

UC Library Special Collections

Collection Development Plan 2024-2029

Scope and purpose

This plan is for the ongoing development of the UC Library Special Collections, which are managed by Macmillan Brown Library alongside the University of Canterbury Library's other permanent collections (the Macmillan Brown Published Collections, the UC Library Archives, and the UC Art Collection). The purpose of the UC Library Special Collections is to support learning, teaching, and research at UC. The collections should support high quality research to postdoctoral level. They are also widely recognised as having significant value for local, national, and international research communities, being part of a global network of cultural heritage collections retained permanently by their institutions.

Formats collected:

- published works including monographs and serials
- manuscripts produced for public consumption, in a variety of formats
- Incunabula (pre 1501 printed materials)
- High quality published facsimiles of rare manuscript and printed material
- Artists' books (works of art that utilise the form of the book)

Background

The core of UC's Rare Books collection originated from Canterbury's early European emigrants and the Canterbury Association, which was the body incorporated by Royal Charter in England in 1849 with the objective of 'founding the settlement of Canterbury, New Zealand'. Under the administration of the Bishop-Designate Reverend Thomas Jackson, significant purchases of books were made by the Association in 1849/50 mostly from William Brown Booksellers of Old Street, London. Calls for donations were met by many individuals, most notably the Reverend Octavius Matthias and other members of the Association and Society of Canterbury Colonists. More substantial donations were received from Oxford University, the British Museum, the British Library, the Smalbrooke and Vyse family of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry, and the Honourable and Reverend Arthur Philip Perceval.

These and many other donations ultimately provided a substantial library for the newly established Province of Canterbury and played a significant role in fulfilling the ecclesiastical and educational objectives of the Association. This library was dispersed among the reading rooms of Lyttelton and Christchurch but mostly with the newly founded educational institution, Christ's College, the lower of the two colleges planned by the Association. The formation of Canterbury College in 1875 followed the demise of the Association which failed in establishing the 'higher educational' institute along with Christ's College. During the early period Canterbury College was under the administration of the Collegiate Union (which included the College, Canterbury Museum and the Public Library) works desirable for teaching and research were transferred from the institutions of the Collegiate Union and from Christ's College to the library of Canterbury College. However, many works did not find their way to Canterbury College as significant amounts had already been transferred from Christ's College to the Dean and Chapter of the Anglican Diocese and to College House. Many of the original 'Association' works were disposed of by Christ's College as surplus to their requirements, with some falling into private hands but many lost forever.

The exact date of the establishment of the Rare Books as a collection is not known but a card catalogue was created in the 1950s. Further items were located in the 1960s among the many rooms, the attic of the history department, hallways and even a basement of the city site in preparation for the University's move to Ilam. The University of Canterbury moved to the Ilam site in 1974, with the rare book collection housed on the ground floor of the James Hight building.

The 1940s to the 1990s saw a significant growth in the Special Collections with a commitment to purchasing by the University, mostly at the request of academics. From this a substantial collection of French works was obtained, particularly from the English supplier John Aspin. A Modern Fine Print collection grew significantly by means of purchase in this period.

Donations

Donations, both institutional and individual, have always contributed substantially to the Special Collections and are the main form of collecting today.

Gifts or donations of material are accepted, provided they fall within the collection priorities detailed in this plan. Availability of storage space and cost of processing will be factored into decisions to accept or decline items.

Sub Collections

The Rare Books Collection

The Rare Books Collection is of high value for learning, teaching, and research due to the provenance, artefactual value, age, and rarity of the items it contains. Books will be assessed according to a combination of the criteria below. Books relating to multiple criteria, or which are exceptional examples of one of the criteria will be prioritised for collecting.

- The date range can include from the European Middle Ages to 1860 with the earliest item currently in the collection being produced around 1275. This range encompasses early written works written on vellum, parchment and those bound in codex format, including manuscript works, through to the Canterbury Association era.
- Books for which there is proven significant provenance relating to Waitaha Canterbury and the university.
- Material of value in illustrating rare or historical methods of production
- Fine bindings
- Early publishers' bindings
- Extra illustrated volumes
- Books of value for their illustrations, maps or plates.
- Non-Pacific or New Zealand items from the original collection of John Macmillan Brown that do not fit the Macmillan Brown Collection Development Plan.
- While the collection is predominantly European works, the scope of the collection is global with a few areas of exclusion due to internal and external memoranda of understanding.

