

Collection management policy: special collections development



Scope

This Collection Development Policy outlines the key areas in which the Department of Special Collections seeks to build its holdings. Special Collections includes material acquired outside the remit of legal deposit (although some legal deposit material may transfer to Special Collections depending on rarity or value) and current materials purchased under the aegis of Subject Librarians for research and learning.

The Collection Development Policy should be read in conjunction with the Collection Management Policy for Special Collections, which includes technical details relating to policy and procedures for accessioning and managing newly acquired materials.

Collecting Criteria: Overview

The Library was re-founded by Sir Thomas Bodley in 1602 and his original intention that it should build its collections for the benefit of the 'Republic of the Learned' remains unchanged. The Bodleian seeks to build on the manifold strengths of existing holdings, thereby enhancing and extending our understanding of them and their social, historical and intellectual contexts. It also seeks to fill obvious gaps in such holdings.

In developing the Special Collections throughout its libraries, the Bodleian's primary focus is on materials whose form and content are likely to advance some specific field of scholarship or learning, and while it seeks to support scholarship internationally, particular attention is paid to supporting and engendering research and teaching in the University of Oxford itself.

While the intellectual content of Special Collections is of importance across different formats (eg early modern women's studies as a subject may be collected across rare books, music, manuscripts and printed ephemera), careful consideration is given to physical format and copy-specific nature of materials, as these elements contribute to their overall meaning and their potential for bibliographical or broader study and for teaching. Objects are accepted where appropriate, for example where they form an inalienable part of a larger archival collection, or where they enhance our understanding of the history, form or technological development of the written word and other forms of legible culture (for example, writing or copying tools). The Bodleian seeks to acquire material which supports the research and teaching activities within its four Divisions: Humanities; Medical Sciences; Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences; and Social Sciences. Although the principal criteria for collecting are the research potential of the material in question and the support of teaching (for example in manuscript or rare book master classes or the instruction of palaeography), the Bodleian also acquires special collections that may represent some particular wider cultural or aesthetic value, particularly where these will have strong and positive impact upon the visitors to its exhibitions, readers of its publications, or will be appreciated by the people of the city of Oxford, county of Oxfordshire and beyond. The focus for collection development in relation to archival or manuscript material is on primary, unpublished materials likely to generate new research and routine working papers or research materials which have already led to published and widely available research outputs will generally not be collected; nevertheless the archives of scholars are considered on a case by case basis and may be acquired where they contribute further to the understanding of a particular topic, the social and cultural contexts of a particular discipline, or to the life and times of distinguished scholars, particularly with a connection to Oxford.

While this Collection Development Policy seeks to outline the broad areas of our collecting, particularly in relation to the existing strength of our holdings, it is not limited to these categories and all possible collections or items will be considered on the basis of their merit and likely research value.

Material is acquired through donation, purchase (where funds allow), bequest and through the government's Acceptance in Lieu scheme (in which pre-eminent collections may be allocated in lieu of inheritance tax liabilities). In exceptional circumstances, material may be considered for deposit on loan.

Material may be accepted in various formats, including:

- Printed material on paper (including ephemera), parchment or other media
- Manuscript material on paper, parchment, birch bark, palm leaf
- Photographic material, such as photographic prints, negatives and slides
- Artistic material in various media
- Audio-visual material, such as film, videotapes and audiotapes
- Born digital material, such as documents, emails, photographs and websites
- Objects (as described above)

Decisions to accept material depends upon a careful assessment of suitability in relation to the principal collecting areas set out below.

Additionally, in assessing the suitability of materials for acceptance:

