Archives and Records Association
Best Practise Guidelines

13. DOCUMENTATION FOR PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

(including notes on use of the CALM Conservation Module)

13.1 Definition

Conservation or preservation documentation refers to the information permanently recorded prior to, during and after the conservation or preservation treatment of archival collections. Documentation is recorded in a written format and may be supplemented by images or diagrams. The information summarises in appropriate detail: what items have been treated; their condition; proposed treatment and requirements; treatment or actions undertaken and recommendations for future preservation. Conservation or preservation records may cover: a short episode of treatment; a one-off survey; or monitor observations or treatments over longer periods of time.

13.2 Aim and scope

These guidelines aim to cover both the broader principles of documentation in its context as a type of recordkeeping within the wider heritage professional setting; as well as give more detailed, practical recommendations about its form and content.
The intention is to advise on aspects of Best Practise, whilst also recognising the need for flexibility and reasoned interpretation of the guidelines on a case-by-case basis. Benefits of following Best Practise include raising and maintaining standards, accountability, enhanced professionalism, quality reference material, better potential for monitoring and benchmarking.

Appendix 2 covers the conservation module of the Calm database as a practical aid to its use for documentation. This does not suggest that this system alone is a template for Best Practise (it is how it is used that is important), nor that it is the only acceptable database available. It is intended as a tool for those who already use this system, or wish to assess it for use.

13.3 Relevance of documentation

Documenting preservation and conservation measures are integral to collection history. Record keeping is also fundamental to professional integrity, providing a record of decision making, observations, treatments and planning.
The following points pick out some of the areas in which documentation can have particular relevance.

13.3.4 Accessibility

Conservation documentation makes information available about collections to others which may not accessible elsewhere. It also makes information about the profession as a whole available. Accurate, organised and up to date records are one of the means conservation and preservation can be integrated as a holistic part of collections care and access within an organisation.

13.3.5 Accountability

Any responsibility held by professionals for aspects of collection care should be accountable. To be accountable for activities undertaken in the interests of collection care, recordkeeping is

needed. Conservators, because of the nature of the work they undertake, are often temporary custodians of historical and unique archives which require bespoke treatment, and they should also be accountable for this responsibility by documenting their work.

13.3.6 Collection history
Information gathered from observing the physical components and make up of archival documents (e.g. binding styles or watermarks) adds to insight to collections (e.g. dates).

13.3.7 Collection monitoring
Conservation documentation can be a vehicle for monitoring changes in the condition of collections over time. Inspecting and testing collections at intervals, then recording the results can build up a picture of deterioration or stability (e.g. iron gall ink corrosion or cellulose nitrate film degradation). This documentation paints a portrait in time of how a collection or document is ageing.

13.3.8 Collection provenance
A condition report can provide an insight into collection history prior to acquisition, for example regarding past storage conditions. Recorded information about treatments carried out after acquisition provides detailed primary evidence about any changes or alterations a document or collection has undergone during this treatment.

13.3.9 Consistency
Documentation enables greater consistency of approaches to collection care and maintenance of appropriate standards by providing benchmarking references.

13.3.10 Future treatment review
Interventive conservation treatment or repairs carried out may require removal or reversal at some future date. Information pertaining to exact materials and adhesives used can be crucial to safely carry out this process. Where consistency of materials used is important (e.g. leather dye), records enable these decisions to be more easily repeated.

13.3.11 Health and safety
Documentation of health and safety measures (Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health – COSHH - assessments, Personal Protective Equipment - PPE) observed during treatment of collections is important to record when appropriate. This helps protect both practitioners and employers and encourages safe practise.

13.3.1 Professional memory
Conservation information recorded today can itself form an archive for the future, giving an insight into an area of archive preservation history, such as repair techniques or approaches to pest and control.

13.4 Organisation and retention
Conservation and preservation records should be treated as permanent records. Both their short and long term retention should be organised and planned for. In principle, documentation records should be organised according to a numbered reference system which is easy to use, consistent, accessible and searchable.

13.4.1 Short term retention (6-7 years)

When conservation records are relatively recent, they are likely to be required for reference for administrative purposes. In this case, it is appropriate for them to be readily accessible, either via paper copy or electronically. Access to, and use of these records should be factored into any business continuity planning to help maintain access in the case of unforeseen disruption. Consider how the loss of these records would affect ongoing conservation related activities and plan accordingly.

13.4.2 Long term retention

Plans for the long term retention of conservation records should be in place to ensure their survival for the life of the documents they relate to. It is recommended that they are formally accessioned into a collection of records relating to the institution. This “archive” can be added to on an annual basis.
If privately owned, it is suggested that a copy of the record should be kept permanently by the owner with the document, and that the private conservator retain the record at least for the short term period. Owners of archival material worked on by an independent conservator, should be made aware of the importance of the documentation they receive as part of the work carried out.

13.5 Storage

Conservation records which have been archived for long term storage within a repository’s collections, are therefore covered by BS 5454:2000 – ‘Recommendations for storage and display of archival documents’. These recommendations provide benchmarks for packaging and environmental conditions to help maximise the life of the documents.
In addition, “archived” conservation records which form part of an institution’s formal collections should also be covered by its emergency plan, helping ensure protection and salvage should the need arise.
For a private conservator who is unattached to an organisation which can permanently his/her records, the same security and environmental control measures should be applied to them as is afforded to archival documents when in temporary custody of the studio.

13.6 Documentation formats

Conservation documentation may be paper based, electronic or preferably both.

13.6.1 Paper

Paper-based records may take the form of log books, hand-written and drawn records or printed documents. Paper records are still a handy reference tool and are often most useful for recording diagrams. Even in this digital age, paper records can be a useful back-up to a digital system.
Paper records however have limitations, particularly in terms of updating, cross referencing and searching content.
The paper used should be designed for long-term storage, such as “permanent paper”. Inks (printed or written) should be non-water soluble.
Paper documents can also be scanned and stored digitally.

13.6.2 Digital

Conservation documentation lends itself well to the electronic format. Stringent back-up procedures need to be in place to insure against loss of data. These should include regular, off site back ups.
Digital conservation documentation records can also form part of an integral catalogue system (such as CALM) for collections, and allows linking of conservation records to catalogue records. These records are also easily searched, enable compilation of statistics, and as part of a network

may be accessed by multiple users.
Generic databases (such as Microsoft Access) can also be formatted to cater for conservation documentation needs. Survey or project related information can be accommodated in this way if required in addition to CALM records.
Altering or setting up a digital conservation documentation system can be more complex than designing a paper based record. Consider carefully what is required and seek technical advice. Future capacity, software updates, back-up and data management are just a few of the issues that will need consideration.

