

ACCESS POLICY

1 Purpose

The purpose of Special Collections is to select, preserve and make available the University's collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives. It aims to serve members of the University by meeting their information needs for research and learning, and to serve the wider community by innovatively opening up the collections to a variety of different audiences.

The University's collections are some of its key cultural assets which it holds in trust for both the University and the nation. The collections are accessible to all and access is free of charge. Special Collections welcomes people from every part of the community and is committed to promote equality of opportunity in all aspects of the service.

Access is made possible through a range of services offered including: provision of information about Special Collections (in print, via the website, social media and in person); on-site access for individuals and groups; remote access through correspondence, telephone and electronic enquiries; talks delivered by staff and outreach activities such as exhibitions, a schools programme and a public programme of lectures.

Every opportunity will be taken to provide equality of access to reflect the diversity of users, including future users and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and belief. All opportunities will be taken to communicate with users and seek their views and opinions on services. Special Collections will respond and, where possible, make improvements to reflect the interests of its users. To gain further information see the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

2 Personal Enquiries

The Reading Room provides users with facilities for the consultation of the collections. Guidance on collections, their access, safe handling and interpretation, is given by Reading Room staff and is supplemented by a range of information factsheets.

Users are made aware of their responsibilities when accessing the collections by information contained within the Library Regulations, which are prominently displayed in the Reading Room and also available on the website. Library members are given access to the collections upon presentation of a Library card; non-members are asked to register for an Access Pass and are requested to present photographic identification and proof of address. In so doing users agree to comply with the Regulations. See Library Regulations (specifically section 6) here: www.abdn.ac.uk/library/get-started/library-regulations/

For additional information about the Reading Room, including opening hours see here: www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/using-the-collections/wolfson-reading-room-48.php

3 Remote Enquiries

When an electronic enquiry is made enquirers will receive an automated e-mail response acknowledging receipt. All enquirers will receive an initial response to their enquiry, within 20 days.

Special Collections provides enquirers with information about the content of the collections, about how to find material and request access to collections and, where appropriate, offers advice on

other archive/library services that may be able to better assist. If the requested information can be simply gleaned from the original, this will be provided. Where the request goes beyond providing general information about the collections, or requires extensive research, the enquirer will be advised, with support from staff, to consult the documents or printed material themselves. Staff also advise enquirers how quickly their request can be met; this varies depending on enquiry deadlines and the level of research required.

4 Information about Special Collections

The library catalogue, archive catalogue, information factsheets and on-line collections are available on the Library, Special Collections and Museums web pages. Information factsheets and collection catalogues are also available in printed form in the Reading Room. Search results from catalogues, information factsheets and web presented text and images can be printed remotely.

The printed book collections are accessible via the main library catalogue while the manuscript and archive collections have a dedicated on-line catalogue. For the printed collections there is also information (searchable and browseable) on the composition of the collection and its division into chronological and named collections. Collections may be searched individually using the library, archive or digital image catalogues or simultaneously, using PRIMO.

Catalogues: www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/search-catalogues/index.php

Information about the archive collections is also available through other means. Special Collections provides the National Register of Archives with annual information on new archive accessions and general descriptions of the archive collections are available through national archive portals, specifically the Scottish Archive Network and the Archives Hub. Copies of archives catalogues are also lodged with the National Register of Archives (Scotland) and at The National Archives in London (older catalogues in paper, more recent ones in digital format).

The University's printed catalogue is also available via COPAC: union catalogue of major UK research libraries. Many of the pre-1801 holdings are represented on ESTC (English Short Title Catalogue).

5 Outreach and promotion

Special Collections is committed to making its collections accessible to local and regional communities and to as wide a range of new audiences as possible, a commitment embodied in the University's Public Engagement Strategy. This is currently achieved through a programme of public talks and events, publications, exhibitions and workshops for school-age learners and those in formal education.

www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/exhibitions-learning.php

For further information see the Exhibitions and Learning and Outreach Policies.

6 Access restrictions

Access to the collections is as unrestricted as possible, however, access must be consistent with owner rights, copyright legislation, conservation and security issues. Access to the collections is also subject to certain statutory or legal requirements, notably the Data Protection Act, 1998, the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act, 2002 and copyright legislation. Where there are restrictions, users are provided with an explanation and guidance on access procedures, if appropriate.

- Confidentiality: archive material which contains personally sensitive or confidential information is not generally available for consultation and in such cases the provisions laid out in the Data Protection Act (1998) will be implemented
- Owner Rights: where there is an existing agreement between the owner of a collection and Special Collections restricting access, that information will be recorded in the relevant catalogue entry. Restrictions may also apply solely to copying and publishing material
- Copyright: information derived from the collections and copies supplied must be used in conformity with current copyright legislation and in accordance with Special Collections guidelines
- Condition: access to any part of a collection may be restricted if it is considered by Special Collections staff to be physically unfit to be safely handled. Where a surrogate copy (including a digital copy) exists, that copy will normally be produced in preference to the original. Consideration will be given to prioritising conservation treatment of such material
- Security: Special Collections reserves the right to withhold from consultation any parts of the collection which are unlisted and/or inadequately arranged and where access might affect the integrity of that collection.

7 Reprographic Services

Where conservation, copyright and other considerations permit, Special Collections will provide research copies from the collections. Self-copying for research purposes is also facilitated. Where copying is required for publication purposes, staff from Special Collections undertake this service.

For further information see the Reprographics Policy.

8 Service Development

Special Collections will strive to continually improve its services by developing new policies, drawing up action plans, targeting resources and regularly reviewing the services it provides. Special Collections has implemented a targeted action plan to meet the full requirements of the *National Council On Archives/Public Service Quality Group: A Standard For Access For Archives 2008*.

9 Consultation and user comments

Special Collections welcomes user comments on its services. It will consult over policy and quality in execution through participation in user surveys and through customer feedback processes.

10 Feedback and Complaints

Special Collections have a Feedback and Complaints procedure through which personal and remote enquirers can provide feedback and comments about our services or make a formal complaint. www.abdn.ac.uk/special-collections/about/feedback-113.php

11 Responsibility and Review

This policy has been approved by LSC&M Senior Management Team in January 2017 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.