

King's College London, Libraries & Collections: Collections Policy

Purpose

Libraries & Collections (L&C) acquire, curate, and make accessible a rich and diverse range of print, digital, and unique archival resources to support teaching, learning, and research at King's College London, our NHS partner trusts, and the wider local and global research community.

In alignment with **Strategy 2030**, L&C is committed to building sustainable collections that foster inclusive education and research excellence. Beyond our academic mission, L&C recognises the essential role reading plays in health and well-being. We are therefore dedicated to developing our collections as sources of inspiration, stimulation, and connection for all users.

Following our **Open Library Strategy**, this policy outlines our operational approach and decision-making framework for developing, managing, and promoting our collections.

Audience and Stakeholders

This policy is intended for the following audiences and stakeholder groups:

- The King's community of students, academic, research and professional staff
- Senior management and professional services (including Finance, Estates, and IT)
- Internal L&C staff
- NHS partner institutions
- The broader information community, including publishers
- External researchers and the public interested in accessing our collections

Accountability

The ultimate accountability for our collections rests with the University Librarian, Lis Hannon, Director of Libraries & Collections. The Collections Steering Group is delegated day-to-day responsibility for collections and oversight of this policy.

Values and Ethics

The following core values guide our work with collections:

- **Open:** We advocate for openness in all its forms, with particular emphasis on open research, open-access publishing, and transparency in collection practices.
- **Inclusive:** We actively seek to identify and incorporate historically excluded voices and perspectives and strive to remove barriers to access and engagement.
- **People First:** We engage students, academics, and NHS partners in the development and use of our collections. We invest in staff expertise to ensure our collections reflect King's distinctive teaching and research strengths, and the diversity of our global community.
- **Sustainable:** We are committed to reducing our environmental impact by embedding sustainable practices throughout the life cycle of our collections and delivering value for money and process efficiency.

Commitment to Diversity and Responsible Curation

Our collections, though extensive, are predominantly Western-centric and from the English-speaking world. We are committed to growing our collections to include a broader range of languages, ideas, cultures, and formats. We recognise that some challenging and sensitive content is held within our collections, particularly our historical holdings. The inclusion of content within our collections is not an endorsement of the viewpoints expressed. Our duty as information professionals within an academic context is to contextualise and curate these collections responsibly to ensure they can be examined and critically engaged with in scholarship. We are committed to partnering with groups that can add insight, context, and alternative perspectives to our holdings.

Legal and Professional Standards

We uphold all relevant copyright and intellectual property laws, and adhere to international best practices in the development, management, and stewardship of collections.

Collections development decision-making

Our collections development is guided by a strategic and balanced approach that supports the University's mission. The following principles inform our decision-making:

- **Professional Judgement:** Decisions are grounded in staff expertise in scholarly publishing, licensing, access management, and in alignment with King's academic needs.
- **Data and Evidence:** We use robust quantitative and qualitative data, including usage analytics, feedback, and content mapping, to guide choices.
- **New Publishing Models:** We respond to evolving publishing practices and funder mandates, adapting to necessary resource purchases despite market constraints.

- **Inclusive Collections:** We prioritise resources that broaden representation and diversify perspectives, voices, and formats.
- **Key Subscriptions:** Institutional expectations require sustained access to critical resources, especially major journal and database packages.
- **Value for Money:** We aim to optimise spending for maximum institutional benefit, operating within financial constraints.
- **Open Models:** We advocate for open access publishing while recognising that traditional, paywalled models still dominate the landscape.
- **Diverse Publishing Ecosystem:** We seek to balance our support across commercial and smaller not-for-profit publishers to avoid dependence on monopolies.