13.7 Documentation content

Certain information is considered essential to any conservation documentation record. The extent and detail of additional information may vary greatly and is dependent upon the context of the task. For example, a condition survey of a large collection will require a more minimal approach to documentation, with more of a focus on statistical information and patterns emerging from the information gathered. Use of “tick-box” style forms or parts of forms can be a useful way of standardising information, particularly if repetitive observations and records are being made. However, bespoke treatment of an individual item often justifies more detailed condition analysis and description of each treatment process. Both “bullet point” and prose-style text can be employed to do this.

In principle, the basic minimum documentation enables both the document in question and its conservation record to be uniquely identifiable and linked to the other, and for that record to provide information about what conservation or preservation intervention has occurred and why. In addition, by identifying both the date and the creator, the record itself has provenance.

The content of a documentation record can be grouped under a few headings: administrative information; physical description; condition assessment; treatment proposal, treatment details and preservation information.

13.7.1 Administrative information

Information relating to identification of the document in question - the conservator, dates etc. is largely administrative. However, without this information, the integrity and usefulness of the conservation record is limited. Receipt and dispatch of items into and out of the conservation studio should also be recorded if they are temporarily withdrawn from their normal storage or ownership. Procedures for document production are usually in place in archive repositories and should also apply to documents admitted into conservation. Conservation documentation is a place where this transaction can be logged. Private conservators will usually generate estimate and invoicing records which can tie in to this stage of the “paper trail”.

13.7.1.1 Unique conservation reference

Each separate conservation record should be identifiable. Usually this relates to administrative systems in place in the studio. This system should enable individual records to be easily filed and located and should be in consistent use. A numerical, or alpha-numerical system is common. Consider how you may want to use the information in the future to help choose a reference system. The chronology of the reference may be continuous or need to be broken down into years or months depending on the volume of records created. Names or initials may be important, for example in a situation where a number of conservators are using the system or where clients’ records are required to be kept together. Whatever system is in place, it should be consistent.

13.7.1.2 Archival document reference

A document or collection should be identifiable as the one described in its conservation record. This is done most accurately when documents are labelled with item-level references or legible titles. Where a document is also catalogued electronically at item-level, this record may be linked to its corresponding conservation record (e.g. via CALM). Where possible, documents should have an agreed unique reference or title before treatment in conservation. However, this is not always possible and may mean use of collection-level references in combination with titles, dates etc. The minimum identification a document should have before conservation treatment and documentation is an Accession Number if from an institution collection, or an owner if privately owned. This is important when treating new deposits (e.g. for mould) before more detailed cataloguing is possible.
Photography can be useful in helping ensure the document is correctly identified in the conservation record.

13.7.1.3 Title
The document title may be taken from a catalogue entry or the document itself. This often provides an easily recognisable name by which the document is known while in the conservation studio. Use of a title should be in addition to, and not replace the use of a unique reference number for the document where possible. The title used should be agreed between the relevant custodian or archivist.

13.7.1.4 Document date
A date, or date range may be available via the document itself or the catalogue entry. If not, information from e.g. a watermark or binding style may give clues about its age. If a date recorded is subjective, this should be stated on the conservation record.

13.7.1.5 Creator
Authorship of a conservation record and any treatments undertaken is important both for administrative purposes and for professional accountability. Initials or a full name should be recorded, with additional names if more than one person is involved in a project.

13.7.1.6 Documentation date
A record should be dated. This information may be relevant to monitoring conditions of collections, work flow statistics etc. Conservation documentation should be up to date, so if conservation treatment is extended over a period of time, the documentation is a correct record of its current status.

13.7.1.7 Cross references
Conservation activities may also generate or relate to other administrative records. These can include: health and safety risk assessments; photographic records, exhibition and loan agreements; insurance information and environmental monitoring information. Up to date references to these should be included where appropriate.

13.7.2 Physical description
The aim of describing the physical nature of an archival document is to summarise its key characteristics. Conservation documentation should note what its components are and how it is put together. If there is some uncertainty about identification of some aspects, terms such as “probably”, “likely” etc. should be used to describe the confidence with which observations are made.

13.7.2.1 Dimensions
Recording the dimensions of a document is relevant for a number of reasons. It can give information relating to packaging and storage needs, equipment options etc.
Accurate measurements are particularly important when treatment may alter a document in size.

For example in the case of a map lining, the dampened document will not completely regain its original dimensions after drying, often becoming wider across the grain direction of the paper. For this reason, post-treatment measurements should also be taken and recorded.
Millimetres are advised for accurate recording of measurements, using the format height x width x depth. Diagonal measurements should also be taken in the case of maps, as well as the length of the scale.
Imperial measurements may also be useful in addition, particularly as these more often relate historically to paper sizes. If the generic paper size is known (e.g. “foolscap”) this can be recorded too.
If accurate measurement is not possible or appropriate, a more general indication of size can be used (e.g. “approximately A4”).

13.7.2.2 Extent
It is important to record how many components are present, even if it is only one item. This may involve counting the letters within a bundle or plans in a roll. It is also pertinent to note items that are part of but may be separated from the document such as inserts. Such items may be also numbered with the document’s reference number and details of where they came from (e.g. in between pages 4 and 5) to help prevent misplacement.
Where the scale of a collection prohibits accurate counting, an educated estimate may be made (this may be based on an average calculated from a sample for example). The use of estimation should be made clear on the record. In this situation, generalised observations must be made to summarise the nature of a collection as a whole (e.g. 60% of the volumes are stationery bindings, the remainder are bound in files).

13.7.2.3 Packaging
The packaging a document is received in should be noted. This may be later discarded but can have relevance to its provenance and give clues as to condition. Information found on packaging materials may also be noted.

13.7.2.4 Format
The basic format of a document can be simply noted, e.g. “large volume”, “rolled plan”, “folded deed with pendant seal”. This gives an at-a-glance description of a document.

13.7.2.5 Stamps/inscriptions
Documents often have additional media in the form of inscriptions or stamps. The presence of these should be noted. They can have implications for treatment (e.g. solubility, covering after lining). They may also provide additional information relating to provenance or dates.

13.7.2.6 Old repairs
Record the nature and position of old repairs. These may be removed and documentation is a record of previous treatment. In not removed, documentation clarifies why they were left and that they were not the result of current treatment.

13.7.2.7 Original materials
The support upon which a document’s text or image is made needs to be described. This information can often be inaccurate in archive catalogues so visual confirmation is best. Generally, paper, parchment, board, film, glass and cloth are amongst the most common supports. If a firm identification is not possible, chemical tests may be carried out to further investigations.
A document may have a primary support on which the media has been applied directly, such as paper, but it may also have a secondary support such as a cloth backing or a board. It is important to include information about these as well as treatment options may involve separation of the primary and secondary support.

Paper - Probably the most common support met by archive conservators is paper. There are many aspects of paper that enable detailed description. Some are measurable, some are subjective and require experience or comparison. All help build a picture of the age and type of paper, and detail should be tailored according to the circumstances.

