



Preventive  
Conservation  
in Historic Houses  
and Palace  
Museums:  
Assessment  
Methodologies  
and Applications

SilvanaEditoriale

# **Preventive Conservation in Historic Houses and Palace Museums: Assessment Methodologies and Applications**

Conference of the National Museum of the Palace of Versailles (EPV), the Association of European Royal Residences (ARRE), and the Research Centre of the Palace of Versailles (CRCV)

In collaboration with the International Committee for Historic House Museums (DEMHIST), held at the National Museum of the Palace of Versailles and Trianon

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## **Conference Proceedings**

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# Project Presentation of SiLK

## Guidelines for the Protection of Cultural Property

### Abstract

Cultural treasures in museums, archives and libraries are continually threatened by damage and in some cases by irretrievable destruction. Awareness of this has become particularly acute through disastrous events of the past years, including the fire at the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar in 2004 and the collapse of the building housing the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne in 2009. However, subtle dangers that arise from unfavourable environmental influences or incorrect usage can also have devastating effects on objects.

The Konferenz Nationaler Kultureinrichtungen – KNK (Conference of National Cultural Institutions), a cooperative association furthering the interests of 23 nationally significant cultural institutions of various sizes and orientations in the former East Germany, among those the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg (SPSG), has confronted these vulnerabilities with the introduction of the SiLK – Guidelines for the protection of cultural property, a digital safety and security guide for cultural assets.

### Keywords

Protection, cultural property, safety, risk analysis, risk assessment, security management, online-tool, prevention.

“SiLK,” in German “SicherheitsLeitfaden Kulturgut,” is a state-funded project for the protection of cultural property, which was initially funded by the German Federal Minister of Culture and Media (BKM). Since last year, the funding was taken over by the German Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK). Until now only available in German, the English version of the SiLK guidelines was recently put online so that now everybody worldwide has the opportunity to use it.

SiLK is an online-tool for assistance, which makes interactive risk analysis possible with recommendations for care and treatment in addition to offering comprehensive information. It should raise awareness for potential risks that could threaten the collections, but also buildings and parks.

The main principle and focus is on prevention. SiLK helps staff evaluate the protection efforts of their own institution. Potential hazards

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Fig. 1  
Screenshot of SiLK  
website: questionnaire  
“fire.”

Fig. 2  
international SiLK  
conference 2015 in the  
«Händel-Haus» in Halle /  
Saale.  
(© Konferenz Nationaler  
Kultureinrichtungen /  
Christian Ditsch).



are made visible by these guidelines, but they do not stop at this point. They make proposals for improvement and offer tips and possible solutions and are by this an instrument for self-help.

SiLK covers the following 14 topics: 1) general security management, 2) fire, 3) flooding, 4) theft, 5) vandalism, 6) accidents/malfunctions, 7) deterioration/wear and tear, 8) climate, 9) light, 10) pests and mould, 11) pollutants, 12) severe weather, 13) earthquakes, 14) violence.

Each topic has an associated introduction, an interactive questionnaire and a knowledge base, with the questionnaire forming the core element – each containing about 15 to 30 questions (fig. 1). After answering, users obtain a “traffic light assessment:” “Green” indicates a given minimum standard. If the minimum standard is not reached (“Red”) or if an on-going threat exists (“Amber”), the assessment will include recommendations for action or mitigation measures. The conclusion can be saved as a PDF document and printed. The use of SiLK is for free and there is no need for registration. The aim is to be practical, easily accessible and easy to use.

Besides keeping the SiLK guidelines up-to-date, the SiLK team holds lectures, makes publications and provides information material. The project furthermore organises workshops and conferences (fig. 2) and therefore has meanwhile become a platform for communication and discussion for all kinds of topics related to the protection of cultural property in Germany and beyond.

#### Bibliography

SiLK – Guidelines for the protection of cultural property,  
<http://www.konferenz-kultur.de/SLF/EN/index1.php?lang=en>.



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