Preface

This report was originally published by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) in Washington, D.C. It deals with the primary responsibility of libraries, archives, and museums, to maintain original physical objects – evidence or artifacts – for scholarly use in the future, even as more and more information is created in digital form.

Most of our recent history, the record of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is kept on film, magnetic tape, and paper. Today, great sums of money are being spent to digitize materials for broader access. In many cases, electronic availability has boosted demand for the original. Nevertheless, concern with preserving the original seems to have fallen out of fashion. In recent years, digitization projects and acquisition of electronic resources have received greater emphasis than has traditional preservation. These new interests – both of local institutions and of funding agencies – may jeopardize preservation budgets. It is therefore more important than ever that funds for preservation be spent wisely on measures that are appropriate, effective, safe, and economical.

In commissioning the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands, to undertake this study, the CLIR aimed to provide information on recent significant developments in the preservation of analog library and archival materials as well as a summary of informed opinion concerning where there are significant research gaps in preservation science. The review focuses on work being done in North America, Europe, and Australia. Recognizing that this survey cannot convey the full scope or detail of the research noted, the authors have provided contact information for the individuals and institutions mentioned in this survey and a list of references.

The report is intended for those who make decisions about preservation as well as the foundations and other organizations that support such work. We hope it helps them to decide which measures to take to ensure the preservation of the objects entrusted to their care.

European Commission on Preservation and Access
Amsterdam, March 2001