Coating - Some papers may have a coating or fillers that affect how the paper behaves when wet, or responds to cleaning. Identifying and recording this in advance is good practise.

Colour - Paper may vary in both tone and colour. There are many shades of pale and this is always a subjective description (e.g. light cream, ivory, blue tint etc.) but can also be supplemented by photography. Examination is best made in daylight. If paper is discoloured, check less exposed areas such as the inside of more recent tears, or areas which have remained covered, to assess the likely original colour of the paper. If a paper has been tinted, this can have implications for wet treatment.

Edges -The edge of the paper may be cut, torn or a deckle edge. This can indicate if a paper is handmade or not and also its original size.

Fibres - Paper fibres can be both tested, examined and described. Microscopic examination can reveal whether cotton or linen fibres for example are present. Chemical tests can identify some types of pulp. This level of documentation is not often possible or required. However, fibres can be described as short or long, uniform etc. as this has a bearing on the paper's behaviour and condition.

Grain - Grain direction is fundamental to the behaviour of both paper, cloth and board as well as skin. This should be determined where possible, as it can have important implications for treatment. This may be difficult in the case of damaged paper, or where handmade paper has a very even direction. If it is not possible to tell by flexing the paper, or noting the direction of straight tears - clarification can be made during wet treatment when curl can be noted or expansion across and along the grain.

Handmade/machine made - Documentation should note whether a paper is handmade or machine-made. The characteristics of each help predict the behaviour of a paper during treatment, as well as provide additional historical information.
Clues include: date (machine made paper was developed from the beginning of the 19th century); grain (that of machine made paper is often more pronounced); lignin (presence would indicate a machine made paper) and deckle edges (hand made paper).

Laid or wove - Paper may be made on a mould with regular chain and laid lines, "laid" or on one with a woven mesh, "wove". Wove paper was a post 1750 development, so this information can help date the period of a paper. Determine which type a paper is using raking and transmitted light. Record also the distance between the thicker chain lines (by doing a tracing for example) and the number of thinner laid lines per inch. This can help match a repair paper, or identify when the same type of paper has been used elsewhere. Or, for example, if different chain and laid lines are found on the outer sections of a volume from those inside, this may indicate a later rebinding with sections added.
Laid paper may also be dated post or pre-1800 if the chain lines are observed carefully. Darker shadows visible in transmitted light along the chain lines indicate a pre-1800 paper, a result of the design of the wire attachment to the mould which was

later altered, removing the shadow effect.

Sizing - The degree and type of sizing a paper has can be recorded. Mould damage, or creasing can cause deterioration to the sizing and can be assessed by noting the softness or hardness of the surface, or its degree of water absorbency. The “rattle” of a sheet can also indicate whether a paper is heavily sized.
The type of size may be determined using knowledge of materials history (e.g. usually gelatine for antique papers) or by chemical tests. Use of tests should also be recorded, as well as from where the samples were taken.

Texture - Paper texture may help indicate whether a paper is handmade or machine made. Handmade paper has a wire side and felt side which may be distinguished in raking light. The felt side will bear the visible fibre marks impressed when freshly couched onto felts after the sheet is formed. The wire side is the side of the sheet which was adjacent to the paper making mould after the sheet was formed.
Texture can also indicate the finish of the paper, whether ROUGH, NOT (not hot pressed) and HOT (a smooth calendered surface). Again this can be a subjective observation, but is important, as texture should be preserved as much as possible during treatment. This can have implications for pressing for example.

Thickness - This can be measured in microns using a micrometer. Also, a subjective assessment can be made, e.g. thin, medium, thick. This comparative information can be helpful when selecting infill papers.

Type - Type of paper e.g. tracing, cartridge, Kraft should be identified where possible.

Watermark - Watermarks are found in both hand made and machine made papers. Examining and recording these provide important information. Transmitted light reveals any text or images that are part of the watermark. These can be recorded descriptively (many watermark motifs have standard names e.g. Britannia), photographed or traced. This information can help date a paper if a date forms part of the mark, and give provenance if the papermaker is given. If a watermark must be partially obscured by a lining for example, a record is especially important.

Weight - The relative weight, or grams per square metre of paper may be worked out if the document can be weighed on accurate scales (such as those used in searchrooms) to 0.1g accuracy. The paper’s weight (g) divided by the paper’s area (m2) give its value in gms. E.g. A 10cm2 (0.01m2) piece of copy paper weighs 0.9g. 0.9 divided by 0.01 is 90gms. This information again may be useful for repair paper choices.

Parchment & vellum -In addition to observations in common with paper (dimensions, thickness), parchment should be recorded with the following details.

Animal - Where possible, clarify the skin used, i.e. split sheep skin, calf or goat.

Grain - Identify and record the grain (spine) of the skin. The area of the skin used, may influence the pieces chosen for infills.

Hair & flesh side - The hair and flesh side of the skin should be identified, commonly the flesh side is used for the text. There is often a difference in tone to each side which can also be recorded.

Cloth - Although cloth is not commonly encountered as a material on its own in

archival collections, it often is a component of them, e.g. as a map lining or book cover. The following are aspects that may be relevant to documentation.

Dye - Identify whether the cloth has been dyed, what colour and whether this has discoloured.

Fibre - Note the fibre (e.g. cotton, linen) where possible.

Loading -The weave of a cloth may be loaded, filled or coated. Note if this is the case.

Thread count - The density of the weave may be described by counting the threads within an inch.

Warp and weft - Gauge which way the warp and weft run. A fabric will tear more easily along the warp.

Media - Most archival documents have some kind of media applied to them, to form the content of the document. Identifying the types present, where they are and their application is key to treatment decisions.

Identification - The method of identification should be noted, e.g. ultra violet light or iron III test paper.

Application - Note how the media is applied, e.g. quill, pen, pencil, brush or printed.

Type - Possibilities include: inks; coloured media; photographic emulsions; pencil.

Bindings - Elements of paper of parchment documentation are relevant to bindings according to the material of the text block. But books in particular demand descriptions of their make up and function as well as their components. Information needs to be more detailed if a book is to be disbound as this evidence is then lost. Also, some information may only be available (e.g. spine linings) if the book is dismantled. Aspects of this include:

Boards - Describe the material used if possible (e.g. mill board, straw board) and thickness as well as method of attachment (e.g. split) and width of the joint. Details such as size of the squares may also be relevant if intending to make new boards.

Covering - Describe what materials are used to cover the book (e.g. leather, cloth, marbled paper), noting colour and surface texture (e.g. rough calf, grain of the leather or coating on the cloth). The extent and style of the covering is also to be recorded (e.g. full, half leather).

End bands - The sewing pattern and tie-downs need to be described as well as the colour and thickness of threads used. Note the presence or not of a head cap.

Endpapers - Describe the style of endpaper, whether “made”, cloth jointed, marbled and so on. Note also their method of attachment.

