

ARCHIVES COLLECTION POLICY

1 Purpose

Special Collections is an archive repository recognised by the National Archives and the National Records 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, businesses and organisations associated with the University and the North East of Scotland. Special Collections continues to add to these institutional and deposited collections.

2 Organisation and collection strengths

The collections, which number approximately 5000 and date from antiquity to the 21st century, fall under the following broad categories:

- the institutional archive of the University of Aberdeen (est. 1860), its predecessors, King's College (1495 – 1860) and Marischal College (1593 – 1860), and affiliated bodies, including 'The Aberdeen Colleges of Education' (1874 - 2001) and the Rowett Institution of Nutrition and Health (1913 – 2008)
- 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*)
- medieval and early-modern manuscripts
- records of individuals, families, estates, businesses and organisations associated with the University of Aberdeen and/or the North East of Scotland
- oriental manuscripts, papyri and ostraca
- photographic collections
- oral histories, relating to the University and the oil & gas industry.

3 Partnership Collections

Special Collections are also the location of two partnership collections: the Scottish Catholic Archives, Historic Archives and the National Health Service Grampian Archives. These collections have their own collection strengths and any acquisitions to these collections will be made after discussion between Special Collections and the appropriate partnership body.

4 Development of the collections

4.1 Selection criteria

Special Collections 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 areas of learning, research and outreach promoted within the University

- 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
- reflect the University's commitment to the preservation and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the region
- 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 through the purchase of 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 the Moving Image Archive, the national film archive, and part of the National Library of Scotland
- 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 75 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 until they are available to the public.

4.3 Exemptions – what we will not collect

In assessing material for acquisition, a number of specific exemptions apply to the 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
- material 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).

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*.

- 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 only exceptionally accept material on deposit or long-term loan
- Purchase: Purchases will be made only of archives that make a significant contribution to existing collection strengths. Special Collections will consider requests from academic staff to acquire material, subject to collection strengths, spatial and financial considerations.

6 Appraisal and disposal

Special Collections reserves the right to conduct appraisal and re-appraisal of its holdings: as part of on-going cataloguing where material is deemed of low evidential value, as part of a strategic Collection Review, in light of research use and needs, where material is considered duplicate, where it would be more appropriately held elsewhere and in extreme cases where the material is in a badly damaged state and cannot be retrieved.

If after an appraisal exercise material is deemed disposable, various options of disposal will be investigated such as returning material to the original owner or heirs (if the collection was a deposit as opposed to a gift), returning material to the Secretary of State (if the collection was allocated as part of the Acceptance in Lieu of Tax Scheme), donating to another appropriate body or as a last resort confidential destruction.

All appraisal exercises documenting the reasons for disposal and the eventual disposal method will be kept in perpetuity as part of the relevant collection files. If appropriate, material which is donated to another appropriate body, will be marked accordingly.

7 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.