Collection Security and Exhibition Work at the British Library

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Collection Security and the British Library and the management of risk



1. Some background about the British Library, collection risk, and the governance of collection security issues
2. Our on-site exhibition spaces
3. How we plan exhibition security
4. Object installation / de-installation
5. Inward loans
6. Day-to-day physical security in the galleries
7. Security guidelines and training for exhibitions
8. Touring exhibitions and individual outward loans
9. Concluding remarks

Some context



over 150 million collection items

399,000 visits to our reading rooms each year

1,296 reader desks in our reading rooms

11 reading rooms

1.65 million items issued to readers in our reading rooms each year

What are the risks?

- Lost books
- Accidental damage
- Criminal damage and theft

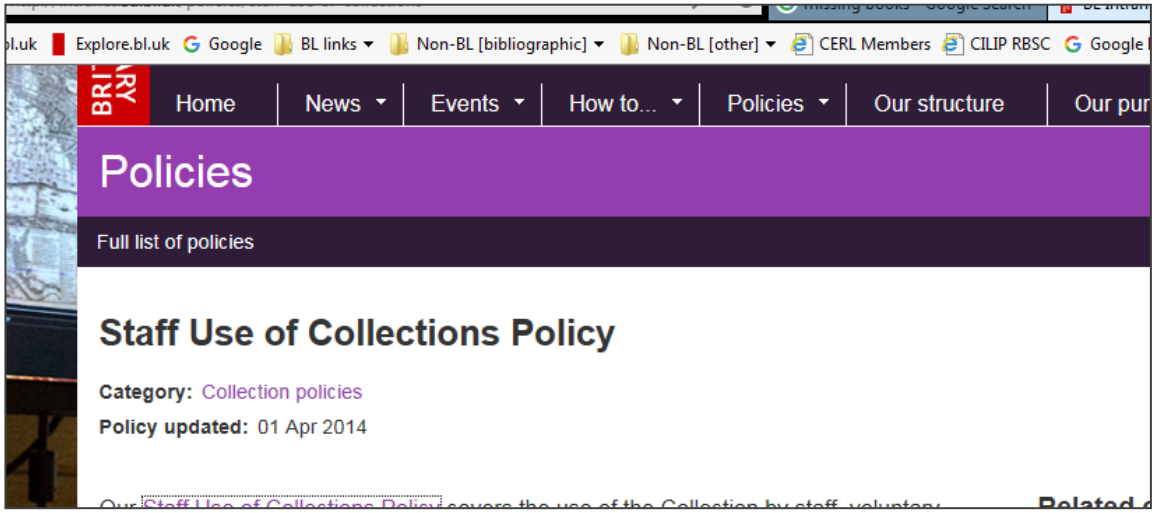


Image: USF Reference blog

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Lost books

- Flawed systems
- Poor housekeeping
- Failure to comply with our ‘Staff use of the Collections’ policy



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Accidental damage

- Poor book handling by staff and contractors.
- Poor book handling by readers.
- Failure to maintain storage areas and their shelving.
- Failure to operate rolling stacks/automated shelving systems correctly.
- Failure to transport books in an appropriate manner.
- Failure to use authorised safe routes around the building.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Criminal damage and theft

- Career criminals.
- Opportunistic thieves.
- External (readers / visitors).
- Internal (staff / authorised contractors).



GOVERNANCE OF COLLECTION SECURITY

British Library's Legal Obligations



c. 54

ELIZABETH II

British Library Act 1972

1972 CHAPTER 54

An Act to establish a national library for the United Kingdom under the control and management of a new Board and incorporating the Library of the British Museum; and for connected purposes. [27th July 1972]

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

The British Library.

1.—(1) This Act shall have effect with a view to the establishment for the United Kingdom of a national library, to be known as " the British Library ", consisting of a comprehensive collection of books, manuscripts, periodicals, films and other recorded matter, whether printed or otherwise.

(2) The British Library shall be under the control and management of a public authority, to be known as " the British Library Board ", whose duty it shall be to manage the Library as a national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and other information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities.

(3) The Board shall make the services of the British Library available in particular to institutions of education and learning, other libraries and industry; and—

(a) it shall be within the functions of the Board, so far as they think it expedient for achieving the objects of this Act and generally for contributing to the efficient management of other libraries and information services, to carry out and sponsor research; and

- British Library is a non-departmental government body, formed by act of parliament.
- The Secretary of State in our finance settlement requires us to "protect our world-class collections".
- We are accountable for the safety of the collections to the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee.
- Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Section 19), we are required to publish our database of missing items.
- As a charitable organisation, we also have financial and governance obligations under the Charities Act of 1993.