Sections
Document how many sections the text block is composed of and how many leaves make up each section.

Sewing - A diagram can be particularly useful for recording sewing, especially if the text block is to be re-sewn. Note the position of the sewing stations and kettle stitches,

and whether ties are made inside sections or on the spine. Record the number of tapes or cords used, their size and position and whether they are raised or sawn-in. Samples of thread can be kept if the text block is to be resewn. Also document changes in the sewing pattern around the end papers for example (e.g. sewing around tapes).

Spine - Determine if the text block has been rounded and backed, a profile of the spine shape can be recorded using a diagram. Note what adhesive has been used on the back of the sections and what coverings have been applied. If resewing, these will be removed.

Style - Describe the general style of the binding, e.g. library style, stationery binding.

Tooling - Record the type and position of any tooling, whether blind, foil or gold. Measuring the size and style of the font, position of lines etc. is relevant for rebinding. A label's details need also to be noted, as well as it position. A rubbing can be taken of a spine to record many of these details accurately.

13.7.3 Condition assessment

Having described the components and make up of a document, its condition and stability should also be recorded. These are observations to be made in context, with likely reasons and explanations included where possible.

A general summary of condition is a useful summary to begin a condition assessment with, e.g. poor, fair, unfit for production. This overall condition can then be attributed to a combination of factors, i.e. biological, mechanical, chemical damage. Conservation documentation should establish which of these are responsible and also suggest why.
Detailed observations can then be made: dirt; tears; folds; losses; creases; cockling; detachment; stains etc. Any problems noted should include a judgement on location, extent and severity e.g. "moderate surface dirt around all the edges".
Microchemical test results such as for iron II, adhesives, pH, lignin etc. should be recorded and also interpreted e.g. "presence of lignin probably accounts for degree of discolouration".
If observations have been made for example using magnification or ultra violet light, this should be noted.

13.7.4 Treatment proposal

This aspect of the conservation record considers options for treatment and recommends a reasoned course of action. Options can be considered, e.g. minimal and interventive options. Some indication of priority can be given too, in relation to: urgency; significance of the item; condition and time and skills required for treatment.
The aim and purpose of the treatments proposed can be outlined here.

13.7.5 Treatment record

Once treatment has taken place, a record should be made of the individual aspects of this e.g. washing. This includes information on materials used, relevant techniques and duration. When conservation takes place over an extended period of time, current notes are important, enabling more accurate writing up of documentation upon completion of the work.
Samples of materials used kept as a reference may be a useful addition to the record. Here, observations and reflections on how well a treatment has gone, e.g. whether much discolouration was removed, can be made. Visual comparisons of before and after treatment can be made via photographic documentation, but comparative observations such as the improved flexibility of a parchment membrane, can only be made in the conservation record.

13.7.6 Preservation information
Finally, recommendations for storage and future preservation should be made. This may include simple advice regarding handling, flat storage, environmental conditions. If a document is being monitored, a date for a condition check can be noted.

13.8 Terminology
A good written conservation record describes in text form (supported by photography) all the information a conservator deduces from an archival document by looking, handling, testing (even listening and smelling) as well as forming a record of their decision and actions. Almost an art form in itself, both accuracy and an element of creative input help bring a document alive on the page. This information is communicated best if it is easily accessible and understandable to others - both fellow professionals and other relevant parties such as clients or archivists. Consistency and some standardisation of elements of the record will assist with this.

Care should be taken to ensure legibility (if hand written) and use of recognised terminology and words. Consistency in the use of particular words, such as the name used for particular materials (e.g. “chemical sponge” or “smoke sponge”) is helpful for future reference and also searching electronic records. An in-house glossary might be a useful point of reference to help avoid potential confusion.
Trade names are another common pitfall, where possible both the generic term (e.g. archival polyester) given alongside a trade name (“Melinex”) will help clarify what may be obvious information at the time, but in the future may not be as clear.
Similarly, care should be taken when using chemical nomenclature, to expand on abbreviations or trade names. Correct names can always be found on Material Safety Data Sheets.

13.9 Future developments
As technology develops apace, the format of conservation documentation is likely to continue to evolve. The layout and design of electronic databases will change too. The essential principles of recording conservation and preservation related work on collections remain however - to document: what a document is; who it belongs to; what it is about; what it is made of and what condition it is in and why. Then; to record what may be done to stabilise or repair it, how and what this was done with and why. And finally to review the outcomes and recommend future preservation measures.

13.10 Supporting Best Practise
There are a number of sources to turn to for support in applying Best Practise to Conservation Documentation. Peer review is an excellent way of assessing quality and effectiveness. A fellow professional can provide a fresh eye which has not become overly familiar with the archival item in question. Journal articles of case studies (e.g. The Conservator, Restaurator) often provide examples of thorough and honed documentation which can provide ideas and examples. The professional accreditation process (PACR), along with its CPD scheme, draw heavily on information provided by documentation. The PACR guidelines detail the key standards in this area.

APPENDICES

13.11 References

13.11.1 PACR (Preservation Accreditation of Conservation Restorers) Professional Standards.

The professional standards required of accredited conservators, and against which accreditation candidates are assessed, include points relating to documentation.

Candidates must demonstrate they:

1e. Can record or report the findings of the assessment.

Depending on the context, findings may involve a combination of verbal, written, software-based and graphic representations. The coverage and detail of the report or records need to be appropriate to the context of the assessment.

2c. Develop or negotiate a considered course of action for implementation.

You should be able to negotiate with organisations and individuals as relevant to your area of practice. The agreed action should be recorded in a format and level of detail appropriate to the context.

3e. Maintain records of conservation measures.

Records should be of a form, level of detail and clarity appropriate to their intended use, and be sufficiently permanent.

4f. Ensure that adequate and accessible records are maintained.

Records include conservation records, statutory records, records required by your organisation or needed for running your business, and any records that you or your colleagues need to work effectively. Recording should use relevant methods and formats including, where relevant, the use of appropriate technology and software. Records must be physically accessible and intelligible to the people who need access to them. Records must be maintained for an adequate period for their purpose. Appropriate levels of security and confidentiality should be maintained.

13.11.2 BS 4971:2002 (Repair and Allied Processes for the Conservation of Documents)

This standard briefly covers points relating to documentation in point 7.4 on page 9. It advocates making written and photographic records of the condition, description and treatment of documents and making these permanently available.

