

UCL Special Collections Strategy, 2019-22

Introduction

The UCL Special Collections Strategy is mapped to the UCL Library Services Strategy 2019-22, which is set in the context of UCL 2034, a strategy for UCL for the next 20 years. It is supported by strategies and operational plans for specific areas of Special Collections work.

Key Performance Areas

- User Experience
- Staffing, equality, diversity and inclusion
- Finance and Management Information
- Systems, Collections and Processes
- Sustainable Estate
- Communication, Outreach and Open Science

Mission

We aim 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 and social media.
- 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.

The UCL Records Office provides help and advice to staff on information management issues, produces policy in line with legislation and promotes good governance.

1. User Experience

We will develop our externally-facing access points (in person and online) to make them as accessible and informative as possible for our audiences.

We will continue to develop our successful academic support and events programme to support teaching and research at UCL ([link to strategy and reports](#))

We will review our first Special Collections Fellowship and actively pursue possibilities of introducing further fellowships focussed on aspects of our work or collections.

We will continue to undertake wide-ranging cataloguing, digitisation and conservation projects across our collections, in order to improve and broaden access for researchers.

We will continue to develop our digital offer in terms of teaching, events and outreach.

2. Staffing, equality, diversity and inclusion

We will continue to develop the skills of Special Collections staff through appropriate internal and external training, including shadowing opportunities within and without the section.

We will continue to participate in schemes to develop traineeships and apprenticeships.

We will continue to refine and extend our volunteering and work placement opportunities through partnerships with UCL Volunteering and external organisations.

We will continue to provide input into the improvement of staff office and workshop spaces.

We will ensure that staff have had all requisite training and support relating to health and safety in the workplace.

We will engage with the Liberating the Curriculum programme and aim to create projects to support the opening up and diversification of our collections

3. Finance and Management Information

We will develop an ongoing programme of valuation for our rare holdings, supported by policy and procedural documentation.

We will create a cross-departmental fundraising strategy in order to build on ongoing success in attracting external and internal funding for Special Collections projects.

We will work with the Library Finance team to develop a larger Special Collections Friends group, which will be embedded in the fundraising and events programme of the section.

We will review current statistical gathering and analysis and devise a set of statistics and reports that show the full extent of Special Collections activities and evidence the outcomes and benefits of our work.

4. Systems, Collections and Processes

We will continue to develop robust collection development and management policies and procedures, including prioritisation and deaccessioning.

We will create defined cataloguing, retrieval enhancement, conservation and digitisation projects based on the policy structure.

We will maintain and develop our management and cataloguing systems so that they remain fit for purpose.

We will work with the UCL GDPR team to develop a business case for digital records management and scope future activity and training.

We will explore service improvements in line with the CSE activity of UCL Library, including more structured audience development and feedback.

5. Sustainable Buildings

We will complete Incident Management planning and training for all spaces managed by Special Collections, in line with UCL standards and templates.

We will work with the Library Buildings team to manage and improve existing storage spaces, aligning this work with Benchmarks in Collections care and relevant British Standards.

We will work with the Director of Operations, UCL Library Services, to manage contracted storage spaces provided by third parties.

We will work with UCL Estates and the Director of Operations, UCL Library Services, to identify potential teaching space suitable for Special Collections.

6. Communications, Outreach and Open Science

We will continue to develop our successful schools and community outreach programme to open up our collections to new audiences.

We will work with relevant groups to devise, implement and support new spaces and programmes at UCL East.

We will contribute to internal Library exhibitions and continue to loan material to external organisations.

We will continue to develop our online and social media profile.

We will aim to develop digital volunteering projects to increase access and diversify our volunteer roles.

We will work with the Library Communications Officer and UCL Media to develop an annual communications strategy and timetable for Special Collections.

Agreed by Director of Services 21/01/21

