

# Pembroke College Library

## Special Collections Management Policy

### 1. Aims of the Policy

This document constitutes a statement of the Special Collections Management Policy of Pembroke College Library, and aims to explain the basis on which material is acquired and managed. It ensures material is accepted according to a strategy and serves as a reference document to guide curatorial decisions.

Its purpose is to provide information and guidance to members of the College, the Library, and the wider scholarly and professional communities as to the principles governing the development and management of collections within the Library.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Library's general Collection Management Policy and the Donations Policy.

### 2. Definitions

The Library holds a number of items which, for reasons of scarcity, age, provenance, or other special significance, are distinguished from the Circulating and Reference Collections of the Library and are given special treatment in terms of collection management, including secure storage and restricted access. An item is normally considered part of Special Collections if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- i. It was created before 1820;
- ii. It is of significant provenance, usually relating to the College;
- iii. It is of special bibliographic significance;
- iv. It is of noteworthy historical or cultural significance.

The Library's Special Collections do not include either artworks or archival material, which are managed by the College's Curator and Archivist respectively. However, bound medieval and early modern manuscripts are considered part of Special Collections. The management of hybrid objects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### 3. Purpose of the Collection

The primary function of the Library's Special Collections is to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the College.

The College recognizes its responsibilities to preserve its Special Collections holdings in perpetuity to support the teaching, learning and research of the College, and for the use of future generations. The main role of Library staff in relation to the Special Collections is to enable physical and intellectual access to these collections while at the same time ensuring their long-term preservation.

#### 4. Description of the Collection

The Collection comprises approximately 30,000 printed and manuscript items. These include around 100 incunabula and around 300 manuscripts (chiefly medieval but including some early modern manuscripts). Of particular note are the named modern collections:

- i. The Hadley collection, comprising around 1,000 books on the Napoleonic era;
- ii. The Golden Cockerel Press collection, comprising a nearly complete set of works from this press dating from its inception to 1960;
- iii. The Rosenthal Art collection.

The Collection is housed primarily in secure storage on the College site. The medieval manuscripts are housed in the Manuscripts section of the University Library.

#### 5. Collection Readership and Access

The Library recognizes that its Special Collections are of interest to the wider scholarly community. To that end, Special Collections material is available to any reader with a specific academic need according to the access terms posted on the Library's website.

Special Collections material can only be consulted under the supervision of Library staff and is in most instances not available for loan. However, it should be noted that the Rosenthal Art collection is available for loan to current students of the College and may consequently be unavailable for consultation by Special Collections readers.

Special collections material may be made available for institutional exhibitions; please contact the Librarian in the first instance to discuss exhibitions.

Access to the medieval manuscripts should be arranged directly with staff in the Manuscripts Reading Room at the University Library.

#### 6. Collection Strengths

The majority of the Library's Special Collections were received as donations or bequests from old members and consequently reflect the wide range of their interests. However, there are

particularly strong collections of early printed Bibles, as well as early textbooks for the study of languages and the natural sciences.

#### 7. Acquisitions Policy

The Library does not currently have a budget for the acquisition of new Special Collections materials. Consequently, items are now generally only acquired by gift or bequest.

#### 8. Guidelines for Gifts and Bequests of Special Collections Material

The Library is pleased to receive gifts of special collections material, provided that it falls within the scope of this Collection Management Policy. Financial donations to support the purchase, storage, digitization, cataloguing, or conservation of the collections are also warmly welcomed; to discuss potential financial donations, please contact the Development Office.

Gifts and bequests of special collections material will be accepted under the provisions that:

- All gifts of material become the property of Pembroke College Library;
- Ownership of legal title is established where appropriate;
- The Library will not accept deposited material;
- Items in need of significant conservation work will not normally be accepted unless their scarcity or provenance justifies the expense to the Library;
- The Library reserves the right to dispose of items that are in poor physical condition, fall outside the scope of the Collection Management Policy, or are otherwise superfluous to requirements;
- Cataloguing of any gifted materials will take place as staff time becomes available and will be prioritized according to anticipated demand;
- Materials will be interfiled with existing collections and will not normally be shelved separately or as a distinct collection;
- Unless the donor declines, a bookplate will be inserted in all printed volumes that are added to the Collection (unless the nature of the item precludes it) and an entry made in the annual Gazette;
- A note of the gift may also be included in the online catalogue record for each printed item. This will enable a list of the contents of the original donation to be created, regardless of the physical location of the material in question.

As Library space and staff time are limited, potential donors are asked to contact the Librarian in advance, particularly in the case of large collections of material, so that the receipt, storage,

cataloguing, and conservation implications of the donation can be discussed in detail. “Large collection” may be defined as those gifts whose review, cataloguing, processing, storage, and conservation cannot be covered by existing Library resources.

The Library cannot provide value estimates for any materials nor suggest materials for donation. Likewise, the limits of staff time mean that the Library cannot make suggestions of other libraries that may wish to receive donations.

#### 9. Preservation of Collection

Insofar as possible, the Library will store Special Collections materials in secure, climate-controlled facilities to ensure their long-term preservation.

The Library is a full member of the Cambridge Colleges' Conservation Consortium and is arranging for conservation treatment of material that is at risk. This work is prioritized by relative vulnerability and perceived reader demand.

In the case of fragile material, readers may be required to work from surrogates, including digital or microfilm. Where no surrogate exists, the Librarian reserves the right to make fragile material unavailable until it has undergone conservation treatment.

The Library prioritizes conserving collection items to make them available for consultation. Interventions will be as non-intrusive and reversible as possible; however, ensuring safe handling conditions may require more intrusive work. All new conservation work will be fully documented to allow scholars to ascertain the extent of any such work while consulting collection items. Where historic repairs have been made, these will be identified and described as fully as possible and may, if necessary, be undone or further repaired in line with current best practice.

#### 10. Digitization

At present the Library does not have a systematic digitization programme in place, but will digitize material as funding becomes available.

#### 11. Review of Policy

The next review of this policy is expected to be the Michaelmas Term Library Committee Meeting in 2023.

*Written 05/11/18*

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