ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Archives and Special Collections Collection Management Policy

1. **Introduction**

Mission Statement

To preserve and provide access to the University's archives and special collections, supporting research, teaching, and engagement within the University and the wider community.

1.1 Scope

This policy covers the physical and digital collections held by Royal Holloway, University of London Archives and Special Collections. The purpose and function of the archives service is to provide a long-term depository for material which it is normally appropriate to retain in perpetuity for its intrinsic historical value to the institutional record. This is different from working business records which will be managed and deleted regularly in accordance with standard records retention schedules.

The policy does not cover collections held in the academic departments of the University.

The policy does not cover rare books which fall under the scope of the Library Services Content Strategy and Information Resources Policy.

This policy is also separate from the University's records management activities which adhere to the University's Records Retention policy.

1.2 Legislative Framework

Legislation relating to archival collections management includes the following, and any previous or subsequent amendments through regulations, statutory instruments, or directives:

Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988
Freedom of Information Act 2000
Environmental Information Regulations 2004
Equality Act 2010
Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015
Data Protection Act 2018

1.3. Definitions

Archives – a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

Special Collection – a collection of documents or publications which have enduring historical value but were not created by Royal Holloway, University of London or its predecessor bodies.

Preservation – the use of passive or non-interventionist measures to slow down the deterioration of material. This includes repackaging, environmental controls and safe handling practices.

Digital Preservation - the process of ensuring that digital information remains accessible and usable over time and is not simply concerning the storage of digital material.

Conservation – the use of active measures to prevent further deterioration of material. An example of this could be flattening a map or repairing torn paper.

1.4. Roles and responsibilities

- The Director of Library, Learning Support & Culture is the Operational Owner of this policy and will delegate day to day oversight and coordination to the Head of Cultural services, the Archivist, and other relevant staff members of the Directorate. Reporting to the Executive Board and University Council is through the Executive Director of Business and People Services.

- Head of Cultural Services: responsible for the management of the Cultural Services Team, works with the Archivist to manage and develop the archive collections within the scope of this policy.

- Archivist and Special Collections Curator: responsible for developing and managing archive collections within the scope of the policy, will liaise with potential depositors as well as library staff and departments regarding suitability and research potential, raise possible acquisitions within the directorate, referring up to relevant staff where necessary.

- Building Manager: responsible for the management of the Emily Wilding Davison building in which the archive reading room and archive store is situated, including maintaining facilities such as environmental conditions, pest management, fire gas suppression and security systems and other systems as relevant and within the scope of building managers remit.

- Head of Security: responsible oversight and delegation of procedures for the alarming of the archive spaces, including reading room and archive store. Overseas the response of security officers to alarm activations and to attend and investigate activations.

- Business Continuity Manager: responsible for the development of business continuity plans including salvage and disaster recovery procedures in collaboration with the archivist and head of cultural services, and the circulation and testing of plans to relevant teams across the University.

2. Collections Development

Collections development parameters are vital to ensuring that acquisitions to the archives and special collections Are closely aligned with the academic mission and priorities of the University and can be managed within available resource parameters. This also enables the service to be transparent and clear when accepting and declining new material and the reasons behind acquisitions decisions.

The service will accept new archival collections which align with the wider University and Mission Statement of RHUL Archives and Special Collections, alongside our acquisition policy. There is a need to balance the desirability of acquiring collections against the cost of storage, processing, and

accessibility. The service has a responsibility to ensure that collections which would be more appropriately kept by another archive repository are not accepted.

2.1 Collection Strengths

The collections currently fall into three sections:
- Institutional records of Royal Holloway College, Bedford College and the merged Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (Royal Holloway, University of London) with a particular strength in the history of women's education. These can be loosely defined as records created or received by the Colleges in the course of their history and development. This includes records of committees, internal and external communications, photographs of university life, records of the Student Union, records of clubs and societies, records of special events, broadcasts relating to the University etc.
- Personal papers of individuals with a connection to the University. This may include oral histories, reminiscences, photographs of university life and correspondence etc.
- special collections which support research strengths within the curriculum, in particular but not limited to women's history, history of higher education and theatre history.