1 record physical nature and condition before treatment
2 record materials, chemicals, methods, results of tests
3 support with photography, before, during and after
4 record removal of any material, keep this with the document
5 permanently accessible

13.12.3 Archives and Records Association Conservation Glossary

See the link below on the ARA website for terms and definitions of use in documentation.

http://www.archives.org.uk/thesociety/specialinterestgroups/preservationandconservationgroup/glossaryofconservationterms.html

13.13 Calm – Conservation module

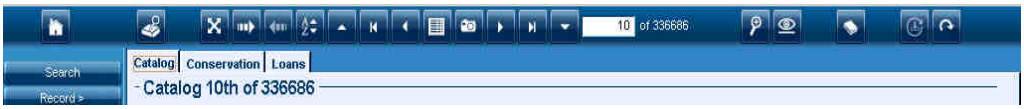
All conservation work undertaken relating to collections held by an archive can be documented in the conservation module of CALM. Where a catalogue record exists in the database, the conservation record is linked to this. Where there is no CALM catalogue record, an "uncatalogued" conservation record is created.

13.13.1 Searching conservation records

Where practical, conservation records should be kept up to date, therefore providing accurate information regarding the status of projects. It is advisable however, to consult Conservation with any particular queries about the progress of work, as in many cases, accurate documentation is only possible after completion of a treatment.

13.13.1.1 Finding conservation records linked to the CALM catalogue

You can search for the conservation record in the usual way via the main catalogue. The conservation record can be accessed via the tab at the top of the relevant record. (N.B. If a catalogue search brings up a number of hits and you then tab across to a linked conservation record, upon return to the catalogue via the "back" button, the original hit list is lost.)



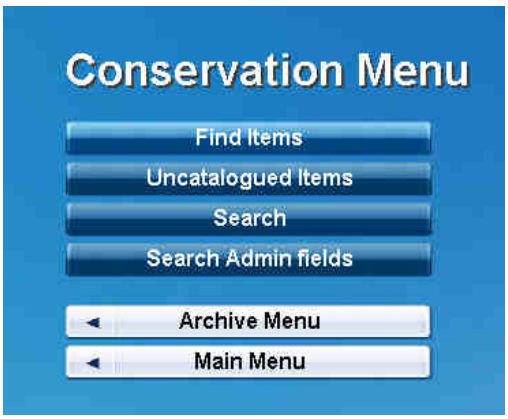
13.13.1.2 Finding collection or item level conservation records

Where possible, the conservation record should link to the catalogue at the most logical level given the work done. E.g., if a large amount of material had been treated from a collection, individual items may not be given single conservation records, but be grouped and linked either to a collection or section.

But if single items are treated and an item-level catalogue entry to link with is unavailable, the conservation record should link to the lowest collection/section/series level entry. The conservation record should note exactly which items were treated.

It is possible that cataloguing at a later date might provide an item level entry. In this case, the cataloguing archivist should communicate with conservation, who can then decide whether to alter the accompanying record.

13.13.1.3 Searching "uncatalogued" conservation records
Conservation work carried out on collections which are uncatalogued on CALM, or for external clients, is recorded in the "uncatalogued" section of the conservation module. To search this data, begin with a search from the conservation menu. This route can also be used for CALM catalogued records which are linked to the conservation module.

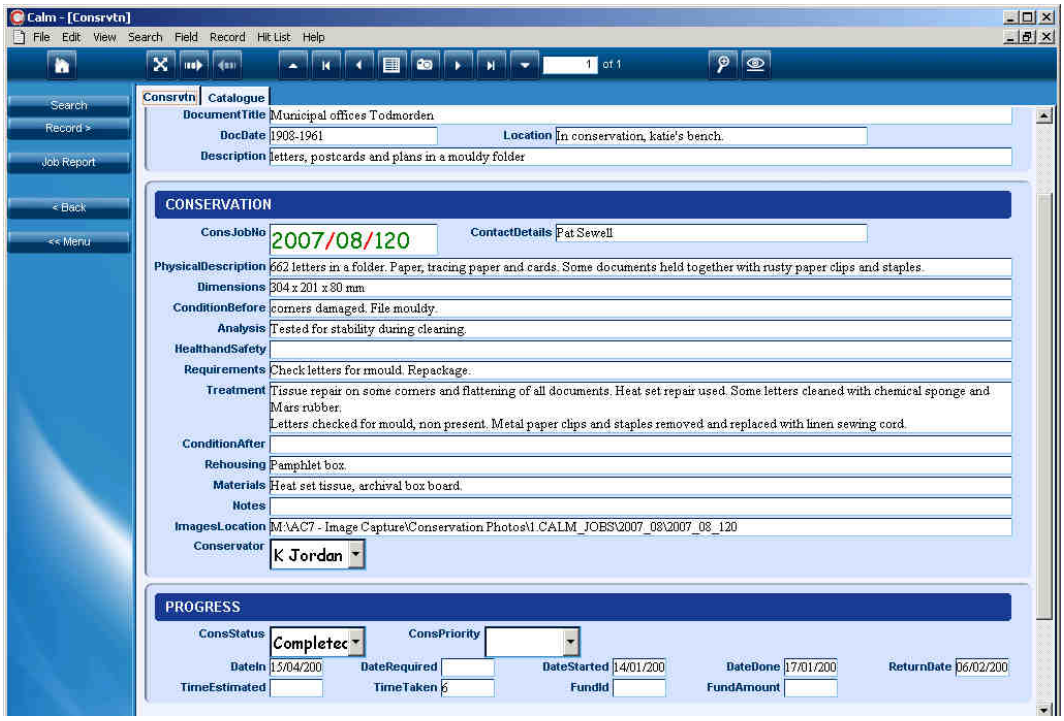


A hit list can then be most usefully narrowed by: date; repository; staff members or key words. Conservation job numbers can be formatted according to the system in place. For example using the financial year followed by a sequencial number results in a number like this 2010/11/17.

13.13.1.4 Searching for conservation records from a project
It is sometimes useful to "tag" a record by inserting a key phrase, e.g. "Leeds tithes". If this is included in all records from this project, a search using these key words will produce a hit-list accordingly.

13.13.1.5 Searching for *all* conservation records

Bring up the “search” options box in the conservation module. Press “shift” and “enter” together to call up *all* conservation records.



13.13.1.6 Searching for a year group of conservation records

A search using “2008/09*” in the Conservation Job No. field will bring up all the records for that year.

13.13.2 Referring CALM catalogued items to Conservation

Items may be “referred” or “flagged” electronically for attention by Conservation using CALM, allowing transfer to the conservation module for further documentation.
As this is only effective for documents catalogued at item level on CALM, this is not necessarily the only or best means of alerting Conservation regarding advice on, or assessment of items. This electronic referral mechanism is usually best employed as part of a collaborative process.

13.13.2.1 Assessment of a “flagged” item

A project may, after discussion, not be considered a priority for the near future (there may be many factors involved including: complexity and length of project; staff availability; public interest; health and safety; time allocation etc.). Conservation staff may: still chose to create a CALM record to record the assessment made; or decide to “flag”, then “reject” the item/s with a written explanation.

