Collections Information Policy

Purpose
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. Its full remit is defined in the SC&A Collection Development and Management Policy.

The purpose and scope of this policy is to outline the standards and guidelines involved in the acquisition and cataloguing of SC&A’s collections. It is intended to provide both staff and users with a clear statement of current processes regarding the accessioning, cataloguing and physical management of material. It also indicates plans for improvements to existing collection information.

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

- SC&A Collection Development and Management Policy
- SC&A Collections Care & Conservation Policy
- SC&A Conditions of Donation/Deposit
- SC&A Access Policy

SC&A has recently reviewed its collection management processes and systems and is implementing changes accordingly. As such SC&A is currently going through a period of transition with regards to how information about its collections is recorded and disseminated.

Acquisitions
SC&A acquires material by the following methods, fully outlined in the SC&A Collection Development and Management Policy.

- gifts, bequests and deposits from former staff, students and members of the public.
- internal transfer of records from within the University via the University Records Management Service or individual Departments
- transfer from main Library collection
- purchase, via internal or external funding sources

SC&A works collaboratively with the University’s Records Management Department to ensure the regular transfer of records to the University Archive in accordance with the University Records Retention Schedule and the needs of departments and schools. Efforts are being made to include born-digital records as part of this regular transfer.

Since the creation of the University Archive Department in 1968 basic accession information, including details of donors & depositors, and the nature of each archival acquisition, has been
recorded in paper registers. All information regarding donors and depositors, including correspondence and supporting documentation, is contained within an established filing system, historically organised by accession number, and retained indefinitely. Current correspondence regarding potential donations, which can range over a number of years, is filed electronically. Donors are encouraged to supply as much information as they can about the content and context of the material.

Since 2014 SC&A has implemented the use of Donation & Deposit Conditions forms which are retained alongside the Accession Register. For the internal transfer of records within the University a Conditions of Transfer form is completed. Any existing correspondence and supporting documentation for older collections has been retained and filed by deposit number.

Beyond the process of donation, we are committed to maintaining good relationships with archive creators, their estates and other donors indefinitely. One copy of the donation form is retained permanently by SC&A as proof of the terms of ownership; one is retained by the donor. Depending on individual circumstances, some donations are acknowledged in writing by email or letter. In exceptional circumstances, for example during the process of acquiring a collection of high commercial value or significant status, a contract may be drawn up between the University and the donor/depositor, drafted by the University’s Legal Services team.

SC&A adds all newly acquired material to the Accessions Registers when it is received by staff in its physical or digital form. Separate registers are maintained for printed and archival material.

SC&A recognises its role as part of a network of archive and special collections services across Merseyside and the UK more widely. When advising potential donors, SC&A will draw attention to other repositories where appropriate to ensure that material is offered to the most suitable institution.

SC&A also seeks clarity about intellectual rights and any access arrangements, recording this information at the point of accession.

Notification of new acquisitions is made public at the earliest opportunity, with summary information of major collections being sent through to The National Archives in the annual Accessions Return. SC&A’s finding aids are made available in printed format in the reading room and published online via two main platforms, the online catalogue accessible via the SC&A website and the Archives Hub.

A new collection management system, EMu, will enable the electronic recording of accession information for the first time.

Deaccessioning

Once a decision has been taken for material to be deposited and accessioned within SC&A, it is usually the case that items will be retained and preserved in perpetuity. However, SC&A regularly reviews its collections and the department reserves the right to makes exceptions using criteria consistent with its acquisitions policy. Further information is contained in the SC&A Collection Development and Management Policy.

It is usual practice to deaccession a deposited collection only when a suitable institution can be identified to take it. Historically this has happened on occasions where the archive has been returned to the creating organisation. Once a collection has been identified for deaccessioning the receiving organisation is given official notice in writing and a process and timescale for removal is
agreed. Records created by the University are assessed in accordance with the depositing Departments, Schools and the University Records Management Service, and are returned to the creator or destroyed using a secure and confidential disposal service.

