

Durham University Library & Collections

Content Management Policy

Governing Body

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Durham University

University Library & Collections Committee

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1. Introduction

The content, collections and resources managed by University Library and Collections are fundamental to the University's activities and standing as a centre of research and teaching excellence; We aim to provide access to strong and diverse content as a foundation for these activities and to enhance the reputation of the University.

Our current content and continuing content development represent a significant investment by the University, in terms of annual spend and infrastructure for storage and access.

The landscape of content and resources for learning, teaching and research - within Durham University, nationally and internationally - is characterised by change and complexity. The way in which we develop and manage our content and collections needs to take account of recent and ongoing changes, complexities and opportunities, to support and enable access to the materials used for learning teaching and research and to maintain our national value as a research library. Our approach needs to adapt, as models for content publication and provision are developed, in order to support the creation and use of open access content for research, teaching and learning: at Durham and for wider societal benefit.

Our policies are also informed by the commitment of Durham University as part of the wider sector to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within content, and to actively consider environmental as well as financial sustainability.

These reasons create a compelling argument for the review of policies and principles for content development and management, to articulate our place within the University and wider sector, and as a foundational framework for decision making.

2. Scope and Purpose

This policy sets out the way in which Library & Collections undertakes collection and content development and management and the principles within which decisions are made. The scope of collections and activities governed by this policy encompasses:

- Library and information resources and content, in all formats, including print books and journals, ebooks and ejournals, articles, reports, theses dissertations, databases discovery and analytics tools, datasets and other research sources, images, recordings, news and open access resources.
- The acquisition of or other provision of access to content through outright purchase, donation, subscription, inter-library loan; or suitably licenced open-access publications.
- The ongoing active management of content and resources to ensure they remain relevant and to focus core resources on needs for current, developing and emerging teaching and research. This includes decisions relating to location, storage, security, movement, review and disposal of print stock; and strategies such as active transition from print to digital provision. It also includes our approaches to the acquisition and management of metadata to enable and enhance discovery of content.
- The principles within which decisions are made relating to the allocation of financial and other resources for the acquisition and management of collections and content. This includes space, budgets and staff time. This also includes our approach to the use of library resources budgets to fund Durham open access publishing costs, under current and emerging provision and models; and to enable the generation of open content across the sector more widely through our support of alternative publishing models.
- Our support for acquisition and collection development and management of college (print) libraries.
- Our commitments to and participation in national collaborative content and collection development and management. This includes our involvement in sector negotiations relating to journal agreements and metadata provision; our involvement in the UK Research Reserve and in the development of a UK Distributed Print Book Collection; and reciprocal frameworks and arrangements for inter-library loan and access to library spaces.

This Policy does not relate to collections development of Museums, Art or Archives collections: these are covered by a separate Collections Development Policy¹ and related policies and procedures for collection management.

The acquisition of rare or early printed books as additions to Special Collections is also covered by the Collections Development policy for Museums, Art, Archives and Special Collections. However, the principles set out in this policy relating to the management of print collections apply to all of our printed material, including Special Collections.

This policy does not relate to material within Durham Research Online. The primary purpose of DRO is to provide open access to publications authored by staff and students affiliated with Durham University.

¹ [Collection-Development-Policy-June-2023-\(1\).pdf](#)

3. National landscape and strategic context

Within the national landscape of information resources and scholarly publication there are three areas where recent, current and future changes have a substantial impact on content development and management:

- Diversity of user-needs, content, resources and access models
- Open scholarship
- National collaborative print book collection management

For each of these areas we can identify the impact they have on content development and management, and the principles that will shape our approach to the challenges and opportunities they represent. These will guide decision making and inform the way this policy is implemented.

3.1. Diversity of user needs, content, resources and access models

The goal of University Library and Collections is “to provide inspirational services, collections, experiences and expertise to the students, staff, academics and researchers at Durham University whilst supporting the University in outreach to communities locally, regionally, nationally and internationally”. This is aligned with the University strategy and reflects the relevance of our collections and activities to a wide diversity of users and stakeholders. We will be:

Inclusive in supporting diversity within our collections and content, and in enabling and actively encouraging our staff and students to contribute to this activity; in acquiring material in support of the wider student experience, personal development and wellbeing; in providing access in alternative formats; and in extending access to a wider community of researchers, alumni, retired staff and members of the public, where possible

Open: we subscribe to IFLA’s IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom (1999) and Statement on Censorship (2019).

Our guiding principle is to maintain collections that ensure our users have access to different viewpoints which may differ from their own views and challenge their thinking. We remind readers that applying critical thinking and research skills is important when using any piece of writing or research. The Library will not exclude, withdraw from availability, or restrict access to any material because it is controversial or might be judged offensive by some; only on the grounds of illegality. The presence of any material within our collections does not imply an endorsement of the ideas or opinions expressed within the content.

