

# RARE BOOKS COLLECTIONS POLICY

## 1 Purpose

Special Collections holds some 230,000 printed books dating from the 15th century to the present, the majority of 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.

Special Collections 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.

## 2 Organisation and collection strengths

There are five chronological collections created by Library staff from stock accumulated over the centuries:

- Inc (Incunabula)
- $\pi$  or Pi (pre-1600 Continental, pre-1640 English and pre-1780 Scottish)
- SB (post-to 1800 and to 1860 for medical and other scientific titles)
- SBL (examples of local printing to 1800)
- Lib R (rare titles mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, to present)

In addition, there are over 45 separate, named collections, covering a comprehensive diversity of subjects, from classical literature to pharmacology.

Recognised strengths of the collections within Special Collections include:

- Charles Dickens
- Hebraica and Judaica
- History of science, including medicine
- Jacobitism
- Local studies (examples of local printing and all aspects of social, economic and cultural life relating to the University, Aberdeen city and shire, Banffshire and Kincardineshire to present)
- Railways
- Walter Scott
- Scottish Catholicism
- Theology
- Travel and typography
- Victorian fiction and poetry.

## 3 Development of the collections

### 3.1 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 collection strengths
- reflect the University's commitment to the preservation and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the region
- complement and enhance the University's archive and museum collections.

### **3.2 Additional considerations**

The following are currently identified as having priority:

- Charles Dickens. Priority is given to acquisitions which fill any gaps in comprehensiveness of contemporary holdings, principally first editions
- 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 locally printed or published works deemed 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
- Bernard C Lloyd Walter Scott Collection. Priority is given to acquisitions which fill gaps in comprehensiveness of this collection, and to new works of lasting scholarly importance on Scott
- items having 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.

### **3.3 Exemptions – what we will not collect**

In assessing material for acquisition, a number of specific exemptions apply to the collecting policy:

- printed material that might be more appropriately placed elsewhere (for instance specialist family history organisations and Aberdeen City Libraries). In such cases, we will advise potential depositors of the appropriate organisation to contact
- material that duplicates current holdings or other University repository sites, unless there is an exceptional reason for retention, for example important provenance/copy-specific information.

## **4 Acquisition procedures**

- transfer: Printed books may be acquired via internal transfer from originating departments subject to the discretion and agreement of senior curatorial staff within Special Collections
- 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 Collections will only exceptionally accept material on deposit or long-term loan
- purchase: Purchases will be made only of printed material that makes a significant contribution to existing collection strengths. Special Collections will consider requests from

academic staff to acquire material, subject collection strengths, spatial and financial considerations.

## **5 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), 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.

## **6 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.