

# Collections Strategy for Leeds University Library

## Introduction

The Library's collections are central to the learning, teaching and research of the University. They provide the information base for the University's academic work and are a repository for the University's research outputs, learning resources and institutional memory. The Library will continue to curate its rich assets, combining print and digital to ensure the currency, longevity, depth and breadth of information appropriate to the needs of a major research-intensive university.

There are separate strategy documents for the development of our Special Collections, gallery and archival collections governing the development and management of those collections which contain items that are particularly rare, or unique. Many of our main collections however have great historical strength and breadth. We have also built up over the recent electronic era extensive collections of e-journals, e-books and digitised content to support current research and teaching in the University.

However, we are in a period of transition, with the role of academic libraries and the nature of collections being reconsidered, both within the University and the research community globally. Developments such as open access publishing, production of digital content (both published and archival), and the exponential growth in digital information which libraries license rather than own are major factors in accelerating this shift. Like other major research libraries worldwide, we are under pressure from constraints on physical space, time and budgets. Challenges include collections which are physically crumbling, the rapid move to as-yet unstable and potentially unsustainable e-publishing models, and the speed of technological change. In addition rapid changes in our user requirements and expectations are driving the re-purposing of library space with an increasing demand for flexible and varied learning spaces, study tools and new research facilities.

In this rapidly changing environment, we recognise that we cannot and should not attempt to build or maintain collections in all areas equally. We need to target our collection building, digitisation and preservation on areas we have prioritised as the most important to the University, and be guided by these principles in curating our electronic as well as our physical collections.



# Categorising collections

To meet this challenge we have embarked on a major programme of categorising our physical and digital collections to establish where our true strengths lie. Once strengths have been identified we will use this categorisation to guide all decisions relating to purchase, subscription, location, preservation and digitisation of our collections, whether analogue or digital. Collections will be categorised as follows.

## Heritage:

- Definition: Collections of internationally or nationally significant depth and breadth which the Library will continue to develop.
- Management: Heritage collections will be actively developed as live collections, able to respond to current teaching and research. Access to material will be via the most appropriate route, but outright ownership will always be considered. Items will not normally be withdrawn from these collections, but measures will be taken to preserve material of all formats contained within them. To develop these collections, items may be transferred in from elsewhere through collaborative collection development schemes, or received as donations.

## Legacy:

- Definition: Collections which have historic strength. These may, in reflecting the output of a particular period or person, be of international or national significance, but they do not reflect current research and teaching needs. These will not usually be added to using Library funds.
- Management: Legacy collections will not be actively developed as live collections. Items will not normally be withdrawn from these collections, but measures will be taken to preserve the material of all formats contained within them. Material may be added from elsewhere through collaborative collection development schemes, or received as donations.

## Self-renewing:

- Definition: Collections which do not have sufficient depth or breadth to be of national significance, but which are required to meet the needs of current research and teaching. Material will only be retained within these collections for as long as it is required for teaching or research.
- Management: Items within self-renewing collections will be regularly considered for withdrawal from Library stock. Access to material will be via the most appropriate route. These collections will not generally require measures to ensure long term preservation, however items may be digitised to facilitate current teaching or research. Material will not be transferred into these collections from elsewhere through collaborative collection development schemes, or received as donations, unless to satisfy a specific academic need.

## Finite:

- Definition: These are collections which have neither historic strength, nor relevance to current teaching and research. These collections will be considered for withdrawal.
- Finite collections will not be added to, either through purchases or donations, but may be withdrawn from stock, or transferred elsewhere through collaborative collection development schemes. No measures will be taken to preserve these collections.

In this context a 'collection' may be either large or small, and may be confined to one subject or physical location, or may be distributed across many sections of the Library. It may also include material in different formats, including digital resources, either in the form of born-digital content or digital surrogates from physical collections.

It is understood that material not 'heritage' or 'legacy' in itself may play a supporting role to a heritage or legacy collection, and will not be treated in isolation without reference to the heritage or legacy collection it supports.

