

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
SPECIAL LIBRARIES & ARCHIVES
RARE BOOKS COLLECTION POLICY

1. Overview

- 1.1 Special Libraries & Archives includes within its auspices some 200,000 printed books dating from the 15th century to the present, which are designated as being for reference-use only. These holdings reflect the heritage of the University of Aberdeen, and of its antecedent institutions, King's College and Marischal College.
- 1.2 Special Libraries & Archives currently exercises curatorial responsibility for the following:
- scientific and topographical books to 1860
 - books in other subjects, to 1840
 - other books deemed rare, valuable or otherwise important, 1860 to present
 - discrete, named special collections of printed books.
- 1.3 While assigning a high priority to the requirements of users, the department's overriding responsibility is preservation. Material is held in conditions as far as is possible in accordance with current best professional practice (e.g. BS 5454).

2. Organisation and strengths

- 2.1 There are eight collections artificially created by Special Libraries & Archives from stock accumulated over the centuries. Four are divided chronologically: Inc (Incunabula); π or Pi (pre-1600 Continental, pre-1640 English and pre-1780 Scottish); SB (post- π to 1800 and to 1860 for medical and other scientific titles), and Lib R (rare titles of later date, to present). The remaining four are thematic:
- SBL (local printing to 1800)
 - L (local printing and all aspects of local studies relating to Aberdeenshire, Banff and Kincardine, to present)
 - VL (Victorian literature)
 - VP (Victorian poetry)
- 2.2 In addition, there are over 45 separate, named collections, covering a comprehensive diversity of subjects, from classical literature to pharmacology.
- 2.3 Recognised strengths of the collections within Special Libraries & Archives include:
- History of medicine
 - Rabbinnics
 - Jacobitism
 - Walter Scott
 - Charles Dickens
 - Railways
 - Travel.

3. **Rationale for retention**

3.1 The printed books within Special Libraries & Archives comprise a resource for:

- supporting, strengthening and encouraging the University's learning, teaching and research activities. Special Libraries & Archives will take particular note of statements of departmental and/or school and/or faculty research if/when available
- stimulating new research, teaching, learning and outreach initiatives
- assisting in promoting the University, and its undertakings in commercial development
- outreach to both wider local and the broader higher education communities - the division having a responsibility to provide and widen access, insofar as practical considerations and preservation and security requirements allow this

4. **Development**

4.1 **Appraisal criteria**

Special Libraries & Archives is committed to developing its collections. All new acquisitions, whether obtained by purchase, gift, deposit, or transference from current collections, must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- strengthen and support areas of learning, teaching, research and outreach promoted or to be promoted within the University. This may entail the acquisition of complete new collections, or the acquisition of material to enhance the strength of existing collections
- strengthen collections already frequently called upon as points of first referral, by reflecting extant learning, teaching and research activities within the University
- reflect the University's commitment to the preservation and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the region
- complement and enhance the University's archives and museum collections

4.2 **Consultation**

Special Libraries & Archives will respond sympathetically to requests from academic staff and students to acquire material, whilst recognising the realities of constrained financial resources, and limited space, but will also undertake broader consultation on such requests if necessary.

4.3 **Prioritisation**

With respect to consideration of further acquisitions, the following are currently identified as having particular priority:

- **Local Collection.** This should be developed selectively, reflecting an academic interest in the history, topography, culture and administration of the North-East of Scotland. Consideration will be given to purchase of texts bound in 19th century 'Aberdeen Corner-Square' style and other (post-1800) locally printed or published works important because of their design features or history of production.
- **MacBean Stuart and Jacobite Collection.** This should be maintained as comprehensively as possible, whilst exercising discretion with regard to reworkings of Jacobite history aimed at a popular readership.
- **O'Dell Collection.** New works of lasting scholarly value on British (and especially Scottish) railways and early-published material should be acquired, when possible, to enhance the value of the collection for academic research.
- **S Collection** of supporting material on bibliography
- **SBL Collection** of pre-1801 material printed locally
- **Bernard L Lloyd Walter Scott Collection**
- **VL Collection**, especially Dickens.

4.4 Chronological collections

Additions to these should be made only after they can be shown to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- fulfil an academic need within the University
- support a current research project within the University
- enhance existing, recognised research strengths within those or other collections
- support archival collections, themselves the subject of active research work e.g. printed editions of James Beattie
- have been previously owned by (an) individual(s) with significant associations (e.g. as student, teacher or as benefactor) with the University or its antecedent colleges.

4.5 Exemptions

Senior curatorial staff at Special Libraries & Archives reserve the right of discretion in assessing material for acquisition. Exemptions include:

- Printed material that might be more appropriately placed elsewhere - for example church magazines, community council publications may be better-placed in local authority libraries and specialist family history organisations.
- Material that duplicates extant holdings within Special Libraries & Archives or other University repository sites, unless there is an exceptional reason for retention e.g. important provenance/copy-specific information.

5 Acquisition procedures

5.1 Methods of acquisition

- Purchase: Purchases will be made only of printed material that make a significant contribution to existing collection strengths.
- Transfer: Printed books may be acquired via internal transfer from originating departments subject to the discretion and agreement of senior curatorial staff within Special Libraries & Archives.
- Donation or bequest: The donor or executor will be required to sign a deposit agreement and books or other printed material 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 materials offered to the University.
- Deposit / Long-term loan: Special Libraries & Archives will not normally accept material offered on deposit or loan.

5.2 Selection and de-accessioning

Special Libraries & Archives reserves the right to conduct a periodic review of holdings, in light of usage statistics, spatial requirements, development priorities or such other contingencies as may arise, and to, where necessary, recommend their de-selection.