Finances

King's allocates **£6.4 million** annually for information resource acquisition and management, distributed across five core areas:

1. **Senate House Library Subscription**
2. **Physical Collection Resources**
3. **Open Research**
4. **Digital Collection Resources**
5. **Digitised Collection Resources**

Key financial considerations include:

- **£4.5m** (approx.) is committed to journal and database subscriptions often under multi-year contracts.
- Remaining funds support new and emerging needs in teaching and research.
- Budget is not ring-fenced or automatically adjusted for inflation or institutional growth.
- Cost control is critical; we actively negotiate with vendors and seek consortium agreements to secure favourable terms.
- Endowments supplement funding for specific subject areas and special collections.

Supporting Learning & Teaching

Curriculum and Teaching

Libraries & Collections plays a vital role in supporting teaching and curriculum development across King's. We collaborate directly with educators to:

- Maximise the use of existing collections.
- Identify and address gaps in resources.
- Promote the inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives, and formats.

We are involved at the programme proposal stage for new modules, advising on existing resources and identifying new materials to support teaching outcomes and inclusive pedagogy. For existing modules, we support curriculum review by analysing reading lists and student engagement data.

We are committed to inclusive education by:

- Evaluating teaching materials for representation and inclusivity.
- Collaborating with vendors and aggregators to broaden the range of authors and publishers represented.
- Curating collections that reflect diverse experiences and identities.
- Ensuring our e-resources are accessible to users with various disabilities, working closely with publishers, suppliers, and partners.

Reading Lists

Our comprehensive Reading Lists service supports creating, maintaining, and delivering reading lists across the university. We advocate for each module to create a reading list to enable the programme. We aim to provide:

- Electronic access to all core and recommended materials, where possible.
- Physical copies where digital formats are unavailable.
- Annual updates to faculty with refreshed [reading list guidance](#).

Digitisation of reading list material

Where an item listed on a reading list as core or recommended cannot be reasonably procured in digital format, we use a print copy create a partial digital copy.

Following copyright and intellectual property law, we can only digitise up to 10% or one chapter of the resource.

If we cannot procure the copy in a physical format, we apply for a 'copyright fee paid' digital copy of up to 10% or one chapter of the resource, via the British Library Document Supply Service. Where students are registered with the Disability Support & Inclusion Team as having a print impairment, we work directly with the students to ensure they have access to all their core reading materials in an appropriately accessible format in time for the commencement of the relevant teaching week.

E-textbooks

E-textbooks differ from standard e-books in that:

- They are licensed on a one-student-per-copy model.
- They are only accessible for limited periods and only by specific cohorts.
- Costs are significantly higher and often unsustainable.

This licensing model conflicts with our commitment to openness and equity. However, when a title is critical to a module, we procure access on demand. We work with academics to:

- Promote understanding of the e-textbook model and the issues it presents.
- Balance access limitations against teaching needs.
- Uphold inclusive education principles within the constraints of the publishing market.

OERs

[Open Educational Resources](#) (OERs) are freely available, openly licensed teaching and learning materials. Their use and promotion align with King's values and our Open Library strategy.

Libraries & Collections is committed to:

- Raising awareness of OERs among academic staff.
- Supporting the development and integration of OERs into teaching.
- Including up-to-date OER guidance in tools like the Inclusive Reading Lists Toolkit.

Student Engagement

Student engagement underpins our approach to education support and collections development. We continue to prioritise direct and meaningful engagement through:

- [Find Yourself in Our Collections](#) – a campaign promoting representation and inclusion.
- Library Champions projects – student-led initiatives to build inclusive collections.
- Empowering students to communicate with academics about the accessibility, diversity, and impact of reading lists.
- Using data analytics to inform staff and students about how collections support teaching and learning, enhancing decision-making and engagement.