Please see the policy below for specific information on material the service can accept. In cases where the service is unable to accept material offered, the Archivist will, where possible, advise on a suitable alternative repository.

2.2 Acquisitions policy

- Unique material relating directly to the history of the institution will usually be accepted.
- The papers of an individual will usually only be accepted if a significant part of the collection relates to the history of the University. The service may decide not to accept student and staff papers created outside the course of their academic career at RHUL. In the case of large collections, the resource implications of cataloguing, storage and preservation will be weighed against the research benefits of accepting the material. In such cases, advice will be sought from subject specialists within academic departments. The discretion falls to the service, and the Director of Library, Learning Support and Culture.
- The service actively seeks to fill gaps in the collection, which includes records of the Student Union and other sports, and social clubs associated with the University.
- Where material does not relate to the history of the University, it will usually only be accepted if it relates directly to a curriculum strength or to a research area already represented by archive sources, such as women's history or theatre history. Again, in the case of large collections, the resource implications of accepting the material will be carefully considered.
- In line with the University's value of openness, the service will not usually accept material where the donor requests for additional conditions of access to be in place. To comply with the General Data Protection Regulation, we cannot share details of those requesting access to collections with donors.
- Material will be considered for acceptance in either hard copy or digital format.
- A Digital Preservation Strategy for archives has not yet been developed but there are procedures in place for the storage of and access to digital records. Donated digital files will be stored using the most appropriate infrastructure solution provided by the University at the time. Donated files may be renamed or migrated to an alternative file format (such as PDF) to aid discovery and digital preservation.
- Material which would be better suited to deposit in a repository approved by The National Archives which already holds material associated by provenance to that subject area will

not be accepted. An example of this is documents relating to the local area, which would be better offered to Surrey History Centre.

- Archival collections are most valuable for research if the evidential links between documents have not been destroyed by splitting the collection. Therefore, in most cases, the service will accept a collection in its entirety or not at all.
- Items in poor physical condition which prohibit public access (where the cost of necessary conservation treatment is disproportionate to their value as a historical and teaching resource) will not be accepted.
- Duplicate materials will not be accepted, this includes later reproductions of original documents.
- See the Library Services Content Strategy and Information Resources Policy for details and our collection policy for printed, electronic and other published materials.
- It is acknowledged that archive collections are unique, and there may occasionally be agreed exceptions made to clauses above following consultation and agreement within the University. This in no way sets a precedent for the University's position on future acquisitions.

2.3 Additional considerations

On occasion the quantity and condition of the material offered to the Service make it unable to accept, even if the material meets the scope of acquisitions outlined above. When deciding whether to accept material the potential historical and research value of the material alongside challenges involved in its storage, retrieval and preservation will be considered.

2.4 Resource and storage capacity

The resource involved in permanently preserving paper and digital records limits the storage capacity of the Service. The value of permanently storing collections, on an individual basis, dependent on their potential historical and research value will be considered, and we may choose not to accept collections that are already well-represented in the Service's current holdings, or where the quantity is judged to outweigh the quality of the information contained in the records.

2.5 Decision-Making

Overall responsibility for decisions within the scope of this Policy rests with the Director of Library, Learning Support & Culture. To support decision-making, the Directorate will convene a regular formal meeting to review potential new acquisitions offered to the University. A log noting all donations offered and the decision will be maintained. Membership of the formal meeting consists of appropriate staff from the directorate. All new acquisitions are considered against the acquisition policy. In line with the University's approach to managing risk, where a decision cannot be made under this Policy within the Directorate, it will be referred to a senior governing committee of the University, especially if there are resource, reputational, legal or other implications.

During the pre-acceptance process, the archive will conduct necessary due diligence to confirm the provenance of items offered to ensure ownership can be transferred legally using our standard transfer agreement. When considering the acquisition of important cultural assets, the archives will follow the guidance set out by The National Archives and follow the advice of RHUL Legal Council and Alumni and Development Office, as appropriate. Approvals to be made outside of the directorate would be referred to the most relevant University committee.

