1. Organisational context and purpose

Durham University (DU) has a series of policies relating to collection management within libraries, museums and archives and special collections, underpinning its general strategy. These documents are all available at http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/about/.

Culture Durham, established in January 2016 brings together Durham University’s archives, museums, special collections and cultural engagement services. Collections-centred and audience focussed, its ambition is to use these cultural assets and team expertise in bringing together researchers, communities and organisations in order to create and disseminate knowledge in new and relevant ways, and to forge new routes to learning.

The collecting policy below relates specifically to archives and special collections material and covers every area of these collections including Local Studies. It covers material collected by Durham University, by donation, deposit, or purchase; and also material collected by Durham University on behalf of Durham Cathedral.

1.1. Recognitions and agreements

Durham University was founded in 1832. It operates within the context of relevant archive, library and information legislation. In particular, it is subject to, or party to the following recognitions and agreements:

1. Appointment by the Lord Chancellor as a repository of public records, particularly probate records, under the Public Records Act 1958.
2. Recognition by the Master of the Rolls as a repository for manorial and tithe documents under the Law of Property Act 1922 and the Tithe Act 1936.
3. Recognition by The National Archives as a suitable repository under the Standard for Record Repositories.
4. Designation by the Bishop of Durham as a repository for ecclesiastical records.
5. Agreement between Durham University and the Chapter of Durham Cathedral, established in 1955 and renewed most recently in 1991, relating to the care and custody of the Cathedral Archives. This fulfils Chapter 35 of Durham Cathedral’s 1555 statutes for the keeping of its muniments.
6. Award of Designated status in 2005 by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to the Sudan Archive and Bishop Cosin’s Library (both in the first group of archive and library collections to be awarded this status). The collections were deemed to be of national or international importance.
7. Since 1937 Durham University has been the sole trustee of Bishop Cosin’s Library.
8. Memorandum of Understanding between Durham University and the Trustees of Ushaw College, including arrangements relating to the cataloguing and care of archives, special collections, art and artefacts.
2. Collections context

2.1. National and regional context

Durham University archives and special collections exist within two major collecting contexts.

The archival context is within regional and national record keeping, as part of a ‘distributed national collection’\(^1\) Within this context, DU does not seek to compete with other well-established archive institutions in the region or across the UK, but to sustain and build its own collection strengths. Within the same context, there is a need to maintain awareness of current or future potential gaps in the dispersed national collection, where there is no repository regionally or nationally with a relevant collection policy in a particular subject area or type of material.

As described above, for historical reasons the pattern of archival and library holdings in Durham is complex, therefore particular efforts are made to co-ordinate DU’s acquisitions with those of Durham County Record Office and Durham Cathedral Library and other libraries and repositories in the region. In addition to considering the complexities of the past, thought is also given to future structure of record-keeping within the region, including the nature and scale of local authority activity, the need for preservation of born-digital material and the potential for partnership working in collections development, management and/or access.

Consideration is given to the wishes of donors and depositors, but also to public interest in general and the benefit of the current and future scholarly community more specifically. A degree of flexibility is desirable, to develop new areas of strength in response to changing academic priorities and methodologies, and to changes in the nature of archival records and their creators (one example being the emergence of ‘grey literature’). However, it is important that archives relating to similar subject areas (or more accurately, created by similar types of organisation) are concentrated in a few specialist repositories, rather than being scattered amongst many. Material is not acquired, therefore, if a different repository would be a more appropriate home for it, unless attempts to divert it there are unsuccessful and its acceptance appears in the best interests of scholarship, for example to ensure access and prevent loss. Consideration is also given to the resources required to make the material accessible for study.

The national context for special book collections is of a growing focus on institutional, regional and national holdings of unique and distinctive collections. Organisations such as RLUK\(^2\) and initiatives such as the Copac Collections Management project\(^3\) are building the foundations for a national approach to collections management. This

\(^{1}\) Archives : the very essence of our heritage  
C. J. Kitching National Council on Archives (Great Britain) 1996

\(^{2}\) In particular RLUK’s strategic focus on Unique and Distinctive Collections, the subject of a report published in 2014. [http://www.rluk.ac.uk/work/rlukudc/](http://www.rluk.ac.uk/work/rlukudc/)

\(^{3}\) [http://blog.ccm.copac.ac.uk/aboutcollectionmanagement/](http://blog.ccm.copac.ac.uk/aboutcollectionmanagement/)
includes collaboration to help understand the significance of collections and individual items through aggregated cataloguing, and a co-ordinated approach to collection development across the UK.

