

UCL Special Collections Access Statement

The mission of UCL Special Collections is to:

- Collect archives, records and rare books to support the research and teaching of UCL and to reflect the history of the organisation
- Preserve those rare materials for the future by maintaining monitored storage conditions, undertaking preservation activities and carrying out conservation on damaged items
- Engage UCL staff and students and external audiences through academic teaching sessions, exhibitions, special events, community and school links, social media, volunteer programmes and work experience placements
- Provide access to rare materials through specialised cataloguing, on-line access to catalogues and guides, dedicated enquiry services, invigilated reading rooms, digitisation services and publication advice
- Provide support across all library sites in these areas

Special Collections serves a wide-ranging community, including UCL academic and professional staff; UCL students of all levels; academics and students from elsewhere in the UK and worldwide; and all other bona fide researchers. Other stakeholders include our archive donors and depositors; internal and external partners; local (Camden, Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest) schools and community groups; volunteers; and our external funders.

Special Collections aims to serve all its community, including those with those with disabilities or individual access requirements. There are two accessible onsite reading rooms: one in the Institute of Education Library at 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL and another in the South Junction of the Wilkins Building, Gower St, London WC1E 6BT. A third reading room is available at the National Archives in Kew. Opening hours, location, access arrangements and details of policies on copying and reproduction can be found on the [Special Collections website](#). Information on [accessibility and the support we provide](#) is outlined on the Library Services website.

Consultation of hard-copy collections will be in the reading rooms, during advertised opening hours and in accordance with current regulations. Access to digital media will be provided to researchers either through Special Collections staff or through a suitable electronic interface. Access to digitised materials is through the online [Digital Collections webpage](#).

Finding aids for the archive collections are provided in detailed lists, which are available either through our [on-line catalogue](#) or in hard-copy on request. Our rare books are catalogued on [Explore](#) and there is an [A-Z of rare books collections](#). Collections staff provide detailed guidance for researchers on the use of the collections for research; there are also a large number of subject guides. We complete annual returns to TNA on new accessions and contribute to wider archive online portals such as AIM25, and subject-specific sites.

Although we will try our utmost to make the collections available to all our researchers, restrictions may be placed on public access to archive records for a specified period of years due the particular sensitivity of their contents or to comply with legal requirements such as the **General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**. Collection items may also be restricted because of conservation needs. Any restrictions, and the reasons for them, are clearly marked in the archive catalogues.

As not all users are able or willing to visit us in person, Special Collections offers [e-mail enquiry services](#), a number of detailed on-line guides and on-line catalogues. We also produce hard-copy leaflets and publications and provide an on-demand reprographics service. We are exploring the potential for online reading room services, such as on-demand scanning.

We aim to serve all of our community, which includes a dedicated outreach programme that partners with a number of school and community groups in our target London boroughs (Camden and the four neighbouring boroughs of the Olympic Park). We also provide support for the UCL community through a dedicated academic teaching and events programme, and participation in research bids and projects. Our events programme is usually open to the general public. We provide additional access to such events through recording and transcription and we are developing our online offers for academic teaching, events and outreach. We aspire to open up the various professions in our field of work to a wider audience through volunteer programmes (that are mutually beneficial to participants and the department), as well as work experience placements for school age pupils and adults.

Special Collections also provides information for its users in the form of dedicated [blog](#), twitter and Instagram accounts.

We incorporate the views of our community and stakeholders into the development of our work through focus groups, surveys, feedback forms and statistical analysis. Partnership projects will always include a reflective process.

SA 02/12/2020

Agreed by Director of Services 21/01/21