13.13.2.2 “Flagging” items for Conservation via CALM

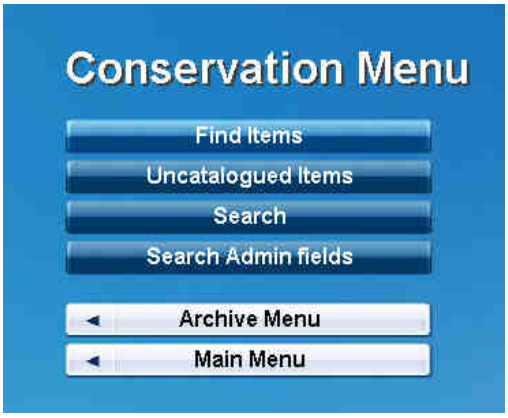
Accurate selectoin of the correct record on CALM is paramount before flagging. Familiarity with the catalogue structure and the collection on CALM may be necessary.
The most appropriate record level for documentation (i.e. collection or item) will have been discussed. If a single item is in question, it is very much preferable for it to be catalogued on CALM to item level. As this is not always possible, the nearest, lowest level of record can be selected for “flagging” using a field called “Conservation Priority” in the main catalogue. If many items are to be conserved, it may be practical to “flag” them for example as a sub-section.

13.13.2.3 Using the “Conservation Priority” field

A record is “flagged” in the main catalogue using the field labeled “Conservation Priority”. This is visible as a default field on all records except Collection level records. To insert this field where it is not present, select the “field” heading at the top of the record with a “left-click”, then select “insert”. Choose “Conservation Priority” from the list. It will then appear towards the bottom of the record. It has an arrow to the right indicating a “pick-list”. Categories may be set up via DS Admin, e.g. “high”, “medium”, “low” and these will appear as options on the pick list. Click the pick list arrow for the “Conservation Priority” field and select the option required. The record is now “flagged” and can be located and transferred into the conservation module by conservation staff. Any conservation or condition related notes can be made in the “conservation” field, but this should not complement any initial discussion with Conservation.

13.13.3 Finding records “flagged” for conservation assessment

This stage of the documentation process is carried out from the Conservation moduel.
To create a conservation record linked to the main catalogue, a “flagged” record first needs to be located. From the conservation menu select “find items”.



This will bring up a table of search options. Select the field “Conservation Priority”.

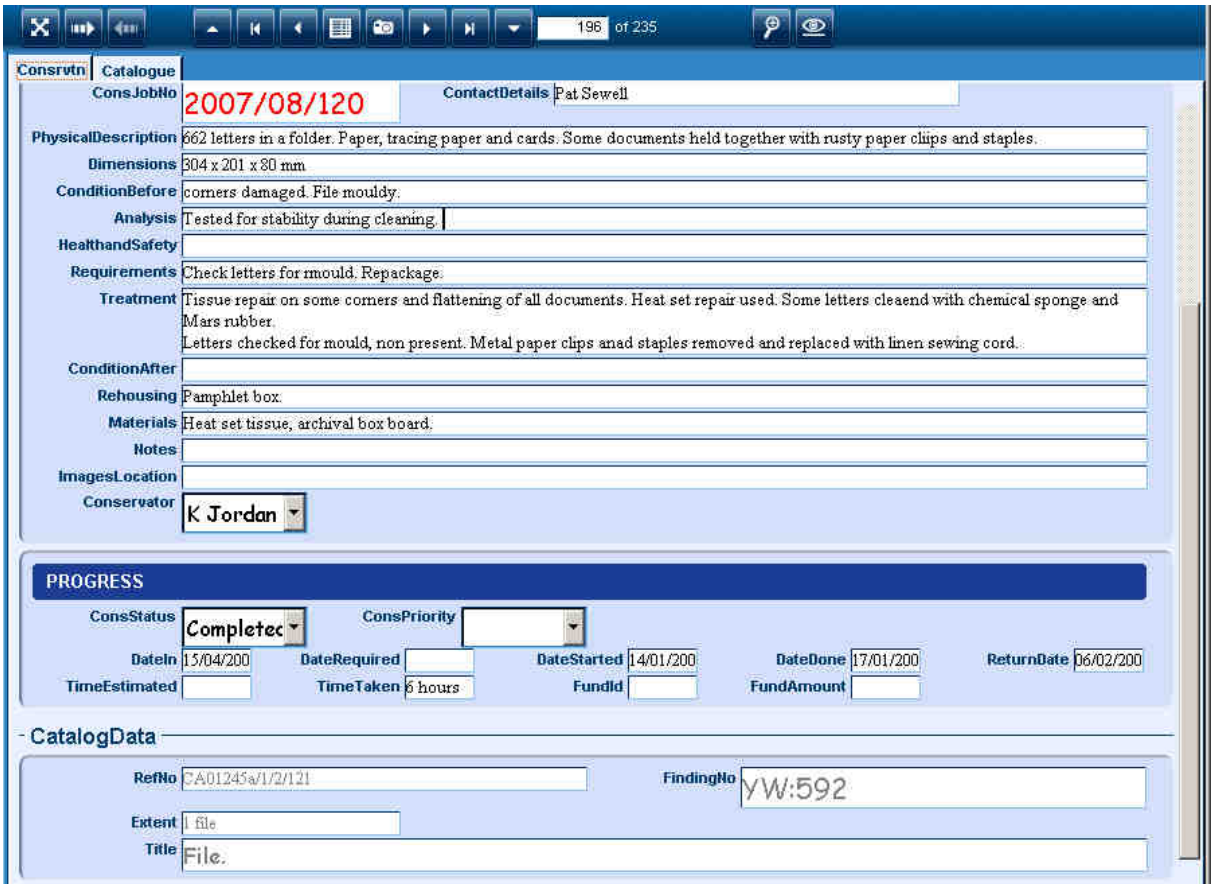
Choose the category you wish to search e.g. “high” from its pick-list. Click “find”. CALM will find a hit list of items that have been “flagged” as “high”. Click on the one you want and *check* it is the correct record.

13.13.4 Linking “flagged” records to the conservation module

When a “flagged” record is brought up via a search through the conservation menu, there are options to either “transfer” the record to the conservation module, or to reject it. (If there is a button inscribed ”No RCN”, see the note towards the end of this document.

13.13.4.1 Transferring a “flagged” record to the conservation module

“Left-click” the “transfer” button the left of the screen. This will create a new, blank conservation record which will automatically have the “date-in” and “date-started” fields completed with the day’s date. Change these if required using DD/MM/YYYY.
The catalogue record will now show “in conservation” in the “item status” field (check via the tab at the top).
A selection of the fields from the main catalogue are visible at the bottom of the new conservation record; conversely in the main catalogue record, selected conservation fields are visible.



13.13.4.2 Rejecting a “flagged” item from the conservation module

If an item is to not to be treated in conservation, but a record is required of the reasons behind any decisions or condition assessment, the referral can be rejected. When a “flagged” record is brought up, there is a “reject” button to the left of the screen. “Left-click” the “reject” button. Complete the relevant information as required.

