

Collection Statement: Special Collections

University Library



1. Context

Purpose:

The purpose of this statement is to provide guidelines for collection development and management activities for Special Collections.

It covers all existing and future materials and collections within Special Collections, including archival and non-archival materials including but not limited to, bibliographic items, ephemera, memorabilia, objects, manuscripts and digital items.

This statement has been developed in accordance with the principles outlined in the Library Collections Policy.

Background:

The Special Collections of Murdoch University comprise a rich, diverse range of culturally significant and unique items, including manuscripts, books, serials, photographs, audio & video recordings, ephemera, and objects. These collections support the academic work of the University and the wider community.

Subject Focus:

The Special Collections are subdivided into the following subject areas: agriculture, Asian studies, counterculture, economics, environmental sciences, health sciences and sport, history, history of Murdoch University, Indigenous studies, law, LGBTQI+, literature, maritime history, media studies, peace studies, politics, popular culture, rare, valuable or vulnerable, science fiction, Wicca, and women's studies.

2. Description

Current Collections:

The current Special Collections includes holdings in agriculture; Asian studies; counterculture; economics; environmental sciences; health sciences and sport; history; history of Murdoch University; Indigenous studies; law; LGBTQIA+; literature; maritime history; media studies; peace studies; politics; popular culture; rare, valuable or vulnerable; science fiction; Wicca; and women's studies. This collection is held in closed storage in the Geoffrey Bolton Library.

3. Selection

For general policy, please refer to the Library Collections Policy.

The Metadata and Collections Team are responsible for the development of the Special Collections and for fostering and managing relationships with current and potential donors, as well as cultural institutions and community groups.

3.1 Collecting Methodology

Special Collections acquires materials primarily through:

- Donations, gifts and bequests, both solicited and unsolicited
- Transfer of items/collections from other University Offices related to the History of Murdoch University, that do not otherwise belong in the University Archives collection
- Transfer of items/collections from the main library collection
- Purchase

Materials will be included/accepted in Special Collections only if they comply with at least one criterion in each section of the Collecting Guiding Criteria, including primary, secondary, tertiary criteria, languages, geographical areas and formats.

All donations, gifts and bequests must be fully documented by completing a [Donation Form](#). Copyright in the materials or a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide licence must be granted to Murdoch University upon donation. Items will only be considered where they can be obtained ethically and in accordance with relevant law.

3.2 Collecting Guiding Criteria

Primary criteria:

The guiding principle for acquisitions is based on the purchase and/or acceptance of materials that:

- Relate to existing collections within Special Collections or collections strengths with the general collections
- Relate to relevant academic/knowledge areas associated with the University's learning, teaching and research programs
- Enhance Special Collections and general collection strengths
- Enrich the academic, cultural and historical significance of the collections

Secondary criteria:

- Material at risk of format obsolescence
- Material that will address collection gaps and/or complete or supplement existing collections
- Materials that are considered either rare, valuable or vulnerable. This may include items that are:
 - Rare
 - A book edition of less than 500 copies
 - Australian imprint Pre-1900
 - Non-Australian imprint pre-1850
 - Not commercially available
 - Of bibliographic provenance (e.g. beautiful or fine bindings, books with significant bookplates or inscriptions, variant issues)
 - Valuable
 - Of noteworthy provenance (e.g. first editions of important literary works)
 - Signed by the author and are of literary value
 - Of significant market value
 - Authentic; of verifiable origin
 - Vulnerable
 - Subject to legal restrictions on access
 - Subject to vandalism or theft
 - Fragile; due to age, wear and tear or environmental factors

Tertiary criteria:

Materials either purchased, transferred or donated must be safely stored and re-housed in the Special Collection area; therefore, to make a final decision, the Library will take into consideration:

- The size of the collection
- Size of individual objects/artefacts
- Storage, housing, preservation and environmental requirements
- Concurrent funding for processing, storage and preservation

Languages:

English is the preferred language for new acquisitions

Geographical Areas:

The collection is international in scope; however, special significance should be placed on acquiring material originating at Murdoch University, in Western Australia, in Australia, or in the Indo-Pacific or Australasian region

Formats:

The University Library collects digital, printed, published and unpublished materials for inclusion in Special Collections in the following formats/types: artefacts; books and pamphlets; correspondence; ephemera; maps; memoirs and other primary sources; newspapers; oral histories; periodicals; photographs; posters; sound recordings; videos and similar materials.

Out of Scope:

Items in a condition that:

- Pose a risk to existing collections
- Require extensive remediation or restoration
- Have lost their integrity as artefacts

Items in the following format/types:

- Business and financial records; University records or archives; diaries and similar first-person accounts, unless the material belongs to a person of interest to the History of Murdoch, or other existing collection; materials available in other collecting institutions; materials available online in the public domain; professional, personal and family papers, unless the material belongs to a person of interest to the History of Murdoch University or to an existing collection; research material used in the production of academic theses and/or university publications

4. Collection Management

For general policy, please refer to the Library Collections Policy.

The Metadata and Collections Team is responsible for the overall management and development of Special Collections and for the provision of expert advice on preservation/conservation and handling of rare, fragile and valuable items, as well as collection decision-making, including acquisitions, disposal/deaccession and donations.

Life cycle management:

The potential life cycle of new material will be considered at the point of acquisition

Deaccession and Disposal:

The Metadata and Collections Team is responsible for the approval and documentation of all deaccessioning and disposal processes.

Donations made under the Cultural Gifts Program (CGP), if deaccessioned, will not be returned to the donor.

4.1 Deaccessioning Principles

In this statement, the term deaccession refers to the removal of items from Special Collections. Unless deaccession is a result of unsalvageable deterioration, loss or theft, items must be transferred to the Library's general collections or transferred to other collecting institutions. Items will not be returned to the donor unless agreed upon, in writing, prior to acceptance of the donation.

Deaccessioning criteria

- Duplicated material
- Items that do not meet the Collecting Guiding Criteria (see Section 3.2)
- Items that are missing

4.2 Disposal Principles

In this policy, the term disposal refers to the permanent physical removal of an item from the Library.

Disposal Criteria

- Items that are in poor conditions, deemed unsalvageable or in condition that may have a negative impact to the collection's environment and/or staff health (e.g. mould, vinegar syndrome, vermin infestation, etc.)
- Deaccessioned items that are not aligned with the Library's general Collections Policy and/or not accepted as donation/transfer to the general Library collection or to other collecting institutions.
- Items donated under the CGP will not be returned to the donor.

Revision History:

Created/Reviewed Date	Approved	Next Review Date
September 2025	Manager, Resources and Collections	September 2030
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