Sustainable research and innovation excellence

Access to current global research outputs

We support King's researchers by providing a wide range of resources and tailored services, supporting them throughout the research lifecycle. We use quantitative and qualitative data to support evidence-based decision making and achieve value for money. This includes:

- Access to major research journals, supporting national negotiations and working directly with publishers to deliver value; agreements often include open access publishing fees
- Subscriptions for specialist databases and e-book packages
- Mediated access to articles, book chapters and books from other Libraries across the UK and around the world through inter-library loans and document delivery
- Our unique and rare Archives and Special Collections, facilitated by specialist staff

Open Research – Publication and dissemination of research

We promote and assist the adoption of open research practices, particularly with regard to the dissemination of research outputs through open access and the FAIR principles – making content Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reuseable. Our approach is inclusive, involving researchers from all disciplines and career stages in decisions about open research practices. We aim to remove access barriers and maximise the reach and impact of King's research, guided by the belief that knowledge should serve the broadest public good. This is a complex and challenging landscape and requires a great deal of advocacy, communications, and training activities. Priorities include:

- Significant support for the day-to-day operations and development of King's [research publications repository](#) (Pure) and [research data repository](#) (KORDS)
- Advising researchers on open access publishing, supporting gold (paid for) open access while recognising that green (non-paid) open access is more sustainable and equitable, and increasingly the way forward
- Development of policy, particularly to support self-archiving and green open access
- Administration of current Research Funder Grants (totalling c£1.8M pa in 2023) to support open access
- Collaboration with the sector to evolve the scholarly publishing landscape to become more financially and ecologically sustainable
- Moving beyond Read-&-Publish deals with publishers that have failed to accelerate the transition to open access adequately

Developing an Open Research Culture

Libraries & Collections plays an important role in research culture, and we work closely with RMID and faculties to place open research at the heart of this work. This includes:

- Advocacy and promotion of open research practices, going beyond compliance with funders and recognising that this will accelerate the creation of knowledge and improve global knowledge equity
- Working with the Research Culture team to champion initiatives such as [DORA](#) and [COARA](#) to reward open research practices and move away from the use of perceived journal quality as a proxy for the quality of research
- Participating in national and international initiatives to build an open research movement
- Funding community-led open access initiatives and alternative publishing models such as 'diamond OA' crowd-sourced and membership models.

Primary and secondary research resources

To support the research community throughout the research lifecycle, and to aid teaching and learning, we continue to invest in a wide range of subscription databases and ebook collections, offering primary and secondary research resources. Some of these resources are also licenced for use by members of our two affiliated NHS Partnership Trusts. Working with tight budgets, our decision-making is data-driven, informed by strong qualitative and

quantitative data. We incorporate user feedback, analysis of usage data and trends, database content mapping, and more. We consider our collections holistically and explore how to offer the best value for money and the richest content to King's user communities. We analyse the cost-saving and collection development potential of ebook aggregator platforms, package title switching, open-access books and monographs, and different subscription/purchasing models - such as evidence-based acquisitions. We harness the power of discovery tools to maximise the potential reach of our resources to service users, including the surfacing of open content.

Inter-lending and Document Delivery

To support the personal academic study and research needs of the King's community and complement our collections offerings, our inter-library loans service obtains copies of articles and book chapters, as well as physical loans of items we do not hold, from other Libraries across the UK and around the world.

Clinical Library Services

As part of King's Health Partners, Libraries & Collections provides dedicated library and knowledge services to King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust staff. These services are delivered through annual Service Level Agreements (SLAs) negotiated with each trust.

We support evidence-based clinical practice, professional development, and staff wellbeing by providing:

- Access to current, clinically relevant collections, including journals, books, and databases, tailored to the needs of healthcare professionals.
- NHS Open Athens registration and administration, enabling NHS staff to access a wide range of digital resources.
- License extensions, where possible, to grant NHS users access to selected King's College London online journal and ebook subscriptions.

Due to licensing restrictions, full online access to all of King's collections is not permitted. However, registered NHS users can borrow print materials from King's Libraries, and use the inter-library loan service to request books and articles from other UK libraries. Through these services, Libraries & Collections contribute to high-quality patient care, lifelong learning, and research-informed practice across King's Health Partners.