13.13.5 Receiving documents into Conservation

All archival documents (external, internal, catalogued and uncatalogued) deposited with Conservation can be recorded using both CALM.

13.13.5.1 Document withdrawal forms

All documents physically brought into Conservation (whether catalogued on CALM or not) should be accompanied by the relevant Withdrawal Form/s or slips. Conservation's copy should remain with the document throughout its time in the studio.

13.13.5.2 Completing a preliminary conservation record

Upon receipt of a document, it is advised to complete the essential fields in the conservation record as appropriate. In particular, ensure contact details, treatment instructions and storage location are clear.

13.13.5.3 Printing the preliminary conservation record

A printed copy of this preliminary conservation record can be kept with the document during its time in the studio (see "Printing conservation records").

13.13.5.4 Secure storage

If possible, place the document in secure storage until conservation work can begin.

13.13.6 Referring WYAS items *not* on CALM to Conservation

Though preferable, it is not always practical to catalogue documents on CALM prior to referring them into Conservation. These items will then be recorded in the "uncatalogued" section of the database.

It is possible that, at a later date, a treated document is catalogued on CALM. In this case, communication between the archivist and Conservation can determine whether a linked record can be created retrospectively.

13.13.6.1 Paper catalogued only items

If a document is catalogued or listed on paper and has a collection or finding number, this information is needed for the conservation CALM record.

13.13.6.2 Accessioned only items

Some collections may need attention immediately upon accession to an archive (e.g. mould, damp etc.). Ideally a collection-level reference on CALM would enable a linked reference to be created. If not, the accession number should be given (see below "Cross referencing to the CALM Accessions database").

13.13.6.3 Pre-assessment consultation

A project may, after discussion, not be considered a priority for the near future (there may be many factors involved including: complexity and length of project; staff availability; public interest; health and safety; time allocation for the district authority concerned etc.). Conservation staff may still chose to create a CALM record to record the assessment made; or decide to "flag", then "reject" the item/s with a written explanation.

13.13.6.4 Document withdrawal forms

All documents physically brought into Conservation (whether catalogued on CALM or not) should be accompanied by the relevant Withdrawal Form/s or slips. Conservation's copy should remain with the document throughout its time in the studio.

13.13.6.5 Conservation admittance form for non-CALM catalogued items

An archivist should supply Conservation with information listed in the table at the end of this document, to accompany a document into Conservation. Conservation staff can then use this information to create an “uncatalogued” record in the conservation module.

13.13.7 Conservation records for external conservation work

Conservation work undertaken for private clients can also be also recorded on CALM. The “uncatalogued” section of the module is used for this. The procedure followed, and record completed is the same as for uncatalogued material. As there may be no “finding no”, this field can be used to insert a word or number that will help identify the document.

13.13.8 Completing the conservation record

The conservation record should be kept up to date where possible. This may include updating the “location”, “cons status” and “time-taken” fields for example. The level of detail and frequency of updates may reflect the complexity of the work or length of time undertaking work.
Each member of staff is responsible for documenting the work they are undertaking.

13.13.8.1 Spell check

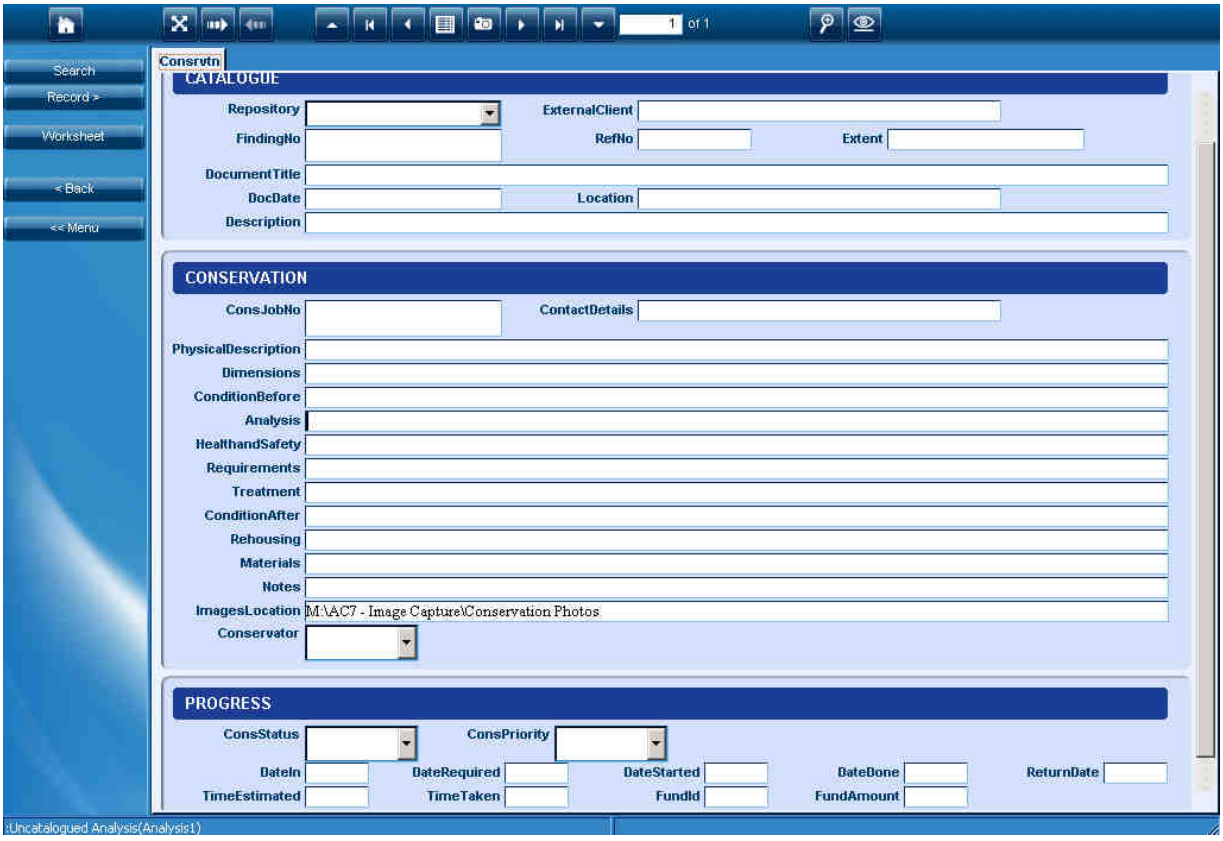
To check for spellings, right click and select “spell check record”.

13.13.8.2 Cross-referencing to the CALM Accessions database

If a document is uncatalogued, a reference to its accession number should be included in the conservation record. In the CALM Accession database, a reference to the relevant conservation job number can be made. In the CALM main menu, select “Archives”, then “Accessions”. Select “search”, type the accession number into the “acc no” field and click “find”. Check it is the correct record, then in the “admin history” field type a reference to the conservation module job number.