GOVERNANCE OF COLLECTION SECURITY

Collection Security Group

Purposes

To be responsible for the Library's *Collection Security Policy*.

To oversee the assessment of risks to the collection and ensure that appropriate mitigations are in place in line with the risk appetite agreed by the British Library Board.

To determine and monitor action planning to respond to new and changing collection risks, and risks inherent in all Library processes. Monitor progress and review benefit realisation.

On-site Exhibition Spaces





Front Hall Exhibition Space

On-site Exhibition Spaces



Sir John Ritblat
Treasures of the British
Library Gallery

On-site Exhibition Spaces

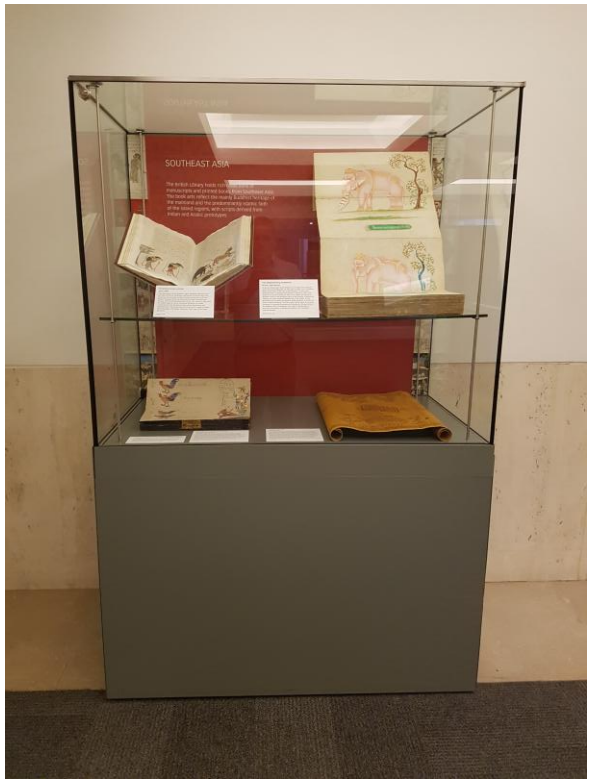






Main PACCAR Gallery (temporary exhibition space)

On-site Exhibition Spaces



Single exhibition case (outside Asian & African Studies Reading Room)

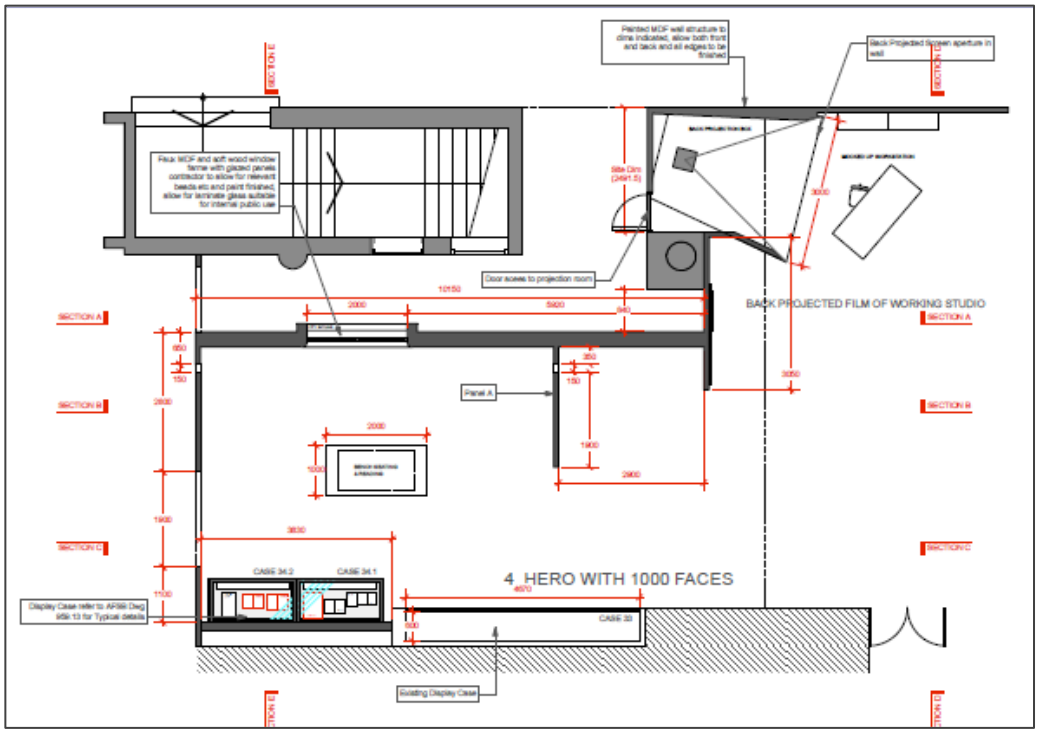


Postal history display

Planning

Exhibitions Department holds meetings with Security, Health & Safety, and Building Management to discuss collection security at three points:

