University of Birmingham

University Special Collections Policy

Purpose and scope

1. The University maintains its Special Collections held within the Cadbury Research Library as a way of identifying, collecting, and preserving those rare books and original archives and manuscripts that the University considers to be of importance and relevance to the University’s research, learning and teaching agenda. Built up over a period of 120 years, the collections housed in the Cadbury Research Library now consist of approximately 140,000 pre-1850 books dating from 1471, a significant quantity of post 1850 books and over 3 million archives and manuscripts, all of which distinguish the Cadbury Research Library as a major UK research library. The collections include materials that are unique, irreplaceable and priceless. The holdings of the Cadbury Research Library are a key asset for the University in attracting potential researchers, staff and students.

2. The purpose of this Policy is to guide the way in which the University’s Special Collections are developed and managed, in order to ensure:

   a. They are made available as far as possible for mainstream use and appreciation in learning, teaching and research, contributing through these ways to enhancing the University’s reputation.
   b. They are made available or exhibited as far as practicable for use and appreciation more widely by others outside of the University.
   c. They are grown in appropriate ways and appropriate subject areas, whether by transfer from the general library collection, or by purchase, donation or legal deposit.

3. This Policy may be considered in conjunction with the following separate policies:

   a. Library Services Collection Development and Management Policy;
   b. University Heritage Archive Collection Policy;

Definitions

4. The term ‘Special Collections’ is used to refer to the University’s holding of rare books, archives and manuscripts. The term ‘Special Collections Department’ refers to the area of the University that is responsible for managing the Special Collections. The term ‘Cadbury Research Library’ refers to the facility which houses the University’s Special Collections. The term ‘University Heritage Archive Collection’ refers to a separate collection of historical records and documents about the University, the management of which is subject to the University Archive Collection Policy. The University Heritage Archive Collection is also held within the Cadbury Research Library and managed by the Special Collections Department.

5. A rare book is one which may have the following characteristics: it has market rarity; is out of print; is of financial value; was published in a limited or special edition; or is a first edition. Rare books are held separate from other University library collections, and treated differently in terms of acquisition, cataloguing,
storage and access. The possibility that, under this policy, some of the rare books collection may be partially formed by transfer of books, periodicals and pamphlets from the general library collection, means that all of those subject areas covered by the Collection Development and Management Policy are potentially of relevance to this policy.

6. The archive and manuscript collection is composed of original archives and manuscripts in a variety of media, including paper, photographs, sound or film, whether electronic or digitised or born-digital format. This collection does not benefit from potential transfers from the general library collection, and is therefore unique and distinct in its content.

**Additions to Special Collections**

7. The University will generally seek to collect rare books, archives and manuscripts which support, complement or enhance the ability of the Special Collections to support learning, teaching and research at the University. Additions to the Special Collections may be by transfer from the general library collection, by purchase, or donation, or by legal deposit under agreement.

8. Donation is the University’s preferred method of adding to the Special Collections. Deposit agreements will take into account space and other resource factors arising from receiving, storing and making available the material on deposit. The University will usually wish to consider deposit agreements that involve a funding contribution from the owner towards the cost of keeping and making the material available for wider use and appreciation. Material held on loan or deposit will be subject to an agreement that specifies the conditions of loan or deposit, the respective responsibilities of the University and of the owner, and arrangements for the regular review of the loan or deposit agreement including its termination.

