

# General Collection Policy

## Contents:

- Objectives of the Library
- Principles of collection policy
- Users of the Library
- The collections
- Criteria for selection
- General policy statement: Co-operation with other Libraries
- Retention and disposal policy
- Appendix - History of collection policy

## Objectives of the Library

The Library's mission is to provide the highest quality information services in support of teaching, learning and research at LSE. Further the Library aims to maintain and enhance its position as a world-class library in support of social science researchers nationally and internationally.

In support of its mission the Library has the following objectives for collection development:

- to collect, record, conserve and make available significant published material in the social sciences, having due regard to the resources of other research libraries in London, particularly within the University;
- to collect, record and make available published materials which support the courses taught by LSE;
- to collect, preserve and make available the digital research output of LSE, including theses, research papers, and research data.
- to acquire manuscript and other non-book materials that are of value for original research in the social sciences, and to record, conserve, and make them available.

## Principles of collection policy

The Library aims to acquire collection materials in support of teaching, learning and research at LSE. In addition, the Library collections provide a resource of national and international importance for researchers working in the social sciences.

Materials are selected on the basis of their subject content, following the collection development policies which are agreed in consultation with the academic community of the School.

The Library will give priority to acquiring materials in electronic format where this gives:

- enhanced service quality for our users in terms of access and use of the material;
- value for money for the School;
- and appropriate assurances of long-term access to the content.

The Library is mindful of its role as an archival collection for the social sciences. Where the principles set out above cannot be met through the acquisition of materials in electronic format alone, a copy in print format will be acquired.

The Library collects significant material in the social sciences on a worldwide basis, paying particular attention to the integrated and interdisciplinary approach of the School. The interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences and its publications means that the boundaries of any particular subject or discipline cannot be easily determined and described in isolation. For the purpose of collection development, a "core area" of specialisation within the social sciences is defined for intensive collection.

Within this core area collection is to research level, i.e. to a level where independent research in the published sources can be pursued. Politics, economics and social studies form the nucleus which embraces, for example, the political, economic and social aspects of anthropology, geography, law and philosophy.

Aspects of these and other subjects which fall outside the 'core' may be excluded (eg. physical anthropology and geography), or collected more selectively to research level (eg. sociolinguistics),  
For a more detailed application of collection levels by subject, please see the individual [collection policies](#) index page.

## Users of the Library

The principal users are the members of the London School of Economics. Research collections are maintained for researchers at the School; with the need for access to information, publications and collections elsewhere being recognised and actively supported. This is particularly the case in those subject areas where the Library does not collect to the same level as in its areas of specialisation.

The Library aims to support all courses taught at the School at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. This usually means acquiring at least one copy of all items cited on reading lists, and acquiring multiple copies of items designated as essential or core reading. In its core area of specialisation the Library has often acquired titles before reading list information has been conveyed to it. Many titles useful for research can be found only in the Course Collection. The research and teaching elements of the collection are therefore seen as mutually supporting each other.

The Library is open to the public and welcomes all visitors who need to use our collections for their research.

## The Collections

- Course Collection
- Main Collection
- The Women's Library
- The Shaw Library

All collections held in the Library have been recognised for their outstanding national and international importance and awarded 'Designation' status by the Arts Council (formerly Museums Libraries and Archives Council).

### **Course Collection**

This contains the essential reading designated by staff for teaching requirements often in multiple copies. The current guideline formula used for multiple copies is approximately one copy per eighteen students on the course. All copies of a title are placed in the Course Collection so there will not usually be a duplicate copy in the Main Collection.

### **Main Collection**

The rest of the Library's stock is in the Main Collection. The policy is not to withdraw items from the Main Collection in any systematic way, although there are occasional small scale 'weedings', as, for example, superseded law textbooks. The following are discrete collections in the Main Collection:

#### **Russian Collection**

A collection of books in Russian and the Slavic languages of the former Soviet Union, excepting official publications and serials.

#### **Schapiro Collection**

Books and serials from the library of the late Leonard Schapiro, principally covering Soviet affairs and communism of the pre-Gorbachev era. New books are not added, but a number of serial and newspaper titles are current.

