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Nuclear physics for cultural heritage

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There has been enormous progress in the use of nuclear physics techniques to study, characterize and preserve cultural heritage objects and artefacts. This expert review, published by the Nuclear Physics Division of the European Physical Society (EPS), seeks to provide the public with a popular and accessible account of the latest developments in this field. The contributions from a range of leading specialists explain how applied atomic and nuclear techniques can be used to obtain information that can help us understand the way of life in ancient times and how they can be used to conserve cultural heritage treasures. This topical review draws heavily on European work and is extensively illustrated with important discoveries and examples from archaeology, pre-history, history, geography, culture, religion and curation. It outlines key advances in a wide range of cross-disciplinary techniques and has been written with the minimum of technical detail so as to be accessible by as wide a possible audience as possible. The large number of groups and laboratories working in the study and preservation of cultural heritage using mainly nuclear physics methods across Europe indicate the enormous effort and importance attached by society to this activity.

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