2.6 Format of the material

The service will only accept digital material in preferred file formats. The service retains the right to migrate digital objects in its care for preservation purposes and to ensure future accessibility. Analogue items in a format which requires special equipment for their consultation will only be acquired if the Service has the necessary equipment to enable access to be provided or facilities for access can be arranged elsewhere under appropriate supervision.

2.7 Status of deposit

Items will be acquired as donations, becoming full legal property of the University (*subject to confirmation from legal*), or internal transfers in the case of organisational records. We will not accept new acquisitions on temporary deposit. Before accepting new material, the University must be satisfied that the donor has proper authority or title to transfer them and will conduct due diligence around the provenance of the potential acquisition. The conditions of donation are detailed within the *transfer agreement*.

Copyright will usually transfer along with the collection unless copyright is to be retained by individuals rather than the donor organisation.

On behalf of the Director of Library, Learning Engagement and Culture, the University reserves the right to refuse material which does not fall within the remit of these acquisition guidelines, or where there is concern over the legal ownership of the material, or implications of acquiring the material (eg cultural assets or conditions of deposit).

2.8 Funding

The Archives and Special Collections does not have a budget for purchasing material. In the unlikely event of a purchase being required, funding may be arranged from alternative University budgets, or external funding sources on a case-by-case basis.

2.9 Deaccession

As part of the acquisition and cataloguing process, collections will be evaluated and any material not required for permanent preservation is identified. Any decision made regarding disposal will reflect the above policy and will be executed in line with the transfer of ownership agreement.

The Archives reserve the right to conduct a periodic review of the records held, considering research use of the records, and where necessary, to recommend their disposal, destruction, or transfer to a more appropriate repository. This is also stated in the archives transfer agreement which the donor will sign on gifting the material to the University.

In the event of a request to deaccession a collection by a historic depositor where no donation agreement or paperwork relating to the original transfer and the terms of deposit can be located, the archive will consider individual cases and work with depositors in the best interests of the collection and the University. Before agreeing to a deaccession, the University may request a contribution towards the cost following an assessment of the costs involved, including staff time, packaging and transport.

Governance supporting Deaccession will follow the process outlined in section 2.5 above.

Once a formal agreement of deaccession is made, the Archive Service will undertake the following activities:

- Contact the funder of any externally funded work on the collection/item, for example cataloguing or conservation. The deaccession and transfer will normally be discussed with the funder prior to it being undertaken.
- Record the formal disposal decision and destination in the accession records.
- Researchers should be informed of the deaccessioning decision and destination via means appropriate to your service, and the collection/item.
- As well as changing the archive service catalogue, if the collection is listed on Discovery (The National Archives' catalogue), Archives Hub, or similar, then these records will normally be amended to show the change.

3 Collections Information

Collections information is all information written and gathered about collections during transfer, accession, cataloguing, and subsequently. Maintaining accurate information about the collections the archive holds is vital for successful service delivery. The information ensures that our collections are discoverable for users and trackable for security and in the event of a disaster.

This information falls into two main categories: accession information and catalogue information, both of which are held within our Collections Management System (CMS).

3.1 Accession Information

As a condition of donation or bequest, the University will record accession information for every accession to ensure that accurate provenance records are kept.

The accession record is created electronically within our CMS and gives details of the scope and content of the material, extent, restrictions on access, legal status including copyright information, date of accession and details of the donor or creator.
A _transfer agreement_ will be completed and signed by the donor and a member of staff. A digital copy of the agreement is stored along with any associated accessions paperwork. Any hard copies of transfer agreements and related paperwork are stored securely.

Each accession is given a unique number beginning with the year it became part of the archive. This is then also recorded as part of the catalogue record when the material is catalogued. The accessions database is not made available to the public due to the inclusion of personal data.

Guidance on creating accession records can be found within the _Cataloguing Guidelines._

An annual report listing new collections is provided to The National Archives as part of the national Accessions to Repositories survey.

3.2 Cataloguing Information

Archive collections are catalogued using our Collections Management System and made visible to the public via the public facing online catalogue.

