

## Changing Attitudes and New Demands in Preservation Training

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### CHANGES OF THE NOTION, CONTENT AND EXTENT OF LIBRARY PRESERVATION

The essence of these changes is the following. At first, library preservation meant binding and repairing books and somewhat later the restoration or conservation of single items joined bookbinding. Besides, the importance of protection against insects and mould was always emphasised. Changes tend towards a shifting of emphasis on evolving optimal circumstances for the storage and use of library documents and on eliminating the deteriorating factors from the various forms of use. According to the old approach the intervention is of a predominantly technical nature, where individual units are treated by a restricted and rather isolated staff trained for this task only. In this process the role of librarians is merely to select the items to be bound or restored. They also have to follow with attention the signs of insect and mould contamination in the stores as well as to take the necessary measures to stop and disinfect it. The aim of preservation of this type is to repair the damage already occurred (binding repair, rebinding, restoration, disinfecting) and to a lesser extent the prevention of damage (making the first binding, preventing insects from entering and causing damage). The new attitude and practice also contain mostly technical elements (e.g. measuring and controlling the environmental parameters, providing for physical protection of the holdings), but at the same time they have a wholesome effect on the entire collection or on major parts of it. Both the management and the wider circle of library staff need special preservation education for making decisions and carrying out preservation measures in a co-ordinated manner. The aim of preservation of this type is to prevent damage from occurring and instead of restoration, conservation will be the main purpose of the individual treatments.

Historical outline of the change: what are the reasons why the notion, content and extent of library preservation have changed so much over the last fifty to sixty years?

In the 1930s the first centre, the Gallo Institute in Rome, was established for book conservation and conservation research. Binders worked in libraries

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at that time and librarians learned basic bookbinding in library schools. In the US William Barrow discovered paper strengthening with a machine and called it lamination.

Between the 1940s and 60s the restoration and conservation of single items began at several European and American libraries which possessed older collections. Traditional hand techniques developed and also some new and/or mechanised methods appeared. The enormous quantity of library and archival material damaged by the 1966 Florence flood had a great effect on the development of conservation techniques and on the realisation of how important it is to be prepared for disasters. Perhaps this was the momentum which initiated the shift of thinking towards considering entire collections. In the US Barrow tested the relationship of acidity and permanence in book-papers and worked out processes for the deacidification of acid paper and for the production of modern permanent paper. Also the possibility of mass deacidification was researched and experimental mass deacidification plants were built. The increase of use and consequently wear and tear of library collections became characteristic everywhere. In the 1960s it was also realised that the vast quantities of acid and brittle newspapers could not be saved either by individual or by mass conservation treatments. This led to the beginning of preservation microfilming in a few libraries. This has been the first preservation method which made more documents accessible in a relatively short time. At the same time by not using the originals they can be protected for a longer time.

The 1970s brought changes both in quality and quantity in many areas; for example:

- changes in conservation ethics;
- new conservation (research) centres were established mostly in Europe but also in the US and Canada (e.g. in Madrid, Paris, Amsterdam, Washington, Ottawa);
- the level of hand conservation continued to increase;
- because of the increasing demand for greater productivity of conservation procedures, semi-mass and mass methods were developed and began to spread;
- conservators' professional organisations were set up and became active, conferences on professional topics began to be held more often, new journals and other professional publications were published. All this brought with it the quantitative growth and the world-wide dissemination of professional information.

