EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

3.5 Disinfecting Books and Other Collections

Last updated: March 26, 2020

The advice below is based on the current research available from the medical and scientific communities regarding COVID-19, and as their understanding of the virus evolves, NEDCC's advice for the cultural heritage community will, too.

QUARANTINE

The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) recommends a 72-hour quarantine of collection items as the safest and most effective way to disinfect them after handling by staff and patrons.

For specific material types, a quarantine period of less than 72 hours may be appropriate. A study published as a Correspondence in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on March 17, 2020 shows that COVID-19 will persist on cardboard surfaces for 24 hours and on plastic surfaces for up to 72 hours. Based on this research, an appropriate quarantine time for paper or plain cardboard products would be a minimum of 24 hours, while an appropriate quarantine time for books covered in polyester (e.g. Mylar) or other plastics, as well as plastic-based materials such as CD's and DVD's, is 72 hours. A 72-hour quarantine is appropriate for any other type of collection item or any item about which a curator is uncertain.

STAFF SAFETY

Staff should be directed to wear gloves when moving items into quarantine and to remove the gloves immediately afterwards so as not to accidentally touch anything else (like door handles). After removing the gloves, staff should wash their hands for 20 seconds, following CDC guidelines.

If a dedicated quarantine space cannot be established, staff can place items in bags until the 24- to 72-hour period is over so that staff do not accidentally handle the items during the quarantine period.

DISINFECTING

Do not attempt to disinfect archival materials, museum objects, or other valuable collections unless under the guidance of a conservator.

The use of liquid disinfectants is harmful to library and archives materials and is **not recommended**. UV ray exposure as a means of sterilization is also **not recommended**. Not only are UV rays harmful to the materials, but in correspondence on the Preservation Administrators' Interest Group list-serv, the Chair of the American Institute for Conservation Health and Safety Committee indicated that 40 minutes of exposure at high doses is required to kill bacteria using UV rays, and this will not disinfect the places that the UV rays miss during exposure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Kampf, D. Todt, S. Pfaender, and E. Steinmann. "Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents," *Journal of Hospital Infection* 104 (2020) 246-251. https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701(20)30046-3/fulltext

> An analysis of 22 studies documenting the persistence of human coronaviruses such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) coronavirus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus, and endemic human coronaviruses (HCoV), on a range of surfaces. The current SARS-CoV-2 ("COVID-19") virus is not one of the coronaviruses that was studied.

Neeltje van Doremalen, Dylan H. Morris, Myndi G. Holbrook, et. al. "Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1" (Correspondence). *The New England Journal of Medicine*. March 17, 2020. https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973. PDF version at https://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/