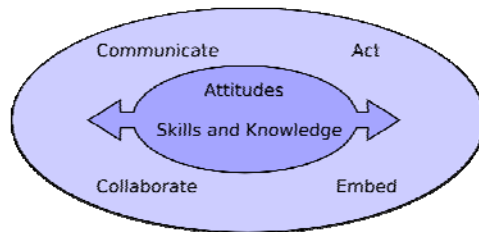


Firstly we are concentrating on individuals' attitudes to, skills in and knowledge about preservation.

By attitudes I mean how individuals think about and approach preservation; by skills I mean what the individual can actually do and by knowledge I mean the things that they know about preservation.

These three areas are entwined and don't work in isolation; in order to be able to perform a skill, you need to know why you are doing it and be able to think of the wider consequences of your actions.

## Aim of the learning programme



Why is it important to develop attitudes to, skills in and knowledge about preservation?

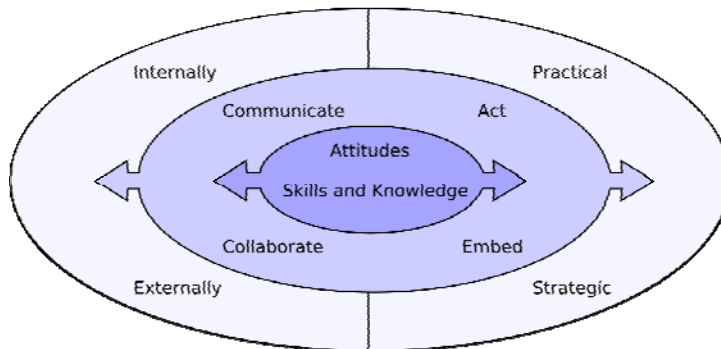
Firstly, we want individuals to be able to communicate about preservation issues; this is about advocacy and promotion of the importance of preservation to users, to peers and to other professionals who perhaps do not work directly with collections management and preservation issues. This is an issue which came out strongly in the focus groups; people said *“collection care impacts on everything that goes on within a library. Making all staff aware of that, from cleaning staff upwards..it feeds all the way up through counter staff, handling staff, curatorial staff, it’s an overall awareness.”* And they also said: *“How to make the case for these things upwards...how to make effective arguments. How to make a case for preservation, may be something people need help with.”* Advocacy is vital in the generation of a preservation culture. If individuals are to spread the word of how important these issues really are, they need to have the knowledge and understanding themselves so that they can speak with confidence.

As well as communicating about preservation issues, we want individuals to be able to act on preservation issues, for example, individuals need to be able to deal with a disaster such as a flood should the worst happen; or to be able to prioritise for preservation, conservation and digitisation. This is about the first steps or everyday actions that are important in preserving our collections for access and for the future.

But we also need to take this a stage further and really embed preservation into the core processes of collection management. This is about ensuring that preservation is part of everything we do; from acquisition to storage, from budget planning to project evaluation. Preservation needs to be embedded at the heart of collection strategies. As one of the focus group members said; *“it should really become second nature and integral to people”*

And, as we have heard today, collaboration is going to become more important in the months and years to come as we all strive to do more with less. Everyone who works in higher education libraries needs to have the skills and knowledge they need so that they are able to confidently collaborate with others – both in terms of knowing what to do in a situation and also in terms of not being afraid of what they don’t yet know. Individuals need to have confidence in what they don’t know as well as what they do. They need to know where to start. Again another quote from the focus group, this time about digital preservation *“I just find it a very daunting area. I feel I ought to have a digital preservation strategy, but it’s knowing where to start.”*

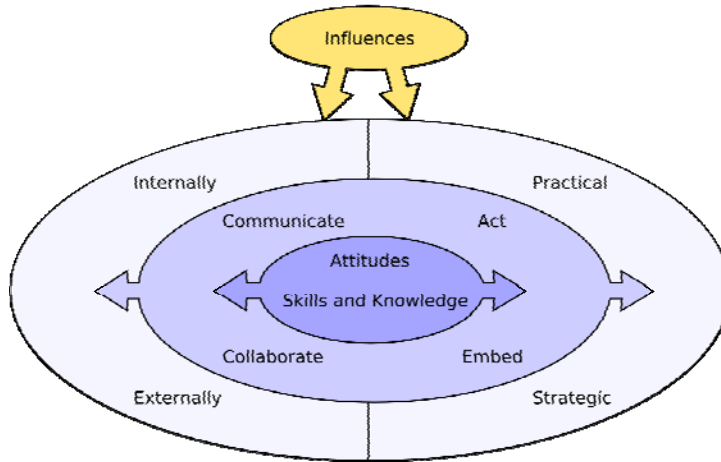
## Aim of the learning programme



We need to help to equip individuals with the skills that they require. There are many different individuals all at different stages of their career and in different roles. Some people will need practical skills such as knowing how to digitise a book or a paper document correctly or the first steps in dealing with a salvage operation; others may need to develop their skills in strategic issues such as developing policies and how to prioritise for preservation. Some people may need to develop on both the practical and strategic side.

