

OXFORD UNION LIBRARY

Collection Development Policy

revised January 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

The Library of the Oxford Union Society ('The Library') collects materials primarily for academic, recreational and research use. Recognising the value placed by Members on being able to borrow from the Library, wherever possible Library materials are loanable. Exceptions are made where for reasons of age, fragility or historical importance to the Society, items may be confined to the Library.

1.1 Purpose of Collection Development Policy

This Collection Development Policy is to serve as a framework for the maintenance and development of The Library's collections, providing guidance to those engaged in stock acquisition, maintenance and disposal. It was developed by the Library Committee in 2002 to provide a statement of The Library's role which had previously been lacking and to ensure consistency in the long term.

The evolving information landscape and options for Library provision in a variety of media are kept under constant review.

The implementation of the Collection Development Policy is subject to budgetary constraints.

2. THREE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The Library's collections can be described as being made up of the following three categories:

- a) *The Academic Collection*: a corpus of current literature for readers studying for degrees of the University of Oxford and for qualifications issued by other institutions associated with the Union Society;
- b) *The Leisure Collection*: works for the recreational use of members, principally, fiction, travel guides and non-fiction accessible to a general readership;
- c) *The Pre-1914 Collection*: consisting of The Library's historic collections preserved for the benefit of Union Society members and the wider community.

2.2 Collection (i): academic

The Library's principal purpose in acquiring materials is the provision of books and selected periodicals for use by current students of the University of Oxford preparing for first and second public examinations.

The Library provides materials for undergraduates and graduates on taught courses reading for degrees in the following subjects, and in the joint-honours schools with which they are associated:

Archaeology and Anthropology, Biochemistry, Biological Sciences, Business and Management, Chemistry, Classics, Computer Science, Earth Sciences, Economics, Education, Engineering Science, English Language and Literature, Experimental Psychology, Fine Art, Geography, History, Law, Materials Science and Metallurgy, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physiological Sciences, Physics, Politics, Sociology, Theology

In addition, the Library provides language and literary works of use to students studying the following modern languages: French, German, Italian and Spanish. Other languages may be supported depending on perceived demand.

The Library seeks to provide, and periodically update, core texts in these fields of study, giving priority to those titles most in demand from Members.

The Library continues to develop collections in areas traditionally well supported by the Society, such as English literature and literary history, Law, Modern History, and Philosophy, Politics and Economics. In addition it seeks to provide for the needs of current and future Members by expanding collections in areas previously less well supported, taking into account the changing university curriculum, student numbers and patterns of demand within the libraries of the Union and the University.

The Library does not collect in Clinical Medicine and does not normally expect to collect postgraduate research material.

The Library does not subscribe to academic periodicals as these are readily available in electronic form through the University catalogue and database services.

2.3 Collection (ii): leisure

The Library also acquires popular works which may be read by members for recreation in addition to those acquired under (i) above for academic purposes.

The purpose of this collection is to provide a range of books and other materials for recreational reading in, but not limited to, the following areas:

- a) Fiction;
- b) Travel writing;
- c) Non-fiction accessible to a general readership;
- d) Books of Oxford interest.

A limited number of print subscriptions to popular magazines and newspapers is maintained for use by Members in the Library.

Recreational materials in other formats (e.g. DVD, e-books) may be acquired in response to demand.

2.4 Collection (iii): pre-1914

The older collection offers a unique reflection of the cultural and intellectual influences on a select group within British society during the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, and thus provides an invaluable resource for research. Many of the individuals associated with the Library in this period have significance for the history of the United Kingdom and its intellectual and political life. Some parts of the collection have especial importance for the social, cultural and administrative history of the Union and the University. Many volumes are by or about individual members of the Society. Much of the older collection is of current use to those undertaking academic work.

The Society recognises the need to preserve in so far as is possible the integrity of the older collection since disposal of individual works is prone to diminish its value as a 'collection' in the true sense of that term.

It is important to preserve and make available to members and the wider research community the collections held by the Library and acquired before 1914. This date is identified because:

- a) it marks a significant change in the composition of the Union and the University and the society from which they are drawn;
- b) it ensures the preservation of materials from the period in the Union's history that is of most interest to historians;
- c) current trends indicate that there will be an increasing interest in the early twentieth century amongst bibliographers and literary scholars.

The purpose of the Pre-1914 collection is threefold:

- a) it provides books which are of continuing practical use to current students, especially research students;
- b) it contains a number of books of bibliographical importance;
- c) the aggregate of the collection provides a tool by which the period in which the books were collected may be better understood.

3. ACQUISITIONS

3.1 Procedure

Recommendations for acquisition are collated by the Librarian-in-Charge from:

- ✓ reading lists provided by faculties and tutors;

- ✓ consultations with subject specialists familiar with the University's curricula;
- ✓ the Members' Suggestions folder in the Old Library;
- ✓ Online suggestions, e.g. via web pages, email or social media;
- ✓ lists of proposed donations;
- ✓ the Librarian-in-Charge's own professional judgement of the Library's requirements.

Lists of proposed purchases are considered by the Library Committee, which uses the following non-exhaustive checklists to decide on acquisitions:

3.2 Criteria favouring acquisition: collection (i) Academic

- ✓ found on a University reading list;
- ✓ a key work;
- ✓ in demand in Oxford;
- ✓ likely to be used;
- ✓ approved by a subject specialist;
- ✓ completes or adds to a series which the Library intends to collect in full;
- ✓ recommended by members;
- ✓ within budget.