- Careful consideration will be given to the collection strengths and policies of other collecting institutions within the university (including its colleges) and beyond and in some cases these may be deferred to where a strong academic or cultural case can be made.
- Decisions to accept material will be informed by the assessments of expert staff in the department of Special Collections and where appropriate active researchers and subject experts within the wider Bodleian Libraries, the university and beyond.
- Careful consideration will be given to the condition of material and to any legal or ethical implications of the material, including provenance and title.
- Other material readily available elsewhere, such as offprints, publications, un-annotated proofs, mimeographed, photocopied or otherwise duplicated typescripts and facsimiles of archival material held elsewhere are not generally accepted. However such items may be retained if they form an integral part of an archival collection.
- Collections of printed material are always considered; however, unless it is seen to be particularly important to retain the collection intact or individual items contain important annotations or other copy specific features (bindings, marks of ownership, etc), the Library will not normally accept items which duplicate material already in its collections, or else reserves the right to return or dispose of them. Collections containing substantial numbers of books not already in the Bodleian are accepted on the understanding that they may be weeded for duplicates.
- Since the transfer of such records to the Oxfordshire Record Office (now the Oxfordshire History Centre) in the 1980s, the department does not collect local parish, archdeaconry, or diocesan records.
- The libraries retain the right to decline offers of collections.

Principal collecting areas

1. Western Manuscripts and Archives

Western manuscripts are archives and manuscripts written in Western European languages. The Bodleian's Western Manuscripts collections range from classical papyri and medieval illuminated books to modern political and scientific archives and electronic records.

The Bodleian seeks to acquire—by donation, acceptance in lieu, where possible by purchase and occasionally deposit—manuscripts and archival material from the earliest period to the present day, in any western European language, which will further the research interests of current and future students and academics of the University of Oxford and support the wider research community, both nationally and internationally. The material must be deemed worthy of permanent preservation and must be original source material of significance to the history of the University of Oxford or of significance at a national or international level. The Bodleian acquires archival material from a wide range of sources. We actively collect the records of individuals, businesses, organizations, charities, political groups and societies whose work, core purposes or interests relate to and enhance our existing collections.

The main subject areas of interest are outlined below.

A. Oxford University

We seek to preserve *a selective record* of the academic work *and social life* of the University by acquiring, where appropriate, the personal papers of academics from each of the four divisions, as well as the records of university clubs and societies. Current Oxford University theses are also collected. The *administrative records of the University* are preserved by *Oxford University Archives (OUA; see below)*.

B. Medieval and earlier manuscripts

Acquisitions of medieval manuscripts (and occasionally earlier papyrus or parchment fragments) are pursued wherever possible. The aim for new purchases is to complement areas of existing strength. However, the Bodleian's holdings in these areas are already so rich that most or all manuscripts written in Western languages (including Greek) before 1500 might arguably make fitting accessions. Donations of pre-1500 materials are always welcome, purchases are occasionally made from existing funds, and more large-scale fund-raising for significant items may be contemplated if and when they appear on the market.

C. Early Modern History

We seek to add material relating to the core strengths of the existing collections: antiquarian and topographical collections from the 17th century onwards; 17th-century British and Irish history, particularly the Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration periods; 18th- and 19th-century British politics; Britain's relationship with European states, 1640-1815, with a focus on diplomacy; Britain's imperial and colonial history, 1600-1800, particularly in the Indian subcontinent (administration of India and trading records) and in the West Indies (slavery and trade).

D. Political and Social History, Philosophy, Theology and Social Sciences

We seek to augment strong holdings in archival and other manuscript material relating to British political, diplomatic, social and economic history, specifically the private archives of politicians, public servants (mainly diplomats and international civil servants), journalists, political commentators, editors and broadcasters, and other figures involved in public life. We hold the official archives of the Conservative Party and seek to complement this with related collections, including private papers.

We pursue material relating to education; industrial relations; women's suffrage and employment; economic and financial policies; the welfare state; Ireland; international relations; the conduct and impact of two world wars; and the development of the United Nations; records relating to non-governmental bodies and charities; business records.

We hold large collections relating to theology and philosophy across all time periods, particularly as these relate to Oxford.

E. African and Commonwealth Studies

We seek to acquire archival and other material relating to the history, politics, economic and social development of African and Commonwealth countries during the colonial and post-colonial period, specifically the private papers of colonial administrators and other individuals who have lived and worked in African and Commonwealth countries and the archives of organisations which were concerned with these countries. Also, material relating to agriculture, medicine, education and the anti-slavery movement and southern Africa.