In the last two decades the emphasis in preservation has shifted and the range of possibilities has broadened more than ever. Let me mention some examples:

- for thin, unbound books some simple, cheap library binding techniques were found and for repairing cloth and leather bindings some more productive techniques were developed;
- conservation ethics turned in the direction of „don't restore everything and do apply minimal intervention only“;
- the results of preservation surveys performed made it evident that it would take a very long time to repair, reinforce or conserve the large quantities of damaged bindings, as well as books and other documents written and printed on acid and brittle paper. During this time the rest of the holdings might also be damaged unless protection is provided for the whole collection. These findings caused the order to be reversed: it is more useful to provide preventive care for the entire holdings and only afterwards or - if possible - in parallel, to deal with the individual conservation of the most valuable, most damaged and most frequently consulted documents.
- The change of attitude has appeared also in the recognition that in a research library not only manuscripts and unique or rare books and other documents are valuable but the collection as a whole can be valuable for the users both at present and in the future. The information on the causes, rate and the possible result of deterioration of the holdings and the measures to be taken are becoming better and better known by the management of the libraries.
- The research and development activity to work out mass processes for paper treatment and to solve the difficult questions of individual conservation has been more and more extended. Side by side with the conservation research centres there have been private companies, universities and industrial research institutes dealing with the evolvement of new technologies and making equipment. At the same time we witness the increase of the number of libraries, archives and conservators' colleges where experimental and research work is done. At these institutions questions with regard to whole collections have been more frequently addressed. Such questions have been, for example, the optimal climatic conditions; the effect of light, UV-radiation and air-pollution on library materials; establishing air-conditioning and air purifying systems; the optimisation of the materials and structure of enclosures to be used for housing library documents; disinfecting with non-toxic materials as well as monitoring and improving the preservation conditions in library stores and exhibitions.

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- Following serious fire and water damage in libraries the need of an institutional disaster preparedness and recovery plan has been recognised world-wide.
- Various - sometimes regional or national - preservation programmes have been formulated and are being implemented and those which had started previously have been continued or extended. The elements of these programmes contain the microfilming of newspapers, books and journals; the mass deacidification of books, newspapers and manuscripts; housing or rehousing of damaged books and vulnerable, unbound items in acid-free enclosures; the improvement of storage conditions and the way of storing; the beginning of preservation training of library staff, to a lesser degree in the library schools, and at the libraries themselves.
- As electronic library networks have developed and the digitisation of certain parts of the library collections is getting on, the originals can be saved better, simultaneously with world-wide access.

#### THE EFFICIENCY OF PREVENTION

The new preservation attitude is becoming more and more emphasised and accepted because the complex application of preventive preservation methods is much more effective than active conservation alone. The increase of effectiveness can be well discerned in three important, interdependent factors: time, quantity and cost.

- a) Time has an outstandingly important role from the aspect both of deterioration and of preservation of library materials. The time during which documents made of different materials will deteriorate depends on the composition and the manufacturing process of these materials, their storage conditions, as well as the frequency and nature of their use. Deterioration of library holdings will occur later and to a lesser extent if they are kept in proper enclosures and conditions which prevent or slow down their deterioration, are saved from theft and - as much as possible - from the occurrence of disasters and if, at the same time, both the staff and the users show the maximum care while - though not very frequently - handling them. By the application of the methods of preventive preservation documents will therefore come to a condition needing a curing treatment at a later date. Otherwise damage will occur in a few years. Time allocated to the conservation of damaged documents is also an important factor because conservation is usually time-consuming: it can extend from one or two hours to some hundreds for a single document. If in a library preservation means the time-consuming repairing only, then the major part

of the holdings will always be in a damaged state and they will continuously get in worse condition because of careless handling and use. Curing this state would then take more time. Consequently, this approach would lead to the complete failure of preservation. Finally, we can consider the connection between time and the two different attitudes of preservation in a third sense too. The implementing of preventive preservation has a beneficial effect on the entire collection, on each item of it simultaneously and continuously also in the future. Item conservation however - as the majority of the treatments can be applied individually only - can be performed on one unit after the other and it can only take place after damage has occurred. Moreover, the conserved items can deteriorate again if they get back to inappropriate storage conditions and are being handled in an improper manner.

