

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
SPECIAL LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES
ARCHIVES COLLECTION POLICY

1 The Archives service

Special Libraries and Archives forms part of the University of Aberdeen's Library and Historic Collections.

2 Authority to collect

Special Libraries & Archives is an archive repository recognised by the Royal Commission for Historical Manuscripts and the National Archives of Scotland (reference GB 0231). It is the central place of deposit for the historic records of the University, its predecessors and affiliated bodies, created and accumulated since its foundation in 1495. From this time, the University's institutional archive has also been augmented by the gift, deposit and purchase of manuscripts and archives of individuals, families and organisations associated with the University and the North East of Scotland. Special Libraries and Archives continues to add to these institutional and deposited collections.

3 Collection strengths

The collections, which number approximately 4000 and date from antiquity to the twenty-first century, fall under the following broad categories:

- the institutional archive of the University of Aberdeen (est. 1860), its predecessors, King's College (1494/5 – 1860) and Marischal College (1593 – 1860), and affiliated bodies, including The Northern College of Education (1870s - 2001);
- personal and professional papers of members of the University of Aberdeen, its predecessors and affiliated bodies;
- collections of other papers of particular institutional and/or academic importance to the University;
- reference copies of University theses, (which are lodged according to the regulations as stated in *Submission of Theses*, September 2001);
- medieval and early-modern manuscripts;
- records of individuals, families, estates and organisations associated with the University of Aberdeen and/or the North East of Scotland;
- oriental manuscripts, papyri and ostraca

4 Scope of the Collection Policy

4.1 Appraisal criteria

Special Libraries and Archives will continue to develop its collections in line with these broad topical, geographical and chronological parameters. More specifically, all new acquisitions must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- strengthen and support existing and future teaching and research in the University, in a sustainable way;
- complement and enhance existing archive and manuscript collection strengths: for example records relating to the history of the University; medieval and early modern manuscripts; north-east estate

papers; 17th – 19th century collections relating to science, medicine, Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, and Jacobitism;

- contribute to the understanding of the history of the University;
- contribute to, and/or enhance, the current administrative functions of the University;
- complement and enhance the University's collections of early and rare printed books and its museum collections.

4.2 Additional considerations

The size, format and physical condition of archives will be considered when deciding whether to accept new acquisitions or not.

- Size versus intellectual value: The space occupied by each archive collection must be justified in terms of its research value. Where its retention cannot be justified, the Archives may reject a collection, or may wish to select part of it for permanent preservation. This process of appraisal is common practice, based upon sound archival principals, informed judgement and knowledge of potential research interest.
- Format: The University accepts paper, photographic, audio-visual and digital archives. It is committed to developing appropriate storage and access facilities for these varied media: these issues are being addressed within the scope of the new Library project, through the purchase of DigiTool digital management software, and in the development of a University policy on electronic records. Facilities do not exist for the curation of artefacts: artefacts should, in the first instance, be offered to colleagues in one of the University's registered museums, from where further advice may be sought. Film archives are normally offered to Scottish Screen, the national film archive, based in Glasgow.
- Physical condition: Items will be rejected if their poor physical condition prohibits public access and if the cost of undertaking the necessary conservation treatment is disproportionate to their historical value.
- Restrictions: Consideration will be given before accepting collections with material that may have to be closed for 50 to 100 years because of the requirements of the *Data Protection Act 1998*. In these cases, the historical worth of the material must be sufficient to justify the expense of their storage while not being available to the public.

4.3 Exemptions – what we will not collect

In assessing material for acquisition, a number of specific exemptions apply to our collecting policy:

- Archives that might be more appropriately deposited elsewhere (for instance, archives that are known to be collected by other, local, national, or specialist repositories). In such cases, we will advise potential depositors of the appropriate repository to contact;
- Archives whose contents duplicate current holdings, or which are so similar as to not justify their inclusion;
- Copies of archives held elsewhere – unless, there is an exceptional reason for keeping them (for instance, in support of an existing collection);
- Oriental manuscripts, papyri and ostraca – unless having a direct, proven association with the University's current holdings in this area.

5 Acquisition procedures

Detailed conditions governing the donation and deposit of archives will be found in the information leaflet, *Donation and Deposit of Personal Papers*, and in the form, *Conditions governing the gift and deposit of personal papers in the University of Aberdeen*.

5.1 Methods of acquisition

- Transfer: Institutional archives of the University of Aberdeen will be acquired via internal transfer from originating departments, in line with the procedures laid down in the University's Records Retention Schedule and in liaison with the University Records Manager.
- Donation or bequest: The donor or executor will be required to sign a deposit agreement and documents will not be accepted without evidence of clear and valid title of ownership. It is the responsibility of each donor or seller to demonstrate that they are the valid owners of the records that they offer to the University. When assigning ownership of archives to the University, the copyright owner(s) will be asked to consider assigning copyright or agreeing to licence copyright to the University.
- Deposit / Long-term loan: The Archives will henceforth only exceptionally accept material on deposit or long-term loan, and any such acquisitions will only be accepted for periods of not less than twenty years.
- Purchase: Purchases will be made only of archives that make a significant contribution to our existing collection strengths.

5.2 Selection and de-accessioning

The Archives reserves the right to conduct a periodic review of the records held, in light of research use of the records, and where necessary, to recommend their disposal, destruction or transfer.