



Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo

ISTITUTO CENTRALE PER LA PATOLOGIA DEGLI ARCHIVI E DEL LIBRO

Guidelines for the sanitization and disinfection of Archives and Libraries – Measures of containment for the risks of infection from Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In respect of the Secretary-general note prot. n. 5178 published on 16th April 2020 “Control measures for Coronavirus infection – compatibility check with reference to the requirements for protection and conservation of cultural heritage”, the Istituto Centrale per la Patologia degli Archivi e del Libro (ICPAL) is here reporting general guidelines that can be followed for the disinfection of Archives and Libraries.

As reported by the Ministry of Health (notice nr. 5443, published on 22/02/2020), it is here reminded that several scientific evidences have shown that Corona – viruses can persist on inanimate surfaces up to 9 days under optimal T(°c)/ UR (%) values.

At the same time, all the available evidences have shown that these viruses can be effectively inactivated through sanitization methods based on the use of common disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite (0,1 – 0,5%), ethanol (62 – 71%) and hydrogen peroxide (0,5%) for an adequate contact period.

It is important to remind, however, that common disinfectants are not recommended for the cleaning of areas where cultural heritage is displayed, preserved or stored. Not all the disinfection procedures can therefore be applied in the same way for every environment.

Here are reported a series of recommendations in order to preserve personnel and visitors as well as cultural archives and libraries.

In spite of the fact that those institutes that have been closed to the public/visitors for at least two weeks before their reopening can be considered decontaminated, they should provide in any case a preliminary sanitization of any working area or any area opened to visitors. This sanitization must consist of an accurate cleaning based on the use of ethyl alcohol, instead of chlorine – based products which are too oxidant.

With reference to “modern spaces” (i.e. offices or newly built reading rooms), with new furniture that contains every day use paper materials and that can tolerate interaction with water and alcohol, no damage can occur if hydrogen peroxide and silver salts are nebulized.

Before starting the treatment, please remember to disconnect the plugs of all electronic devices (computers, monitors, printers, fax, telephones, etc.) as well as all their LAN network cables. Start the devices up again either once the time required for the efficacy of the treatment has or when the surfaces are completely dry.

Moreover, before starting the nebulization treatment, it is strictly necessary to check whether smoke detectors or alarms are present and please proceed with the nebulization process only if absolutely certain of being able to exclude the said detectors, especially if equipped with a connected automatic switching-off system, in order to avoid extinguishing agents discharges, which can be extremely dangerous.

Staff can be let in after about an hour of proper ventilation of the rooms.

For historic spaces and ancient furniture, disinfection can be carried on as follows:

- A 70% Alcoholic solution (400 ml of denatured alcohol + 100 ml of water) can be sprayed on absorbing paper and applied on stone surfaces and wooden furnishings. 70% alcohol based commercial products can also be used. Do not use this solution in case of decorated surfaces (i.e. varnishes, lacquer, etc.) that can be damaged by water and/or solvents.
- The same solution can be used also on metal and glass surfaces.

Every historic furnishing used as consultation desk/table must be covered with plexiglass or glass plates, plastic sheets or any material that can be easily disinfected and washed after the documents/volumes have been consulted, so that their surfaces are not stressed by frequent use of water and/or solvents.



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Management of collections.

As mentioned above, virus can persist on inanimate surfaces up to 9 days. For this reason any disinfection treatment on archival documents and books must be considered as unnecessary, if they have been isolated for at least two weeks before the reopening.

If not, a 10-days isolation guarantees their decontamination without using any substance that could cause them damage.

Isolation should be carried out in a room arranged for this specific purpose in every institute; it should have windows that should be regularly opened in order to aerate the environment.

If documents or volumes need to be consulted, the following procedure must be followed:

- visitors must wear personal protective equipment (mask and gloves) before entering the reading room; at the entrance disinfectant gel dispenser should be available;

- any employee assigned to the library or the archive (with personal protective equipment) can give the document/volume to the visitor inside a room that has new furniture that can be easily disinfected and cleaned;

- any volume/document that has been consulted must be isolated for at least 10 days and, if possible, kept inside plastic bags within the “isolation room” that has been previously arranged; any consulted document won't be available for further consultation during the following 10 days;

- photographic materials that are usually stored inside PAT tested plastic or paper bags, can be packed with non-standard bags because of the short length of the isolation period.

The following table sums up all the sanitization/disinfection procedures and products that should be used in presence of archival documents, volumes and ancient furnishings.

Products	Suggested Use	Where/How To Use	Frequency
-	Isolation for at least 10 days	For all the documents, books and ancient volumes that have been consulted or that haven't been isolated during two weeks before the reopening. Isolation should be carried out in a room arranged for this specific purpose, keeping documents/volumes inside plastic bags	-
Ethyl Alcohol solution (70%) -	Sprayed on absorbing paper	On metal and glass surfaces of ancient furnishings. Do not use in case of decorated surfaces (i.e. varnishes, lacquer, etc.) that can be damaged by water and/or solvents.	<i>One-off application;</i> in case of consultation desks, before covering them with plexiglass/plastic film, etc.
Ethyl Alcohol solution (70%)	Sprayed on absorbing paper	On stone and wooden surfaces of ancient furnishings. Do not use this solution in case of decorated surfaces (i.e. varnishes, lacquer, etc.) that can be damaged by water and/or solvents.	<i>One-off application; Una tantum;</i> in case of consultation desks, before covering them with plexiglass/plastic film, etc.