1. Purpose and scope

Special Collections & Archives (SC&A) cares for and makes available in perpetuity the unique and distinctive collections of the University of Liverpool in support of the University’s strategic priorities in teaching, research and public engagement.

SC&A’s mission means it is relevant to audiences within and without the University of Liverpool. This Access Policy is intended to discuss the nature of these audiences, the services offered to them, and plans for future development and improvement.

The policy is a high level statement which is complemented by the following documents:

- SC&A Collections Care & Conservation Policy
- SC&A Collection Development & Management Policy
- SC&A Collections Information Policy
- SC&A Reading Room Regulations & Document Handling Guidelines
- SC&A Exhibition loan conditions

The context and definition of the service and collections are discussed more fully in the SC&A Collection Development & Management Policy.

2. Principles of access

The catalogued collections of SC&A are open to all, unless there are legal or other substantive reasons to restrict access to them.

Access to both the SC&A reading room and the SC&A enquiry service is free to all. SC&A reserves the right to charge for reprographics services and commercial use; conditions and charges are outlined in the SC&A Reprographics Request form and Licensing Form. Readers may take their own digital photographs free of charge, for personal use and without flash, subject to staff approval.

Additional access is provided to University of Liverpool staff and students, in the form of teaching sessions and research support, and to other audiences by request.

It is acknowledged that interested parties may be unable to visit the SC&A Reading Room to conduct their research. The processes and activities underpinning the cataloguing of the SC&A collections ensure that users can ascertain appropriate information about relevant collections remotely via the website and online catalogues, which conform to standards of web accessibility. The SC&A enquiry
service, operated primarily by email (scastaff@liverpool.ac.uk) and telephone, provides remote enquirers with information and with digital surrogates where appropriate.

SC&A is committed to engaging with the University of Liverpool’s policies on equal opportunities and disability. The Library also works with the University Disability Support Team in helping support University of Liverpool students with additional needs. For more information, see http://libguides.liverpool.ac.uk/dsa

SC&A is open to the potential of new technologies to transform access, and acknowledges the potential of the web, and social media specifically, to open up access to new and potential audiences.

SC&A prides itself on upholding excellent standards of care, and has contributed to the University of Liverpool Library’s award for Customer Service Excellence, which was reviewed and re-awarded in 2017.

3. Legislation, Standards & Guidelines

Access to SC&A must comply with relevant legislation. This currently includes:

- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Copyright legislation

The corporate lead in these areas is taken by the University’s Legal Services. SC&A also seeks help from experts in the sector, particularly the National Archives.

SC&A aims to comply with the following standards:


4. Audiences

SC&A collections and services are accessed by multiple stakeholders. Statistics are kept in order to gather detailed evidence about our users. These include: numbers of research visits; researcher type and institution (if appropriate); teaching use; exhibition loans; internal and external collaborations; remote enquiry statistics; and informal feedback.

Currently our core audience falls into the following categories:

- University of Liverpool students (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- University of Liverpool academic staff
- University of Liverpool professional services staff (including Corporate Communications, Philanthropy; Facilities Residential and Commercial Services; Records Management; Widening Participation)
- University of Liverpool alumni and former members of staff
• Students and academics from other UK HE institutions
• Students and academics from international HE institutions
• Independent researchers
• Media, marketing and publishing
• The arts and creative industries
• Schools and young people
• Local community groups
• Donors and depositors of collections

SC&A is developing a more strategic approach to audience engagement, and plans to develop a stakeholder survey in the 2017-18 planning cycle in order to ascertain areas for improvement and development.

5. SC&A Reading Room, Enquiry and Reprographics Services

5.1 Reading Room & Teaching Room

The ground floor, air conditioned, SC&A Reading Room and Reception provide facilities for visitors to consult collections, supervised by staff. It has regular opening hours of 9.30-4.45pm Monday to Friday. These are advertised widely on the website, on promotional materials, and within the wider Library service. SC&A requests that advance notice of visits is given, up to 4pm day before, to enable material to be fetched in advance. It is sometimes possible to facilitate requests for small amounts of material on the same day.

The reception area enables staff to discuss research requirements or give advice to readers without disturbing those in the Reading Room. A small lobby with a security buzzer entrance system provides an environmental buffer and secure storage for readers’ coats and bags. Space is provided for printed catalogues, the staffed reception desk, a computer to access online catalogues and the SC&A website, a microfilm reader attached to a PC and a combined television, video and audio player. This area also contains the SC&A Teaching Room, used by SC&A staff or members of academic departments who wish to use the collections for teaching and outreach activities.

The Reading Room holds the reference collection, seating for 19 readers, sockets for laptops and wi-fi access. A glass partition separates the Reading Room from the Reception area, to allow both a quiet environment for researchers and clear sight lines for invigilating staff. Reading aids such as magnifiers and light sheets are available upon request.

The office area is adjacent to the Reading Room to allow readers to consult SC&A staff easily.

The Reading Room and Teaching Room are fully wheelchair accessible.

