

The University of Manchester Library Content Development Policy for Special Collections

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
COLLECTIONS OVERVIEW	2
AUDIENCES	2
PRINCIPLES	3
PRINTED MATERIAL	3
MANUSCRIPTS & ARCHIVES	5
VISUAL COLLECTIONS	8
MAP COLLECTIONS	10
SECONDARY MATERIAL	10
GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	11
GENRES AND FORMATS	11
MATERIAL OUTSIDE THE COLLECTING POLICY	11
ACQUISITION PROCEDURES	11
COLLABORATION	12
CONTACTS	13

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the Content Development Policy for Special Collections. It includes a description of the University of Manchester Library's existing collections and an outline of current collecting areas.

Set within the context provided by the Library's overall [Content Development Policy](#) and a related [Collection Management Policy](#), the purpose of this policy is to ensure that the selection of resources – printed books, maps, manuscripts, archives and visual collections – reflects the research and teaching priorities of the University, enhances the reputations of the Library and The University of Manchester, supports the wider academic research community and scholarship generally, and provides best value in both financial and academic terms.

COLLECTIONS OVERVIEW

The John Rylands Library was founded in the late nineteenth century by Enriqueta Augustina Rylands, as a memorial to her husband, the successful cotton entrepreneur, John Rylands, who died in 1888. It opened to the public on 1 January 1900. Early acquisitions, namely the Spencer Collection of early and fine printed books (1892) and the Crawford Collection of manuscripts (1901), established the foundation as a research library of international importance. In 1972 the formerly independent John Rylands Library merged with Manchester University Library.

While the majority of the Special Collections are located in the John Rylands Library on Deansgate, other important material is held at the Main Library, including maps, post-1800 medical printed collections, many medical, scientific and technical archives, the archives of the University itself, and the Christian Brethren Archives. Together they comprise one of the world's finest collections of rare books, maps, manuscripts, archives and visual collections.

AUDIENCES

The Library's Special Collections support research and discovery, teaching and learning and social responsibility at The University of Manchester. As a National Research Library (the only one in the North of England), the Library attracts scholars from all over the world, and support the research needs of the wider academic community.

The John Rylands Library was established by Enriqueta Rylands as a free public library for the people of Manchester. It retains its public library status and its collections are open to anyone who has a need to use them. We also recognize the heritage value of the collections, and their significance beyond the academic community.

PRINCIPLES

The UML collects Special Collections for the following purposes:

- To support research and discovery, and teaching and learning within The University of Manchester. We will collaborate with academic colleagues within the University to devise innovative ways of incorporating such materials into research and learning.
- To enhance the reputations of the Library and The University of Manchester as world-class institutions. As an internationally-important library, within an institution that aims to become one of the top twenty-five universities in the world, our collection policy should match those ambitions.
- To support the wider academic research community within the United Kingdom and overseas.
- To promote scholarship in general, and to support a wide range of researchers and learners outside the traditional higher education sector, including but not limited to life-long learners, genealogists, amateur historians, Open University students, vocational students and special interest groups.
- To preserve a record of the past and present. Special Collections form a living link with the past; they constitute the collective memory of diverse communities. The Library seeks to collect and preserve materials significant for the understanding of the histories, literatures, cultures and sciences of human civilizations.
- To enhance existing collections through acquisitions of additional material, where appropriate. The Library will also respond to changing trends in scholarship, by developing new areas of collecting, and by facilitating the reinterpretation and use in novel ways of existing collections.
- To fulfil statutory requirements, in the case of some archive materials.
- To enrich the experience of visitors to the Library, whether in person or ‘virtual’ visitors, who wish to appreciate the Special Collections for their historical, cultural, artistic and religious significance.
- Our content development policy is also informed by the requirements and wishes of donors and depositors, such as the Methodist Church of Great Britain, and we seek to collaborate actively with individual donors and depositors in the development of collections relevant to them.

