



University of
St Andrews

University of St Andrews – Special Collections Division collections policy

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Purpose	This document provides an overview of the basic principles and procedures governing the management of special collections within the University of St Andrews Library.

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Special Collections Division

Collections Policy

1 Terms of reference

This document provides an overview of the basic principles and procedures governing the management of special collections within the University of St Andrews Library and is supported by an evolving suite of more detailed policy documents. The policy should be read in conjunction with the Library's overall *Collection Policy* and may be amended and revised. The activity of the Division's staff is set within sectoral norms governed by documents such as the Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics (<http://www.archives.org.uk/about/ethics.html>).

2 Scope of Special Collections

Material held by Special Collections is considered to be an inalienable heritage asset and integral to the objectives and purpose of the University of St Andrews. The collections are of local, national and international historic significance. Special Collections support research and learning within and beyond the University of St Andrews and preserve the documentary heritage for the wider benefit of society. Special Collections are maintained and preserved for their contribution to knowledge and culture.

The Division of Special Collections develops, administers and makes accessible materials of widely differing form and content. The Division holds a large number of special collections which by virtue of the uniqueness or rarity of the items contained within them, their physical form, content, depth of subject coverage or other special significance, are distinguished from the general stock of the Library and receive special treatment in terms of housing, management, cataloguing, consultation, preservation and conservation. By their nature they also form part of the local, national, and international documentary heritage. Some formats may require shared specialist management, as in the case of born-digital materials.

The Division recognises its responsibilities to preserve its special collections holdings in perpetuity to support the teaching, learning and research of the University of St Andrews, and for the use of future generations. The main role of Special Collections staff is to enable physical and intellectual access to these collections while at the same time ensuring their long-term preservation.

The scope of collections is explained in further detail in the *Special Collections Collection Development Policy* but can be summarised:

- University Archives: the university's muniment collection contains the administrative records of the University itself. They date from 1215 to the present and are in a wide variety of formats, from sealed parchments to born-digital.
- Manuscripts: archives and manuscripts in Western European and non-Western languages. The Library's manuscripts collections range from classical papyri and medieval illuminated books to personal papers, literary, art and music archives, and scientific and business records in paper and digital form.

- Rare Books: printed material in any Western language, on any subject, from the emergence of printing in Germany in the mid- 15th century to 1900, with some post-1900 items deemed appropriate for special treatment, e.g. value, rarity, conservation need. Recent material includes fine press editions, copy-specific editions, and modern named collections considered of particular merit.
- Photographic Collection: photographic material in a wide variety of formats including negatives on glass and film, lantern slides, prints ranging from salt paper to modern processes, postcards and transparencies, featuring the earliest development of photographic practice in Scotland as well and the development of the medium and its forms of dissemination into the 21st century.
- Maps: all cartographic materials are treated by the Library as 'special' by virtue of their format and the specialist knowledge required for their curation.
- Music: all music is treated by the Library as 'special' by virtue of its format and the specialist knowledge required for its curation and holdings include some archival collections pertaining to music, recordings and concert programmes and named collections of printed materials.
- Reference Collection: a collection of reference works to support research carried out in the Reading Room.

3 Staff and Resources

The Division of Special Collections is allocated an annual budget within the Library in support of its staff and non-staff activities. This is supplemented by a variety of external grants awarded to develop and manage the collections and to make them accessible. The Division seeks to achieve an appropriate complement of staff and adequate permanent resources for the management of special collections.

4 Extent and Storage

Special Collections houses material in a variety of locations, but look forward to consolidating storage in order to achieve optimum security, environment, and appropriate levels of accessibility. Detailed statistics are gathered relating to environmental conditions in current and proposed locations. The Division aspires to have protected expansion space for the growth of collections according to sectoral norms. The Library's rapidly developing holdings of digital collections require different forms of management.

5 Collection Development

The Division seeks to develop its holdings of special collections through a variety of means and according to different criteria. The chief aims are the support of research, teaching and learning within and beyond the University of St Andrews and the preservation of documentary heritage for the wider benefit of society.