#### **Lakatos Collection**

A large part of the Library of the late Imre Lakatos on the history and philosophy of science.

### **The Women's Library**

The Women's Library @ LSE (TWL) focuses on issues relevant to women's lives and experience within the UK and Commonwealth. It comprises both archive and print collections. It is recognised that, while there is a large degree of complementarity and overlap in certain areas with LSE Library Collections, the Women's Library will retain its integrity and identity. It is recognised also that some degree of duplication is inevitable.

### **The Shaw Library**

This is a small collection (currently c. 7,000) of books and periodicals of general interest and recreational subjects such as literature, music and travel. A selection of newspapers is also held. The Shaw Library is in the Main Building and is for the use of members of LSE only.

### **Criteria for selection**

Within the financial resources available the Library's aim is to acquire to research level in the major European languages in the subjects in which it specialises; to acquire materials required for teaching; and to provide a selection of other relevant publications.

In theoretical subjects (such as economic theory for example) publications are not usually acquired in languages other than English. In historical and descriptive subjects publications in the language of the geographical area concerned are acquired on the same basis as publications in English (as long as the relevant language is a European one) but not usually in other languages.

### Books

Very little, if anything, is unconditionally excluded from consideration, but a pragmatic rule is to exclude works of fiction, books of readings, rehashed material and elementary textbooks, and also books which are primarily practitioners' tools (unless in each of these cases they are required for essential course reading).

### Pamphlets and ephemera

Source material for research in British politics and social affairs includes pamphlets, leaflets, memoirs and all kinds of ephemeral material which may often not be of academic value in themselves but can be of potential importance to academic research. The Library tries to collect as much of this type of material as possible, some of it decidedly ephemeral, and in the case of some propaganda, likely to cause offence to groups of users. In this respect the Library tries to collect opinion and propaganda from all points of view no matter how extreme.

### Journals

The scope is theoretically as wide as for books but more limited in practice. This is because of the continuing and escalating costs of serial publications. The Library will give priority to acquiring serials in electronic format according to its "e-first" policy.

### Official Publications

Policy for official publications recognises that government documents are in themselves a source of primary research material by the very nature of their publishers. They are therefore collected extensively for all countries of the world to the same depth as other source materials, and by subject on the same principles as commercially published books and periodicals.

Coverage of United Kingdom official publications is a top priority. An exchange agreement with the United States ensures an extensive collection of federal government publications. For other countries we aim at completeness in those central government publications which contain economic or social data or illustrate the processes of government and public administration. State/provincial and local government publications are not collected extensively.

Publications of intergovernmental organisations are collected on the same principles as governmental publications although depository and exchange agreements with the United Nations, European Communities, and the Organization of American States, mean that their publications are often acquired beyond our normal subject coverage.

Please refer also to the separate policy statement for [Official Publications](#)

### Theses

Copies of LSE PhD theses have been historically collected in print. From 2012 electronic copies are increasingly available through LSE Theses Online

### Other formats

No distinction is made regarding format of material. The Library will therefore collect relevant material in print, microform, and digital format. NB. Materials may be withdrawn

if superseded by new formats (e.g. CD-Rom by web based services), or because of obsolescent technology (e.g. microcards).

- Microforms

Primary material is acquired in microform where existing strengths in the collection can be supplemented.

- Audiovisual

A small audio-visual collection is maintained largely of material required for teaching purposes.

- Maps

New maps are no longer acquired, and atlases only selectively.

- Manuscripts

The subject areas in which the Library collects manuscripts and non-book materials are British political, economic and social history from the last third of the nineteenth century, and the history of the social sciences and of the London School of Economics. The official records of central and local government are seen as the responsibility of the National Archives and of the local record offices. We also collect the private papers of individuals and the archives of political parties, pressure groups, and other private organisations.

- Electronic information sources

As regards content, electronic information sources are acquired using the same selection criteria applied to other formats. The Library will give priority to acquiring materials in electronic format where this gives:

- enhanced service quality for our users in terms of access and use of the material;
- value for money for the School;
- and appropriate assurances of long-term access to the content.