PRINTED MATERIAL

The Library's collections of printed material include a diverse range of books, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers, maps, music and ephemera. The holdings range from incunables to publications of the present day, and cover a broad spectrum of subjects including theology and philosophy; economic, social, political and military history; travel and exploration; literature, drama and music; art and archaeology, and science and medicine. The following categories are of special importance:

- **Incunabula:** The library has the fourth largest collection of incunabula (books printed before 1501) in the country and we continue actively to collect in this area when we can. We currently focus our collecting on three areas: Italian and German incunabula (the two principal geographical strengths of the collections), and Bibles. We have a significant collection of early English printing, in particular the second largest group of books printed by William Caxton, England's first printer, in the world. If the opportunity arises to add to this collection we will give it serious consideration.
- **Italian printing and literature:** We have extremely strong holdings of books printed in Italy in the sixteenth century. We primarily concentrate purchasing on Italian poetry and literature, with a particular focus on named authors. The most important of these is Dante, where we have one of the greatest collections of early editions of Dante in the world – we aim for comprehensive collecting of Dante editions, Italian or otherwise, printed prior to 1851. We have particular strengths in the outputs of a number of Italian printers, including Aldus Manutius and his descendants, the Giunti and Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari. We also actively collect individual examples of the issues of presses not currently represented in the collections.
- **Bibles:** The Bible Collection is one of the finest in the world, spanning six centuries and more than 400 different languages and dialects. We aim to collect comprehensively Bibles printed anywhere prior to 1611, with a particular focus on incunable editions and editions printed in the British Isles. We will also enrich our existing collection through the selective acquisition of later Bibles, based on individual merit.
- **Theology and church history:** Building upon the rich Nonconformist collections gathered by Enriqueta Rylands, we collect relevant print materials particularly in the Methodist, Christian Brethren, Congregationalist, Unitarian, Baptist, Moravian and Quaker traditions, together with our extensive archival collections. In particular, we house the national collections of the Methodist Church in Britain and actively develop these in partnership with the Church. Nonconformist colleges, academies and institutions are well represented within the collections, alongside reports and institutional printed materials, hymnody, tune-books, early modern holiness literature and sermons. Small but significant collections of Jewish printed material are also occasionally augmented with selective acquisitions.
- **Early modern French history and literature:** The Robert Shackleton Collection contains some 3,000 works of literature and philosophy from the 18th and early 19th centuries. The French Revolution Collection is acknowledged to be one of the most significant in Britain, comprising some 40,000 monographs, periodicals, newspapers, proclamations and broadsides, from the time of the Revolution up to the restoration of the Bourbons. Our collecting will focus on these areas where there are already considerable strengths.
- **The history of the book and private presses:** We collect primary materials to supplement the study of the history of the book, especially book collecting, the book trade, book arts and illustration. We aim to augment our private press collections with contemporary publications that are of significance for studies of the history of the book, bibliography and the book arts. If the opportunity arises we will seek to fill the few remaining gaps in our collections of Kelmscott, Dove, Ashendene and Essex House presses

and to acquire individual items which significantly complement our broader holdings – printed, archival or manuscript.

- **Material of local interest and significance:** We collect comprehensively examples of Manchester printing pre-1801, and selectively pre-1901. We also collect, selectively, early examples of Lancashire and Cheshire printing, and rare/significant material relating to the histories of these counties.
- **Street literature:** We collect single-sheet examples of street literature, where the individual items relate directly to the broader collections, archival, printed or manuscript. We collect pre-1851 theatre bills, where those bills relate to a theatre in the North West of England and bills relating to London and elsewhere, where these build on existing strengths. We actively collect chapbooks published in Manchester or the North West and consider on individual merit chapbooks which build on existing strengths (namely Scottish imprints, chapbooks for children and religious tracts).
- **History of science and medicine:** We have extremely strong medical collections, from incunabula through to the 1950s, but with particular strengths in 1460-1601 and 1801-1851. Our collecting will focus particularly on material of local interest and significance.
- **British social and political history:** In line with the collecting focus for the archives we will selectively acquire printed material relating to the history of Liberalism and radicalism during the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially for the North West, the women's suffrage movement, the anti-slavery movement of the early 19th century, and the history of British colonialism (especially in India and China).
- **Modern literary and performing arts archives:** we will selectively acquire printed material that directly supports our collections of modern literary and performing arts archives.
- **Periodicals** are treated as part of the Special Collections either because they support the primary collections in terms of their subject matter (for example, bibliographical and archival journals), or because of their intrinsic importance, format or provenance. Examples of the latter include *Matrix*, and the *Gentleman's Magazine*. There are currently many legacy periodicals at Deansgate from the former John Rylands Library, which either duplicate holdings elsewhere in the UML, or are available electronically.