F. Literary studies, media and life writing

We seek to build on notable strengths in British literature, including Elizabethan poetry and drama; early modern poetry, prose and drama; the Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite movements of the 19th century (particularly Shelley and his circle); writers connected to the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement; Oxford-related authors of all periods, including coherent groups of writers (eg. the Inklings and the 'Pylon poets'); the papers of publishers and distinguished literary families; children's literature and fantasy literature of the 20th century; autobiographical writings and collections, including diaries, journals and commonplace books; small presses; papers of Oxford Professors of poetry and literary prize winners within the University.

American, Canadian and Commonwealth material and manuscripts and archives in other languages which support current research interests within the university and complement existing holdings are always considered.

G. Science and Medicine

We seek to develop collections of archives and manuscripts of scientific interest, both for an understanding of the history of Science from the earliest times to the present, but also for the inherent value to contemporary scientists of research data – for example, collections of glass plate astronomical images, records of meteorological significance or collections of plant specimens.

Also, archives and manuscripts of individuals of note in the fields of science and medicine for the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries; papers of 19th-century scientists and physicians; papers of 20th-century scientists and medical researchers, most having a strong connection with Oxford University; scientific organisations, in particular the archives of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning; and archives and manuscripts which generally demonstrate the role and impact of science, technology and medicine in society.

H. Art History and Visual Culture

We seek to acquire archives and manuscripts which provide insights into visual culture, including photography and the cinema, topographical drawing and other forms of illustration (particularly relating to Oxford); the papers of prominent artists, book designers or illustrators, particularly with Oxford connections; the work and archives of engravers, bookbinders and other designers particularly where these relate to the history of the book.

2. Oxford University Archives (OUA)

The University Archives has been a part of the Department of Special Collections since 2010. Before then, although physically based in the Bodleian and sharing many of its facilities, it had, since its establishment in 1634 been a separate department of the University. Its present functions are the selection, preservation and making available for administrative or research purposes the documentary records of the University and its departments. The University in this sense is the central corporate institution, established towards the end of the 12th century; the records in the Archives date from 1214 to the present. The Archives does not contain any college records, which remain the responsibility of the individual colleges, or personal papers of individual members of the University, which are collected by the Archives and Modern Manuscripts section of the Department of Special Collections. The boundaries of the Archives' collecting remit and priorities for

development are set out in detail in its Statement of Collection Policy and Selection Policy. These policies are available at: www.oua.ox.ac.uk/policies.html

3. Oriental Collections

Oriental special collections are manuscripts, rare books and archives written in Near and Middle Eastern, Asian and Far Eastern languages. The Bodleian's Oriental manuscript collections range from Egyptian papyri and medieval illuminated books to modern archives. The Library has acquired Oriental manuscripts and rare books since the earliest days of its foundation through purchase and donation and will seek to fill gaps in the collections, including by purchase of digital versions of antiquarian materials, as and when these become available. The Bodleian therefore seeks to acquire manuscripts and archival material from the earliest period to the present day, in any Oriental language, which build on strengths and will further the research interests of current and future students and academics of the University of Oxford and support the wider research community, both nationally and internationally. The library acquires archival material from individuals of note in the field of Oriental Studies whose work, core purpose or interests relate to and enhance our existing collections.

A. Near & Middle Eastern

We aim to collect manuscripts and rare books from the earliest period to the present day, including materials relating to Classical and pre-modern Islam with the manuscripts exemplifying most of the branches of learning cultivated in traditional Islamic society in the Middle East and North Africa. Also, Persian illuminated and illustrated manuscripts, Qur'ans, Arabic science, and materials relating to mathematics and medicine. Our smaller but important collections of Georgian and Armenian materials are also added to as opportunity permits.

B. Hebrew, Jewish & Semitics

We collect Hebrew material from the early middle ages to the present day, including biblical manuscripts, manuscript translations from them (into Arabic, Aramaic, 'German', and Italian), Midrash and its commentaries, Talmud and its associated literatures, liturgies, theology, grammar, Kabbalah, poetry, sciences and polemics. We have strong holdings of material relating to the discoveries of the Cairo Genizah which we seek to augment and also wish to add where possible to smaller but still notable collections of Ethiopic and Syriac materials.