9. All material being considered for addition to the Special Collections will be assessed by the Special Collections Department for its potential long-term historical value. Such material will be assessed in this way, using such criteria as:

   a. Additions being considered by transfer from the general library collection will usually but not exclusively pre-date 1900; periodicals and journals will be considered on a selective basis;
   b. Rarity of copy;
   c. Relationship to other material held in the Special Collections – see the separate Appendix for details of collection strengths;
   d. Relevance to subject areas being taught and researched at the University;
   e. Potential relevance to subject areas that might be taught and/or researched at the University in the future;
   f. Evidence and pattern of usage whilst in the general library collection (where relevant);
   g. Suitability as material to support the academic study of the history of printing and publishing, taking into account physical characteristics, production techniques, provenance, publisher, and patterns and history of publishing;
   h. Impact on storage space and other resource implications related to work required to make the material accessible and related to its long-term care;
   i. Potential to enhance the University’s reputation;
   j. Potential loss to scholarship and cultural appreciation if not incorporated;
k. Quality and value of binding.

10. The Special Collections Department will undertake consultation within the University in order to confirm its provisional assessment of material being considered for transfer from the general library collection or addition by other means.

11. When considering possible additions to the Special Collections, particularly in relation to archives and manuscripts, the University will take into account the likely interest in the material by other collections and repositories in the region and nationally. The intention would be to ensure the material was placed in the most appropriate collection or repository where this would provide the best level of access to the material, and/or support the integrity of a particular collection or repository.

12. Manuscript material concerning primarily the City of Birmingham and the historic county areas will usually be offered first to the City of Birmingham Archives and Local Studies Department, or other relevant local and regional record offices. Exceptions to this may be in cases where the material directly relates to the University or its predecessor organisations, or to prominent personalities of relevance to the University’s Special Collections holdings, or to the subject coverage of such holdings.

13. All types of media including paper, photographs, electronic or digitised or born-digital material will be considered for incorporation. Film and sound recordings will normally be referred to the appropriate film and sound archive unless they are otherwise part of a larger collection. Three dimensional artefacts will not normally be accepted, unless these have a particular relationship with other material held in the Special Collections; advice relating to incorporation would be sought from the University Curator in such circumstances.

De-accessioning and disposal from Special Collections

14. The University reserves the right to keep its Special Collections under review using criteria consistent with those to be used to consider additions to the Special Collections. Where material is deemed as the result of such reviews to be no longer appropriate for the Special Collections, the University will consider such material for de-accessioning.

15. The University will only remove or dispose of material from the Special Collections where it has a legal right to do so. The preferred method of removal is by donation elsewhere such as another collection or repository. Duplicate copies of items within manuscript collections will normally be returned to the donor or depositor or with their permission offered to another repository or destroyed. The University may consider de-accessioned items for sale if it is within the University’s right to sell. In general discarding or destruction as is judged to be suitable by the University will only be considered as a last resort, since the University’s preference is to make efforts to keep the material available to researchers as far as possible.

16. All decisions regarding de-accessioning and disposal of material will be made by the University on the advice of the Special Collections Department.
**Loan of material from Special Collections**

17. Subject to prior approval by the University and, where relevant, depositors, material from Special Collections may be loaned to other registered archives, museums and libraries on the condition that the borrowing institution takes full responsibility for the care of the material whilst on loan and for the costs of its transport, insurance and, if necessary, conservation.

18. The use of copies of original material will be encouraged unless borrowers can provide satisfactory reassurance that original materials to be considered for loan can be held in accordance with BS5454, the Standard for Archive Collections.

**Access to Special Collections**

19. Access to Special Collections material is provided free of charge to all researchers including staff and students of the University and all staff and students of the former Selly Oak Colleges and Queens College through the Cadbury Research Library. Researchers will be issued with a Readers Card on production of proof of current name, current address and signature. Proof of identification could include one or more of the following; driving licence, pension or benefit book, utility bill, correspondence from the University, cheque guarantee card, passport, University identity card. Users will be required to sign an application and undertaking form which, inter alia, outlines their responsibility under University and statutory legislation (including under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Copyright Act 1988).

20. The material in the Cadbury Research Library will be open to the public unless a specific exemption applies. Such exemptions will be determined by means of reference to the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Use of or access to fragile material may also be restricted for preservation reasons.