MANUSCRIPTS & ARCHIVES

The Library's manuscript collections cover more than fifty languages, including all the major European and Middle Eastern languages, and numerous Far Eastern ones. They span five millennia, and are written on virtually every medium ever employed. The subject range is vast, encompassing literary, historical, antiquarian, genealogical, biblical, devotional, ritualistic, medical, scientific, legal and administrative texts.

The Library holds several hundred archives of companies, business associations, trade unions, charities, social organizations and religious institutions, as well as landed families. Particular strengths include Nonconformist

archives (especially of Methodism); archives of recent and contemporary literature and drama; the archives of the University of Manchester; and the papers of individual scientists and academics.

The Library will actively develop its manuscript and archive collections in the following areas, through a policy of acquiring new items and collections and enhancing existing collections:

- **Literary archives and manuscripts dating from the 18th century to the present.** In the pre-1900 period we will particularly focus on: 18th-century literature and letters, especially the circle of Hester Lynch Thrale-Piozzi and Samuel Johnson; the history of the 19th-century novel, poetry and *belles lettres*; Elizabeth Gaskell and her circle; travel writing; and life writing. Post-1900, we will focus on the fields of 20th- and 21st-century poetries in English, including: the history and development of the editing, publishing, criticism and reviewing of poetry; translations into English of the works of significant poets and novelists writing in other European languages; and the materiality of visual and literary texts. Particular emphasis will be placed on poets of national and international importance who are associated with North West England, and papers relating to the contribution that Manchester and its region make to the national and international literary scenes.
- **Archives relating to the history of the book, printing and publishing,** particularly those relating to literary publishing in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, fine printing, the Private Press movement, the history of writing and the transmission of texts, the DIY culture of zines and little magazines, the history of book illustration and book design. Archives and manuscripts that document, illuminate or enhance the Library's outstanding printed book collections will be particularly sought.
- **Nonconformist archives,** particularly those representing the history of Methodism nationally and internationally, the history of the Christian Brethren, the history of Unitarianism, the ecumenical movement and Christian women's movements. The records of individual nonconformist chapels and congregations will not normally be accepted, but shall be referred to the most appropriate local repository. The Library does, however, collect the records of individual Brethren meetings.
- **Institutional archives of The University of Manchester,** the former Victoria University of Manchester and UMIST, the archives of individual academic and administrative departments, and the personal papers of distinguished past and present members of academic staff.
- **Archives and manuscripts relating to the history of medicine,** particularly those relating to Manchester and the North West. Collecting will focus on two areas in particular; the archives of regional medical societies and professional bodies, and the papers of key figures in the history of clinical and scientific medicine, particularly individuals associated with The University of Manchester and its predecessor bodies. The Library is not empowered to collect the archival records of NHS bodies, including hospitals. We will however liaise with local repositories which collect these to ensure that collectively we provide the broadest coverage of archives relating to the medical history of Greater Manchester.
- **Archives and manuscripts relating to the history of science and technology,** particularly in those fields within which The University of Manchester and its predecessor bodies have played a significant role. We will also focus on the following areas: science and technology in Victorian Manchester, the history of

computing, the development of radio-astronomy, and the papers of key contemporary scientists, such as Nobel laureates, associated with the University. We will liaise with other repositories, such as the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, over future acquisitions.