**Cataloguing**

**Archives:**

At the time of writing all catalogues are produced in house using Encoded Archival Description (EAD), an XML standard for encoding archival finding aids. This is carried out using the open source text editor Eclipse. In the near future all finding aids will be generated via KE Software’s collection management system, EMu, according to the International Standard for Archival Description (General) (ISAD(G)). This will improve the accessibility and consistency of collection information.

SC&A’s online catalogue is created using EAD/XML/freeware Eclipse and spreadsheets. This will soon to be replaced with EMu. SC&A currently supports its own ‘Spoke’ using the proprietary software Cheshire 3 (UoL) and the Archives Hub remotely harvests SC&A’s data periodically. It is envisaged that this harvesting process will continue when the EMu system is live, and SC&A archive catalogues will continue to be searchable via the Archives Hub.

During the 1990s a retro conversion project was undertaken to convert many of the existing paper lists into word documents and EAD. Many of these lists were created before the advent of archival standards or computers. As a consequence some of the original catalogues do not meet current best practice standards and there is a lack of consistency in the level of cataloguing - where resources allow SC&A staff work on updating and improving older lists, bringing them into line with standards and the mandatory elements of ISAD(G).

In recent years efforts have been made to adopt in-house cataloguing conventions regarding format and terminology in order to ensure high quality finding aids and consistency across SC&A’s catalogues. All cataloguing is now carried out using the **SC&A Guide to Listing** which is written in accordance with a number of archival standards, therefore facilitating the retrieval, exchange and integration of data. The professional standards for archival description used by SC&A are as follows:

- General International Standard Archival Description, 2nd edition, September 2000 (ISAD(G));
- Encoded Archival Description (EAD);
- National Council on Archives rules for the construction of personal, family and place names (1997);
- International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families - ISAAR(CPF) 2nd edn (International Council on Archives, 2004);
- Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names;
- Library of Congress Subject Headings Search Form;
- Art & Architecture Thesaurus.

**Printed books:**

Items acquired for Special Collections are currently accessioned in a manual register, and given an accession number in a format indicating the year it was received, and whether the item came to the collections via purchase, gift, or transfer from other previously accessioned sequences, such as archives. The Library accession registers were used to record gifts and purchases from 1893 up to
the 1960s, including gifts and purchases now formally part of Archive collections. Collections may contain both printed and archival material, and once such bodies of material have been accessioned and appraised by SC&A library and archive staff, the printed material will usually be catalogued separately to appropriate standards on the Sierra library management system. Links are made between the catalogues on both the library and archive systems, allowing the end user to search across the collections, and access is provided on the same basis.

Printed material is catalogued in line with either the DCRM(B)/RDA hybrid (in line with British Library recommendations while DCRM is being revised) for antiquarian material, or AACR2/RDA as appropriate for antiquarian/modern books. Library of Congress subject headings are used.

The number of items searchable on the online catalogue currently numbers c.70 000 titles. In the region of 26 000 records from an old catalogue conversion remain to be upgraded.

New acquisitions are catalogued on arrival, so there is no current backlog of printed items. However, there is a historic backlog of c.1000 19th and early 20th century pamphlet sequences.

The printed book catalogue is available online via the University Library and SC&A websites, and SC&A material is included in the regular uploads of data to COPAC. Almost 10,000 items have been reported to the ESTC, and work is ongoing to identify and report the remaining material.

Other formats (including digital):

The SC&A Collection Development and Management Policy recognises the importance of collecting and preserving digital archives. Procedures for recording information about these collections are currently being established by an internal working group, and the creation of a digital policy is planned for 2017-18. SC&A already takes digital copies of central University committee papers, and efforts are currently being made to secure other born digital internally generated records such as student records and exam papers. Over time it is acknowledged that digital objects will become a major component of the University archive and of deposited collections.

SC&A supports retrieval and use of digital archives by use of a non-networked PC and the provision of surrogate copies. It is anticipated in the long term that born digital material will be made available to researchers via the EMu system. The system allows for the attachment of digital records to catalogue entries which can then be accessed by users worldwide via the internet.