The archive catalogues follow the International Standard of Archival Description (General) or ISAD(G). The Cataloguing Guidelines contain guidance on what information should be recorded.

Some of the legacy data stored in our existing collections management system does not currently meet ISAD(G). Work will be undertaken to retrospectively update these records as resource and capacity allows.

In common with many similar archives services, a proportion of the collection remains uncatalogued including recent acquisitions. Decisions on cataloguing priority will be based on demand in teaching and research, and the availability of an allocated resource attached to a collection.

Our policy on the use of appropriate terms in metadata aligns with the University's core values, particularly in supporting decolonization efforts and fostering an inclusive environment. Recognising that language plays a pivotal role in shaping societal narratives and structures, we are committed to using metadata terminology that reflects respect, diversity, and cultural sensitivity.

4 Preservation

4.1 Storage and Security

The service preserves both physical and digital records. Most of the physical archive and special collections are held in the archive store. Access to the archives store is restricted to key personnel within the Culture team, library team, building management team and security. Researchers and visitors will be supervised at all times while consulting original material in the archives reading room.

4.2 Environment

The University will store donated archives in conditions which meet national standards. The archive store is maintained at a temperature of 18 degrees centigrade and relative humidity of 50 percent. Temperature and humidity readings are recorded at regular intervals.

4.3 Pest management

The archive stores are cleaned periodically, and pest traps are regularly monitored to enable early detection of an infestation.

The University may request to inspect a new archive acquisition in situ before accepting it to check for signs of infestation or mould and assess the cost of treatment. Acquisitions are stored within our quarantine room or a designated processing space for a period of quarantine before being moved to the store. If infestation or mould are identified during this quarantine period, appropriate measures are taken to eradicate the problem before moving to the store.

4.4 Emergency response

The collections are covered by the Library's Disaster Management Plan which is reviewed regularly as part of the University's health, safety and business continuity planning process. In the event of a significant incident, it may be necessary to restrict access to collections.

4.5 Conservation

Items requiring active conservation work are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Prioritisation for conservation is based on amount of use, physical condition of the material, historical significance, status of deposit, and cost of necessary work. A conservation priority register is kept recording details of items requiring conservation as identified by the archivist.

Conservation work is carried out by an external conservation professional, accredited with the Archives and Records Association and/or Institute of Conservation. Records are kept of all work carried out.

5 Access

The Service is available to all researchers on completion of a registration form and agreement to abide by the *handling guidelines*. Access in person is provided free of charge, though there are copying charges for remote users (see Reprographics).

5.2 Enquiry Service

Enquiries can be received via email, telephone, post or in person. All enquiries will receive an initial response within 10 working days. If this is not possible, the enquirer will be notified.

All enquiries will normally be answered in the order they are received, but internal enquiries may take precedence over external enquiries at busy times in support of the University's priorities.

The archivist endeavors to answer enquiries relating to the collection, however this is not always possible due to capacity. The service cannot undertake detailed research on behalf of enquirers. Enquirers are invited to visit the archives to conduct the research themselves.

5.3 Reading room access

Researchers are able consult collections in person within the Archive Reading Room.

Access to the reading room is by prior appointment. Researchers should provide archive staff with a list of material they wish to consult ahead of their appointment. It may not be possible to arrange appointments at short notice due to the need to prepare documents, and due to other activities taking place in the reading room.

5.1 Access Restrictions

The University reserves the right to restrict access to archival materials for the following reasons:
- **Legislation**

Access to the records held by the Archives must comply with relevant legislation including such as Data Protection Act
- **Preservation**

Some items are too fragile to consult in the reading room or display in exhibitions. Staff will monitor the condition of individual items requested by researchers or intended for exhibition and will refuse access or copying on preservation grounds where appropriate. Where a surrogate is available, access will not normally be provided to the original except in the case of a specialist requirement which cannot be met by the surrogate.
- **Uncatalogued material**

It may be necessary to restrict access to material which is uncatalogued if the material has not been fully checked for data protection issues or is in quarantine due to infestation.