3.3 Criteria favouring acquisition: collection (ii) Leisure

- ✓ likely to be used;
- ✓ author or subject matter relevant to the Oxford Union Society;
- ✓ author or subject matter relevant to the University of Oxford;
- ✓ content appropriate to the general reader;
- ✓ work of a popular or 'canonical' author;
- ✓ completes a series or adds to a series which the Library intends to collect in full;
- ✓ recommended by members;
- ✓ within budget.

3.4 Criteria favouring acquisition: collection (iii) Pre-1914

- ✓ Strengthens or aids the understanding of the Pre-1914 collection;
- ✓ Relevance to the history of the Union;
- ✓ Funds permit.

3.5 Freedom of expression

Within the terms of the more detailed statements on collection development policy expressed in this document, the Library will not exclude from purchase material on the grounds of an author's race, nationality, sex or opinions, nor because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval. The acquisition of a particular publication does not imply any endorsement of the views or opinions stated therein. Books expressing opinions or containing illustrations that might be regarded as blasphemous, offensive or distasteful, and which form part of the existing collections, will not be discarded solely on those grounds.

3.6 The Library in its Oxford context

The Library exists primarily for the benefit of Union members, but is a member of OLIS (the 'Oxford Libraries information Service') and must be seen in its broader context within the network of information providers in Oxford.

To this end, Library staff maintain professional contacts with **Bodleian Library Services** (the body charged with overseeing information provision within the University), and individual libraries.

3.7 Budget Allocations

The Librarian-in-Charge and the Library Committee will have a responsibility for allocating the available acquisitions budget to ensure appropriate relative spending over time on Leisure and Academic Collections, and among the different subject areas covered by the Academic collection. To this end, guidelines on the proportions of the acquisitions budget to be spent in each area will be maintained by the Library Committee.

3.8 Donations

Donations are, in principle, welcomed and accepted where they will enhance the Library's established collection. Accepted donations are acknowledged in writing by the Librarian.

Decisions on whether to accept proposed donations will be judged on the same criteria as for other acquisitions. Not all donations are appropriate additions to the Library, and selectivity must be practised. It is Library policy that:

- a) if possible, the books should be assessed for usefulness prior to their arrival at the Library;
- b) if this is not possible, it is appropriate to agree with the donor or his/her family only to accept part of a proposed donation;
- c) books offered in poor physical condition will not normally be accepted unless there is some compelling reason for their being so.

Donations are normally accepted only if they are made without conditions as to their binding, cataloguing, shelving or future disposal, but in exceptional cases The Library has discretion to accept gifts with conditions attached.

It is not Library policy to accept collections or individual items on temporary deposit or loan.

4. DISPOSALS

4.1 Weeding the Collections

The Society regards the weeding of its working collections as a necessary part of efficient library management. However, the criteria for weeding the different

collections will differ: weeding of the Academic and Leisure Collections will be rigorous and weeding of the Pre-1914 Collection will be restricted.

The involvement of University tutors in the weeding process will be actively solicited and encouraged. Final decisions on which books to recommend to the House for disposal will rest with the library Committee as set out in the procedure enumerated under Rule 57 of the Society's Rules.

4.2 Criteria favouring disposal: collections (i) Academic and (ii) Leisure

In making decisions on which works in the working collection are suitable for disposal, the Library Committee takes into account the following criteria, among others, and aims to discard:

- ✗ materials that do not fit the general purpose of supplying the current needs of members or complementing the pre-1914 collections;
- ✗ superseded editions;
- ✗ copies of almanacs and other reference sources once new editions have been acquired;
- ✗ titles unused within a reasonable time period based on subject and scope of the work except for items designated 'classics' by subject tutors;
- ✗ duplicate titles unless a proven demand exists for multiple copies or unless the duplicate is part of the pre-1914 collection. For this purpose, a duplicate title is defined as a work or works having the same or substantially the same intellectual content as another work;
- ✗ materials which do not support the current Oxford University curriculum or the curriculum of other institutions which are associated with the Society;
- ✗ items in poor condition that are beyond reasonable preservation efforts (such items shall only be disposed of if they do not complement the pre-1914 collection, are of no value for research purposes or can be replaced with another suitable copy of the text).

Items which would normally be discarded on the basis of the above criteria may be retained if they are considered to complement the Pre-1914 Collection, especially if they were published in the period 1914-1940.

4.3 Criteria favouring disposal: collection (iii) Pre-1914 Collection

An item may be disposed of if it is:

- ✗ not integral to the main concerns of the Union and the University at the time of acquisition and does not add to the understanding of the culture of the Union and the University at that time;
- ✗ a bibliographic duplicate of another item in the Pre-1914 collection;
- ✗ part of an incomplete series.

An item that fulfils one or more of the above criteria for disposal may be retained if it is:

- ✓ regarded as a 'classic' work still of current use to scholars;
- ✓ listed in standard subject indexes, guides and bibliographies;

- ✓ unique in Oxford libraries;
- ✓ culturally important;
- ✓ of interest for the history of the Oxfordshire region or of Oxford University or of the Oxford Union Society.

5. REVIEW

This Collection Development Policy will be reviewed at least every five years by the Library Committee (next review due: Hilary Term 2023), who will take advice as appropriate and where necessary from members of the Society and from others most closely involved with teaching and information provision in Oxford. Copies of the current Policy will be made available to members of the Society and other interested parties, thus creating an awareness of the Library's objectives, and of its role in library provision in Oxford.

Last revised:
Hilary Term 2018