UCL Library Collections Framework

The UCL Library Services collecting strategy seeks to maintain the balance between teaching and research support and to ensure long-term sustainability for our collections. UCL is committed to the delivery of research-integrated education, which is at the core of UCL's Education Strategy and UCL 2034, the university's 20-year institutional strategy.

UCL Library Services is a complex organisation with collections housed across 14 distinct libraries, including some that jointly serve the university and NHS Trusts, and a significant off-site storage facility. Holdings range from highly specialist research collections to textbook collections supporting the large-scale delivery of UG and PGT programmes. Some of these collections merit recognition as collections of national and international importance and form part of the world's intellectual heritage and must be maintained and developed as such.

The teaching, learning and research landscape has changed significantly over the last decade and will continue to do so into the future. Student numbers have grown significantly. The range and reach of teaching and research activities continues to expand, along with a focus on interdisciplinary scholarship.

The ongoing demand for diverse high quality study spaces means that physical space needs to be considered very carefully. The need for access to print collections varies according to subject and level of study and a balance is needed to satisfy the diversity of need.

The UCL Library Services Collections Framework is based upon the categorisation of collections into three broad categories. This allows us to manage and develop them coherently and facilitates the most effective use of our financial, space and staff resources.

A collection is defined as a set of material which has commonality of subject or range of subjects and will be considered as a whole for purposes of collection management. It may or may not be physically located in the same place but will have a discrete intellectual identity. A collection will include material in all formats.

Categories are:

Teaching & Research: Primarily or exclusively collections that support current teaching, research and clinical practice. They are central in terms of provision of material for staff and students but not of national or international significance. Historical material will not normally be added. Items believed to be unique will be retained.

Flagship collections: Collections which retain a focus on teaching and research needs, but also have a national or international significance. The Library will actively develop these collections, and continue to invest time, effort and resources to ensure they are globally visible, promoted and externally recognised.

Heritage collections: Collections, which are historically strong and will be retained as they supplement areas of teaching and research; as part of institutional history or due to having a national or international importance beyond UCL. They may also be comprised of historical material related to Teaching & Research category collections where the historical material is deemed to be of significance.

Categories will be allocated in light of the collection as a whole and take account of the fact that:

a) A collection may encompass more than one category
b) Collections may be dispersed across multiple locations

Priority in the allocation of financial resources will remain for the acquisition of access to material required for the support of teaching and current research and clinical practice.

The UCL Library Services Collection Management Policy outlines the key principles of our approach to Acquisition & Selection, Retention, and Relegation and Disposal. Where there is a difference in policy with respect to category, reference is made to Flagship Policy or Heritage Policy which should provide the additional information or context related to a particular collection.

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