- **Archives relating to British popular culture.** We are especially interested in the first phase of collection-building in popular music, and in the archives of musicians, bands, clubs, managers, agents, journalists, photographers and designers from Manchester. In the medium to longer term, we will broaden our remit to collect archives from any significant British artist and their associates, and to collections relating to other elements of pop culture, such as youth culture, counter cultural movements, television and film.
- **Significant individual western medieval manuscripts** that complement our existing holdings, either by consolidating areas of existing strength, or by filling gaps in our holdings (for example a manuscript of a style, period or provenance not currently represented in the collections). We recognize, however, that such materials seldom appear on the market, and that the Library's resources are limited. Therefore it will usually be necessary to secure external funding for such acquisitions.
- In four further subject areas the Library will seek to enhance existing collections as opportunities arise.
- **Near-, middle- and far-eastern manuscripts**, particularly significant materials in Persian, Arabic and Hebrew. We recognize, however, that such materials rarely appear on the market, and that the Library's resources are limited. Therefore it will usually be necessary to secure external funding for such acquisitions. The issue of provenance is often crucial with such material. The Library will not acquire any manuscripts whose provenance is not fully documented or is in any way doubtful.
- **Archives relating to the economic and industrial history of Britain**, particularly those of the Lancashire cotton industry and related trades. In order to avoid duplication and conflict with other repositories, the Library will only collect material that has a national or regional significance, rather than county or district coverage. The Library will liaise with local authority record offices and the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester over future acquisitions.
- **Archives and manuscripts relating to the social and political history of Britain and British colonialism**, in particular the history of Liberalism and radicalism during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Anti-Corn Law League and the Manchester School, the women's suffrage movement, the anti-slavery movement of the early 19th century, and the history of the British colonialism (especially in India). We also collect Manchester charities such as the Wood Street Mission and Henshaw's Society for the Blind. The Library will seek to avoid duplication and the potential for conflict with the collecting policies of the Labour History Archive and Study Centre at the People's History Museum, and the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick.
- **Archives and manuscripts relating to the history and practice of the performing arts**, particularly those concerned with popular drama in the 19th and 20th centuries, theatre in education, and British cinema during the 20th century.

The Library will not actively collect family muniments and other material of a purely local nature, except for accruals to existing collections. Such material will normally directed to the Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Lancashire Record Office, Manchester Archives and Local Studies/GMCRO, or another appropriate repository.

VISUAL COLLECTIONS

The UML holds significant Visual Collections comprising: paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, textiles, ceramics, glass, archives, manuscripts, prints, papers, illustrated and painted books, and objects with associational value. Dating from the ancient world to the present, their representation of visual culture is excellent, and international in scope. The University of Manchester Library's Visual Collections relate to and augment the collections held by the Whitworth and the Manchester Museum.

The Visual Collections are classified into the following categories:

1. Fine Art: paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures
2. Decorative Art: metal work, glass, and ceramics
3. Photography: photographs and photographic equipment
4. Objects:
 - that relate to the history of printing
 - that relate to the history of writing
 - that relate to the history of the JRL
 - that have associational value

Content analysis of the collections reveals an excellent representation of:

- **Links between visual and literary cultures**, from the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead to recent and contemporary artists' books and Private Press productions.
- **Western medieval manuscript and book production**, from the scriptorium to the workshop including, the arts and crafts of painting, illumination, calligraphy and binding.
- **European visual print culture from the 15th century to the present**. This collection contains examples of the full repertoire of printing techniques including, relief, intaglio, planographic and screen prints. They relate to a spectrum of subjects and include works by Dürer, Cranach, Mantegna, Rembrandt, Hogarth, Blake, Doré, William Morris, and Lucien Pissarro. In addition, we have some examples of associated objects including printing blocks and plates.
- **The history of mechanically produced photography and the photographic book**. This collection encompasses a comprehensive range of subjects, photographic formats and processes, from the calotype to the Polaroid. We also hold a significant collection of associated objects including cameras, stereoscopes and a magic lantern.