In the implementation of its collecting policy, Culture Durham aims to support the research and teaching of Durham University, and to develop coherent collections which build on existing strengths as a service to scholarship generally.

In considering any acquisition, therefore, attention is paid to
- its scholarly significance
- its appropriateness to this collecting policy and to the University's academic needs and priorities
- its relation to the Library's existing collections
- its relation to the existing pattern of national and regional collections

### 2.2. Archives and Special Collections at Durham University

Manuscripts, archives and early printed books have been acquired by the University since its foundation. It has also since 1990 had responsibility for the collections and functions of the former Department of Palaeography and Diplomatic. This had been established in 1948 and, predating the establishment of most of the local authority record offices in the North East, it acquired a number of significant regional archives, such as those of the Diocese of Durham, and the papers of the Earls Grey of Howick and the Howards of Naworth.

Significant collection strengths within manuscripts, archives and rare books include:
- Records of the administration of the Diocese, Bishopric and Palatinate of Durham
- Archives and library collections reflecting the historical, social, industrial and literary development of the North-East of England and County Durham in particular
- Medieval manuscripts from the 11th to 15th century
- Incunables, early printed and rare books, with particular strengths in general and local history, theology, church history, classical and English literature, natural science, philosophy, common and canon law, early medicine and travel
- Papers relating to the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of the Sudan from the late 19th to the mid 20th centuries

The archives of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral have been managed by Durham University on behalf of the Cathedral under an agreement established in 1955 and renewed most recently in 1991. They are stored and accessed separately from the main archive and special collections holdings of Durham University. This collecting policy includes clauses relating to the archives of the Chapter and of associated Cathedral staff. Current holdings are and future acquisitions would be owned by Durham Cathedral.
3. Strategic aims for collection development

The scope of this collecting policy reflects a strategic approach to collection development in three broad areas: the archives of the University, the UK in general and the North East in particular. The strategic aims for collection development are:

- To ensure the preservation of records created by the University, its staff and students, as evidence of its history, activities and achievements;
- To maintain and enhance collection strengths and specialisms in areas where we have an established reputation as a specialist repository, within the UK’s dispersed national collections of archives and special collections - for the benefit of scholarship generally and to enhance education and research at Durham University;
- In collaboration with other regional repositories, to ensure the preservation of significant material relating to the North East of England.

As described above this collecting policy takes into consideration the archival landscape within the North-East region and across the UK, within relevant specialist areas – and changes to this landscape. Two current factors are particularly relevant here.

Since 2011 Durham University has been working with the Trustees of Ushaw College to catalogue library and archive collections held there and to make them accessible to researchers. The national profile of this work within the Catholic community in the UK has led to the transfer of archives of related organisations to Ushaw College, deposited or donated with Durham University. The existence of important archive and special collections material in this area at risk of loss and the lack of obvious sustainable alternative provision – has been reflected in this collecting policy. Particular efforts are made to co-ordinate acquisitions with the archives of Catholic archdioceses and dioceses; other collecting Catholic educational establishments, including Downside Abbey, Douai Abbey and Stonyhurst; as well as other libraries and record repositories in the United Kingdom where this is appropriate.

Within the area of early and rare book collections there is a growing awareness of the potential of collections within and close to Durham City, in aggregate, for research and engagement in subjects such as the history of libraries and the dissemination of knowledge.

Secondly, the pattern of collaboration with other repositories within Durham City and County and the complex (and atypical) division of archive collections between them is likely to continue. Collaboration between organisations in areas such as collections and heritage management and cultural engagement is continuing and developing.