Archives & Special Collections

This policy covers our Special Collections and Archival holdings. Due to the highly specialist nature of these collections, more detailed information and policies regarding their content and management can be found here:

[Special Collections collection development policy](#)

[Special Collections preservation policy](#)

[Special Collections policy on loans](#)

Partnerships

Libraries & Collections is dedicated to developing and managing our collections in partnership with the broader higher education sector and organisations that align with our values and goals. We collaborate closely with key national partners—including Jisc, the British Library, Research Libraries UK (RLUK), SCONUL, and the University of London—to maximise value, ensure long-term sustainability of collections, and facilitate reciprocal access to resources throughout London and the UK. We actively participate in national initiatives and shared infrastructure to enhance the impact and resilience of our collections, including: the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) and the UK Print Book Collection.

Through our membership in Jisc, we negotiate with major publishers and suppliers as part of a collective UK higher education sector approach, leveraging shared bargaining power to secure:

- Better terms and conditions
- Support for open access publishing
- Improved value for money

When making acquisition and retention decisions, we consider the holdings of partner institutions—especially Senate House Library, which plays a key role in supporting King's students and researchers—and aim to reduce duplication, increase access, and enable collaborative collection development through shared services and inter-library loan agreements. This cooperative approach ensures that our collections are more comprehensive, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of the King's community.

Cataloguing and discoverability

Libraries and Special Collections

Libraries & Collections catalogues information resources, wherever possible, according to Resource Description and Access (RDA) standards, using the MARC21 format and supplemented by local cataloguing guidelines where appropriate. While records created under the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) are accepted, they are no longer preferred.

We apply the Library of Congress Classification (LCC) system and, where possible, assign Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) to support consistent and discoverable subject access.

- A substantial proportion of book catalogue records are acquired from suppliers at the point of ordering.
- The cataloguing of gifted materials is dependent on available staffing resources.
- Special Collections materials are catalogued under RDA unless it conflicts with Descriptive Cataloguing of Rare Materials – Books (DCRM(B)). In such cases, decisions are made case-by-case, with preference given to DCRM(B).

Discoverability

Catalogue records are accessible through **Library Search** (<http://librarysearch.kcl.ac.uk>), our discovery system that enables users to search across:

- Physical and electronic holdings
- Peer-reviewed open access journal content
- Freely available academic resources identified for their scholarly value

To promote inclusive and open access, records are also made available through a variety of national, international, and local discovery tools, ensuring interoperability and visibility across the wider research landscape.

Libraries & Collections recognises that international bibliographic and archival standards reflect systemic biases that can perpetuate exclusion or harm. We are actively examining our metadata practices to reflect better the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Archives

Archival materials are catalogued using the International Standard for Archival Description (ISAD(G)). Collections are indexed using the UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT)—a UK adaptation of the UNESCO Thesaurus—which incorporates MeSH terms and, where appropriate, maps to LCSH.

Access to Physical & Digital Collections

Most physical collections are available on open-access shelves across our libraries, with some low-use resources stored in closed-access facilities. These materials are fully catalogued and can be requested via the Library Catalogue for in-person collection at Library Enquiry Desks.

Loan Categories

King's Library items fall into the following borrowing categories:

- **Standard Loans:** 7-day rolling loan period, automatically renewed daily unless requested by another user.
- **Short Loans:** 24-hour loan period to ensure high-demand items remain accessible.
- **Reference Only:** In-library use only; typically oversized or high-demand titles unsuitable for circulation.
- **Laptops:** Available for 72-hour loan periods.

Borrowing limits and fines

Borrowing allowances vary by user type, with King's students, staff, and eligible NHS staff receiving the most generous limits. Fines are applied to ensure fair access:

- **Standard loans:** Fines apply if not returned within 7 days **once recalled**.
- **Short loans:** Fines apply after 24 hours.

- **Laptops:** Fines apply for overdue returns.

Library accounts are blocked when fines reach £10.