1. Concept design stage
2. Scheme design stage
3. Detailed design stage



ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Planning



Topics may include:

- Location and sightlines for CCTV-cameras.
- Sightlines for security guards.
- Height and robustness of the build.
- Which display cases will be used.
- How display cases will be fixed to the floors or walls.
- How some individual objects might be fixed to floors or walls.
- Access routes to display cases and visibility of locks.
- Alarm systems that will used.
- Special considerations for high profile loans (e.g. the US constitution required a dedicated security guard at all times).
- Sensitive collections on display (e.g. material that might shock visitors or provoke a protest).

ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Object Installation / De-installation

- Storage of objects before installation / after de-installation.
- Gallery access.
- Number of cases open at any one time.



ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Inward Loans

- Lender requirements.
- Use of couriers and fine art transportation companies.
- Escorting couriers within the BL site.
- Timeliness.
- Back-up plans for storage.



Image: myelitedetail.us free clip art

ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Day to day physical security in the galleries

WHEN GALLERIES ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- Perimeter security controls.
- Gallery guards.
- CCTV in the gallery.
- Alarms in display cases.
- Gallery environment (45%-55% RH, 18º–22ºC, maximum 50 lux)
- No food or drink in the galleries.
- No large bags / no bags at all in the galleries.



ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Day to day physical security in the galleries

WHEN GALLERIES ARE OPEN FOR PRIVATE VIEWS

Exactly the same.



ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Day to day physical security in the galleries

WHEN THE GALLERIES ARE CLOSED

- Doors are locked.
- All CCTV and alarms remain on.
- Staff access is controlled.



ON-SITE EXHIBITION SPACES

Security guidelines and training

Staff Use of The Collections policy has to be followed, includes instructions on:

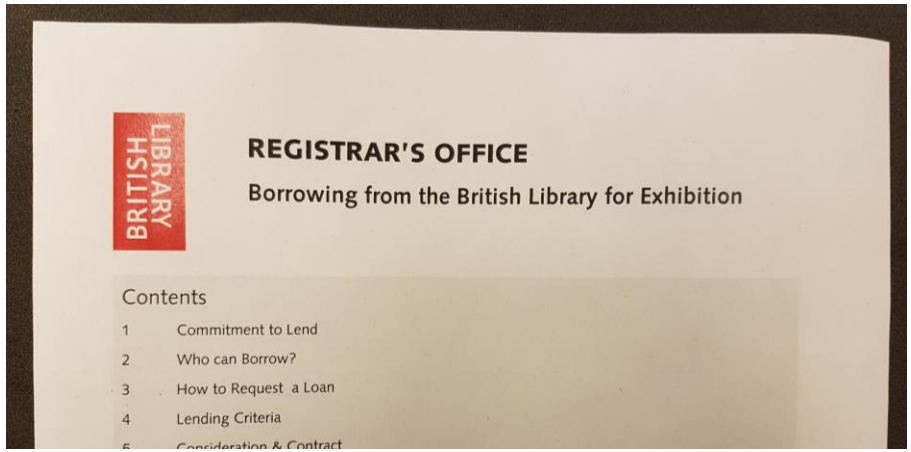
- Correct use of the internal circulation system for collection items.
- Requirement for collection handling training.
- Requirement to store collections items appropriately.
- Guidelines on how to transport collection items around the building.



OFF-SITE EXHIBITIONS AND LOANS

Touring Exhibitions & Individual Loans

- British Library Loans Registry oversees:
  - our own exhibitions touring to other venues,
  - individual collections items lent to other venues.
- Guidance to borrowers is given in document “Borrowing from the British Library for Exhibition”.
- Venues must meet the demands of the UK National Security Adviser.



Concluding remarks

- Ensure clear governance and ownership of collection security issues within the institution.
- Build collection security into the planning process for new galleries and temporary exhibitions.
- Think about security during installation / de-installation of exhibitions for both your own objects and for inward loans.
- Have policies and procedures that ensure the security of objects in the galleries on a day-to-day basis.
- Ensure that all staff who work with exhibitions are aware of their responsibilities and receive appropriate training.
- For touring exhibitions and individual outward loans, be explicit about your institution's collection security requirements from the outset.
- Help borrowers to build their capacity to accept heritage loans, rather than compromise your own security requirements.

Thank you

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