We also support sustainable open access models of publishing, to break down barriers for those outside of the university to access our research output, and to foster equity of access to peer-reviewed publication as far as possible.

Library resources encompass a growing range of formats, including monographs, journals, articles, online databases, aggregated digital collections, reference and multi-disciplinary sources, study skills resources and AV material; with different models for publication, acquisition and access. Increasingly these purchased or licenced library resources are used alongside research data, open access publications, and open educational resources. Digital transformation and the development of collections as data, mean that boundaries between different types of content are fluid and porous.

This diversity presents us with choices as to how we provide access to individual items requested by our users and options for strategic investment in larger packages, access and payment models from publishers to make best use of financial resources. Our response in this area will be:

Focussed on the purpose of collections and content - to support current and evolving learning, teaching and research activities of the University, working in partnership with

academic colleagues; and on the need to provide quick and effective access to our collections, including online and open content.

Robust: in establishing practices and systems that enable user-driven acquisition and content management decisions that are transparent, criteria-led and evidence based.

Agile: in making use of a range of models for acquisition or provision of access in response to user needs

Both the material acquired by the library over nearly 200 years and the metadata and classification schemas used to describe and categorise it, reflect the language and values of their period. As a result, uncomfortable or offensive language or images and discriminatory views may be encountered in our collections, and outdated and disrespectful terminology and subject-headings found in our catalogues.

Library collections are described and categorised using the Library of Congress Subject Headings. We will continue to amend our subject headings in response to official changes made to LoC controlled vocabularies and will also participate in the work of proposing changes to headings as part of the international community of librarians. We have a responsibility to maintain accurate catalogue records, including book titles and related information in their original form, accepting that this will result in offensive terms continuing to appear in our catalogues. We will continue to consider how this language affects our users and the ways in which we can mitigate harm.

3.2. Open scholarship

The transition to Open Research, at both a national and international level is driving significant changes in relationships between libraries, the academic community, research funders and scholarly and commercial publishers. These changes also have significant implications for content development. Models for supporting open access to different publishing formats (journal articles, book chapters and monographs) differs between disciplines, as does the pace of change. Journal licencing agreements are most rapidly evolving, with publishers assigning a greater proportion of costs towards open access publishing and less to traditional subscription access. This is reflected at Durham, given its research intensity, by an increase in the proportion of our library resources budgets that support publishing rather than reading. As a sector, there is a drive to move away from models with high transactional costs (such as article or book processing charges) as the predominant financial model, and to create frameworks for libraries to provide financial support to new and emerging publishing options such as Diamond Open Access, Subscribe to Open (S2O), membership and consortia initiatives. Our responses in this area will be:

Strategic: working collaboratively to change the landscape for scholarly communication, ensuring our institutional policies and decisions are informed by and a part of the wider Library and HE sector; participating actively in national consortia and networks to foster and enable best use of financial resources across UK HEI, and in pursuit of institutional and national strategic goals.

Dynamic: in our understanding of the transition to open research, and the impact this has on models for access to content and the purposes for which library budgets are allocated; our commitment to supporting open research; and in our approach to investigating, implementing and monitoring new or innovative models for content or metadata, in support of open scholarship at Durham and across the sector.

In particular, we will allocate funds strategically from Library content budgets in support of the development of a sustainable landscape for open research, including open access initiatives which benefit the sector as a whole, and Durham University researchers indirectly, rather than directly.

3.3. Collaborative collection management

As a major research library our holdings form part of a national collection. Emerging initiatives relating to a UK Distributed Print Book Collection have the potential to make concept more explicit and meaningful for print collection management across research libraries and present us with a significant opportunity to manage our collections more strategically. Shared aims and objectives are to enable libraries to be more effective and efficient in our approach to those sections of our collections which are not heavily used for current teaching, learning or research; to identify material that is rare or unique within collections and ensure its preservation; and to collaborate to share access to other sections of our collections, to enable us to make most effective use of resources (especially of space) across the sector.

As a long-standing research library our print holdings include a significant quantity of material that is unique and rare, nationally and internationally. We need to identify and articulate the strengths of these collections and to maximise their potential as a research and cultural resource. This includes enhancing descriptive metadata for individual items and collections, and developing long-term research and management strategies for them. Our response in this area will be

Responsible: recognising that the opportunity to engage fully with this national context carries with it an obligation to support the establishment of shared principles and standards for collections retention and management, and to commit to implement them as they are defined and agreed.

Sustainable: Realising the benefits of national collaboration and shared access, to enable us to make best use of our library spaces and other resources.