## Physical collections

Our physical collections will continue to be very important into the foreseeable future. The maintenance of these collections will entail a commitment to physical preservation where feasible and desirable, and/or to digitisation, both to enable access and for the purpose of preservation.

The application of our Collections Strategy to our physical collections means we will:

- Ensure access to reading list materials for students, purchasing multiple print copies where necessary and e-copies where practical, cost-effective and appropriate
- Manage and stock edit our self-renewing collections to support the University's current learning, teaching and research, aiming for zero net growth in these areas
- Continue to develop our heritage and Special Collections for current use and for future generations of scholars
- Invest in the physical conservation of our heritage, legacy and Special Collections, where feasible and appropriate
- Collaborate and lead, both regionally and nationally, on collaborative collection management initiatives which aim to promote and preserve a 'distributed national research collection'
- Make our physical collections available to external researchers through Document Supply and through reciprocal visiting and borrowing arrangements with other libraries, where appropriate and feasible
- Material which by law can be made publicly available will not be rejected solely on moral, political, religious, racial or gender grounds.

## Digital collections

Digital collections are complex and varied in their origin, content types and preservation needs. Some may be created, owned and hosted by the University, including items we have digitised from our own physical collections, where the originals are often rare or unique. The University's research outputs, deposited in our repositories under the University's Publications Policy, and the University's corporate records deposited in the University Archive also fall into this category of material owned and hosted locally. In other cases we may have bought or licensed access to digital material from external providers which is hosted elsewhere and where we may or may not require long-term access to the content. With all these materials entrusted to our care we need to ensure that mechanisms and resources for the digital preservation of this content are in place as required.

The application of our Collections Strategy to our digital material means we will:

- Prioritise electronic delivery of content where appropriate
- Collect and store the University's research outputs digitally in our repositories, such as White Rose Research Online (WRRO), thereby meeting the demands of the University Publications Policy and Policy on the Management of Research Data, as well as applicable open access mandates
- Collect and store University of Leeds e-theses in White Rose e-Theses Online (WREO)
- Provide support as appropriate in line with the University's Open Educational Resources policy
- Digitise material from our own collections in line with the Library's Digitisation Strategy, to be hosted in our e-prints repository
- Preserve and curate digital materials which are required for the long term and for which curatorial responsibility resides with the Library
- Ensure that access is maintained in the long term to e-resources hosted externally which we hold either on the basis of subscription or purchase
- Continue to provide an Online Course Readings service digitising extracts on request to supplement our book purchasing in support of teaching, under the terms of the CLA Licence
- Take advantage of emerging technologies both to make our collections increasingly available to mobile and remote users, and to allow greater interaction with texts
- Investigate innovative supply and purchasing models, and implement those which best satisfy customer needs
- Collaborate regionally, nationally and internationally to influence the emergence of new publishing patterns and business models in favour of affordability and sustainability, especially in electronic publishing.

## Access to collections

- The Library will make all of its resources easily discoverable to the University community and beyond, using single search functionality where possible.
- The Library will maximise the availability of its collections to the University community and external researchers, as far as licensing conditions or other restrictions permit.
- The Library will provide a Document Supply service and support reciprocal visiting and borrowing arrangements with other libraries, to allow our customers to access material not held at Leeds.

## Collection development and management

Collections will be developed and managed in keeping with the principles outlined above. The Library undertakes to consult academic colleagues on collections that relate to their areas of teaching and research primarily through departmental Library Representatives, and also, where appropriate, Directors of Student Education, Directors of Research and Heads of School. The

Library will provide information on the cost and usage of resources, and on the availability of reading lists, on a regular basis.

Information on the Library's procedures for buying items, managing reading lists, our procedures for stock editing and disposal, and our policy on accepting gifts and deposits can be found on our webpages.

## Links to related strategies

The Collections Strategy interfaces with the following Library strategic documents, including:

- Digitisation Strategy
- Digital Preservation Strategy
- Collections Care Policy
- Special Collections Collection Development Policy
- Library Space Plan
- The Stanley and Audrey Burton Art Gallery Collection Development Policy
- The University Archive Appraisal Policy.

## Review term

This Strategy will be reviewed in 2021.