- **Deposit agreements**

Whilst presently we do not normally accept donations with access restrictions, there are some collections acquired in the past which still have access restrictions. Collections may require the completion of an application and reference process before permission can be granted for access. This is where a donor has stipulated that certain conditions of access are put in place as a condition of the deposit.

5.4 Teaching and workshops

Subject to staffing capacity and availability, the service can host groups of students or external visitors; these will ideally be scheduled outside of archive service appointment hours and groups should contain no more than 20 people to comply for safety and security reasons. Group visits will not normally be booked for fewer than 6 visitors. *Guidelines for staff booking group visits* are available.

5.5 Accessibility

The Archive Reading Room is located within the EWD building and is accessible via a lift. Accessibility equipment is available within the reading room, including a height adjustable desk and audio induction loop. General building accessibility information for the reading room is the same as for the Library.

The Service endeavors to remove barriers to accessibility and will support visitors to use our collections where possible. In special circumstances the Service is able to host virtual appointments of up to 60 minutes to enable access for users who cannot physically visit the reading room, with further appointments if necessary. Requests for this service will be considered on an individual basis and are dependent on the availability of equipment and staff.

6 Online

6.1 Digital access

The service will explore opportunities for digitising collections as capacity and funding allows, but significant parts of the collection are only available in physical format. Individual service users should therefore refer to the options 5.5 above and 9 below on digital provision available.

The *Digitisation Guidelines* set out the recommended scanning resolutions and file naming conventions for digitised material.

6.2 Webpage

The Service webpages www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/the-library/our-archives will be kept up to date with information on the archives and special collections, such as scope and content and visitor and enquiry information.

The RHUL library and archives social media pages will feature promotional items from the RHUL archives and special collections. We will comply with all relevant legislation around posting images from donated archives, including copyright and GDPR, in line with the University's broader social media policy, and adopt a take-down approach if material is incorrectly posted.

6.3 Other websites

Catalogue collection level descriptions for the archive collections are available on Archives Hub and The National Archives (TNA) Discovery platforms which allow users to search across multiple repositories.

7 Exhibitions and Events

We will normally support the use of archival material in exhibitions. Duplicates are used where it is not possible to guarantee the security of the items and appropriate environmental conditions. Dependant on condition, original material may be displayed outside the exhibition space in moveable display cases for limited periods of time depending on the format and condition of the items. The Service contributes towards displays of relevant material as part of other events on campus.

8 Loans

Items from the archives may be loaned to external organisations for the purposes of exhibition. Requests will be assessed on an individual basis considering security, environment and insurance coverage at the loan location; physical condition of item requested; agreement to our loan terms; and completion of a *Loan Agreement*. Loan decisions are also considered within a formal meeting for the consideration of loans and acquisitions held regularly within the directorate.

9 Reprographics

Copies can be made of archive documents, depending on the condition and copyright restrictions of the documents. Researchers visiting the reading room can take their own photographs of documents free of charge. The flash should be switched off and no tripods or other scanning equipment is permitted.

Remote users can request copies of documents and there is a charge details of which can be found on the Archives shop website. Unbound items up to A2 size or bound items up to A3 size can be scanned.

The Archives reserve the right to refuse to copy documents in the following cases:

- if they are fragile or if doing so could cause damage to the item. Bound items over 100 years old cannot be copied on a flatbed scanner or photocopier. In this case the researcher is invited to make an appointment to visit the archive and take photographs of the item.

- large copying requests where capacity is limited. For example, the work involved in scanning a 100-page document is significant, and this is not an activity that the archivist can commit to completing within a satisfactory turnaround.

All users (whether requesting copies to be made or taking their own photographs using a camera) must fill out a *Copyright Declaration Form*.

If users wish to publish copies of archival documents, they must first complete a *Publication Declaration form*. The Archivist can provide advice on copyright restrictions.

11. Related Documents

- Library Services Content Strategy and Information Resources Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Records Retentions Policy

12. Document control information:

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Approving Body		Executive Board
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1	2015	First version approved.