- **Portraits.** Our collection of portraits encompasses oil paintings, miniatures, drawings, sculptures, photographs, ceramics and bone. These depict individuals who are connected to the University of Manchester and those represented in the Library's collections.
- **A range of artistic practices**, including those of significant artists, sculptors, and printmakers from Britain and beyond.
- **Post-World War II avant garde international art movements** including visual poetry, sound poetry and some forms of performance art.
- **The art and visual culture of the Near, Middle and Far East.** These collections include examples of the arts and crafts of drawing, painting, illumination and calligraphy.
- **Architectural, urban, garden and landscape history.** These collections include surveys and treatises which range from Alberti and Palladio to Robert Adam, Sir John Soane and Joseph Nash. There is also material relating to the Garden City movement of the early 20th century.
- **The history of collecting, connoisseurship and art historical scholarship.**
- **The art and illustration of science, technology and medicine** in a variety of forms including notebooks, drawings, diagrams, photographs and printed images.

When opportunities arise and funding permits we will develop our Visual Collection by selectively acquiring:

- **Mechanically produced photographs and related objects** that articulate the history of photography and the photographic book. In particular we will augment:
 - our holdings of analogue photographic formats;
 - our holdings in the area of early photographic books from 1844-1890;
 - our holdings of the work of contemporary photographers who practice the art of analogue photography.
- **Items that augment our holdings of European visual print culture**, and associated objects, from the 15th century to the present.
- **Portraits** where they depict individuals or groups connected to the University of Manchester or its collections
- **Artworks that have a connection to Manchester or the North of England.**

In addition we will seek to acquire works of art and objects that augment our collections of:

- Scientific, technological and medical illustration.

MAP COLLECTIONS

The map collection is the largest in the north of England and comprises approximately 140,000 printed map sheets and 1,300 atlases. The collection offers an extensive range of topographic and thematic mapping for the UK, as well as wide-ranging coverage for the rest of the world.

The collection has particular strengths in the following areas:

- Historical and modern maps of Northern England and Greater Manchester
- Official Government mapping
- Topographic and geological mapping of the UK
- 18th and 19th century antiquarian mapping
- Ephemera (including supplements to magazines, posters and advertisements from the 19th to the 21st century)
- Cartographic artworks

The collection includes a significant number of maps collected by the Manchester Geographical Society during the 19th and 20th century and the Mills and Booker collection of historical and antiquarian maps used to teach the History of Cartography at Manchester in the early 20th century.

We actively collect topographic and thematic maps of the UK and historical and modern maps of Manchester and the northwest region of England. We also acquire cartographic artworks, literary cartography and maps, which directly support modules in Geography and Art History & Cultural Practices. On a selective basis, we acquire world maps, which explore key themes such as colonialism, gender, data visualisation and mapping the World Wide Web.

SECONDARY MATERIAL

The great majority of supporting secondary material purchased covers, in the broadest sense, the History of the Book: printers and printing history; book illustration; typography; publishing history; the book trade; libraries and book collecting; bibliographies and the history of reading.

In addition, purchases are made for four named reference collections: Bookplate Literature, Bookbinding Literature, Incunable Literature and the Dante Collection. We also acquire reference material that supports other areas of collecting within Special Collections: the history of science, technology and medicine; named authors; palaeography; slavery; art history and architecture; material relating to Archives and Manuscripts; pertinent local and national histories and religions and theology, particularly Bibles and non-Conformist theology.

We do not collect material on modern librarianship or information studies unless it is particularly relevant to Special Collections.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

Collections analysis reveals the very wide geographical range of our archive and manuscript collections. Accordingly there will be no absolute geographical restriction on our future collecting activities. However, collections that have a particular association with the North West of England will be given special consideration.