Collections information regarding microfiche, microfilm, audio cassette, video, and CD formats is available via the current online catalogue in the same way as for analogue material, and facilities are available for visitors to access this material in SC&A.

Uncatalogued collections and forward planning:

Information about uncatalogued collections is retained in the Accession Registers and in the correspondence outlined above in the Acquisitions section.

Over the last 5 years much work has gone into improving the standard of existing catalogues, primarily in converting them from SGML to XML format and improving descriptions as necessary. In the move towards the implementation of the EMu system further work has been undertaken to improve and standardise catalogue records.

Currently 19% of the total SC&A archival collections are uncatalogued. Historically uncatalogued material had been managed in an ad hoc manner, based on demands for availability of material and availability of staff time. In recent years serious efforts have been made to quantify existing backlogs.
and plan cataloguing on a system of prioritisation, and there a member of professional staff whose role is to work on cataloguing this material to the standards outlined above. Factors taken into account when prioritising material for cataloguing include:

- Whether the content is an area of strength for SC&A, as outlined in the Collection Development & Management Policy
- How the material complements existing, related collections
- How substantially the material relates to the University of Liverpool’s current agendas in teaching, research and public engagement
- Whether the material is known to be of interest to the wider research community
- Any specific conditions made by the donor or depositor, or by a funding body
- Whether the material is in poor physical condition.

**Closure periods and restricted material:**

SC&A holds modern archive material which is subject to access restrictions under the Data Protection Act. Some material is also closed due to specific donor requests for confidentiality. Freedom of Information requests are dealt with by the University’s Legal Services. Professional staff keep up-to-date with current legislation via the Archives and Records Association and The National Archives.

Guidelines for identifying material and applying appropriate closure periods are outlined in detail in the **SC&A Guide to Listing**, which adheres to TNA guidelines. Decisions are made on closure periods at the point of cataloguing. Uncatalogued archives are not made available until they have been assessed and checked. Sensitive or high risk collections are restricted in their entirety until they can be assessed.

The University Archives are currently subject to a thirty year closure period. SC&A plans to work in consultation with the University’s Legal Services regarding a possible future change of policy, so institutional records will have historical status after twenty years, in line with the Public Records Act and TNA guidelines.

Historically the system of managing closed records has been to review the closure when access to the material is requested. Once EMu has been fully implemented a system of controlled and phased release will be managed via EMu and records will be flagged for release or reviewed annually in January. This is planned for 2018-19.

Advice is sought from University Legal Services and from record creators with regard to sensitive material, in liaison with the University Records Management service and other stakeholders as necessary.

Access to material may also be restricted for reasons outlined in the **SC&A Collection Care & Conservation Policy**.

**Physical management of collections**

**Locations and access:**
The location of catalogued archives and printed books is recorded in word documents using a system of numbered stores, ranges, bays and shelves. A copy of the appropriate Location Guide is retained in the relevant store and on the shared departmental network drive, and updated as necessary.

Carbon copy request slips are used to record movement and retrieval of material. Information on the use of collections is gathered weekly and collated annually.

It is envisaged that EMu will be utilised to record such information for internal use and allow for changes to be made more efficiently.

**Space planning:**

Refurbishment of a new storage area has recently taken place, and work has begun to relocate some deposited and purchased collections into this area, so as to free up much needed space in the University Archive Store. This in turn will facilitate the movement of material in order to utilise the existing store to its full capacity whilst ensuring the most appropriate storage conditions for the archives. Work is also being undertaken to transfer a significant amount of archive material previously located within Special Collections into the archive stores, where it can be appropriately managed, and to identify and transfer University-related archive material received pre-1968.

The overall aim is to improve the visibility of and provide better access to existing record sequences. It is recognised that the current backlog is larger than the available expansion space within the SC&A stores. The expansion strategy for the service is linked to the University’s ten year campus redevelopment plan, which will include additional Library space. SC&A will be involved in the planning process as projects are initiated, and it is anticipated that further suitable storage space will be made available following reorganisation of the main Library footprint. This will include provision for a separate holding area for newly acquired material that the service currently lacks.

**Monitoring and review of policy**

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