

National Library of Scotland Collections Management Policy

This policy applies to all employees of the National Library of Scotland.

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1. Mission, vision, purpose and principles

The National Library of Scotland's mission is: 'To enhance Scotland's international reputation by making a significant and lasting contribution to global knowledge and the memory of the world.'

The vision arising from this is: 'To create opportunities for people to participate in Scotland's rich cultural life as one of the leading national libraries in Europe.'

The Library's purpose, as defined by its statutory obligations under the [National Library of Scotland Act 2012](#), is to carry out the particular functions of:

- (a) preserving, conserving and developing its collections,
- (b) making the collections accessible to the public and to persons wishing to carry out study and research,
- (c) exhibiting and interpreting objects in the collections, and
- (d) promoting collaboration and the sharing of good practice with and between other persons providing library and information services, and the adoption of good practice by those persons.

The Library's [Strategy](#) outlines the principles and values which underpin the implementation of these functions. Essentially the Library aims to be:

- Open
- Trusted
- Inclusive
- Connected
- Inspiring
- Responsible.

These principles and values are also defining characteristics of the Library's approach to collections management.

The Library will manage its collections on behalf of the people of Scotland and the wider world, to ensure their preservation and accessibility for the long term. We will follow best practice within the heritage and information sector, but also take account of the varied nature of the Library's collections. Decisions will be taken based on the needs of material and its users, current and future, within a transparent governance process. These decisions will be documented clearly. We accept that as library staff we are temporary custodians of the national collections; we will learn from choices made by our predecessors and expect that future custodians will also take different views.

Within the organisation we will work across departments and collections formats to secure the best outcomes for the collections and their users. The policy is intended to support a holistic approach to collections management, based on good communication and working culture. While the collections are richly diverse, this policy focuses on the areas where there are common needs. The intention is to make it easier for us to protect and develop the national collection as a unique and precious whole.

2. Target audience

Collections start and end with people, and the purpose of preserving materials is to ensure continued access to them. We manage the collections in order to widen and improve access.

'[Reaching People](#), 2020-2025', the Library's five-year strategy, sets out our commitment to strengthening and widening access to the collections. Audiences old and new will engage with our collections in myriad ways, some familiar and some breaking new ground for the Library. By widening and improving access to the collections, we will encourage audiences to explore:

- **What** is contained within our collections
- **Why** we collect.

Our Collections Management Policy will act as a compass for those who wish to delve further into the story of the collections, guiding audiences to learn more about:

- **How** we manage our collections and make decisions that best ensure their preservation
- **Who** is responsible for caring for our collections.

In this way, the Collections Management Policy sets out the ethos for caring for our collections. It functions as a code of conduct and describes out our current best practice, as well as what we aspire to do as a forward-thinking Library. The policy is a resource and will function effectively as such for a range of people. Our target audience for the policy is comprised of:

- **Library staff** – We want the policy to act as a resource for all staff, providing information and a framework for staff decision-making, working practices and behaviour. It should provide a foundation for new colleagues who wish to learn more about the collections and be a mandatory component of staff inductions. Equally, the policy will support familiarisation and continued learning for colleagues as they grow within their roles or take up promotions and secondment opportunities.
- **Donors and publishers** – Individuals and organisations who help us grow our collections should be able to see our values, ethics and expertise clearly reflected in the policy. This will reinforce and broaden the Library's reputation as an organisation that is trusted, responsible, accountable and skilled
- **Sector colleagues** – Reflecting our values of openness, trust and inspiration, we will freely and openly share our knowledge and examples of best practice
- **Accreditation and other professional bodies** – We are confident in our practices and standards and can demonstrate that our workforce is skilled, knowledgeable and respectful of our collections
- **Partners** – The Library's network of partners spans disciplines and geographical boundaries. Our collections form the core of who we are and the policy will effectively communicate our identity to current and prospective partners
- **Library community** – We will nurture the spark of curiosity in our readers, attendees, visitors, viewers and learners, who may wish to discover more about the work we do behind the scenes.

The policy will effectively communicate the varied life cycle of our collection items, providing an insight into the different journeys an object can take. Within the policy or through supporting material we will embrace opportunities to communicate this journey in different ways and support different engagement styles: visual (diagrams and artwork); tactile (leaflets, booklets and props); logical (statistics and data visualisation); auditory (podcasts, recordings and videos).