GENRES AND FORMATS

There is an extraordinary range of formats and genres to be found in our collections. Material will be accepted in every mechanically produced format, whether manuscript, printed, photographic or audio-visual.

The UML does not currently have specialized technical expertise or facilities for the storage and care of large quantities of audio-visual material. Should the UML be offered a collection which comprises, substantially or entirely, audio-visual materials, the collection shall normally be directed to a more appropriate repository unless there are compelling reasons for our acquiring it. In the case of film and video materials, they shall be directed to the North West Film Archive at Manchester Central Library, or the British Film Institute. In the case of audio-materials, they shall be referred to the Manchester Archives and Local Studies or the National Sound Archive. When the UML does accept audio-visual materials, we shall endeavour to have preservation copies made on stable media.

Digital materials constitute an increasing proportion of our modern archive holdings. The UML accepts digital records only within those subject areas that are set out within this collecting policy.

MATERIAL OUTSIDE THE COLLECTING POLICY

Acquisitions that fall outside the current collecting policy shall be made only in exceptional circumstances, after proper consideration by the University Librarian and after full consultation with other relevant repositories.

ACQUISITION PROCEDURES

The Library seeks to acquire Special Collections by donation, bequest, purchase, deposit and transfer. Preference is given to donation and bequest.

Donation: the owner assigns to the Library his/her rights of ownership in the material, subject to any conditions which may be agreed at the time; ownership of copyright in the material is not affected, unless it is specifically included in the transfer.

Bequest: the owner bequeaths material to the Library on death by will or codicil. Owners are encouraged to discuss potential bequests during their lifetimes. The Library retains the right to refuse to accept bequests of material that we consider to be inappropriate to our holdings.

Purchase: the Library buys material from dealers, at auction, and by private treaty sales. Ownership of copyright in the material is not affected, unless it is specifically included in the purchase.

Deposit: the owner retains his/her rights of title, but places the material in the custody of the Library, usually for a fixed term, renewable by mutual consent. The Library will normally enter into indefinite deposit agreements only with corporate bodies such as charities, societies, businesses and legal partnerships.

Transfer: from time to time the Library transfers printed material from the general collections to Special Collections. Transfers are agreed by the Library Collections Group, chaired by the Associate Director of Collection Strategies. University archives are transferred directly to the Library from administrative and academic departments of the University, and from the Records Management Office.

In considering any potential acquisition, the Library will evaluate whether the material falls within its current collecting policy, and whether the material would be more appropriately located in another institution. The Library will not accept material that falls outside its collecting policy, other than in exceptional circumstances. In the case of material that would be more appropriately elsewhere, the Library will refer the owner to the other institution.

COLLABORATION

In developing our collecting policy for Special Collections, we acknowledge that the policy must take full cognizance of the wider context: both the collecting policies of individual institutions, and collaborative agreements and frameworks for collecting, locally, nationally and internationally.

The Library enjoys excellent relations with other collecting institutions, nationally and regionally, including the British Library, many university libraries, and local and specialist archives. We respect their collecting interests and continue to work closely with them to ensure that material is lodged in the most appropriate location. Close liaison will be fostered by our continued participation in national, regional and sectoral bodies such as RLUK (Research Libraries UK), NoWAL (North West Academic Libraries), RAG (Religious Archives Group), and GLAM (Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts).

We will work with the British Library, The National Archives and other bodies to develop national frameworks for collecting policies in particular fields. We will also seek the endorsement of such national and international institutions for our own collecting policy.

In the unlikely event of any dispute between the Library and another institution over the most appropriate location of any material, the advice of a neutral arbiter such as TNA's Head of Archive Section Development or the Chief Executive of the British Library will be taken.

We will not acquire any material in contravention of the terms of current legislation and in particular the Public Records Acts, the Manorial and Tithe Documents Rules and the Parochial Registers and Records Measure. We will exercise due diligence in order to avoid the acquisition of any cultural materials which might have been imported illegally or unethically into the United Kingdom.

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