

Special Collections Collection Development Policy

Introduction

Special Collections seeks to collect archival records, manuscripts, rare books and other primary sources to support teaching and research in University College London and the wider community. This Policy is intended to guide the acquisition of rare and archival materials in all formats.

It should be read in conjunction with several other policy documents, notably:

- UCL Library Collections Framework 2019
- UCL Collection Management Policy 2019
- UCL Library Strategy 2019-22
- UCL 2034
- UCL Records Management Policy
- Special Collections De-accessioning and Appraisal Policy

This Collection Development Policy is intended to sustain a continuing, coherent research collection which has a stable focus and builds on and develops from existing strengths.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Definitions and Scope

The Special Collections section of UCL Library Services is made up of the following sections:

Rare Books: manages rare printed books held by UCL

Archives: manages archives and manuscripts held by UCL, including born-digital archives

Records: manages archival and print material on the history of UCL, including hard-copy research data from UCL research projects. This section is also responsible for semi-current records management across UCL.

Digital: manages the Library's digitisation work and projects, and is responsible for the storage, dissemination and re-use of digital holdings curated by the Library

Special Collections also undertakes reader services, conservation and preservation and outreach and engagement work relating to the collections. It works closely with the Retrospective Cataloguing team, which undertakes backlog cataloguing across Library Services, including Special Collections material.

Definitions:

Rare book: a book that is distinguished by its early date of production, its limited issue, the scarcity of surviving copies, the special character of the item, edition or binding, or its historical interest.

Archive: an archive is an accumulation of primary source documents that have been created over the course of an individual or organisation's lifetime.

Donated/Deposited collections: collections donated to or deposited with UCL by external people or organisations.

Institutional archive: archive collection created by an institution (in this case UCL).

Born-digital archives: archive collections that originate in a digital form.

Digitisation: the process of converting information into a digital format e.g. by scanning a paper document.

Digitised material: archive or book material that has been scanned (and possibly transformed into character data using OCR).

Core Subject Strengths

Our collections have developed since the foundation of the University in 1826. The following subject strengths have been established to allow the continued, focused, development of our collections; supporting the work of the University, its staff and students, and enhancing existing research strengths.

Special Collections core subject areas:

We will collect materials to support and extend the following areas of strength:

- Language, literature and poetry from the 15th to the 21st centuries, particularly in English and Italian
- 20th and 21st century small-press publishing
- Politics and social policy, especially 19th and 20th century reform movements
- History of Science, especially Medical Sciences and Genetics
- Mathematics
- Early modern printed books
- Latin American history and economics, particularly 19th and 20th century
- Hebraica and Judaica
- History of Education, especially 20th century
- History of London, especially 19th and 20th century
- University College London (UCL) archive, including predecessors and affiliated bodies

Collections in these areas will be the main focus of our work and will be prioritised in terms of cataloguing, fundraising, teaching and other activities. We will continue to preserve, make available and add to existing collections outside of this defined remit. We will not usually accept new collections outside of the core subject strengths.

Criteria for selection of new acquisitions

The main consideration when taking new rare book or archive collections will be the core subject strengths outlined above, but each acquisition will also be assessed against the following criteria **where relevant**:

- **Research and teaching interest.** The extent to which a collection will have long-term research or teaching use within UCL
- **Informational and evidential value of the collection.** The extent to which the collection contains substantive, unique, concentrated and significant information about a topic or topics, and the extent to which a collection documents how the creating person or body worked and/or conducted its business
- **Relationship with other holdings.** The extent to which a collection links with our other collections
- **Fundraising and outreach.** The extent to which the collection can be used to further the aims of UCL Library Services strategy in terms of outreach and fundraising potential
- **Collection strengths of other institutions.** The extent to which a collection might be more appropriately housed elsewhere
- **Resource considerations.** The extent to which the space and staff time involved in preserving, appraising, sorting and description are justified in terms of the collection's historical value
- **Physical condition.** The extent to which poor physical condition would limit public access, especially if the cost of undertaking the necessary conservation treatment is disproportionate to historical value.
- **Access restrictions.** Careful consideration will be given before accepting collections with material that might be subject to long closure periods, whether due to legal or organisational reasons.
- **Format:** We will accept material in any format, including AV and digital material, provided this format can be safely stored and readily made available to users

Acquisition Procedures

Rare Books

An item or collection of rare books will be designated as, added to or acquired by Special Collections if it fulfils the first and one of the following criteria:

- It complements, enriches or builds on existing subject specialisms and strengths
- It is a rare printed work, or contains rare printed works
- It is of special bibliographic significance (e.g. first edition, out of print, limited, unique or special edition or copy, privately published or small press items)
- It is of significant cultural or historical significance (e.g. association items, inscribed items, items of known scarcity or value)

Items not usually considered:

- Material that does not fit the identified subject specialisms and strengths
- Material offered on loan or deposit
- Duplicates of material already held (unless there is a significant provenance or association)

External donors:

- Each potential donation will be assessed individually by Special Collections staff, possibly including a site visit. Where the material does not meet the above acquisitions criteria, special collections staff will advise as to alternative locations
- All material must come from a bona fide source and have a demonstrated provenance
- The donor or depositor must have the authority to transfer the material
- All material must meet the terms of donation as laid out in the donation agreement
- The donor must sign a formal [donation agreement](#), which will capture information on copyright and publication rights
- There should be no unnecessary restrictions on access or availability for research
- There should be no stipulations on storage, preservation, conservation, cataloguing or use which do not conform to UCL's available resources or strategic aims.
- We will only purchase items in limited circumstances.

Internal transfers to Special Collections:

- Special Collections staff should be consulted when stock weeding exercises are conducted in the libraries, or related stores, as some items no longer required for current teaching and research may have historical significance and be appropriate for transfer. This should be done in collaboration with the Head of Rare Books, following the procedure outlined on the Special Collections [guidelines](#).

Donated Archives

A donated archive collection will be added to Special Collections if it fulfils the following criteria:

- It complements, enriches or builds on existing subject specialisms and strengths
- The material is unpublished and fits the definition of archival given in this document

Items not usually considered:

- Records of central or local government departments (or other public records)
- Any records which are closely associated by provenance with those already housed in another recognised archive repository
- Collections of reproduction or duplicate documents, the originals of which are already housed in another recognised archive repository
- Collections in certain formats or media for which UCL has no facilities for the provision of adequate long-term preservation and/or access
- Collections composed entirely of published material
- Records or papers which are still in current or semi-current use by their originators
- UCL historical material (this is managed by the UCL Records Office and can be found under UCL Archive)

External donors

- Each potential donation is assessed individually by archives staff, usually including a site visit. Where the material does not meet the above acquisitions criteria, archives staff will advise as to alternative locations
- All material must come from a bona fide source and have a demonstrated provenance
- The donor or depositor must have the authority to transfer the material
- All material must meet the terms of donation as laid out in the donation/deposit agreement
- The donor must sign a formal [donation agreement](#), which will capture information on copyright and publication rights
- There should be no unnecessary restrictions on access or availability for research
- There should be no stipulations on storage, preservation, conservation, cataloguing or use which do not conform to UCL's available resources or strategic aims
- We will only purchase items in limited circumstances

Deposited archive collections relating to merged institutions (e.g. personal papers of academics linked to institutions) will also come under the remit of the Archives Section.

Aside from the IOE Archive (see separate Collection Development Policy), which forms part of Special Collections, deposited archives at other UCL Libraries will be governed by local acquisition policies.

UCL Archive

The Records Office acquires the administrative records of UCL which document its activities, transactions and governance. This material consists of the following areas:

- Semi-current administrative material. ***This is covered by the UCL Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule and does not form part of this policy.***
- UCL historical material
- Research records of UCL staff, including some clinical trials
- UC Hospital records (see separate Collection Development Policy)

The UCL Administrative Archive comprises historical records of UCL from its foundation to the present day. This archive is intended to reflect the activities and development of UCL and will take records including (but not limited to):

- Minutes of UCL Council
- Council correspondence
- Records of formal committees
- Corporate strategy and planning
- Buildings material, including leases and plans
- Publications, including annual and financial reports, prospectuses; professorial lectures; newsletters; research papers; handbooks; regulations and syllabuses etc.
- Staff and student files
- Photographs
- Departmental records

The UCL Administrative Archive will usually include the administrative records of merged institutions. Deposited archive collections relating to merged institutions (e.g. personal papers of academics linked to institutions) will come under the remit of the Archives Section.

Some institutional archives are managed on-site by individual UCL Libraries according to their own policies and procedures (e.g. Institute of Neurology, School of Pharmacy, SSEES, and Institute of Orthopaedics).

Items not usually considered:

- Material in current use or marked for destruction in the UCL Records Retention Policy
- Minutes of meetings from persons other than the Secretary
- Working drafts, duplicates, junk mail, newsletters, notices, trade literature
- Personal or local copies of records that are filed elsewhere
- Routine material such as invitations to meetings or acknowledgements

Internal transfers:

- Transfer of material from internal departments will require a [donation agreement](#) and will be accessioned on CALM as an internal transfer
- Once material has been transferred it will not be returned to the creating department. Unsolicited material may be returned.

