

Guidelines for the management of sanitization and disinfection operations in Archives and Libraries - Containment measures due to the risk of infection by Coronavirus (COVID-19)

With reference to the Secretary General protocol. N. 5178 dated 16/04/2020 addressed as “Containment measures aimed at avoiding Coronavirus contagion – Compatibility verification with regard to the need to preserve the overall cultural heritage”, general guidelines, elaborated by the present Institution, will follow. These will deal with the management of all required operations aimed at the sanitization of premises within Archival Institutes and Libraries.

As stated in the administrative circular n. 5443 dated 22/02/2020 issued by the Ministry of Health, scientific research has shown that Coronavirus may persist on inanimate surfaces up to 9 days, in presence of optimal conditions in terms of humidity and temperature. At the same time, the latter research has shown that the virus can become inactive by means of adequate sanitization treatments which use ordinary disinfectants such as sodium hypochlorite (0.1 – 0.5%), either ethanol (62 – 71%) or hydrogen peroxide (0.5%) for a sufficient amount of time.

However, one must note that not all ordinary disinfectants may be considered appropriate to disinfect premises in which cultural assets are preserved and displayed. Therefore, sanitization treatment procedures should not be taken into consideration as univocal and applicable to all kind of premises. A set of procedures and behavioral norms aimed at guaranteeing the security of personnel, of the public and of archival assets are given below.

Provided that in case of Institutes that were to have been closed throughout the 14 days prior to the reopening of their premises, the latter should be considered decontaminated. For this reason, each Institute will be required to solely carry out a preliminary sanitization of all premises used to receive general public and/or working stations. The latter sanitization must include the usage of extremely accurate cleaning, without having to rely on chlorine-based products rather on ethyl alcohol-based ones.

As far as modern premises are concerned (such as offices and reading rooms) which may be damaged by the use of both water and ethanol or printed material, no damage has been registered if one were to use oxygenated water and salts of silver finely nebulized. Unplug all electronic devices and their respective LAN cables before starting (computers, monitors, printers, scanners, fax, telephones, copying machines, etc.). Plug back in all devices after a considerable amount of time after the sanitization treatment’s completion, once everything is dry.

In addition, it is extremely important to turn off all smoke detectors before starting the nebulization process along with **having the absolute certainty with regard to being able to turn off and temporarily halting the functioning of the suppression/Anti-Burn system in order to avoid extremely dangerous shocks coming from extinguishing agents**. Employees will be able to access the affected areas after one hour following the treatment’s completion.

As far as antique premises are concerned, furniture and surfaces of value may be disinfected in the following ways:

- In the case of stone surfaces and wood furniture it is advisable to nebulize on absorbent paper a 70% ethylic solution (400ml of ethylic alcohol denatured at 90° mixed with 100ml of water). At the same time, ordinary products ready-to-use, on condition of presenting a 70% concentration. The latter must not be used on surfaces presenting specific finishing (such as varnish and resins).
- In the case of metallic and glass surfaces, it is advised to use the above-described ethyl alcohol solution.

The overall antique furniture, especially single components used as support surfaces for consultation will need to be wrapped up using covers which may be easily washed and disinfected once each consultation is over in order to avoid the use of daily employment of water and/or solvents.

Collections' Management

As stated above, the virus is to be considered effective up to 9 days therefore if the premises were to have been closed in the 14 days preceding the reopening, there is no need to carry out a specific disinfection on the archival assets and library items.

If this were not to have been the case, please simply isolate all material for 10 days, without recurring to the use of damaging disinfectants. The latter isolation will need to take place in specific premises equipped with windows that may be regularly opened.

In the case of volumes and documents that need to be consulted, the following procedure shall be followed:

- In order to view such documents and volumes, users must be safety devices such as face masks and gloves. At the entrance, each Institute shall provide hand-sanitizing gel dispensers
- An employee (equipped with all safety devices) may hand the interested document and/or volume to the user in a "modern" premise which should be cleaned and disinfected once the user has finished his/her consultation.
- The consulted material shall then be isolated for 10 days in specific plastic bags therefore no one will have access to it in the following 10 days.
- As far as photographic material is concerned, which is usually stored in plastic bags, this shall be located in ordinary plastic bags given the nature of the material, certainly difficult to undergo damages.

Please find attached a summary providing all means of premises' sanitization in presence of archival assets, books and historical furnishings:

Products	Usage	People/Workplaces Working Materials	Usage Frequency
-	10-day isolation	For all archival and library materials which are subject to consultation or which have not been isolated within the two weeks prior to reopening. Carry out decontamination by isolation in a suitable room, possibly in containment bags	-
70% Ethylic Alcohol	Nebulization on absorbent paper	On historic and/or prestigious metal or glass surfaces (furniture and shelving)	Once in a while; in case of consultation surfaces, before covering them.
70% Ethylic Alcohol	Nebulization on absorbent paper	On stone surfaces or wooden furniture. Do not use in the case of surface finishes (e.g. lacquers, resins) which are likely to be damaged by interaction with water and/or solvents	Once in a while; in case of consultation surfaces, before covering them