

LIBRARIES & COLLECTIONS



Foyle Special Collections Library

Collection development policy, 2022-25

This document constitutes a statement of the collection development policy of the Foyle Special Collections Library, King's College London, 'collection development' here being understood to mean the selection of items for acquisition following a defined set of criteria and priorities. It aims to provide guidance for Special Collections and other Libraries & Collections staff and to inform members of the university, other users of the Foyle Special Collections Library and the wider scholarly and professional communities as to the principles governing the development of the Foyle Special Collections Library's collections.

1. What are Special Collections?

The Foyle Special Collections Library at King's College London holds collections which, because of the rarity or other special significance of the items contained within them, receive special treatment in terms of their housing, cataloguing, conservation and consultation. These collections comprise the university's Special Collections. By their nature they also form part of our local, national and international documentary heritage. The Foyle Special Collections Library enables physical and intellectual access to these collections, in support of the university's teaching, research and public engagement missions, while at the same time ensuring their long-term preservation, so that they can remain in the public domain and be consulted by future generations.

An item is usually assigned to Special Collections if it fulfils *one or more* of the following criteria:

- It has a publication or creation date of 1900 or earlier
- It has a significant provenance
- Its physical format demands special storage conditions or care in handling (i.e. it is an artefact, a photograph, a volume of loose plates, a manuscript, a typescript or otherwise physically vulnerable). The Foyle Special Collections Library does not acquire collections that predominantly comprise archival material; this is the role of the University Archives. Some

collections held by the Foyle Special Collections Library do, however, contain codex manuscripts or bound volumes of archival documents

- It is of special bibliographic significance (e.g. private or small press items)
- It is an item of considerable cultural or historical significance
- It is of considerable rarity
- It is contentious in subject matter (e.g. publications emanating from Nazi Germany)
- It is of special local significance to King's College London.

2. The Special Collections collection development policy

King's College London is committed to enhancing and expanding the strengths of its Special Collections by a programme of carefully targeted collection development. To this end items are acquired for Special Collections if they fulfil one or more of the criteria listed in section 1 *and* if they otherwise conform to the Special Collections collection development policy.

The Special Collections collection development policy seeks to reflect and build on the existing strengths of Special Collections and the teaching and research strengths of the university as a whole. It also takes account of the strengths of other major UK research libraries, particularly those within the London area. It is a dynamic policy, which may alter as appropriate in response to internal and external influences and in reflection or anticipation of new areas of academic demand. Areas which are currently being collected include:

Theology

- Biblical texts
- Christian doctrinal theology, particularly as relating to the Greek Orthodox Church
- History of Christianity
- Judaism

Languages and literature

- Philology and lexicography; the study and teaching of foreign languages
- German literature (particularly of the 20th century)
- English and American literature (particularly of the 18th and 20th centuries)
- Modern Greek literature
- Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American literature

History

- Post-classical Greece and Cyprus (history and culture)
- Portuguese studies (history and culture of Portugal and of the countries of the former Portuguese Empire and sphere of influence)
- Spanish and Latin American studies (history and culture)
- 20th century Germany (in particular the period 1933-90)
- Travel and voyages of exploration and discovery
- Military and naval history and strategy
- British and European diplomatic history; international relations
- The history of the British Empire and of the Commonwealth
- The Atlantic slave trade and its abolition

Other humanities

- Music (particularly 18th century music and choral music)

Sciences

- Medicine (particularly anatomy, surgery, public health, military and naval medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology and popular medicine)
- Dentistry
- Psychiatry
- Tropical natural history
- 19th century scientific and technical developments, particularly in telegraphy, acoustics and photography.

Within these broad subject areas acquisitions are made that build on more specific strengths of the existing collections. To take two examples, 18th century English hymn books have been acquired to supplement the fine collection of hymnals from the former library of Dr Bernarr Rainbow, held in the Foyle Special Collections Library, while in the field of 19th century science works on the theory of evolution have been acquired to supplement the De Beer Collection of works by and about Charles Darwin.

It should also be noted that the nature of specific acquisitions is to a considerable extent governed by the availability of items on the antiquarian market and the resources available to purchase them.

3. Acquisition method

Items for Special Collections may be acquired by gift, bequest, exchange or purchase on the open antiquarian market. Where items are purchased on the open market, purchase from booksellers is preferred to purchase by auction. Purchase should only be made by auction where items of exceptional rarity or other significance to King's are concerned. In such cases, the use of a recognised bidding agent is recommended.

Occasionally collections may be accepted on permanent loan; this generally applies only to collections emanating from an institution or organisation, rather than to those from an individual private collector.

Suggestions from readers as to items for acquisition are welcomed and those items deemed appropriate for acquisition will be actively sought; the ability to acquire them, however, is necessarily dependent both on their availability and on the availability of resources to purchase them.

It is recommended that Special Collections staff are consulted, when appropriate, when stock reviews are conducted in any of the university's libraries, as some items no longer deemed relevant to teaching may have historical significance and may therefore be appropriate for transfer to the Foyle Special Collections Library.

4. Policy on duplicates

While it can be argued that the term ‘duplicate’ has no meaning when applied to books of the hand-press era, it is in general not the policy of the Foyle Special Collections Library to acquire duplicate copies of items already held in its collections. The exception to this rule is in the case of items with a significant provenance, in which case a duplicate copy may be acquired.

Later or earlier editions of a work already held in the Foyle Special Collections Library may be acquired, particularly where the edition in question differs substantively in content from that already held, where it fills a gap in otherwise comprehensive holdings or where it is of particular bibliographic, literary or historical significance.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Libraries & Collections *Policy on gifts and bequests*: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/governancezone/InformationPolicies/Library-Services-Gifts-and-Donations>