



National Preservation Office

Preparing funding applications for Preservation and Conservation Projects

NPO Preservation Guidance
Preservation Management Series

Author Nancy Bell

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Preparing funding applications for Preservation and Conservation Projects

This leaflet is designed to help librarians, archivists, and conservators prepare funding applications for preservation and conservation projects. Whether funding is sought from within an organisation or externally from a grant-giving body, the aim is to help you to improve your chances of making a successful application. Preparing a preservation and/or conservation grant application need not be a daunting task : it can be exciting and creative. It offers a chance to build upon programmes already in place, develop ideas, and extend existing financial resources for projects aimed at safeguarding library and archive collections.

Terminology

Grant-awarding bodies and other funders may use terms with which you are not familiar. These are some of the most commonly found and they are used throughout this leaflet as defined below.

■ **preservation policy statement**

A summary of an institution's preservation policies and procedures. It should include details of the institution's retention and acquisition policies and policies on the provision of surrogate copies such as photocopies, photographs, microfilms, or digital images. A description of the storage conditions, the standard of physical protection of the collection, handling procedures for staff and readers, standards for exhibition, loans and security, as well as details of disaster management plans should be provided.

■ **conservation plan**

Required for most grant applications including the Heritage Lottery Fund. A conservation plan is a long-term strategic document and should explain in detail

the significance or heritage merit of the collection, and the expected demand for the collection. A conservation plan should also indicate what the implications are likely to be if the project is not undertaken and what impact your project may have on the collection and its management.

■ **conservator**

A person with specialist education, training, and experience who undertakes conservation treatments in compliance with a professional code of practice such as those published by The Institute of Paper Conservation and The United Kingdom Institute of Conservation.

■ **preservation or preventive care**

To extend the life of an object by retarding deterioration and preventing damage through the formulation and implementation of policies for the following: appropriate environmental conditions and storage, physical protection, exhibitions and loan policies, handling procedures, emergency planning, creation and use of surrogate copies, such as preservation quality microfilming, digitisation or archival photocopying within a planned programme of preservation management.

■ **conservation (active)**

Intervention techniques applied to the physical form to achieve chemical and physical stability of an object for the purpose of extending the useful life of library and archive materials to ensure their continued availability.

■ **restoration**

Treatment procedures intended to return an object to a known or assumed state usually with the addition of non-original material.

■ **condition survey**

An analysis of the overall condition of a collection. It can be a statistical or sample based analysis or a condition assessment for individual items, often termed an item-by-item survey. For a large collection, a statistically generated sample may be the most effective means of gathering detailed information. An item-by-item condition survey will provide detailed information for each item and can be used to help to direct resources and to decide individual conservation treatments.

■ **examination report**

A summary of the findings resulting from the examination of an object before conservation treatment is undertaken, including a full description of

deterioration, earlier treatments and testing of the object. A full examination report should include photographic documentation as required. This documentation should be provided before any conservation work begins.

■ **treatment proposal**

A report which details the examination of the item(s) and offers suggested treatment options including costs.

■ **treatment report/documentation report**

The formal and permanent record, prepared after treatment, which documents all information gathered from examining the object (including any photographic evidence), treatment of the object, and recommendations for future care.

Note: Definitions are based on those used by the American Institute of Conservation (AIC), The Institute of Paper Conservation (IPC), The Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), and United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (UKIC).

Getting started

Defining the Project

Be sure the aims and objectives of your project are clear and, if applying to a grant-giving body, that the project meets the stated criteria. The benefits of undertaking a project will need to be clearly articulated. For example, are there educational benefits in undertaking this project? Does it improve access to the collection? Explain where the project is placed in the organisation's overall strategic plan.

Preparing a preservation policy statement

Most institutions and grant-giving bodies, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT), now require a preservation policy statement as part of the supporting documentary evidence. The purpose of the preservation policy statement is to help expert advisors evaluate the existing standard of care for a collection, to ensure that sound preservation practice is already in place.

A preservation policy statement should include details of the strategies and procedures that are in place to ensure that policies are achieved. This should

include a summary of:

- retention policies
- policy on the provision of surrogate copies
- the standard of all storage in all locations
- the standard of physical protection of the collection
- the standard of security
- procedures for exhibiting and loaning material
- a written disaster plan
- procedures for safe handling of library and archive materials by both staff and readers
- any other preservation or collection management policies within the institution.

This exercise will help clarify the strengths and weaknesses of your preservation programme and identify those areas that need improvement. In policy terms, state how improvements might be made.