We recognise that making our approach to collections management inclusive in both process and outcome is beneficial to everyone. We are committed to building a collection that is diverse and representative, as detailed in our [Collection Development Policy \(PDF\)](#). All items in our collections, regardless of format, provenance, authorship or subject matter will be preserved and cared for appropriately. We recognise the importance of reflecting Scottish culture and society and commit to doing this better by examining the way we have recorded and catalogued our collections. By looking at our processes with a critical eye, we will start to address the historic biases of the Library and the silences in the collections. This will involve replacing outdated vocabulary and bringing underrepresented or neglected narratives to the fore. We will actively review this approach on an ongoing basis to ensure our Collections Management Policy is relevant for individuals and communities of the 21st century.

3. Scope of collections

The National Library of Scotland has built up collections of over 50 million items since its creation in 1925. These include:

- Digital and digitised collections
- Archives
- Manuscripts
- Modern published collections including Legal Deposit
- Moving image collections

- Sound archive
- Rare books
- Maps
- Music
- Objects / realia.

The range and diversity of the collections reflects the varied history of Scotland and its interactions with the wider world. Material has been acquired through gift, loan, purchase and through the legal deposit privilege which entitles the Library to claim a copy of all UK and Ireland publications. Formats collected range from medieval books written on vellum to digital files. Physical collections are primarily held at sites in Glasgow and Edinburgh, while digital collections are also increasingly stored in the cloud. The National Library of Scotland does not operate in isolation and our collections are part of a distributed network of holdings at local, national and international levels. However, our priority is the resources which we own or directly administer, and for which we are accountable.

All of these collections are within the scope of the Collections Management Policy. We will ensure that policies address digital collection management needs – singling them out where they differ significantly from physical collections, but otherwise embedding them in a format agnostic narrative.

4. Scope of framework

The Collections Management Policy is the basis for a framework which identifies four main elements of collections management activity, based on the model devised by the Collections Trust (itself based on the [Spectrum standard](#) which derives from [PAS 197:2009](#) – plus an additional element of ethics as outlined below. These elements are also structured to meet the requirements of key accreditation schemes including Archives Accreditation and Digital Preservation Core Trust Seal.

1. Collection development policy (selection, acquisition, impact assessment, disposal, collections analysis)
2. Collections information policy (location control, metadata, authority control, accessioning, inventory, audit, rights, insurance, documentation)
3. Collections access policy (visitor spaces, reading rooms, online, exhibitions, loans, digital access, digitisation process)
4. Collections care policy (conservation, preservation, disaster response, collections security)
5. Collections ethics policy (due diligence, equality, diversity, inclusion, sustainability).

This top-level document introduces the framework and the overall approach. Detailed policy and documentation will be developed within this framework structure for the five areas identified. These five policy areas may require single or multiple policy documents.

Documentation will be as clear as possible, without jargon, and will be managed sustainably. We will make effective use of technology to ensure that information is captured in appropriate systems, preserved and re-used, so that we can build on the successful development of policies and procedures without having to reinvent the wheel each time. It will be easy for people to access collections management information and to understand the current status and context of each document.

5. External context

The Collections Management Policy is informed by our commitment to uphold national and international legislation, appropriate sector standards, good practice and ethical codes. We will keep abreast of developments and do regular benchmarking with other organisations.

As an indicative, but non-exhaustive list, these are some of the key pieces of legislation and standards with regard to which we have developed this policy framework:

The pieces of governing legislation that form the National Library's statutory framework are:

- [National Library of Scotland Act 2012](#);
- [Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003](#); and
- [Legal Deposit Libraries \(Non-Print Works\) Regulations 2013](#)

Legislation relevant to collections management activities include:

- [Data Protection Act 2018](#);
- [Dealing in Cultural Objects \(offences\) Act 2003](#);
- [Environmental Information \(Scotland\) Regulations 2004](#);
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Freedom of Information \(Scotland\) Act 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#);
- [General Data Protection Regulation 2018](#);
- [Holocaust \(Return of Cultural Objects\) Act 2009](#);
- [National Heritage Act 1980](#);
- [Prescription and Limitation \(Scotland\) Act 1973](#);
- [Return of Cultural Objects Regulations, 1994](#);
- [Succession \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#); and
- [UNESCO Convention on the means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 1970](#)