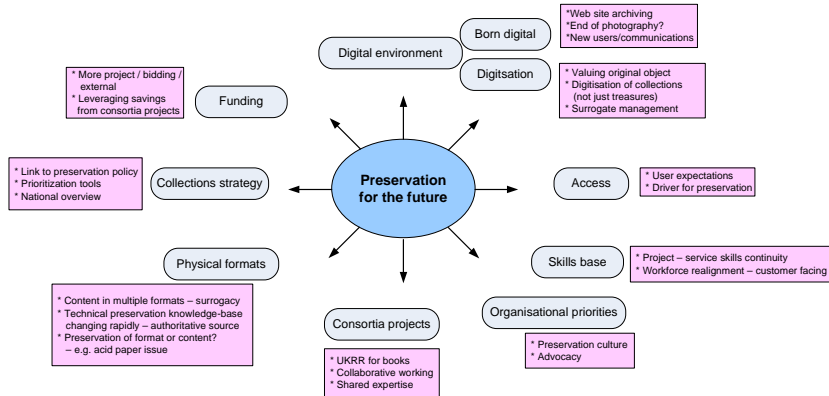
Individuals need these skills so that they are able to work internally within their institutions and also externally with other institutions – this is going to become increasingly important as time moves on and budgets shrink – institutions will need to collaborate more. Just as different collections will have their own unique strengths; individual institutions will also have their own strengths. Collaboration can exploit this opportunity to combine strengths and can also help to further develop the skills and knowledge of those individuals working together, we can learn from each other.

### Aim of the learning programme



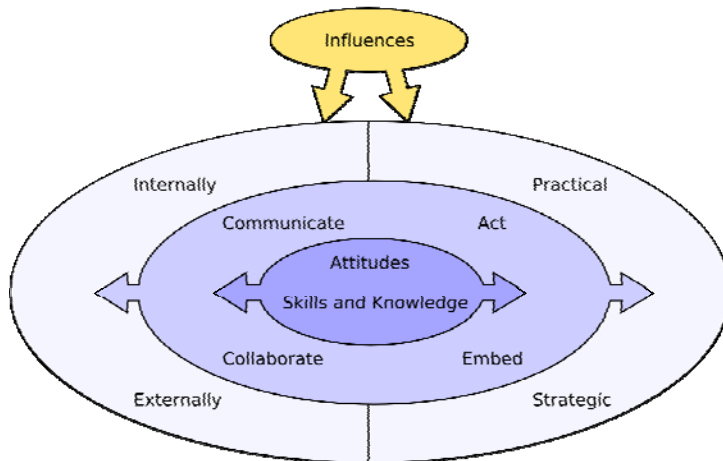
But we do need to bear in mind other influences that may affect what we are trying to do. The focus group research identified a number of influences that had acted as drivers for change.

## Influences on preservation and associated issues



We can see these influences here. But the main influences currently are the political and economic climate which has already changed dramatically in the past 6 months is likely to continue to change in the near future. Therefore, the learning programme can't remain static; it needs to respond to issues that arise.

### Aim of the learning programme



To recap our aim, we aim:

To support individuals to develop their existing attitudes to, skills in and knowledge about preservation so that they are able to:

- communicate about preservation issues;
- act on preservation issues;
- embed preservation into the core processes of collection management and;
- collaborate with others on preservation projects and initiatives.

How is the learning programme meeting this aim?

As I mentioned previously, the learning programme has been designed into response to research conducted with RLUK member organisations. My predecessor Jane Arthur conducted this research through holding focus groups (and some of the focus group contributors are here today) and through an online survey.

The research was originally focused on special collections, but discussions in the focus groups showed that the learning programme needed to move beyond the issue of how to apply preservation to the core physical collection; it needed to include care of digital as well as physical collections and needed to touch on wider collections management issues. The research also identified the need for advocacy and the desire for the learning programme to be delivered using a variety of methods. The learning programme has been designed in response to the research.

## The RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre learning programme

### Programme strands:

- Face to face training courses;
- Conference;
- E-learning.