Written formats prior to the use of paper or vellum and being considered classical antiquities (e.g. papyri, cuneiform tablets etc.) are excluded from the collection as these fit with the collecting interests of the Teece Museum of Classical Antiquities.

The Modern Fine Print Collection

The Modern Fine Print Collection is a dynamic collection that is constantly enhanced to meet the demand for teaching and research at the University of Canterbury.

The Modern Fine Print Collection consists of New Zealand works of value for their alternative publishing, artistic, and typographical significance in New Zealand print history and Artists' Books, both New Zealand and international. International fine print are publications collected for their artistic merit, and generally includes works produced from the 1870s onwards. It includes representative examples from most well-known private European presses and fine printing from commercial presses. New Zealand works and Artists' Books are a higher collecting priority than international works.

Future collecting will focus on works in high demand for UC teaching, which are those relating to contemporary art, including Artists' Books, material culture, the arts and crafts movements and limited edition works from local private and alternative presses such as Ilam Press Kowhai Press, Freerange Press and other independent practitioners.

Collectors' Collections

The UC Library Special Collections includes a number of discrete collections associated with prominent collectors of literature, which are considered complete collections (i.e. further works will not be added). UC Library will take a conservative approach to future offers of such collections, and only those of exceptional quality which have a clear connection for current UC teaching or research will be accepted.

- **The Laing Collection** of botanical works bequeathed by R.M. Laing, a former teacher at Christchurch Boy's High School who died in 1941. The books are mainly 19th and early 20th century specialist works outside the standard commercial publishers output, and include many scarce items.
- **Bridges Collection** of about 350 volumes, mainly the published output of Robert Bridges in English language editions. The collection was purchased from J.H.E. Schroder in 1965. There are many duplicate titles, and most of the scarcer works are present including Daniel Press and other private press editions. There are also a small number of manuscript items, including letters which have been transferred to the UC Library Archives.
- **Walter Scott Collection** of first and other early editions of Scott's works. It comprises about 350 volumes, and early collected editions make up most of this number. It was purchased from a member of our English Department, A.W.S. Stockwell, in 1981.
- **Young Persons' Fiction Collection** of children's books from the latter nineteenth century.
- **Historical departmental libraries** such as the School of Fine Arts, Geological Sciences, Forestry and Engineering.
- There are several other named collections as detailed in the appendix.

Permanent Published Collection

These are items of enduring teaching and research value which do not quite fit the criteria for the Rare Books Collection. These works will in time fit into the criteria noted in the definitions of Rare Books due to their significant production merit, age, provenance, and place in the history of the University and are items which if disposed of would be very difficult or impossible to replace. Items

in this collection have been reviewed in consultation with relevant subject librarians or academic staff to ascertain their long-term relevance for current and future UC teaching and research.

Transferring materials

Library materials that are in open stacks or store and being considered for disposal should be flagged for review by the Heritage Collections Librarian if they fit within the parameters of this collection development plan. Priority items will be transferred to the appropriate collection area for permanent retention.

Items currently in the Permanent Published Collection will be transferred to the Rare Book or Modern Fine Print Collections if they are found to fit the criteria for those collections.

Appendix: Collectors' Collections

- Nineteenth century music collection
- Brian Douglas music score collection
- de Jong collection
- Julio Campal experimental poetry collection (part of the International Modern Fine Print)
- Laing collection
- Rewi Alley collection
- Chilton collection
- Bishop Grimes collection
- John Macmillan Brown (non-NZ and Pacific) collection
- Robert Bridges collection
- Walter Scott collection
- Young Persons' fiction collection
- Herriot collection
- Karl Popper collection
- Rutherford collection

Catalogued within the Special Collections:

- Historic Geography collection
- Historic Engineering collection (examples of)
- Historic Forestry collection (examples of)
- Donovan Collection (formerly known as Caxton collection)