

## New initiative on environmental conditions for cultural collections

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### PRESS RELEASE

15 July 2010

A new specification for environmental conditions for cultural collections in the UK is being developed by BSI with sponsorship from Collections Trust; CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales, a division of the Welsh Assembly Government; The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA); and The National Archives. The Publicly Available Specification (PAS) will be called PAS 198 and is scheduled for publication in May 2011.

**PAS 198 Specification for environmental conditions for cultural collections** will provide a set of requirements for the environmental conditions in which archive, library and museum collections should be stored and displayed. It will include requirements for temperature, relative humidity, light and pollution. It will apply to cultural collections whether in storage, on display or on loan, and to all types and sizes of collections held by all collecting organizations such as archives, libraries and museums, both public and private.

The overriding aim is to help minimize the damage to items caused by inappropriate environmental conditions. It is intended that the PAS will achieve this by providing a framework for risk based decision making that allows collecting organizations to identify and implement controls that are tailored to the needs of particular collections and buildings.

This risk-based approach reflects a growing consensus that there is a need for an approach that allows for a more responsible use of energy in the control of environmental conditions. This view is supported by a call from the National Museum Directors' Conference for a review of collections care policy and practice, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions. It also reflects research findings that have shown a need to move away from a prescriptive to an evidence-led approach to environmental management.

PAS 198 will complement other work in progress in related areas, in particular the review of BS 5454:2000, a standard for the storage and exhibition of archival documents, and the forthcoming development of a new European standard for the protection of heritage objects under the aegis of CEN, the European Committee for Standardization. For more information on the current initiatives in this field, please see <http://shop.bsigroup.com/pas198>.

The development of PAS 198 *Specification for environmental conditions for cultural collections*, will include a 4-week period of open consultation, due to begin in early 2011. Interested parties are invited to register to participate in the consultation at <http://shop.bsigroup.com/pas198>.

Nancy Bell, Head of Collection Care at The National Archives said: "We are delighted to be part of this important new initiative and look forward to working closely with our co-sponsors and with BSI to provide an up-to-date specification, which I believe will be widely welcomed by those caring for collections in archives, libraries and museums."

Mike Low, Director of BSI Standards commented: "Just as we have been able to enjoy collections in our time, it's essential that future generations can continue to do so. This PAS will help to make this possible by recognizing the importance of preserving collections in appropriate environmental conditions whilst at the same time ensuring that the resources used to do this are sustainable."

- ENDS -

### NOTES TO EDITORS

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#### About Publicly Available Specifications (PASs)

A PAS is a sponsored fast-track standard driven by the needs of the client organization/s and developed according to guidelines set out by BSI. Key stakeholders are brought together to collaboratively produce a BSI-endorsed PAS that has all the functionality of a British Standard for the purposes of creating management systems, product benchmarks and codes of practice. After two years the PAS is reviewed and a decision is made as to whether it should be taken forward to become a formal British Standard.

#### About BSI Group

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#### **About Collections Trust**

The Collections Trust is the independent organization which campaigns for the public right to engage with and enjoy the collections of museums, archives and libraries in the UK and internationally. Their work includes standards, copyright and the use of new technology. For further information, visit [www.collectionstrust.org.uk](http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk)

#### **About CyMAL**

CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales is a division of the Welsh Assembly Government. CyMAL represents a significant investment by the Assembly Government in the development of museums, archives and libraries services to meet 21st century needs. For further information, visit <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/?lang=en>

#### **About MLA**

Leading strategically, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) promotes best practice in museums, libraries and archives, to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all. For further information, visit [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

#### **About The National Archives**

The National Archives, [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archives of the UK government, it cares for, makes available and 'brings alive' a vast collection of over 1000 years of historical records, including the treasured Domesday Book.

Not only safeguarding historical information, The National Archives also manages current digital information and devises new technological solutions for keeping government records readable now and in the future. It provides world class research facilities and expert advice, publishes all UK legislation and official publications, and is a leading advocate for the archive sector. At the heart of information policy, The National Archives sets standards of best practice that actively promotes and encourages public access to, and the re-use of information, both online or onsite at Kew. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensures that they become tomorrow's permanent record.

The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)