External donors:

- Each potential donation will be assessed individually by Records Office staff, possibly including a site visit. All material must come from a bona fide source and have a demonstrated provenance
- The donor or depositor must have the authority to transfer the material
- All material must meet the terms of donation as laid out in the donation agreement
- The donor must sign a formal [donation agreement](#), which will capture information on copyright and publication rights
- There should be no unnecessary restrictions on access or availability for research
- There should be no stipulations on storage, preservation, conservation, cataloguing or use which do not conform to UCL's available resources or strategic aims.
- We will only purchase items in limited circumstances.

Research records

The Records Office also collects non-active hard-copy research records of UCL staff. Digital research data is usually collected and managed by UCL RITS (Research IT Services).

Specific criteria apply to the records of clinical trials. UCL accepts:

- UCL Trial Master Files
- UCL Site Files
- Site Files from UCLH NHS Foundation Trust, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust or Whittington Hospital NHS Trust where the Chief Investigator holds a substantive or honorary contract with UCL.

No other clinical trial records are accepted.

Records are acquired by internal transfer in accordance with the UCL Retention Schedule.

Due to the generally large nature of these collections, each potential donation will be assessed individually by Records Office staff and acceptance will be dependent on available space, condition of material and the required input of staff in terms of cataloguing and repackaging. If the Records Office is unable to take the offered collection for any of the reasons outlined, advice will be given either on alternative places of deposit or work required by the donor prior to deposit.

Digital Materials

Digital archives

We are committed to working with donors of digital material to facilitate its long-term preservation and to provide access for researchers.

Born-digital material will be collected in the same subject areas as outlined above, using the standard donation form, and stored securely in an appropriate digital repository.

Each potential donation will be assessed individually by Special Collections staff and acceptance will be dependent on our ability to preserve and provide access to the collection in the long-term.

Digital Research data

The Digital team sometimes manages digital research data where it does not fall under the remit of UCL RITS (Research IT Services). Access to these data collections is approved by the data owners, based on their own criteria with input from the UCL Data Protection Team, and managed by Special Collections staff.

Each potential data collection will be assessed individually by Special Collections staff and acceptance will be dependent on our ability to preserve and provide access to the collection in the long-term.

At present we are unable to collect certain formats of digital archives; these include some databases, Computer Aided Design files and e-mails. A full list of workable formats is available.

Digitised archive collections

Collections of digitised book and archive material will be stored in line with the current Digital Preservation Policy, especially if they complement, enrich or build on existing subject specialisms and strengths. These collections will usually be based on UCL Library materials.

Offers of collections created by UCL departments other than UCL Library Services will be considered on a case-by-case basis and decisions will be closely based on the overall Collection Development Policy and in conjunction with the Research Data Management Policy. Decision-making will include consideration of capacity, in storage, staffing and technology.

Reappraisal and de-accessioning

We reserve the right to re-evaluate and reappraise our holdings on a periodic basis. This will be based on the categories outlined above and will usually be focussed on Heritage collections and according to written plans created by heads of section. Our aim is that, in negotiation with donors, collections will be weeded to core series rather than de-accessioned.

De-accessioning will be considered for items or collections when they are judged no longer to contribute to the mission of the Library, or if physical deterioration or damage means they cannot be preserved in a usable state.

When possible and if appropriate, efforts will be made to ensure that the items disposed of remain in the public domain. Materials will only be disposed of when we have a legal right to do so. Academic staff and/or other stakeholders as appropriate will be consulted on major de-accessions.

Equalities and Gap analysis

The development of our collections has been undertaken within the context of one of the UK leading universities and some of our collections reflect the inherent inequalities and biases of such an institution. While we are committed to collecting as comprehensively as possible and have done some notable work on opening up the collections, including dealing with difficult histories and provenance, we are aware that we still need to reflect further on our current holdings and future collecting policies to ensure we are aware of existing biases and gaps. As a minimum we will undertake:

- An ongoing review of collection policies to ensure that in the future our collections are truly representative of our audiences and stakeholders
- A gap analysis of our holdings to identify areas for pro-active collecting
- To create a dynamic and flexible forward plan for work in this area
- To develop engagement projects with under-represented members of our community and explore how to increase interaction with, and donation of materials from, these groups

Areas for future development will include building up our holdings of material created by underrepresented groups in our flagship collecting areas, specifically:

- Archives of BAME academics at UCL
- Archives relating to race, disability and international education (IOE)
- Archives created by women relating to UCL
- More diverse rare book material that complements our key strengths

Decision-making

Initial negotiations and scoping of acquisitions will be undertaken by the relevant section head in Special Collections.

Decisions on smaller acquisitions and additions to existing collections will be made by the Head of Special Collections on the basis of the stated selection criteria.

For major acquisitions, a report based on the selection criteria, with a recommendation by the Head of Special Collections, will be submitted to the Special Collections Advisory Group for final approval.

A report listing all acquisitions will be made to the Library Senior Management team on an annual basis (January) and may be passed to any other relevant stakeholders.

Agreed by Director of Services 21/01/21