

**BS 4971:2017**



**BSI Standards Publication**

## **Conservation and care of archive and library collections**

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## Summary of pages

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# Foreword

## Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 June 2017. It was prepared by Subcommittee IDT/2/9, *Document preservation*, under the authority of Technical Committee IDT/2, *Information and documentation*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

## Supersession

Together with BS EN 16893<sup>1</sup>, this British Standard supersedes BS 4971:2002 and PD 5454:2012, which will be withdrawn upon the publication of BS EN 16893.

## Use of this document

As a code of practice, this British Standard takes the form of guidance and recommendations. It should not be quoted as if it were a specification and particular care should be taken to ensure that claims of compliance are not misleading.

Any user claiming compliance with this British Standard is expected to be able to justify any course of action that deviates from its recommendations.

## Relationship with other publications

BS 4971:2017 contains archive and library specifications ([Clause 5](#)), hitherto covered by PD 5454, but which are considered out of scope of its replacement, BS EN 16893, being archive-specific. This means environmental parameters and decision-making for archive or library collections are covered by this British Standard and not by BS EN 16893.

## Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its recommendations are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “should”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

The word “should” is used to express recommendations of this standard. The word “may” is used in the text to express permissibility, e.g. as an alternative to the primary recommendation of the clause. The word “can” is used to express possibility, e.g. a consequence of an action or an event.

Notes and commentaries are provided throughout the text of this standard. Notes give references and additional information that are important but do not form part of the recommendations. Commentaries give background information.

## Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

**Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.**

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<sup>1</sup> In preparation.

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## Introduction

Managing archive and library collections to ensure their long-term availability involves a specific range of activities known as conservation or collection care. This British Standard has been revised to reflect the current needs of the sector and is aimed at custodians and conservation specialists alike. It sets out a structured approach to defining conservation policy, identifying the needs of collections and prioritizing actions that will ensure their protection.

One of the challenges for modern archive and library management is the need to address a growing range of collection materials. Some materials exist in traditional, often stable forms, others are inherently unstable and short-lived. These latter include electronic formats that present new and complex challenges. This British Standard gives recommendations for the conservation of traditional media, more recent non-traditional media (such as photographic and analogue audio-visual media) and for the carriers of digital media. It does not include the preservation of digital information and associated metadata.

This British Standard has been developed with the acknowledgment that conservation is an overarching function, required to ensure that risks to collections are addressed, removed, mitigated or accepted. The deterioration rate of archive and library materials can be managed and to a certain extent controlled by the actions of custodians and conservators. In order to preserve a varied and challenging group of materials, a comprehensive knowledge of their composition and structural qualities is required.

An analysis of the needs of material types in the collection, and the provision of appropriate and sustainable storage and handling environments, constitute preventative conservation and are fundamental to any conservation strategy. Where remedial conservation measures are deemed necessary, to protect and provide access to vulnerable materials, it is important these measures are planned and managed in an informed and transparent manner. Having formerly been a document dealing exclusively with materials and practice, this British Standard now aims to assist custodians and conservators to work closely together to define their objectives, agree priorities and systematically plan their conservation activities.

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## 1 Scope

This British Standard gives recommendations for the long term conservation of archive and library collections. It gives recommendations for managing conservation of collections, starting with organizational policy, strategy and planning, which in turn lead to the identification of prioritized actions and on-going processes that protect collections, such as environmental qualities, repository management and preventive and remedial treatment projects.

It is applicable to traditional archive and library collections, e.g. documents, books, maps, drawings, prints, photographic materials and the carriers of machine readable records in both analogue and digital format such as video cassettes and CDs.

It does not include the preservation of digital information and associated metadata.

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## 2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes provisions of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS 1153, *Recommendations for processing and storage of silver-gelatin-type microfilm*