

## Special collections of printed materials

September 2021

QG HCOL004

### The Wolfson Reading Room

#### Special Collections Centre

The Sir Duncan Rice Library  
University of Aberdeen  
Bedford Road  
Aberdeen  
AB24 3AA

### Introduction

The Special Collections Centre cares for the University's large inheritance of printed material, acquired since its foundation at the end of the 15th century and enriched by donations and bequests from teachers, graduates and benefactors. Until 1856 these donations were added to the Library's general stock; since then, many have been kept intact as separate, named, special collections.

Our major **chronological** collections, with their identifying shelfmark prefixes, are:

- **Inc:** incunabula, i.e. books printed pre-1501
- **pi:** 1501 to 1600 (European), 1640 (English) and 1780 (Scottish)
- **SB:** all other pre 1841 material, plus scientific and medical material to 1860
  - **SBL:** books printed locally in Aberdeen to 1800
- **Lib R:** all other rarities, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, including topographical material, to 1860.

In addition, there are many separate **named** collections which cover a wide variety of interests, including classical literature, early science and medicine, Jacobitism, 19th century literature, children's books, pharmacology, psalmody, Rabbinica, railways and travel, printing, and theology. We also have collections from individuals and families associated with the University and the north-east, such as the Gregory and Melvin Collections, and collections of material of and by individuals, such as the Bernard Lloyd Walter Scott Collection.

Please visit our webpages for Collection Level Descriptions which describe the scope and content of individual printed collections.

Also see The Provenance Database, available on the website, which provides information on the past ownership of printed books in the collection.

### Open access collections

Three collections are on browsable open access in the Reading Room;

- **Local Collection** – covering the north-east corner of Scotland and the former Grampian Region with special emphasis on the University and its history.
- **S Collection** – relating to the study of books and manuscripts and complementing our printed and manuscript collections.
- **Periodicals** – including historical society publications, journals and serial titles, dating mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries.

### Closed access collections

Most Special Collections materials are not on open access and notice is required to fetch individually requested items from storage areas for consultation in the Reading Room.

### Access

Records for the great majority of our printed books, pamphlets and periodicals, including the earliest or oldest, incunabula, are entered in the library catalogue. Different collections are distinguished by a prefix in the shelfmark e.g. **pi**, **SB**, **GY**, **MN**, and will have the location of **Special Collections Centre**.

Please search our online catalogues to identify individual items.

### Printed catalogues

There are, in addition, published catalogues of some of the individual collections and covering particular subjects, e.g. incunabula, and European books 1501–1600. The principal printed catalogues, copies of which are available to consult in the Reading Room, are:

- Mitchell, W. S., *Catalogue of the incunabula in Aberdeen University Library* (Aberdeen University Studies, 150, 1968)
- Drummond, H. J. H., *A short title catalogue of books printed on the Continent of Europe 1501–1600 in Aberdeen University Library* (Aberdeen University Studies, 156, 1979)
- Wightman, W. P. D. *Science and the Renaissance* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962)
- *Subject catalogue of the Phillips Library of pharmacology and therapeutics* (Aberdeen University Studies, 47, 1911)
- *Catalogue of the Taylor Collection of psalm versions* (Aberdeen University Studies, 85, 1921)

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- *Catalogue of pamphlets in the King, the Thomson, and the Herald Collections* (Aberdeen University Studies, 104, 1927)
  - Allardyce, M. D., *Aberdeen University Library, MacBean Collection* (Aberdeen University Studies, 126, 1949)

## **Factsheets**

There are many factsheets available on the website, organised by type, subject and geographic area.

## **Further reading**

- Anderson Smith, M. I., "*The Special Collections in Aberdeen University Library*", *Aberdeen University Review*, vol.50 (1983–4), pp. 265-87.
- Beavan, Iain; Davidson, Peter; Stevenson, Jane, *Library and archive collections of the University of Aberdeen: an introduction and description* (Manchester: Manchester University Press with the University of Aberdeen, 2011)