The usefulness and limits of a conservation plan integrated into an establishment’s policy document

the example of the technical control of the buildings of Chalon-sur-Saône’s public library

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The context
Short history in a few dates:

- **1792**: revolutionary confiscations (books, 18th-century wood panels from the La Ferté Abbey, two globes from the Capuchin Convent),

- **1824**: creation of a Public Library at Chalon-sur-Saône,

- **1845**: installation of the library in the former Carmelite Convent,

- **1972**: the library is listed as a historic monument
How the collection was created:

- **Revolutionary confiscations** (La Ferté and Maizières Abbeys and other religious communities),
- **19th century**: acquisitions and donations (State and individuals),
- **20th century**: donations (local scholars) and policy of acquisition.

In figures:

The heritage collections (26% of the collection):
- **265** manuscripts (50% before 1810),
- **48 000** books, brochures and periodicals (80% before 1950),
- **Graphic documents** (drawings, prints, cards, plans, post cards),
- **2** 18th-century globes.

➤ varied materials requiring particular conservation conditions which are difficult to respect in old and dispersed locations.
Premises:

- storage area for heritage collection: 266 m$^2$ (446 m$^2$ with the reading room): 33% in the reading room, 58% in storage shelving and 9% in the Réserve (rarest and most precious documents),

- premises equipped with thermo-hygrographs,

- compromises by lack of space:
  - direct access by the public to the collections prohibited in the reading room but in fact possible (configuration of the space)
  - no separation between the room for consultation of heritage documents and general reading room,
  - presence of non-heritage documents in the storage shelving.

- storage not adapted (T and RH too high and strong fluctuations),

- collections dispersed between several locations,

- 7 areas to be protected and 5 levels of priority
A conservation plan integrated into the establishment’s policy document
4 aspects:

- the premises: safety, technical control of the storage areas and other buildings

- the collections: state, statistics, acquisitions, intellectual treatment, conservation, restoration, reproduction...

- the personnel working on heritage collection;

- public access and display: communication, borrowing, publications, promotion.

Plan integrated into the establishment’s policy document (2006)
Action taken on the policy document
1.2.6 technical control of the premises:
conception of tools for monitoring and analysis
Action taken since 2007: on the basis of good knowledge of environmental conditions (ECs)

Why?

- conducting a better **dialogue** with the professionals involved,
- better **evaluation** of the building’s reaction to ECs,
- **selecting** the conservation areas according to the documents and how fragile they are,
- **correcting** the conditions if needed.

Putting in place an appropriate working group (curator, technical staff from Heritage sector, manager of building works at the Library).
How?
Definition of objectives

- **budgeting** of equipment to monitor environmental conditions (ECs),
- **updating** the way equipment is used and making recommendations for the improvement of ECs,
- **interpretation** of data and **technical description** of the premises,
- **listing** heating and air-conditioning systems and the staff in charge of them

Ways and means

Internal, institutional tools (Direction du Livre et de la Lecture, BNF) & reference works.

Updating of procedures and of who does what?
New measures, new means….

Aspects to cover

- quality of monitoring in the work carried out,
- material resources (purchase of materials, furniture, equipment or packaging and measuring apparatus),
- human resources (trained personnel).

Application

- analysis of current data (assessment of the situation),
- critical review and optimisation (work organisation),
- discussion with specialists (Energy Section of the Architecture Service).

Presentation of 2008 budget

- for feasibility study (modification of the air conditioning system),
- for purchase of a recording system and computer management of data.
Outcomes
Objectives met

- **dialogue** between professionals,
- improvement works,
- sharing responsibilities,
- understanding of how the building reacts,
- choice of adequate conservation spaces and small corrections of ECs,
- purchase of equipment ensuring the improvement of storage conditions (dehumidifier) and of exposure (luxmeter),

→ putting in place a coherent preventive conservation policy: better awareness and discussion with partners, improvement of the quality of monitoring, training plan.
Limits

- personnel changing or moving: weakening the team needed,

- old buildings: daily tasks more difficult and adaptations limited,

- budgetary constraints.
The Future

Carrying out Action 1.2.6 allows:
-us, with the other proposals of the establishment policy document, to move towards a policy of preventive conservation,
-discussions which will allow advice for the future to emerge, in the framework of a new library.
I thank you for your attention