Looking ahead, bearing in mind the regional and national context and also strategic directions for research at Durham University, there is a further aim to enhance archive collections dating from the 20th and 21st centuries. The specific focus of collecting in this area is still to be determined, following consultation. Once established it will be reflected within a revised collecting policy. As one strand of this programme, consultation is already underway to define a possible extension of the collection policy in relation to the Sudan archive, within appropriate areas.
4. Scope of collection development

Durham University:

1. Records produced by Durham University staff, departments, committees and governance structures, colleges, societies and other organisations in the course of administration, governance, management, research or teaching of the university, its members, and its societies. (These records are acquired by internal transfer.)

2. Other records relating to the university, its colleges, buildings, societies, estates, members and activities, where these do not belong within, or have become separated from another archive.

3. Records of members of the university, both junior and senior, where these contribute to an appreciation of the university and its history or where these are significant in themselves, providing that those papers should not more fittingly be in another repository.

Institutional specialisms

4. Records of administrators from the Sudan Political Service, missionaries, soldiers, businessmen, doctors, agriculturalists, teachers and others who served or lived in the Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898-1955).

5. Papers created by or relating to the British presence, activity and life in the Sudan, including research papers, from the late nineteenth century to the present day, providing that they should not more fittingly be in another repository.

6. Records produced by the Diocese of Durham and Durham Palatinate in the course of their carrying out of their functions, including the diocese’s probate jurisdiction. Also selective papers of significant members of those organisations, especially bishops and archdeacons, providing that they should not more fittingly be in another repository.

7. Records, manuscripts and rare books adding to or closely relating to existing archives and named special collections held at DU.

8. Medieval Manuscripts, incunables and early printed books: with a close association to existing holdings, to complement areas of existing strength, and to collect representative examples from different genres and chronological periods, reflecting the development of manuscript and printed book production and ownership in England and the North East in particular.

9. Rare printed books: collections or items with a close association to existing named collections, whether by authorship, production or provenance, and to complement areas of existing strength.

10. Material within the preceding three categories to enhance the History of the Book collection.

11. Records and associated special collections reflecting the historical, social, theological and ecclesiastical development of the Catholic Church, particularly in
Northern England, but also elsewhere in the country, providing that they should not more fittingly be in another repository.

12. Records and associated special collections from Catholic organisations and institutions which are deemed to be ‘at risk’ of destruction, so long as they are of scholarly significance, complement the existing holdings, and should not more fittingly be in another repository

13. Records created by or relating to significant members of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral fall within DU archive and special collections collecting policy on behalf of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral.

Regional material

14. Material to add to DU Local Collection. This includes published and other printed material reflecting the historical, social, industrial and literary development of the North-East of England, with particular relevance to Durham (city / county / diocese / Cathedral / University), providing that they should not more fittingly be in another repository.

DU is able to accept archives and special collections in all formats, with the following caveats and exceptions:
- Films and sound recordings will normally be referred to the appropriate film and sound archive unless they are otherwise part of a larger collection.
- Artefacts would normally be accepted only if they relate closely to associated archive material: this relates particularly to the Sudan Archive.
- DU library is developing infrastructure and skills in order to be able to manage born-digital material and can discuss our current capabilities in this area with record creators and depositors.

DU will seek to avoid a conflict of interest with any other archive. In the event of such a conflict arising, the National Archives will be referred to as the final arbiter.

5. Conditions

DU will accept archives and special collections as donations in preference to deposits, and with clear and valid title of ownership. Purchases will only be made of items or collections of outstanding importance to the University.

Material which is in a physical condition which makes it unfit for access for research and which is not capable of repair or conservation would not normally be accepted.

It is a condition of acceptance that archives, once catalogued, will not be subject to unreasonable access restrictions and will be made available for public access. Access restrictions will be applied in order to comply with the Data Protection Act, to protect
other confidential material and to ensure preservation of any items requiring conservation and therefore too fragile to allow consultation.

[This collecting policy is based on The National Archives: Archive collection policy statements: checklist of suggested contents. (2004.) It will be reviewed regularly and approved by the University.]
7 June 2006

Revised 11 February 2009

Further revision approved by the Collections Committee 10 February 2016