4. Acquisition

Parameters and processes for acquisition will support our principles and aims to be evidence-based in order to focus on user and stakeholder needs. We will consider the overall cost of ownership or other provision, including digital or physical storage, cataloguing and licence conditions. We will operate a strategic preference for digital access / access online, through acquisition, subscription, Open Access or digitisation; but also recognise the continuing importance of print collections for teaching, learning and research.

The library participates in regional and national consortia, networks and framework agreements for resources and metadata, to maximise purchasing and negotiating power across the sector, to secure significant discounts and to ensure value for money.

4.1. User-driven

For the large number of individual resources which are acquired or provided as individual items, acquisition will be user-driven and prompted, in most cases, by user request. Our users in this context encompass all staff and students of the University.

The focus will be on efficient and effective processes which enable us to be responsive to requests. Items will be acquired (or access provided), as a default with queries raised or reviews undertaken only where standard parameters (for example relating to cost) are exceeded. Parameters will be reviewed and amended regularly.

- All essential texts on submitted Reading Lists will be available in at least one copy. This will be digital wherever possible.
- All recommended texts on Reading Lists will be available in at least one copy.

- Licences will be purchased or maintained for multiple concurrent users where possible, based on the student cohorts for relevant programmes or modules.
- Use of e-resources will be monitored and financial resources allocated to the provision of additional licences, where available, where user demand significantly exceeds capacity, or where additional copies of print items have been requested by staff or students.
- Further titles may be requested by staff or students, for additional reading, for research use or to support wellbeing, wider student experience and career development. These will be fulfilled within agreed cost and other parameters, with a timely review process for cases outside these parameters.
- We will support the acquisition, cataloguing and classification of print materials purchased for college libraries, with separate funding allocations.
- The range of available resources, especially for research and at higher levels of UG and PG study, will be extended through the use of patron-driven and evidence-based acquisition models; and through inter-library loan.

4.2. Stakeholder-driven

In the case of purchasing or licencing of more substantial aggregated content, including journal packages and digital collections, decision-making will be stakeholder-driven: that is, informed by strategic priorities and evidence based. Strategic decisions also determine the routes or models through which content is acquired or otherwise made available. Our key stakeholders in this context are members of the University Executive Council. We also acknowledge that funders, creators and end-users of research across the higher education landscape are also stakeholders in relation to our institutional support for open scholarship.

The focus will be on a robust and transparent framework for decisions (for acquisition or other provision, renewal or review), incorporating library expertise and academic knowledge, informed by analysis of usage figures, costs and other relevant metrics. Through our participation in consortial purchasing agreements, we will seek to influence publishers and suppliers and increase the range of resources and purchasing models to ensure value for money.

For strategic acquisitions of new content, especially for research, resources will be provided on a trial basis where possible and appropriate, with usage data analysed before final acquisition.

We recognise that within agreements for publishers' journal packages ('transitional' and 'post-transitional' agreements) user and stakeholder requirements for publishing are as relevant and important as those for access/reading. For these resources, open access costs, provisions and processes will be analysed and taken into account alongside those for access. Where there are strategic issues to be considered relating to open access publishing, including price, cost transparency, protocols, equitable coverage or funder compliance, we will inform or consult with stakeholders across the University on our responses as part of sector consultations.

Our approach to the allocation and deployment of library content budgets to fund and enable open access publishing as well as access will evolve in response to the external funding environment, including changes to block funding from UKRI and other funders, as well as the provision of central University funds for publishing. Publisher licence provisions, and stakeholder requirements are complex and often in conflict. We recognise the need to consider the global landscape for scholarly communication and the need to promote equality of access both to publishing and reading the results of research. We also recognise that the specific interests of Durham University (given its size and profile as research-intensive university) may differ from the aims and objectives of HE libraries and research institutions as a whole, in the UK or globally. As these issues arise we will consult with senior stakeholders across the University and will be transparent when advocating for the University to commit or contribute to sector goals for the public good. Where this gives rise to a substantial

change or extension to the remit and purpose of library resources budgets we will consult and seek a mandate as appropriate.

4.3. Collections-centred

For a small number of special and specialist collections, acquisition will be collections-centred. The focus will be on acquisitions of individual items or material within a defined range or scope in order to ensure inclusion of significant contemporary publishing within areas of subject specialism.

Donations of material are not solicited. Any donations offered to the University via approaches to Departments should be referred to the relevant Faculty Librarian.

Proposals will be evaluated taking into consideration strategic benefit, stakeholder support, operational issues and cost of ownership. In general, donations will be accepted only where they are relevant to current or known future teaching or research needs of the University and if they fulfil the conditions and priorities within this Content Management Policy. We will take into consideration the physical condition of any donations as well as storage and cataloguing requirements. Donations will not be accepted if costs of ownership are disproportionate to the likely benefit of the material to the University.

