

## **Collection Management at Bristol University Library**

Library Services at the University of Bristol are committed to preserving our heritage legacy collections and participating actively within an emerging national collection management framework. We also acknowledge the pressures on our library estate as we respond flexibly to space requirements across the campus, and efforts to enhance the student experience.

This document explains the rationale used to inform how we manage our print collections.

### **Background**

The relationship between library stock and the space it occupies is dynamic and requires careful management, both day-to-day and strategically. Student growth has led to significant pressure on library space and there is a need to redefine the nature of spaces within library buildings. As increasing demands are made on academic libraries, both financial and in terms of space, it is no longer practical, or economically possible, to continue with our former policy of retaining the last copy of every title on the basis of possible future need.

At the national level, academic research libraries are working towards the collective management of their low-use print collections. This important work has the potential to transform the definition of a 'research library', and to create a more open, reciprocal, and cooperative community within Research Libraries UK ([RLUK](#)), of which Bristol is a member. Bristol is actively engaged in these discussions, which encompass potential service delivery models, data management models and tools, and working cooperatively to define a shared agenda across institutions.

### **Bristol and the UK Research Reserve (UKRR)**

As members of RLUK, Library Services support the [UKRR](#) project. This collaborative approach to print journal management allows us to benefit from participation in a distributed national research collection, and to withdraw lesser-used print journal runs when titles are already held in the UKRR, secure in the knowledge that they remain available nationally. Engagement with the UKRR process also brings the professional responsibility of custodianship and requires us to retain print journal holdings as appropriate, highlighting the value of many of our holdings in terms of the national collection.

### **Bristol and the UK Distributed Print Book Collection (UKDPBC)**

Library Services are engaged in the development of a national shared print strategy. Through our membership of RLUK, we are participating in the development of the [UKDBPC](#). This will build on work which has been undertaken in recent years to enable us and our peer institutions to gain insight into the RLUK aggregate collection; identifying material that is widely held, material that is rare and, importantly, where that material is located. In practice, it is hoped that this will lead to a similar collaborative approach to the retention of print books across the nation that the UKRR has facilitated for journals.

### **Bristol and the National Bibliographic Knowledgebase (NBK)**

In tandem with the discussions around a shared print initiative, leading to the proposal for the UKDPBC, the development of a UK-wide digital infrastructure was undertaken by the HE data agency [JISC](#). This resulted in the JISC Library Hub: a set of services built on a database – known as the National Bibliographic Knowledgebase (NBK) – that aggregates collections data, with the potential to inform collection management decisions as well as aid efficiencies in other library processes, such as cataloguing.

Library Services engaged with this project from the pilot stage and regularly use the data provided to inform our responsible collection management while we await the outcome of the national shared print strategy. The [Compare](#) module is particularly useful in allowing us to assess the national scarcity of titles we hold. Together with colleagues in the [GW4](#) consortium, we have pioneered the use of this platform to further allow us to interrogate the holdings of our nearest neighbours in Bath, Cardiff, and Exeter Universities. This enables us to work together in new ways, to build a full picture of collection overlaps and local strengths. We hope this will be a basis to better support the research outputs of our shared community.

### **Categorising our Collections**

Library Services actively use the [strategic framework devised by the University of Leeds](#) to inform our retention policy by defining all our items according to four categories:

**Heritage:** Collections of internationally or nationally significant depth and breadth which the library will continue to develop.

**Legacy:** Collections which have historic strength. These may, in reflecting the output of a particular period or person, be of international or national significance, but they will have been developed to reflect current and recent research. Where these do not meet current research and teaching needs these will not be added to by using library funds.

**Self-renewing:** Collections which do not have sufficient depth or breadth to be of national significance, but which are required to meet the needs of current research and teaching. Material will only be retained within these collections for as long as it is required.

**Finite:** These are collections which have neither historic strength, nor relevance to current teaching and research. These collections will be considered for withdrawal from the library.

### **What this means for University of Bristol library collections**

As national custodians of the distributed shared research collection, and of print culture, our responsibility is balanced with the urgent pressures facing us at the institutional level. The benefits and security of a national scheme for printed book retention will help us with the challenging collection management decisions we face within our libraries.

We are committed to making these decisions in a responsible and sensitive manner. We have adopted national and international best-practice and advice. We make data-driven decisions to determine low-use items we may no longer need, ensuring that other copies are held nationally, including a copy in the British Library, and remain available to our researchers. When we find that this is not the case, we retain our copy at Bristol.

Within the parameters of the UKRR project, we routinely withdraw print journals which are duplicated in our electronic collections where we can guarantee perpetual, secure access.

Where we do have to withdraw stock as a result of our decisions, we do so responsibly. We prioritise re-use of materials, either elsewhere within the HE community or via book resellers. Withdrawn journals and damaged books we are unable to send elsewhere will be disposed of in an environmentally sustainable manner. We are aware of our responsibility to handle books which have extraordinary significance to different cultures in a sensitive way and ensure that such books are not at risk of disposal as part of this process.

The national landscape around collection management is rapidly evolving as the momentum grows to make our HE library community more open and co-operative. Bristol is committed to being at the centre of this movement and is developing a content strategy that will reflect this.