All collections management activities will be in accordance with relevant guidance including:

- [Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines For Museums, libraries and Archives on Collecting and Borrowing Cultural Material \(DCMS 2005\)](#) ;
- [Guidance for Exporters Issue 1 2021 0.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](#);
- [Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for National Institutions \(2016\)](#); and
- [IFLA Gift for the Collections: Guidelines for Libraries](#)

National and international sector standards and codes of good practice will inform collections management activities. Relevant standards include:

- [Spectrum: The collections management standard created by the Collection's Trust](#)
- [PAS 197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management](#);
- [BS 4971: 2017: Conservation and care of archive and library collections](#); and
- [BS EN 16893: 2018: Conservation of Cultural Heritage – Specifications for location, construction and modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage or use of heritage collections.](#)
- [Core Trust Seal](#)

The collections management ethics policy will be created with consideration of ethical codes recognised by the cultural sector including:

- [FIAF Code of Ethics](#);
- [Museums Association Code of Ethics \(2015\)](#); and
- [ICOM Code of Ethics](#)

A commitment to working closely with other Legal Deposit Libraries and cultural organisations is reflected by memberships and affiliations with sector organisations including:

- [Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries](#); and the
- [National Museums Directors Council](#)
- [ARA Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections](#); and the
- [Consortium of European Research Libraries](#)

The intention to collaborate with other institutions is underlined by signed Memoranda of Understanding with Edinburgh and Glasgow University Libraries.

Key legislation and standards relevant to each of the detailed policy for the five areas will be logged. Review of relevant legislation and standards will take place on the same schedule as the policy review.

6. Internal context

The Collections Management Policy (this top-level document and the framework) is a key plank of the Library's policy suite and is approved by the Library Leadership Team.

The Library maintains a register of Policies (Statutory and Non-Statutory Compliance) to which the Collections Management Policy will be added.

The detailed policies covering the five areas identified above will be brought together under the Collections Management Policy framework and managed within SharePoint.

The Collections Management Policy sits alongside and supports (without duplicating) Department Plans, the Service Catalogue and Business Continuity Plans. It informs KPIs and key areas for reporting within the overall Library Plan and Strategy. It also supports the Risk Management framework and Risk Registers by developing and documenting good practice to mitigate and control risk.

It should be noted that although the overall approach is new, many of the core elements of Collections Management Policy are already in place and this does not impose a major new burden of policy and administration. The priority is to improve the flow of information and working culture rather than to create more paperwork.

We will review the Collections Management Policy annually with a working group report to LLT. We will be open that we will not always get it right, we will learn, and improve, and this will be a living policy. We will revise the framework and documentation in response to external drivers as required.

7. Governance and review

Once the top-level policy is approved, a working group convened by the Associate Director for Collections Management will develop the framework, prioritise areas for development and report on progress. This group will provide an annual action plan and a progress report to LLT.

Appendix 1: Projected benefits of the Collections Management Policy

- Greater clarity and transparency around key policies and decision making process
- NLS uses same business language as peer organisations
- Allows for our approach to be easily understood by funding bodies such as Heritage Lottery Fund
- Creates a toolkit for future external accreditation and validation schemes (e.g. would support Customer Service Excellence)
- Easily maps to published standards, e.g. British Standard BS EN 16893, BS 4971
- Brings Library staff and departments together as common approach requires integration (e.g. around collections impact assessments)
- Identifies key roles and responsibilities (e.g. Collections Management department has a central role in delivering the CMP but cannot do so in isolation)
- Sets a wider context for decision making, moving away from decisions driven solely by item format or individual curatorial responsibility
- Provides a concise summary of the Library's approach to its collections which is understood and endorsed by the Board
- Supports Risk Management framework by developing and documenting good practice to mitigate / control risk
- Sits alongside and informs Department Plans, Service Catalogues, Business Continuity Plans
- Informs KPIs and key areas for reporting within Library Plan
- Underpins collections element of Library Strategy
- An approach and momentum which helps us develop detailed policy and procedure, particularly where there are currently gaps
- A toolkit for future external accreditation and validation schemes (e.g. Archives Accreditation, would support Customer Service Excellence).

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