Identifying priorities

Conservation treatment priorities

Having reviewed your institution's preservation programme and identified the preservation needs of your collection, you will then need to narrow your focus and establish conservation treatment priorities. Responsibility for this should be shared between the librarian, archivist and conservator. Grant-giving bodies and those responsible for financial management within an institution are looking for the synthesis of credible evidence in three key areas: the importance, use, and condition of the collection or objects. This synthesis will identify parts of a collection or individual items in poor condition which are important to the collection and are in demand now or are likely to be in the future.

The **importance** and **use** of an item will need to be identified. These are sometimes difficult to gauge, but the following questions should be considered. Is the item of national, regional or local significance? Does it have particular intrinsic or artifactual value? How does this collection compare with others? Is it heavily used? Is there immediate or expected demand for it in your institution?

An assessment of the **condition** of a collection will form a very large part of a grant application, therefore you will need to undertake a systematic analysis. The method of analysis will depend on the scale of the project, and the following should be noted:

- A condition survey seeks to collect detailed information on the physical condition of a collection. For a large collection, a statistically valid sample may be the most effective means of gathering detailed information;
- An item-by-item condition survey will provide detailed information for each and every item in a collection or sample. This type of survey can be used to help direct resources and determine individual conservation treatments;
- Undertaking a survey will, however, require institutional resources which should not be underestimated.

Who does what?

Preparing an application draws on expertise across an institution; the librarian or archivist and the conservator will each have a different focus but each has a specific role to play.

Responsibilities of the librarian or archivist

- Ensure that the aims of the project are within the remit of the grant. Define the aims, objectives, and scope of the project.
- Provide a preservation policy statement for the collection which details the standard of collections care.
- Assess the importance and level of use of the collection. Detail the specific items or classes of material in the collection needing care.
- Identify project management skills. Grant-giving bodies will need to be assured that project leaders and management expertise are in place, particularly for large-scale projects. If the expertise is not available within the institution, bringing in outside help should be considered. This may be considered a legitimate expense for the project and viewed favourably.
- Identify potential risks to the project and possible contingencies. For example, withdrawal of partnership funding, loss of key staff, or unexpected difficulties in the work. Develop contingency plans to deal with these eventualities.

- Establish realistic timetables. For large projects it is essential to establish milestones against which to measure progress. It is preferable to have a staged timetable rather than suggesting an unrealistic schedule for the work to be completed.
- Prepare project briefs for the conservator, whether you are using in-house or contracting external conservators. The brief should include a description of the whole project and the level of treatment appropriate for the collection, based on its importance and use. Keep in mind that conservators may suggest different options and that depending on their skill and experience they may offer widely different treatments.

Responsibilities of the Conservator

- In your report, provide a good description of each item examined, so that it can be identified easily.
- Provide an examination report, treatment proposal(s) and details of cost. Treatment alternatives should be thoroughly detailed. Explanations should be given of the proposed treatment, extent of treatment, materials to be used and options for treatment. Personnel undertaking the work, including details of experience and qualifications, should be made clear.
- If the work is to be done outside the institution, give details of security arrangements for your studio, and details of insurance including professional liability. Cover should be provided for the artefacts during transport, and while on the conservator's premises. Extra costs may be incurred if the valuation of the objects exceeds the cover provided by the conservator. Give details of arrangements for collecting and delivering the completed work.
- Draw up a timetable for completing the conservation work.

Conclusion

Many libraries and archives, whether large or small, will be seeking additional funds for preservation and conservation projects. In order to stand the best chance possible of success, be sure your application:

- Has well-defined aims and objectives and the significance of the collection is made clear.
- Is presented clearly and concisely. Do not assume prior knowledge.

- Provides good supporting evidence. Be honest: it will be obvious if costs are unrealistic or timetables are not achievable.

Consult with other professionals who have experience which may be of help to you when preparing your application: the grant-giving body, other impartial colleagues, conservation organisations, or professional bodies such as the National Preservation Office, or the Museums and Galleries Commission.

For further information, you may wish to consult

- British Standard Institute, **Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents (BS 5454)**. London: BSI 1989. (Under revision.)
- Lomax, J., Palmer, S., Jefcoate, G., and Kenna, S., **A Guide to Additional Sources of Funding and Revenue for Libraries and Archives**. Library and Information Research Report 108. London: The British Library, 1997.
- Heritage Lottery Fund Guidelines are available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, 7 Holbein Place, London SW1W 8NR. Tel: 020 7591 6000.
- Museums & Galleries Commission, **Levels of Collection Care: A Self Assessment Checklist for UK Museums**. London: MGC, 1998.
- Museums & Galleries Commission **Working with a Conservator: A Guide for Curators**. A free leaflet available from the Museums and Galleries Commission. Tel: 020 7233 4200.



National Preservation Office

The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB
Tel: 020 7412 7612
Fax: 020 7412 7796
E-mail: npo@bl.uk
www.bl.uk/services/preservation

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