Access is available to most of these sources via Library Search on the School network. NB. Electronic sources may be withdrawn from the Library if superseded by access format (e.g. CD-Rom superseded by web based service), other e-services, or because of changes in licence terms.

### Donations

The Library welcomes gifts of books and other materials which support the teaching and research needs of the London School of Economics and Political Science and which fall within the Library's collection development policy.

Anyone wishing to donate materials to the Library should contact the Collection Development Manager. Wherever possible it is very helpful to supply a list of publications for checking. All donations will be acknowledged.

Material which is deemed suitable will be integrated into the collections according to subject. It is not possible, except in exceptional circumstances, to maintain separate collections.

Material may not be accepted for the following reasons:

- It duplicates items already in stock unless further copies are needed for the Course Collection
- It is in poor physical condition (i.e. brittle paper, water damage, writing on pages, torn and/or missing pages)
- Periodicals may only be accepted if they are full runs or fill gaps in current holdings.

The wishes of donors concerning unwanted items are ascertained and disposals made in accordance with them.

## General policy statement: co-operation with other Libraries

The Library's collecting policy is actively influenced by some formal and informal cooperative arrangements with other libraries, particularly those in the University. Specialist libraries such as those at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and the School of Oriental and African Studies provide a significant degree of rationalisation of library acquisitions at research level.

The collecting stance of these and other libraries in London influences the day to day application of policy. Consultation takes place, for example, over very expensive materials to avoid duplication. However, the current relationships between the Libraries within the federal system are more fluid than in recent years and any change could have significant effects on the degree of possible co-operation.

The Library is a partner in the [CURL CoFoR](#) project for collaborative collection management in Russian and East European Studies.

## Retention and Disposal Policy

This document lays down general principles to guide decisions on retention and disposal of printed material from Main Collection stock. Procedures are in place for Course Collection material. Gifts are covered by the donations policy.

### Retention

The chief criteria for retention of stock relate to its present and potential future importance for LSE teaching and research. The Library will therefore aim to keep material falling into the following categories:

- Material required for teaching.
- High use material.
- Research material in "core areas", as defined in the Library's collection development policies. Including material covered by any collaborative collection management scheme. To date the Library is participating in the following:
  - BL Concordat (Western European Government publications)
  - Co-FoR (Russian and East European Studies)
  - SCOLMA (selected African materials)
  - Unique, rare or hard to obtain material.
- Historically deposited collections, unless permission is given to dispose as the Library sees fit.

## Disposal / Relegation to store

Disposal encompasses the removal of items to other appropriate Library collections or to the UK Research Reserve; relegation to low use store; offering to charitable book disposal firms for redistribution and/or recycling; and physical recycling of unwanted or unusable material.

Material for disposal will normally be identified by the Collection Development Team. All major (i.e. collection or part of collection) disposal decisions will require final approval by the Library Leadership Team (LLT).

Catalogue records for material approved for relegation or disposal will be altered or removed as appropriate. All items designated for disposal will be stamped as "Withdrawn" from stock. The following factors will be taken in account in making decisions for disposal or relegation:

- Documented feedback from consultation with academic staff.
- Availability and accessibility in other London or M25 libraries.
- LSE participation in collaborative collection management schemes.
- Availability in electronic format, including access for non - LSE visitors.
- Consultation with appropriate Library staff / teams (e.g. Collection Development Manager, Print Collections Manager, Taught Course Support Manager) and final approval of LLT.

The relegation of stock to store will be supported by an active programme of digitisation to be planned and implemented by the Digital Library Team.

## Appendix - History of collection policy

The present collecting policy can be traced back to the foundation of the Library and in particular to the immense influence of its originator Sidney Webb. More than any other factor and certainly more than any other individual the ideas of Webb determined the policy from the Library's establishment in 1896 to the 1930's and beyond. He was the chief proponent and trustee of the Library, a magnanimous benefactor, the first Acting Librarian, and until 1938 the Chairman of the Library Committee.