In the case of unannounced or anonymous donations the library will assume that owners are aware of our policies on the acceptance and management of donations.

We do not accept donations of self-published material by non-Durham University authors and would not generally purchase self-published material unless it is included in a Reading List.

5. Collection Management

We will actively engage in long-term strategies for collection management to ensure that collections and resources remain relevant, engaging, discoverable and accessible.

5.1. National context

Implementing collection management strategies and policies within a national context requires a commitment to principles and processes: these should be embedded in our collections management practice. In particular:

- We acknowledge our responsibility to retain unique or rare print journal holdings under the requirements of our membership of the UK Research Reserve (UKRR)
- In support of RLUK's development of a UK Distributed Print Book Collection, we commit to reviewing national holdings of print monographs via UK National Bibliographic Database prior to disposing of material. Our criteria for retention of print copies will align with the requirements of the UKDPBC, and we will develop and maintain a programme of applying retention statements within our catalogues as far as resources allow.
- We support the objectives of Plan M to create a landscape for bibliographic metadata in the UK that is coherent, transparent, robust and sustainable. We will contribute information on our holdings to the Jisc National Bibliographic Database, in order to support Library Hub Discover, Compare and Cataloguing services.

- We will allocate and maintain systems and staff resource to fulfil reciprocal arrangements for inter-library loan and will be active participants in initiatives to develop the efficiency, effectiveness and scale of ILL provision to enhance access to resources.
- We commit to participating in the SCONUL Access Scheme and SCONUL Vacation Access Scheme

5.2. Institutional context

We will continue an active transition from print to electronic resources, according to set criteria, to increase the quantity and proportion of resources available 24/7 and in most cases off-campus.

We will continue an active review of existing print resources to ensure relevance, effective use of space and to enable us to respond to changing user needs. In this context, our content falls under three broad areas: current active content; rare and significant items; and material which does not fall within either of these two categories. This division is reflected in our approaches to collections management.

- Currency: the visible nature of the collection – on shelves and in Discover

As a general principle, the Library will hold in the main sequence shelves at Bill Bryson Library all print material actively being used for teaching and research.

We will undertake regular content management, including reduction in duplicates and multiples (whether print copies or multi-user licence subscriptions) or where usage information suggests this and/or where items have been removed from reading lists as being no longer relevant or current. We will also dispose of out-of-date print editions of textbooks as appropriate.

- Rarity: National strategies and frameworks

As a major research library, Durham University's collections are an important part of a 'national collection' of print journals and monographs. We maintain a long-standing commitment to participate in the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) for print journals. For print monographs there is a general acceptance across the sector that 'rarity is common' and that deselection is a complex process. We support national collaborative approaches to print monographs, in particular RLUK's proposals to develop a UK Distributed Print Book Collection. We will use data from the Jisc National Bibliographic Database to enable us to take a well-informed approach to the retention or disposal of print books, based on up-to-date knowledge of copies retained within the sector. Our criteria for review of our print holdings will align with the principles and requirements for a UKDPBC.

- Sustainability:

We recognise different stakeholder requirements for the allocation and use of space in Bill Bryson Library as a source of information and a space to study. We will undertake periodic major reviews of print collections where their level of use has decreased, in order to achieve the most effective strategic use of space. We will use loan information to support decision-making relating to the retention and location of material, which will also be informed by the need to recognise and protect rarity, and to ensure sustainability.

In the case of print library resources for which there is no requirement to retain for reason of currency or rarity, we will balance the case for retention against alternative routes to providing access.

We recognise that capability and capacity to meet increasing demand for inter-library loan services is a key enabler for providing access to resources within a context of sustainable collections management, at Durham and across the sector. We will continue to be active participants in existing

and emerging networks and frameworks for inter-library loan and to allocate financial and staff resources to this type of provision.

We will direct strategic expenditure towards purchasing or acquiring permanent access to online resources in order to remove our need to retain print copies, undertaking cost-benefit analysis to assess the relative costs of e-acquisition against library space. We will also undertake regular reviews of content to which we subscribe, assessing cost against usage data and considering post-cancellation access rights.

For AV materials on legacy formats, we will migrate to digital formats where required and possible. Our preferred route is via access to digital copies via external providers, through subscription or purchase. We are not able to provide equipment for access to AV material in legacy formats.

The location of print resources more widely will be determined according to a framework of criteria, balancing the requirements for security, preservation, access and use.

We will provide support for the creation of a (print) collection development policy for college libraries, including criteria for withdrawal and disposal, and the acceptance and management of donations. We will provide advice on collections management decision-making by colleges and provide training and support as needed.