C. South, South Asian and Inner Asia

We seek to build on outstanding strengths in Sanskrit manuscripts, also Mughal paintings, 19th-century printed Sanskrit and Hindi language and literature and the output of 19th-century mission presses. We also seek opportunities to acquire manuscripts and rare books in other Indic languages and in Tibetan.

D. East Asia

The Bodleian contains as many as a quarter of all the extant Chinese books that arrived in Europe in the seventeenth century and aims to develop this collection. It has a large collection of missionary publications, particularly rich in tracts published during the first half of the century. Japanese special collections are small, nevertheless, the Library holds some unique treasures acquired in the early years of its foundation, including Saga-bon (Saga Press edition, acquired in 1629); Jesuit Mission Press editions; and the first trade agreement between England and Japan issued by Shogun Ieyasu in 1613. The Library also holds a fine collection of illustrated manuscripts of the 17th century. Korean and Mongolian collections are more modest in size but all contain individually significant items.

4. Rare Books

The early printed holdings of the Bodleian Library reflect its history as the library of the University of Oxford since 1602. Legal deposit, which has been more or less comprehensively received since the middle of the 19th century, has extended the range of British material collected into almost all subject areas. The acquisition

policy reflects this very broad base, and builds on areas of strength as well as identifying and ameliorating areas of relative weakness.

We seek to acquire books on all subjects, both popular and academic, in all Western European languages, printed between the mid-15th century and 1900. Certain categories of material printed after 1900, for example, livres d'artiste, private press books, and association copies are also acquired. All material acquired should further the research interests of current and future students and academics of the University of Oxford and support the wider research community, both nationally and internationally.

In recent years the integration of the University's library service has seen collections held in several libraries come under the umbrella of the Bodleian Libraries and as a result collecting policies now seek to be more collaborative, although each individual library retains its own acquisitions policies and practices.

A. Theology, history, classics, philosophy and law

The importance and strength in these areas reflect the enduring interest the Bodleian has retained in these subjects since its foundation, with strengths across the board in all periods. There are large named collections in all areas, in addition to the legal deposit holdings.

B. English literature and drama

We collect drama from the Elizabethan, Jacobean, Caroline and Restoration periods, including important holdings of early Shakespeare; novels and romances, particularly of the 18th and 19th centuries, with almost comprehensive holdings of Victorian triple-decker novels; popular and cheap literature of all periods, including jest books, penny dreadfuls, chapbooks and significant numbers of ballads; poetry and poetical miscellanies; belles-lettres; modern first editions and English literature in translation.

C. Science, medicine and technology

We collect significant early mathematics, geometry, astronomy and physics books, including the library of the Savilian professors; life sciences, particularly early medicine, anatomy, and biology, including important 19th century botanical and zoological plate books; books on technology and practical manuals in all subjects, particularly from the 19th century, including, but not limited to, architecture, mensuration, printing, military sciences, cookery, gardening; pattern-books, and books on trades and crafts.

D. Incunabula

We seek to add to the largest collection of pre-1500 printed books in a university library, and the fifth largest collection of incunabula in any library in the world. The collection can be considered comprehensive in terms of its coverage of authors and subject matter.

E. Children's books

We seek to add to our world-class collections of books for children from all periods, which includes the Opie collection and the vast wealth of children's material acquired through legal deposit from the 19th century onwards, including pedagogical works. We collect hornbooks, games, puzzles and other forms of instructive entertainment.

F. Prints, drawings and photographs

We collect prints, drawings, plans, elevations, etc., generally portraits or topographical in nature. We also look for opportunities to augment our collection of early photographic books, including works by Julia Margaret Cameron and William Fox Talbot.

G. Early serials and newspapers

We collect periodical literature in parts, almanacs, auction and booksellers catalogues, newspapers and news-books dating from the mid-17th century onwards, and seek also to develop important holdings of 17th and 18th-century British newspapers not available elsewhere.

H. Foreign language holdings

We collect, including at the Taylorian Library, early literature, philology and linguistics in all continental European languages, with a particular focus on Romance, Germanic and Slavonic languages.

