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Scientific collections and Preventive Conservation

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Cultural objects can be prone to degradation as a result of the environment in their enclosures such as display cases or crates. Scientific instruments are no different, and their preservation must take into consideration the variety of materials they are made from as well as the condition of their exhibition spaces and storage areas. A Preventive Conservation (1) approach foresees a series of measures aimed at containing or avoiding the elements of degradation in cultural heritage and is now considered a core objective especially for small- and medium-sized museums. These collection spaces are often far from ideal because they are in historical buildings, often without accurate climate control systems. Preventive conservation often struggles to become an integrated part of collections management and this may be linked to a lack of skilled or specifically allocated professionals in charge of the collections. The European Apache (Active & intelligent PAckaging materials and display cases as a tool for preventive conservation of Cultural Heritage) Project aims to contribute to widespread adoption of Preventive Conservation by identifying and disseminating novel and affordable approaches, materials, and sensors. The Fondazione Scienza e Tecnica (FST) of Florence is a member of the project consortium, contributing case studies from their scientific and technological collections and in my presentation I will provide an overview of the research carried out there. I will also briefly explain the Apache project general results, such as the App, the innovative sensors, the cutting-edge materials and the training programme that has been developed to disseminate best practice as broadly as possible.

(1) Please see ICOM-CC resolution Terminology http://www.icom-cc.org/54/document/icom-cc-resolution-terminology-english/?id=744#.YNr0FUzOPIU

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