13.13.9 Conservation record fields

Below is an example of fields used in a conservation record. Fields may be duplicated (appended), e.g. if more than one conservator has worked on a project. “Left-click” the field required, select the “field” tab at the top and select “append” or “split”.



13.13.9.1 Conservation field explanations

Below is an explanation of the fields used in the example above.

Repository	The Repository field has a pick-list listing the names of each office within the organization, followed by the relevant repository code as defined by the National Archives' ARCHON directory. Click on the arrow for this field, and a list will appear. Click on the relevant office to select it. If “External Client” is required, fill in the “External client” field with more information.
External Client	Full name of institution or private client.
Finding No	Number on the document.
Extent	Number of items, quantity or bulk or size. For a collection level entry, state no. of boxes and metric (not linear) measurements where meaningful.
Document title	E.g. Warley Enclosure map.
Document date	Date or date range of the catalogue item.
Location	Record either temporary (e.g. “in press in conservation”) or usual location of item using pattern e.g. building, room, bay, shelf.
Description	Brief description of format, e.g. rolled paper plan.

ConsJobNo	Use the “insert” key to generate the next number. The number is also logged in the Conservation Job Book stored on the shelf in the conservation office.
Contact details	Name, phone number and e-mail of relevant archivist or client.
Physical description	Describe the make up, components, support, media etc. of item/s.
Dimensions	Use millimeters in order of height x width x depth. Use imperial measurements in parentheses, e.g. (4 inches).
Condition before	Details of the condition of item/s. Refer to photographs or diagrams if required.
Analysis	Results of pre and post treatment tests, e.g. pH, iron II & III, starch, solubility of inks or adhesives.
Health and Safety	Details of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) used, risk assessments carried out and any other COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) relevant information.
Requirements	Relevant instructions for conservation work after consultation with client, e.g. monitoring for infestation, labeling, format, packaging/storage, facsimiles etc.
Treatment	Describe processes used in conservation treatment. Refer to BS4971 for standard terms.
Condition after	Summary of the condition of item/s before leaving conservation.
Rehousing	Describe packaging provided and storage information.
Materials	List all materials and quantities used; include cleaning materials, solvents, repair papers, packaging materials, adhesives.
Notes	Use for any additional notes.
Images location	Complete the default file path with the folder name. Delete if not required. Use ConsJobNo. as a title e.g. 2007_08_65_brotherton_church
Conservator	Name of Conservation staff member responsible for job. Append this field to add other names if required.
Conservation status	Select a project’s current status from the pick-list.
Conservation priority	Agree this with the commissioning archivist and Conservation Manager, then select from the pick-list.
Date in	Date the job is brought in. DD/MM/YYYY. Tip: Use “Insert” key to enter today's date.
Date required	Date the job needs to be completed. DD/MM/YYYY.
Date started	Date the job was started. DD/MM/YYYY.
Date done	Date the job was completed. DD/MM/YYYY.

Return date	Date the item was returned. MM/DD/YYYY. Remember to sign out the item in the Conservation Job Book.
Time estimated	Time in hours to the nearest 0.5
Time taken	Time in hours to the nearest 0.5
Fund Id	Charge code for external work.
Fund amount	Fee for external work.

13.13.10 "Returning" CALM-catalogued items from the conservation module

A document which has been "transferred" to the conservation module for treatment, can be "returned" to the main catalogue once documentation is complete.
Ensure the "date done" field is complete in the conservation record (DD/MM/YYY). Press the "F12" key to save the record. A "return" button will appear on the left of the screen. "Left-click" this and the "return date" field at the bottom of the record will automatically be completed with the day's date (If this does not correspond to the day's date, delete and change it). Remember to change the location of the item/s. Do a final spell check.
The record in the main catalogue will now have a blank "item status" field instead of reading "in conservation".

13.13.11 Dispatching documents from Conservation

All archival documents (external, internal, catalogued and uncatalogued)dispatched from Conservation should be signed out using both CALM and any other paper work (e.g. withdrawal slips) as required.

13.13.11.1 Completing essential post-treatment information in the CALM conservation record

Complete a final check of all the fields, especially spell-check, dates, location and status.

13.13.11.2 CALM conservation record permanent print out

Printing out an archival copy of the final conservation record (see below) gives a paper back up and useful reference copy, which may also be given to clients or kept with the document. File as necessary.

13.13.12 Printing conservation records

13.13.12.1 Printing a single conservation record

A hard copy of all completed conservation records can be made. This enables quick reference when a computer is unavailable, acts as a back-up and can be included in reports for clients where required.
"Permanent" paper is recommended for a permanent copy. The record is printed in landscape format using the path: file, print, screen, printer (select printer), select "landscape", ok, ok.

13.13.12.2 Printing a hit list

After creating a hit list, do not use the same method as above, this will print all the records from the hit list individually! Use the path: file, print, overview, HTML, select "hit list", ok. This creates an HTML image of the list. (N.B. sort the list as required before exporting to HTML)

When the HTML version of the list is produced, “right-click” to bring up options for exporting to Exel or to print the list.

13.13.13 Conservation images

Digital images should be taken before, during and after conservation treatment where appropriate.

13.13.13.1 Conservation record images reference

Where images are not linked to the conservation record in CALM, a reference can be made. In the Images Location field, a reference for the folder where the images are stored can be pasted, e.g. *M:\AC7 - ImageCapture\ConservationPhotos\1.CALM_JOBS\2009_10\2009_10_37_Warley_enclosure_map_part_A.*

13.13.14 Miscellaneous

13.13.14.1 Saving a record

On the keyboard, the “F12” key is “save”.

13.13.14.2 “No RCN”

This may be an error message/button seen during the transfer process of an item flagged for conservation into the conservation module. This just means the original catalogue record does not have a Random Computer Number and therefore cannot be linked with another record. With the catalogue record in question on view, the “F9” key will make the RCN number field visible. This will be empty, so use the “insert” key to generate a number. Save the record (“F12”), before trying the transfer process again.

13.13.15 Archivist information form (prior to conservation of uncatalogued material)

Use for items *not* on CALM

Repository		
Finding No		
Accession no.		
Extent	number of items, quantity or bulk or size	
Document title	e.g. Warley Enclosure map	
Document date	date or date range of the catalogue item	
Location	usual location of item	
Description	brief description of format, e.g. rolled paper plan	
Contact details	name, phone number and e-mail of relevant archivist	
Physical description	make up, components, support, media etc. of item/s	
Dimensions	height x width x depth in m	
Condition before	brief description	
Requirements	relevant instructions for conservation work, e.g. monitoring for infestation, labeling, format, packaging/storage, facsimiles etc.	
Rehousing	packaging required and relevant storage information	
Notes		

Date required		
Date		