There are three strands to the programme:

- face to face training courses
- conference
- e-learning

The face to face training courses are the heart of the programme. This research identified major gaps in staff development provision, both at the strategic level (including issues such as collection prioritization, institutional advocacy and enabling a preservation culture) and also at a practical level (including topics such as handling, repair, environmental controls and disaster preparedness). A series of half day and full day training courses have been designed to address these topics. The courses stand alone but are designed to complement each other, so for example, we are working on two courses around digitisation, the first will give a more strategic overview to the issues around digitisation and digital preservation while the second will cover more practical issues such as how to handle a document which is being digitised. Individuals can choose the course which is most relevant to their work or even attend both if they wish to!

The conference is happening today! The research identified high demand for skills development on strategic issues in collections management amongst staff in research and higher education libraries. Responses particularly emphasised the value that a long-term view can bring in considering access to the collections – both physical and digital - and the importance of preservation within an encompassing and strategic perspective.

E-learning was identified in the focus groups as an alternative delivery method for training. I am currently in the process of investigating and developing an e-learning course; this will be a preservation induction course aimed at anyone who starts work in your library. We will provide a free e-learning course that people can do at their desk with the hope that this will reach more people than face to face training courses are able to due to time and money constraints.

## The RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre learning programme

<i>Date</i>	<i>Course title and location</i>	<i>Delegate numbers</i>
09/12/09	Disaster response and salvage training, London (2 x half day courses)	18
19/01/10	Preservation policies in practice, London	15
25/01/10	Disaster response and salvage training, Leeds (2 x half day courses)	17
10/02/10	Disaster response and salvage training, Edinburgh (2 x half day courses)	29
23/02/10	Prioritization for preservation, conservation and digitisation, London	23
02/03/10	Damaged books and bound archives: a practical approach, London	15
21/06/10	Disaster response and salvage training, Oxford (2 x half day courses)	20
08/07/10	Preservation basics, Edinburgh	19
15/07/10	Introduction to digitisation, London	25
26/07/10	Disaster response and salvage training, London (2 x half day courses)	29
	<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>

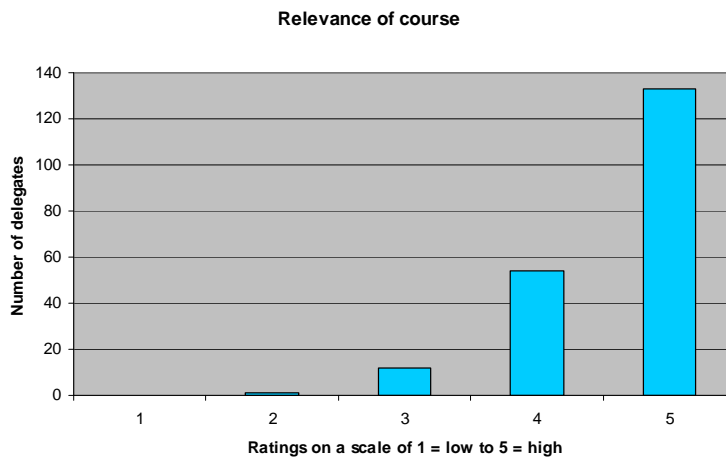
So what have we done so far? To date we have run 10 half day courses and 5 full day courses which have been attended by a total of 210 participants, the chart shows the dates and titles.

These courses are specifically aimed at RLUK and higher education libraries although they are open to all. The topics were all identified in the focus groups; the online survey was also used to establish the demand for these courses.

These courses are an example of collaboration in action; 22 out of 30 RLUK member organisations have sent a total of 67 people to the 10 training events that have been held to date. 6 RLUK member organisations have provided speakers for courses and 4 have provided venues.

Today's conference is also an important part of the programme. Today we have around 90 professionals from 66 institutions sitting in one room focusing on collection strategies. I hope that the conference has given food for thought and inspiration for meeting the challenges ahead. If each of you goes back to your organisation and tells one person one thing that you have heard today that will propagate thoughts and information to another 90 people, if each of those people repeats that to 1 or 2 others, then that's another 90 or 180 people – now 270 people in total, this will snowball and really help to spread the message about preservation and collections management.