- b) What I mentioned in connection with time indicates the quantity of items that can be preserved at the same time. Supposing that there are 50,000 items needing some kind of conservation treatment in a library, ten to twenty years can be calculated for carrying out such treatments. Conversely, by applying preventive methods, a beneficial effect can be reached on several hundreds thousand or million items, not yet damaged at all or less damaged, in a much shorter time.
- c) Various methods of protection have different costs and during a given time different numbers of items can be saved by using them. The labour costs and therefore the unit cost of conservation are high and under deleterious conditions conservation often proves a vain attempt. Certain methods of preventive preservation need a bigger investment at first but still this means a smaller investment per unit, because the cost is spread over all items of a major collection. Some techniques of preventive preservation with non-recurrent expenditure and continuous maintenance ensure protection for a long time, whereas to operate and maintain others have further, continuously high costs. To reach the stage, however, when the usefulness of the holdings improves, the rate of deterioration decreases, future conservation work is less and cheaper, and altogether the holdings survive for future research, is possible only by applying the measures of preventive preservation.

Summing up the changes mentioned it can be concluded that the most important change in preservation philosophy over the past years has been a move away from technological intervention, dealing with single items, towards preventive preservation, and, at the same time, that in order to realise a library preservation policy effectively special emphasis should be put on preservation management.

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### NEEDS FOR PROPER TRAINING IN PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT

The effective realisation of library preservation with such a widened scope and content is possible only if both the management and the staff of a library recognise the significance of preservation and understand every aspect of the issue. They have to know the possibilities and limitations as well as the methods of preservation. They have to be able to apply these methods in a way which takes both the nature, priorities and preservation requirements of the collection and the needs of the users into consideration.

Next I would like, as a case study, to outline the situation of and the plans for library preservation training in Hungary.

The state of preservation at both the National Library and the major libraries in Hungary has been surveyed in the last fifteen years. A complete (written) preservation policy has not yet been formulated but some sets of basic principles, guidelines and instructions related to preservation have been created for the various areas of library work. One of the conclusions of the surveys was that the majority of library staff has had a very limited and/or mostly obsolete knowledge of preservation issues and methods. An average Hungarian librarian with a university degree has got very uncertain ideas about the notion of preservation itself. This was shown by a question addressed to me not long ago asking if librarians need preservation training in order to become able to write better applications to get funds for the conservation of books. This may be so because until recently one has had only a few possibilities to gain some knowledge of preservation in the course of both professional training and continuing professional education. It also became evident that to formulate a preservation policy and to implement a preservation programme, as well as to enforce the preservation principles in every-day library routine, is possible only if both the management and the staff are armed with the appropriate and possibly up-to-date knowledge of preservation issues.

### PRESERVATION COURSES PLANNED FOR LIBRARY STAFF

We are planning from the coming autumn (1999) to start a series of courses at the National Széchényi Library with the support of the National Cultural Fund Programme. We would like to provide specific knowledge in preservation for the management and staff members of various types of libraries.

PLANNING THE CONTENT OF PRESERVATION TRAINING

Taking the needs of the library management and staff at different levels and with different functions into account, a four-level preservation training plan of the subjects, methods and training material has been prepared. The four levels are the following:

1. The library management
2. Heads of collection units
3. Non-managing staff in direct contact with collection holdings
4. Specific groups needing different special knowledge

The levels, subjects and methods planned are summarized in the following tables.

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FIRST LEVEL: THE LIBRARY MANAGEMENT	
Staff to be trained	Director, deputy director(s), economics manager, heads of the divisions concerned.
Some of the themes to be taught	The problem, the importance, the position and connections of preservation in the institution; asserting the aspects of preservation in the institution; preservation policies, aspects of setting priorities and planning; general methods of preventive preservation including disaster planning; elements of cost efficiency of various preservation possibilities.
Teacher, method	Two or three lectures at the most; the best and most suitable Hungarian and/or foreign lecturers. Discussing the lectures.