I. Printed ephemera

The Bodleian assiduously collects printed ephemera. Pre-1960 material is collected to fill gaps in the original John Johnson Collection of printed ephemera (acquired in 1968) and to add significant items. Broadly, these are: advertisements; book trade and publishing history; education; entertainment; political, religious, social and economic history; printing processes; private presses; sports and pastimes; transport and travel; and all genres of ephemera (bookmarkers, greetings cards, labels, and trade cards, etc). Chronologically, a major gap in holdings is the ephemera of the 1940s to late 1960s.

Post-1960 ephemera are collected across the same broad range. From time to time, the John Johnson Collection will appeal for material, e.g. the 2012 London Olympics. Such appeals will be posted on the collection website: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/johnson>

For all periods, the collection is particularly keen to acquire individual items of historical significance (documenting an event or representing technological advances); items relating to private presses, protest, royalty, and Oxford; whole collections relating to a specific themes or genres. Recent donations have included board games, trade cards, and propaganda postcards.

5. Maps

The Library has acquired maps and atlases since the earliest days of its foundation through purchase and donation. This has continued to the present day, with the considerable addition of legal deposit ensuring that the map collection remains current yet constantly supported by reference to the geographical past. Unique cartographic treasures have been acquired throughout the Library's history, for example the medieval Gough Map of Great Britain (part of the UNESCO UK National Register of the Memory of the World); the Tudor Sheldon tapestry maps of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire; the Selden Map of China and the South China Sea; and the seventeenth-century map and terrier of Laxton in Nottinghamshire.

We collect historic maps where these complement or add to the strength of existing holdings, where they answer particular research needs (in particular within the university), or where they contribute to our understanding of the mapping of Oxford and Oxfordshire in particular.

We collect global coverage of current topographic mapping at a scale of 1:100,000 or greater (subject to availability) with particular emphasis on Soviet-produced material that has only become available since the fall of the Berlin Wall. We are always looking to fill gaps in our Ordnance Survey County Series holdings, which is the perhaps the most complete and best documented in existence. Other acquisitions are often generated in liaison with academics, for example updating geological map coverage to support overseas field work within Earth Sciences. We accept regular donations from other agencies seeking to rationalise their collections, including the Ministry of Defence. We also collect celestial charts, and planetary mapping, as well as maps of imaginary locations, such as Ambridge or Middle Earth.

We are constantly seeking to develop our collections of digital mapping, in particular to meet the demands of student and researchers using our GIS (Geographic Information System) facilities, where we currently lead the field in the UK with staffing dedicated to teaching digital cartography.

6. Music

The music collections comprise in excess of 500,000 items of printed music, 60,000 books and journals, and 5,000 manuscripts, placing them among the most important and comprehensive in the world. Music librarians are responsible not only for the acquisition and custody of Special Collections material, in the form of manuscript and early printed scores and archival collections relating to music, but also for current music material, whether purchased, donated or received through legal deposit.

A. Printed books and scores

Printed music has been regularly received under legal deposit since about 1780. While the comprehensiveness of receipt has varied greatly over time, donated collections and retrospective purchases have done much to fill in gaps and result in fine collections of earlier British musical publications. Many gaps still exist, however, and the Library will seek to fill these gaps wherever possible via donation or purchase, when the opportunity arises. In addition, donations and retrospective purchasing of foreign music have helped to form a well-rounded and representative collection in the field of western art music with additional strengths in certain other areas, such as music hall and Broadway musicals.

B. Music manuscripts and archival collections

The Library is keen to build on its material relating to British composers and consideration is given to offers of donations of such collections. Suitable additions are also made by purchase, especially to areas where holdings are already strong and where there are clear connections to Oxford figures. Whilst British music lies at the collection's core, there are large and highly important collections of foreign material such as the Deneke Mendelssohn Collection, which makes the Library one of the two principal centres of Mendelssohn research in the world, and we are interested in collecting related material.

C. Concert programmes

The Bodleian has substantial holdings of concert and opera programmes, both local and national. Additions are regularly made, both by legal deposit and donation, and occasionally by purchase.

D. Recordings

A representative selection of commercial CDs by local performers (e.g. Oxford college choirs) is maintained but other recordings are not generally purchased. Donations of individual recordings are usually accepted, particularly when they relate to specific items in or important areas of the collections. Donations of collections of recordings may be considered, especially if they are of special archival interest (for example, non-commercial recordings).