## Course evaluation



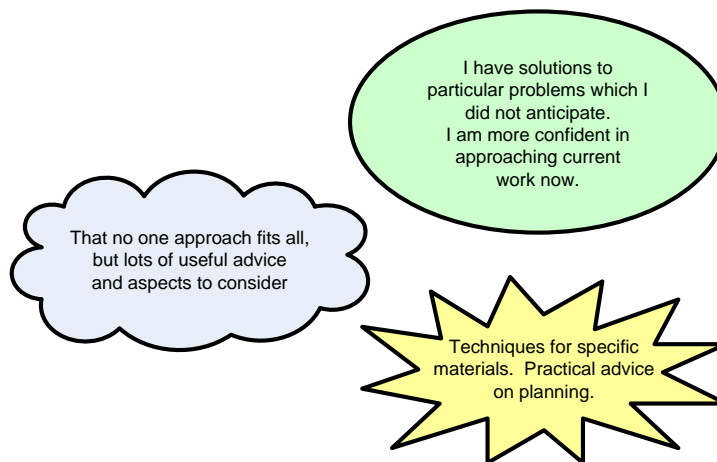
But how is the programme impacting on institutions? We are collecting feedback from all the face to face training courses; we ask participants to complete an evaluation form at the end of each course. Of the courses that have taken place to date, 202 people have completed a form which is a 96% return rate. We asked participants to rate the relevance of the courses on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high); 98% rated this as 4 or above. This shows that the courses we are delivering are relevant to those who attend – this is to be hoped for given that we designed the courses in response to the focus group and online survey research.

## Course evaluation



We revised the evaluation form recently and have started to ask participants what their overall satisfaction for the course was, of those participants who were asked, 96% rated this as a 4 or above (again on the scale of 1 – low to 5 – high).

## Course evaluation



We also collect information on what the participants have learnt on the course; many answer “lots” but others are more specific and give examples such as the ones on the slide.

We have begun to test the longer term impact of the courses; a short questionnaire has been devised, this is personalised – on the original feedback form, participants are asked what they would do as a result of the course, we are referring back to this in the questionnaire to see whether participants are following up on these actions to test the longer term impact of the course. We are also asking who they are sharing information with so that we can see whether more people are benefiting from what is taught on the course.

These questions link back to the original aim of enabling individuals to communicate about and act on preservation issues. It is more difficult to test whether individuals are able to embed preservation into the core processes of collections management. We are getting an indication of whether participants are collaborating with others as we are asking them whether they are communicating with others outside their organisation, but this is preliminary information and is more difficult to test in the short term.

Although we have only just started to send out these follow up questionnaires, it is important to acknowledge that the individuals who have responded so far have given thoughtful and thorough answers to our questions – another act of collaboration. All of those who responded have said that they have either already disseminated information about the course to others in their organisation or are planning to do so.

And of course, there is an evaluation form in your pack today, please fill this in and hand it to us on your way out as it will help us to evaluate today’s conference.

### **Future courses**

- **Damaged books and bound archives: practical first steps**
- **Preservation policies**
- **Prioritization for preservation, conservation and digitisation**
- **Approaches to digitisation and preservation**
- **Handling for digitisation**
- **e-learning induction**

How is this work being taken forward? The face to face courses that have run so far have been extremely successful, we are building on this success with further courses planned in the autumn – we are repeating the Preservation Policies, Damaged Books and Bound Archives and Prioritization for preservation, conservation and digitisation courses and are running two new courses on approaches to digitisation and preservation and handling for digitisation (all are or will be advertised on our website shortly, do have a look and tell others you think will be interested). We are running more courses regionally too to help lessen the effect of travel costs for those who want to attend.

I am also working on the e-learning induction course that I talked about earlier. But, I can only do all this with the help of you – the sustainability of the preservation learning programme relies on your involvement and collaboration.

### How can you help?

- **Tell others about the learning programme;**
- **Encourage staff to disseminate what they have learnt;**
- **Provide a venue for a course;**
- **Help to develop and deliver courses.**

So how can you help? There are 4 ways in which you can help. Firstly and most easily, you can tell others about the programme and what we are offering, sign up for our e-newsletter and you will be guaranteed to hear about all the learning opportunities offered as part of the RLUK/BL Preservation Advisory Centre programme as well as other courses offered outside of this programme, you'll also get to hear about other news as well.

Secondly, book a member of your staff on one of the face to face courses or give them time to complete the online course; but also encourage them to talk to others in your institution about what they have learnt and encourage them to give me feedback on the course, both at the time and when I email them a follow up questionnaire.

Thirdly, I am always on the lookout for venues so that the courses can be delivered locally. If you can help me with providing a venue, I can in return provide a place on the course for one of your staff, thus reducing the costs to your institution; you may also want to take advantage of the fact that staff won't need to spend time or money travelling to another venue and book others on the course – it also means that we can deliver courses locally so that those in the area can benefit, this all helps with networking and collaboration with other organisations.

Lastly, get involved with developing and delivering content for the courses. Courses that have been designed by the community for the community are very effective. I am currently looking for help in developing, writing and testing the e-learning induction course, please email me if you are interested.

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To summarise, the learning programme was set up in response to the needs of the community; we have collaborated to research the specific needs in terms of preservation and are also collaborating to deliver the courses. It is vital that we continue to collaborate to ensure that the learning programme is relevant and of value and to evaluate the impact of the work we are doing together.