The Library's origins reflected the difficulties the Webbs had experienced in their own research. The document Webb drafted for a "Proposed establishment of a library of Political Science" begins: "There is, at present, no library in England that deals, with any thoroughness, with Political Science. There is no place where the serious student of administrative or constitutional problems can find the material for his work." The case of local government is then used as an example of this inadequacy. But although "municipal and other local administration" was singled out for particular attention the original plans were formulated in a much broader perspective: the Library "would set itself to acquire a systematic collection of all available material bearing on the structure and function of public administration,...in all parts of the world... Economics, jurisprudence and general history would form subordinate departments, the dominant and central object being always the focusing of attention upon the actual facts and experience of public administration."

No consolidated collection policy seems to have been written down until the 1960's when a development plan was needed to manage imminent expansion, but it would be true to say that this original mission statement was a constant background to early acquisitions, its simplicity and coherence instantly recognisable to succeeding generations. The mission statement is still remarkably pertinent to current thinking and its ambitiousness rather inspiring, as when the Library is envisaged as "promoting the study and general knowledge of political economic and social science [,] statistics history and jurisprudence and all matters relating to the progress and development of communities and of mankind generally."



The emphasis has of necessity changed in many respects. Not only does the word "sociology" not feature in this early document (the School first offered courses on sociology in 1904), but such was Webb's emphasis on politics and administration that it may now also seem rather odd that Economics is said to take a "subordinate" role - in fact not until 1925 did the Library change its name from the British Library of Political Science. Also the emphasis on local government diminished over the years as it became clear that no one library could possibly hold "all available material" on this subject or anything remotely approaching such an ideal. And of course the social sciences have developed in ways which could not have been formulated in 1896. Nevertheless the intentions behind the early practice bear a distinct relationship to the intentions of today.

What should be made explicit, though, are two collection principles which clearly underlie the early years: the importance of primary source material, and the idea of comprehensiveness. It is the emphasis on primary source material that more than anything else distinguishes the early Library. When the Director W.A.S. Hewins reported to the Governors in July 1902 on the contents of the Library the seven divisions by which he defined the collections were: 1. "ordinary text-books and works of reference" 2. The collection of official documents (which "may be regarded as the backbone of the Library. It is by far the most frequently used collection...") 3. Official documents by local authorities 4. Documents issued by Trade Unions, Banks, Railway Companies, etc. 5. Periodical literature. 7. Special Collections.

Today the secondary literature is of course the dominant acquisition, the purchase of the "ordinary" books far more plentiful and their selection more systematic, but the Library can still be said to retain the distinctive flavour of one where the primary research material has been actively collected for many years, a "laboratory of the Social Sciences" in Webb's phrase.

Another important assumption behind the collecting policy of the time was that of comprehensiveness, a term which today few libraries wish to use such are the unrealistic implications of the word. But although today even the British Library can only refer to a very few of its subject collections as comprehensive, it was the British Museum ideal of collecting everything relevant to a subject which inspired the Library policy at the beginning of the century. Everything published by all governments all over the world, for example, was an explicit early objective (although one which had quite quickly to be modified); and the Hutchinson Collection should be a "collection of books and other documents dealing with socialism... to contain impartially every publication, great or small, for or against, or relating to the subject."

This formulation was by Webb himself who was from the start conscious that inclusiveness and depth were particularly desirable for a social sciences collection with its links across disciplines and its indeterminate boundaries. This ideal remains today, although in a more practical (and realisable) way, where the Library's policy is to collect in depth to research level in its subjects of specialisation. It has also been the intention to maintain an integrated 'single faculty' social sciences library in order that the collections can be genuinely interdisciplinary in character. As Webb proposed in the early years each subject collection gains from being related to and interdependent with others.

In broad terms these subjects of specialisation remain remarkably similar to those of the early years. In one sense this is not surprising since it has always been an intention to build on past collecting strengths, but in conjunction with this broad approach the Library has tried to be sensitive to new developments and new research directions in the social sciences.



Shifts in collection emphasis have occurred to reflect these developments and will continue as the research spectrum of its users changes and develops.

Revised [September 2015]