5.2 Enquiry service

SC&A receives enquiries relating to the collections and service via email, telephone, post and social media. We aim to reply within two working days, but the time will vary depending on the nature of the request. SC&A does not operate a paid research service, and does not have the capacity to undertake detailed research for enquirers, but endeavours to answer queries as fully as possible within the limits of its resources. Enquiries are mainly dealt with via the shared departmental email address scastaff@liverpool.ac.uk, which is monitored by a professional member of staff on a weekly rotational basis, with enquiries being allocated to the most appropriate team member to answer.
5.3 Reprographics service

SC&A offers a reprographics service, subject to copyright law and preservation requirements. Visitors to the Reading Room may seek permission to take their own digital photographs for non-commercial research purposes. SC&A also offers a scanning service for readers, and for remote enquirers. This includes photocopying, digital scanning and digital photography. Requests are largely done in-house, though in some cases the work may be outsourced to other departments in the University (e.g. for large scale images or glass negatives), or externally (e.g. the North West Film Archive). In these cases the costs are passed directly to the requester. Further details can be found in the SC&A Collections Care & Conservation Policy, the SC&A Reprographics Request Form and the SC&A Licensing Form, all available on the SC&A website.

6. Online Access

Access is provided to collection descriptions and service information via the SC&A website, which also provides a gateway to the online catalogues. Archive catalogues can be searched more widely via the Archives Hub, and the SC&A printed collections are searchable via COPAC and WorldCat. The SC&A website has recently been redeveloped in order to improve usability and sustainability. The new platform provides greater capacity to widen access through online content, and is compliant with disability legislation.

The SC&A blog Manuscripts and More https://manuscriptsandmore.liverpool.ac.uk/ provides a showcase for collections, new acquisitions, exhibitions, collaborations and other outreach activities. Guest posts are encouraged. SC&A is represented on the Library’s Social Media Group and promotes the service via the @LivUniLibrary Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts and the #LivUniSCA hashtag. SC&A also engages more widely with University social media platforms.

SC&A has contributed to digitisation projects including the open access e-textbook Using Primary Sources, the University of Liverpool Health and Life Sciences Flickr, 19th century pamphlets online, EEBO and JISC Historical Texts. It is committed to widening access to its collections via digitised content as far as resources permit, and plans to actively seek opportunities to develop this area of activity. A future project, due for launch in 2018, is the RomArchive, the digital archive of the Roma, to which SC&A is a contributor.

SC&A supports retrieval and use of digital archives by use of a non-networked PC and the provision of surrogate copies.

7. Exhibitions and events

7.1 Internal

SC&A has a dedicated space for the exhibition of physical items from the collections. Display cases are incorporated into the wall dividing the SC&A area from the main Library, with three larger standalone cases alongside. Currently SC&A displays 3 exhibitions each year, to coincide with relevant anniversaries, University conferences and initiatives, or wider events in the city of Liverpool. Mainly curated by SC&A staff, they are also co-curated by academics, students or other stakeholders.

SC&A also loans items for display in the University’s Victoria Gallery & Museum, regularly contributing to their exhibition programme.
7.2 External

SC&A material is exhibited externally both locally, such as by National Museums Liverpool and Liverpool Central Library, and nationally and internationally. Recent partners have included the Barbican Centre, London; the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford; University of Durham; the Royal Institute for British Architects and the Southbank Centre.

The loan of original material for exhibition must be approved by the Special Collections & Archives Manager and the Deputy Director, Libraries, Museums & Galleries. Loan for exhibition will normally only be approved if compliance with the standards of care set out in the SC&A Exhibition loan conditions can be satisfied and the application form is completed. Further criteria are outlined in the SC&A Collections Care & Conservation Policy.

8. Restrictions

Access to some items is restricted. This is generally due to:

- Legal reasons: SC&A follows the National Archives guidance on closure periods [https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/closure-periods.pdf](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/closure-periods.pdf). Collections are subject to regular monitoring to ensure material is released as soon as possible. Some material may remain closed for a pre-defined period due to an agreement with the donor or depositor.
- Preservation reasons: more details can be found in the SC&A Collections Care & Conservation Policy.
- Uncatalogued material: SC&A cannot provide access to uncatalogued material due to issues of data protection and security. As outlined in the SC&A Collections Information Policy, uncatalogued collections are primarily prioritised according to research need.

9. Feedback

SC&A encourages feedback via all its communication platforms, and also provides feedback cards in the Reading Room. All feedback is logged, and staff work to act on issues as and when they arise.

10. Service Continuity

Access to SC&A services depends on availability of staff, collections, spaces and technology. Our staffing levels are such that we are able to maintain the advertised Reading Room & Enquiry service unless circumstances are exceptional. Any disruptions to the service will be advertised on the website and via social media. Business continuity plans for buildings and systems are operated by the University’s Facilities, Residential and Commercial Services and Computing Services. Emergency situations within SC&A are covered by the Library Disaster Plan.

11. Monitoring and review of policy

This policy was approved in July 2017 and will be reviewed annually. Revisions will be approved by the Library Leadership Team.