Enhanced Services for Students with Disabilities

Users registered with the **Disability Support & Inclusion Team** benefit from:

- Extended loan periods (14 days instead of 7)
- Book-fetching services
- Inter-site delivery of requested materials

Access and Membership Arrangements

We aim to balance open access to our collections with the need to prioritise the King's community, through tailored membership options:

King's Community

- **NHS Staff (Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust & King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust):** Borrow up to 30 items and request materials across sites.
- **King's College London Alumni:** Receive automatic reference access; borrowing privileges (up to 5 items) available for a fee.

External Users

- **M25 Consortium & SCONUL Access:** Enables reciprocal access (and in some cases borrowing rights) with other HE libraries. PhD students and Academic/Support Staff can apply for SCONUL Band A membership (TBC).
- **Affiliated Organisations:** Members of select professional bodies (e.g. Chartered Institute of Taxation, Society of Construction Law, etc.) may apply to borrow a limited number of items. (TBC)
- **Reference-Only Access:** Permitted for:
 - University of London students
 - Undergraduate and taught postgraduate students through the SCONUL Summer Vacation Scheme (July–August)
 - Independent researchers

Archives and Special Collections Access

All materials in Archives and Special Collections are held in closed access for preservation and security reasons. These items can be consulted only on-site in:

- Michael Howard Reading Room (Archives)
- Foyle Special Collections Library

Items from these collections may not be borrowed.

Gifts

Since their foundation, the libraries and archives of King's College London have been privileged to receive many generous donations of printed, manuscript, and other materials. These contributions have played a vital role in enriching our collections, enhancing their international research value, and supporting the university's core mission in teaching, research, and scholarship. We greatly value the generosity of donors who help us continue developing our collections in ways that benefit current and future generations of scholars. For further details about our approach to accepting gifts and donations, including the types of materials we can take and the process for donating, please consult our policy here:

[Library Gifts and Donations Policy](#)

Stock management

Locations

King's College London has seven libraries across our Strand, Waterloo, London Bridge, and Denmark Hill campuses. Each library holds collections that reflect the teaching and research priorities of its corresponding academic disciplines.

Most physical resources are openly accessible at the most relevant library site. Some lesser-used or specialist items are held in closed-access stores on campus or off-site storage facilities. All materials, whether on open shelves or in storage, are discoverable through Library Search and can be requested.

Wherever possible, we aim to locate materials at the campus where they are most likely needed, ensuring convenient access for students, researchers, and staff.

Special Collections and Archives

- **The Foyle Special Collections Library**, based at the Maughan Library, houses over 200,000 printed works alongside maps, slides, sound recordings, and manuscripts. These collections span all subject areas and include many rare and unique items acquired over centuries through purchase, gift, and bequest.
- **King's Archives** King's College London Archives - including the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives - hold a unique and internationally significant range of archival and printed materials. Committed to openness and inclusion, the Archives provide access to the King's community, external researchers, and the general public.

Retention and Weeding

Space in our libraries is limited and carefully managed to ensure collections remain current, relevant, and usable. We undertake continuous stock management to:

- Identify materials suitable for digitisation, retention, or weeding
- Align our collections with evolving teaching and research priorities

- Maximise the efficient use of physical space
- Maintain the physical condition of print resources

Digital resources are reviewed and evaluated based on usage data, cost-effectiveness, and subject relevance. Following our sustainability commitments, withdrawn physical materials are recycled responsibly or offered to King's students and charitable organisations.

Withdrawal decisions are made by professional library staff, considering factors such as usage, relevance, availability in alternative formats or institutions, rarity, and condition.

Collaborative Collections Management

King's College London actively participates in regional and national schemes that promote shared stewardship of print resources:

- We were a founding member of the **United Kingdom Research Reserve (UKRR)**, contributing to the national preservation of key periodical and newspaper holdings.
- We also support the creation and expansion of a **National Print Book Collection (UKPBC)**, working with other research-intensive institutions to ensure sustainable, cooperative print retention practices.

Through these partnerships, we maximise access, reduce duplication, and contribute to a more resilient and efficient research infrastructure across the higher education sector.

Policy Management & Review

This policy was created in October 2023 and revised in May 2025. It will next be reviewed in May 2026.