21. All users of the Cadbury Research Library will be expected to conform to conventions designed to protect the physical wellbeing of the material. Users should expect to be supervised whilst consulting the material.

**Governance and management of the Special Collections**

22. Responsibility for the governance of all matters relating to the University's Special Collections as an area of University responsibility is delegated by Council via the Senate to the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee of Senate. The Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee will maintain a sub-group to take particular responsibility for the detailed oversight of the application of this policy, and to provide a forum in which principal stakeholders and user representatives may provide guidance on the strategic issues and academic priorities which may influence the on-going development and use of the Special Collections. The sub-group will also oversee plans to make the Special Collections available for use in learning, teaching and research, and for exhibiting more widely.

23. Responsibility for the on-going conservation, preservation and management of the University’s Special Collections is delegated by the University to the Director of
Special Collections through the Registrar and Secretary. The Director of Special Collections exercises such responsibility on behalf of the University, and is accountable to the University through the Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee for the range of actions taken and services provided in support of this Policy.

Approved and Adopted by University Executive Board on behalf of University Council on 10th December 2012

Due to be reviewed December 2017
Appendix

Collection Strengths – Spring 2007

Rare Books

Rare books are usually treated as a special category of library material which in terms of acquisition, cataloguing, storage and exploitation calls for different treatment from the rest of the library stock. Because the rare books collection is partially formed by transfer of books from the main library collection its scope covers all of those subject areas covered by the main library collection as detailed in the Collection Development and Management Policy. The existing rare books collection can conveniently be divided into four areas:

**General collection including:** a substantial number of early printed books published before 1850, including some fine incunabula, and the original collection purchased by Dr Heslop. It includes particularly strong collections of literary, theological, historical, scientific and medical texts and good collections of eighteenth century theology, philosophy, history, travel and mid- to late-nineteenth century novels.

**Parish Library collections including:** three separate collections containing books on a wide range of subjects but focussing particularly on theology and dating mainly from the 16th to 19th centuries

**Famous printers and presses including:** including a collection from the press of the 18th century Birmingham letter-founder and printer, John Baskerville and a significant collection of books from the Kelmscott Press established by William Morris and Emery Walker

**Named collections including:** The Little Malvern Court Collection of early books on devotional and recusant matters

Archives and Manuscripts

The manuscript collection does not receive transfers from other areas of the library and is a unique and distinct collection. The existing manuscript collection can be categorised into a number of subject areas:

- British politics, especially 19th and 20th centuries
- World War One and World War Two history
- Middle Eastern manuscripts
- Church of England and British Nonconformist history, especially 19th and 20th centuries
- Mission studies, Christian youth movements and Christian education
- English literature and drama especially 19th and 20th centuries
- Public and local government administration
- Athletics history and the Olympic games
- Russian history of the 19th and 20th centuries
- West African history and literature
- British and Western European Music – 18th – 20th centuries
- Gender Studies
- Special Education
Highlights of our archives and manuscripts include:

**The Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern Manuscripts:** The largest collection of illuminated Middle Eastern manuscripts, after the Vatican and the Bibliothèque Nationale in France consisting of ca. 3,000 Arabic and Syriac manuscripts, a number of Hebrew/Jewish works, coins, seals and clay tablets. This collection has recently been awarded ‘designated status’ by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, which identifies it as being of national and international importance.

**The Church Missionary Society:** The collection is a rich source of information not only for ecclesiastical history and missiology but for the secular history and anthropology of the many countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, in which the Society has operated. It contains the earliest recorded documents from pioneering explorations into Africa or Asia.

**The Chamberlain Collection:** Comprises the papers of Neville Chamberlain (Prime Minister 1937-1940), Joseph Chamberlain (Founder of the University), and Austen Chamberlain, including letters describing Neville Chamberlain’s meeting with Hitler.

**The Avon Papers:** Papers belonging to and about the life of Anthony Eden (Prime Minister 1955-1957), including material on the Suez Crisis.