SECOND LEVEL: HEADS OF COLLECTION UNITS	
Staff to be trained	The heads of those departments and sections which are in contact with the holdings.
Some of the themes to be taught	Composition and deterioration of library materials (including the causes of deterioration); notions and functions of preventive care, conservation and binding; methods of preventive care in various fields of library work including disaster planning; the role of permanent materials and technologies; surrogate copies as a means of preserving the originals; planning and making decisions on preservation including the concept and practice of phased conservation.
Teacher, method, training material	Home trainers; lectures combined with demonstrations of different types (slides; videos; good and bad examples; showing different methods of preventive care and the instruments for measuring the environmental conditions; examples for planning, etc.). Written training material in Hungarian and literature both in Hungarian and other languages will be needed.

THIRD LEVEL: NON-MANAGING STAFF IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH COLLECTION HOLDINGS	
Staff to be trained	Non-managing library staff who are in direct, everyday contact with the holdings.
Some of the themes to be taught	Composition and deterioration of materials; practical methods of preventive care and physical protection as well as the proper ways of handling the documents; measuring the environmental conditions and checking for mould and insects in the store-rooms; preparing simple repairs and enclosures; selecting for preservation measures together with the evaluation of the state and usability of the originals; explanation of pre-servation measures for informing the users; the course of action for reacting to disasters and their consequences; the relation of preservation to packaging, transporting, moving and exhibiting the holdings.
Teacher, method	Home trainers; lectures, demonstrations of various types and practical lessons. Written training material and literature in Hungarian and permanent possibility of consultation are needed.

FOURTH LEVEL: SPECIFIC GROUPS NEEDING DIFFERENT SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE	
Staff to be trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bookbinders, conservators, reprography staff;</li> <li>• Cleaners (both in-house and occasional external ones);</li> <li>• Newcomers (staff);</li> <li>• Users (readers, scholars).</li> </ul>
Some of the themes to be taught	Special preservation knowledge needed by the specific group in question.
Teacher, method, training material	Lectures, demonstrations, practical lessons, leaflets, drawings, pictograms, videos, exhibitions, open days in the workshops, etc. according to the nature and needs of the groups.

#### TRAINING MATERIAL

For the different groups we are compiling the training material and the reading lists both from the Hungarian professional literature and the sections of foreign literature chosen purposefully and already translated or to be translated. Very valuable material has been received from colleagues at the Dutch State Archives and it has been translated into Hungarian with the generous assistance of the European Commission on Preservation and Access (ECPA). Our intention is to complement the selected and translated sections of the Dutch training material with anything still necessary and to form everything into a coherent entirety according to the Hungarian conditions and needs.

Finally, I would like to illustrate the „old“ and the „new“ attitude with a few additional Hungarian examples.

- I mentioned to the librarian of a church library possessing a valuable old collection that we were planning to start a continuing professional educational course on preservation. He thinks it will apply to a narrow circle only and that for example it will not apply to the Budapest municipal public library. He might think that this library would not need it in spite of the fact that it possesses valuable book collections and a unique local history collection on Budapest.
- Three special collections of the National Library keep valuable photographs, not separately and not in conditions suitable for photographs. Our newly trained photographic conservator would like to ensure that all photographs from the three collections get to one store where the circumstances are appropriate. As the head and staff of certain special collections do not know how sensitive the photographs are and that in unsuitable conditions they can deteriorate irreversibly, we can expect serious resistance in realising this plan.
- One of the librarians at the national pedagogical library consulted me on what methods could be applied for the protection of a uniquely comprehensive collection and for making it more accessible at the same time. The collection is in bad state, partly on brittle paper. I advised her the following:
  - proper dusting;
  - making a permanent surrogate copy on microfilm or permanent paper;
  - to have the units in worst state repaired before microfilming or copying them;

- digitisation of the items which are frequently consulted, possibly from the microfilm;
- the originals should be housed in proper enclosures and stored in appropriate storage conditions; after microfilming their use should be stopped.

When advising, I mentioned to her the planned course on preservation and she showed an enthusiastic interest in it. This case is a good example that the librarian who keeps valuable collections needs to know those methods which are suitable for saving whole collections if they are applied in a complex way and that the librarian realised this necessity.

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