Acquisitions are made through gift, bequest or purchase. Gifts are governed by a donor agreement in the case of major collections and by a small gifts form or exchange of letters in the case of smaller collections. Purchases are made using limited restricted funds and through approaches to individuals

and funding bodies. The Library's Collections Advisory Group is the forum in which major new acquisitions are discussed. In rare circumstances, collections are taken on loan (or 'deposit'), but usually only if there is a strong likelihood that they will eventually come to the Library on a permanent basis. Further details are available in the *Special Collections Collection Development Policy*.

6 Accessioning

Accessioning signifies the general acceptance of collections into the Libraries' holdings but not necessarily on a permanent basis. Accessioning varies according to the management requirements of diverse formats of material, which may range from a single printed book to an archive comprising 10,000 boxes, but all material is appropriately recorded on a collection management database and stored before being fully accessioned through cataloguing. This type of activity is described further in the *Special Collections Collections Information Policy*.

7 Disposal

The Library retains the right to weed, return, transfer or dispose of unwanted material. Such material would normally be identified in the process of accessioning or cataloguing in the case of large collections which are impossible to appraise fully in advance of their physical arrival. This material would generally include categories such as non-copy-specific texts readily available elsewhere including off-prints, publications, un-annotated proofs, mimeographed, photocopied or otherwise duplicated typescripts, facsimiles of archival material, and duplicate books, maps and musical scores. Such material will be retained where it adds to the intellectual coherence or integrity of any collection of which it forms a part, or where it has a significant cultural value in its own right. The Library retains the right in exceptional circumstances to de-accession and transfer material when it can be more suitably used and accommodated elsewhere. Further details are available in the *Special Collections Disposal Policy*.

8 Cataloguing

Since the foundation of the Library, numerous cataloguing initiatives have been undertaken and many historic catalogues still serve an important function in providing access to library collections. Several different approaches are taken to current cataloguing, depending upon format and availability of funds, but in each case the approach conforms to recognised international standards. Current cataloguing initiatives aim to make information relating to collections available online and, where resources allow, are supplemented by campaigns retrospectively to convert earlier manual finding aids to searchable online catalogues. Further details are available in the *Special Collections Information Management Policy*.

9 Collection Care

Conservation and care of special collections is achieved as part of general good practice in handling and use of materials. Further details are available in the *Special Collections Preservation and Conservation Policy*. Highly technical work may be undertaken on certain classes of manuscript or printed books, often facilitated by external grants. Key elements relating to general practice are:

- Housing of collections: in the case of archival collections which largely comprise loose paper, boxing is a pre-requisite for appropriate storage, handling and fetching. In the case of single items, boxing protects and facilitates access and security. Other forms of housing, such as foldering are determined on a case by case basis.
- Environment: all areas housing special collections are monitored and maintained to provide acceptable conditions under the appropriate national standard.
- Emergency Response procedures: protocols exist to respond to emergency situations affecting special collections and these are kept under review.
- Loans: loans to other institutions follow established protocols. Loans between UK institutions or involving private lenders (including deposited collections) may be covered by Government Indemnity.
- Born digital materials: matters relating to the preservation of born-digital materials are covered by the Library's *Digital Preservation Policy*.

10 Access

Our aim is to make the special collections as widely available as possible within the confines of a University Library. Institutional archives, manuscripts, rare books and theses are available for public consultation in the Napier Special Collections Reading Room in Martyrs Kirk. The Reading Room is under constant supervision during opening hours.

In all cases, readers will be required to produce evidence of identity before being given access to unique materials. Special conditions may apply where collections are held on deposit. Readers wishing to use Special Collections are required to agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the Reading Room. In addition, readers are required to abide by legislation pertinent to the use of special collections, including Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Copyright. Reader information is held in a manner complying with GDPR 2018. Further details are available in the *Special Collections Access Policy*.

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