

# EXHIBITIONS POLICY

## 1 Purpose

The primary purpose of the Exhibitions programme is to showcase items from the extensive holdings of archives, printed books and other material in Special Collections in order to increase awareness of the work of Special Collections and engagement with its collections.

## 2 Venues and resources

The main **Gallery** space is situated on the Ground Floor of the Sir Duncan Rice Library. It is a purpose built exhibition space comprising a running length of 35 metres (total floor space of 88m<sup>2</sup>), with controllable lighting track and audio-visual system. It has movable equipment including 10 museum-standard display cases, 8 freestanding panel stands, 3 projectors, 2 sound domes, seating and assorted other display equipment. It is a secured space and environmentally monitored, making it suitable for the display of high value/fragile objects. Exhibitions shown in the main Gallery are usually scheduled to run for a period of six months, but in some instances displays may be shortened or lengthened to meet conservation, budgetary or other internal or external demands. The Gallery's location on the Ground Floor and outside the barrier controls make it accessible to University staff and students as well as members of the public. Its opening hours are typically 10am – 5pm Monday-Sunday with extended evening openings on Thursdays until 7pm.

Adjacent to the main Gallery is the Library **Event Space**. This is a multi-purpose space with a large media screen which can function as an exhibition space for in-house or external temporary/touring displays as well as an activity or reception area. As an open space with windows along one side it has a lower level of security and environmental control, making it unsuitable for the display of most collection items. Its main purpose is as an accessible and flexible space for satellite exhibitions and pop up displays. As an unsecured space, it is accessible to University and non-University visitors during Library opening hours which are longer than for the main Gallery. Exhibitions programmed into the Event Space area generally have a shorter run and must be flexible to accommodate other events and activities programmed by other departments. The use of a system of temporary, moveable display boards allows for the display of wall-mounted panels.

**Other areas** in the Library such as the foyer and area in front of the main Gallery are also used for small displays that generally run for shorter periods of time e.g. 1 week to 1 month.

Access and entrance to all exhibition spaces programme by Special Collections is free of charge and open to all.

## 3 Exhibition Programming

The Exhibition and Displays programme plays an important role in helping Special Collections achieve core aims and objectives to:

- increase the understanding of and engagement with items and subject areas in the Special Collections through high standards of scholarship, exhibition curatorship, conservation, interpretation, education and access
- develop and explore subject areas and strengths within the Special Collections through academic collaborations with other University departments

- maintain, extend and broaden the range of audiences accessing the Special Collections through an inspiring and accessible exhibition programme which accommodates a variety of learning styles
- take account of the programmes of other venues on campus, in Aberdeen and across North East Scotland to ensure that the University offers a unique and complementary exhibition programme

Display material must exhibit strong links with the Special Collections and with University research. In general terms the programme should be:

- responsive – have the flexibility to utilise and respond to ideas received externally that relate to the Special Collections core areas of interest
- exploratory – with a focus on specific events, individuals or strengths within the collection, often using sensitive material that can only be shown for a limited period
- imaginative– to provide insights into the role of Special Collections and to explore the collections in new and engaging contexts

#### **4 Types of Exhibition and Exhibition Selection**

The programme of exhibitions for the main Gallery space focuses on the display and interpretation of original material from the Special Collections. Exhibitions may occasionally be augmented by loans from the University's Museum's Collections, other institutions, or artists whose work will enhance the display scholastically or aesthetically.

Exhibition proposals are welcome from across the University. These should be submitted using the LSC&M Proposal Form, and in general, should allow for 12 months planning period. Proposals should demonstrate an awareness of how items from the Special Collections may be used to create an exhibition which will be of a high academic integrity and have wide public appeal.

Academic staff submitting proposals must allocate sufficient time and resources to facilitate the development and creation of an exhibition in collaboration with Special Collections. Special Collections staff will lead on project planning, exhibition design, conservation, interpretation, installation, marketing and evaluation. Timescales and budgets will be determined at the early planning stages.

- proposals for Exhibitions are accepted from both internal and external sources. A standard template is employed when preparing exhibition proposals. This is available on the Special Collections web pages or can be requested from the Exhibitions Officer
- all exhibition proposals are considered first by the Head of Special Collections. A Special Collections Exhibition Committee considers proposals that meet the Gallery's Exhibition and Displays Policy
- the Exhibitions Officer will communicate all successful and unsuccessful proposals

The selection of exhibition proposals will be determined by Special Collections staff in accordance with the following criteria:

- relevance to the Special Collections holdings
- intellectual quality of the theme/subject matter of the proposal
- relationship to the existing programme and programmes of other regional venues
- strong demonstration of an understanding of public engagement and the University's audience development plans and strategic partnerships

- appropriateness of the proposal to one of the Special Collections exhibition venue
- security and conservation requirements of the material proposed for display
- availability of staff and financial resources

In general terms, the programme should also:

- support the University's academic profile and seek to accommodate periods of research for in collaboration with academics
- encourage ideas and curatorial involvement from outside Special Collections
- include themes with both a national and global outlook
- cover popular subjects, as well as academic or specialist topics
- reflect and attract a broad range of audiences in terms of age, social and cultural background
- encourage innovative interpretation that enhances an engagement with the collections

## **5 Public Engagement**

Public engagement is a key objective for the exhibitions and the associated events programme. Exhibitions and events will be selected and devised to comply with this remit to provide ways to engage with University staff and students as well as specialist and non-specialist groups and local, regional, national and international audiences.

The Exhibitions Officer works closely with the Learning and Outreach staff within Special Collections as well as other departments to provide an integrated and cohesive public programme.

## **6 Management**

The Special Collections Centre's Exhibitions Officer manages the programming of the spaces identified in Section 2 of this policy and may be involved in collaborative programming for other smaller spaces across campus as requested. The Exhibitions Officer leads on the organisation and management of exhibitions. The Special Collections team (made up of representatives from Archives, Rare Books, Learning & Outreach and Conservation) is responsible for the delivery of the exhibition within the Gallery via regular project management meetings.

## **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.