

Groupe BIZOT Group

The Bizot Green Protocol

Latest refresh: September 2023



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1. Declaration of intention

We acknowledge the need for our museums to contribute to effecting change in our ways of working and addressing with a sense of urgency the climate and nature crisis.

With the Bizot Green Protocol, the Bizot Group recognizes that:

- ➔ museums need to approach long-term collections care in a way that is environmentally sustainable.
- ➔ this necessary shift requires proactive and strategic engagement at all museum levels.

- ‘greener museum practices’ call for a systemic and collective effort and the large adoption of a ‘greener practice first mindset’ which implies that we have to opt out from a greener practice as this may not always be possible to apply rather than discarding it on the name of habits. As such, collaboration, trust and reciprocity are at the heart of the directions set out in the Protocol and its associated handbooks.

Our approach is evidence based and has been shaped by the expertise and practice of museum professionals across the museum fields (ie. restoration, conservation science, facilities management, security, registrars, exhibitions, sustainability managers) as well as climate science and international reports such as those published by the IPCC¹.

The Bizot Green Protocol is composed of guiding principles, guidelines relating to climate controls and a series of handbooks to provide evidence, shared practice and tools.

We commit to refresh our work every 5 years to ensure we incorporate the latest knowledge and technological advances and, in turn, support museums to deliver their mandate in the most sustainable way possible.

2. Context for the 2023 refresh

In November 2014, the Bizot Group agreed on the Bizot Green Protocol comprising a series of guiding principles and new standards for environmental control. The Protocol was subsequently adopted by a number of national organisations (e.g. NMDC in the UK; AAMD in the US; Council of Australia Museum Directors).

In December 2022, the Bizot Group launched a working group of 54 museum professionals representing various museum expertise areas and organized in relevant sub-groups to work on a refreshed Bizot Green protocol to reflect the further shifts in knowledge, evidence, technology and appetite for change and add a series of handbooks to the existing protocol to ease its implementation. The main outcome is some additional wording around transport and virtual couriering in the wake of new practices successfully tested during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a series of handbooks that provide scientific evidence, testimonies of museum having implemented the Protocol, and guidelines and practical tools to facilitate its adoption and implementation.

3. The Guiding Principles

Museums should review policy and practice, particularly regarding loan requirements, storage

¹ IPCC - The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - <https://www.ipcc.ch/>

and display conditions, and building design and air conditioning systems, with a view to reducing carbon footprints. Museums need to find ways to reconcile the desirability of long-term preservation of collections with the need to reduce energy use and carbon consumption.

Museums should apply whatever methodology or strategies best suit their collections, building and needs, and innovative approaches should be encouraged.

The care of objects is paramount. Subject to this,

- environmental standards should become more intelligent and better tailored to specific needs. Blanket conditions should no longer apply. Instead conditions should be determined by the requirements of individual objects or groups of objects and the climate in the part of the world in which the museum is located;
- where appropriate, care of collections should be achieved in a way that does not assume air conditioning or other high energy cost solutions. Passive methods, simple technology that is easy to maintain, and lower energy solutions should be considered;
- natural and sustainable environmental controls should be explored and exploited fully;
- when designing and constructing new buildings or renovating old ones, architects and engineers should be guided significantly to reduce the building's carbon footprint as a key objective;
- the design and build of exhibitions should be managed to minimise waste and recycle where possible.

Transport has a significant impact on carbon emission². To reduce this impact, museums should adopt the principle of 'greener option first' in other words the low-carbon emission options (such as transport by sea, road or train and virtual couriers) when planning the movement of people and objects. This principle of 'greener option first' translates into a series of elements to be carefully considered before discarding the more environmentally friendly option. This principle is based on the notion of reciprocity (so the whole ecosystem can move towards 'greener' practices), collaboration and professional trust.

- *Working towards affirming shipping by sea, road or train as the future 'preferred option' for long distance object movement*

² See benchmark research from GCC and report made by STiCH, Sarah Nunberg and Matthew Eckelman <https://stich.culturalheritage.org/life-cycle-assessment-of-museum-loans-and-exhibitions/>

While shipping by sea, road, or train is not always possible, museums should adopt the following steps to move the ecosystem towards these 'greener transport practices' or lower carbon emission options.

- To systematically ask transport agents to provide a quote for transport by sea, road or train where such transport is available
 - To systematically ask transport agents for an invoice with clear carbon emission³
 - To record incidents and data emissions by mode of transport and analyse this on an annual basis
 - To advise the art shipper to actively seek to consolidate shipments
 - To advocate for reciprocity in not requesting exclusive shipments or "last on, first off" and advocate for flexible timescales for releasing object for loans
- *Affirming virtual couriership as safe and practical and the 'preferred option' when moving objects*

While virtual couriership may not always be possible, museums should work to reduce the need for couriers through a process of risk identification and mitigation, with use of couriers as last resort if no other method of mitigating risks can be identified. Museums should follow these steps in their decision making:

1. Presumption against courier
2. Virtual courier
3. Local (bookend) courier
4. Shared on-site courier
5. On-site courier

Working towards extending exhibition duration to unlock the international pattern of tours and reduce total carbon emissions from transport. We invite therefore museums to explore collectively longer exhibition runs as a factor to reduce their carbon footprint.

4. The Bizot Green Guideline

For many classes of object containing hygroscopic material (such as canvas paintings, textiles, ethnographic objects) a stable relative humidity (RH) is required in the range of 40 - 60% and a stable temperature in the range 16 - 25°C with fluctuations of no more than $\pm 10\%$ RH per 24

³ See example of wording for procurement documentation to ask the right data from your shipping agent in Handbook 2

hours within this range. More sensitive objects will require specific and tighter RH control, depending on the materials, condition, and history of the work of art. A conservator's evaluation is essential in establishing the appropriate environmental conditions for works of art requested for loan.

