Special Collections Strategy

The Special Collections at the University Library comprise unique and rare material of regional, national and international importance and provide an important opportunity to exploit the University’s cultural assets. This strategy reflects the curatorial mission to accommodate, preserve, organise, and catalogue the material along with the complementary need to maximise the potential of the collections to support teaching and research within and beyond the University.

Promotion

1. Exhibitions will feature regularly in the University Libraries, with at least two exhibitions per year being organised.

2. We will exploit opportunities for cooperative exhibitions with other libraries. The possibilities of loan arrangements will be exploited with due regard to the security and conservation of Special Collection items.

3. Talks and presentations will be given on the Collections within the University and to outside academic and community groups. Attention will be given to widening access to the collections, including to disadvantaged social groups.

4. All publicity media and online formats will be used to raise awareness of the Collections to a wide audience.

5. The Special Collections and Rare Books online Subject Guide and additional printed guides will be used to promote knowledge about and access to the Collections.

6. Collection level descriptions will be provided for Special Collections databases and publications.

7. Bibliographical details of rare and early printed books will be provided to short-title catalogues such as ISTC and ESTC.

Access

1. We will prioritize the quality of the user experience at all points in which they engage with the Special Collections, whether by visiting a library or by digital access.

2. Suitable rooms will be made accessible for consultation.
3. Cradles, snake-weights and instruction in the safe use of special collection items will be provided.
4. Trained staff will be available to help users use special collections items.

Teaching and Research
1. Opportunities will be sought to link the Special Collections to teaching within the University and facilitate student engagement with the Collections.
2. We will seek for and cooperate with opportunities to facilitate research access to the collection within and beyond the University.

Discovery
1. We will prioritise collections requiring cataloguing and listing to facilitate scholarly access. The aim of this strategy will be to eliminate the problem of “hidden collections”.
2. Cataloguing will adhere to bibliographic standards such as DCRM (B), AACR2 and RDA.
3. Items for digitisation will be identified with due regard to academic interest and the need to provide surrogates both for the conservation of fragile material and to facilitate access.
4. Digitised resources will be accessible through the Library discovery service.

Preservation and Conservation
1. The Library will give priority to all necessary requirements for the safe preservation of the Special Collections in its care.
2. We will provide suitable environmental storage for the Rare Books and Manuscript collections paying due regard to published standards such as PD 5454: 2012 and PAS 198. The aim will be to achieve acceptable lux levels, humidity and temperature.
3. All Special Collection material will be held in secure rooms and use of those rooms will be monitored and recorded.
4. When necessary expert conservators will be consulted to seek advice on conservation issues.
5. Appropriate Insurance cover will be provided for all Special Collections.
Collection Development

1. The acquisition of new Special Collections will be considered after careful consideration of their long-term contribution to teaching, research and scholarship.
2. Due regard will be given to space implications of accepting new collections by purchase, donation, bequest or deposit.
3. Due consideration will be given to the financial implications of any new acquisition in terms of accommodation, management and preservation.
4. Due consideration will be given to ethical responsibilities in accepting any new collection.

Sustainability and Income Generation

1. The Library will seek to secure external funding to supplement Library budget funding, particularly to achieve actions and goals outlined above in relation to promotion, cataloguing, conservation and digitisation.
2. Efforts will be made to attract funding through donations, copyright related income, and grant applications.
3. Where funds permit, suitable equipment will be purchased to enable the above actions and goals to be realised.