



Access Policy for Special Collections at the University of Bradford

Version 2.0

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Introduction

Special Collections at the University of Bradford collects, organises, preserves, and makes accessible, unique and distinctive collections to support learning, teaching and research for all.

Our collections are relevant to many audiences, inside and outside our parent University. This document discusses who these audiences are and the services we offer them.

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the University Academic Librarian at University of Bradford.

Principles

We aim to:

- Provide a service which offers free access for all.
- Provide physical access to our collections in conjunction with the preservation of material in our care.
- Make our digital collections more accessible by developing online resources.
- Provide extra services to our own staff, students and other stakeholders, such as teaching sessions, workshops and in-depth research.
- Provide excellent customer service to give researchers the best possible experience and support them in making the most of the collections.

Legislation, standards and guidelines

Access to Special Collections must comply with relevant legislation. This currently includes:

- General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act (2018)
- Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Copyright legislation

We aim to comply with the following standards:

- Collections Trust and British Standards Institution (2009). *PAS 197: Code of Practice for Cultural Collections Management*.
- National Council on Archives: Public Services Quality Group (2008). *A Standard for Access to Archives*.

Special Collections Audiences

Our current audiences are:

- University of Bradford students (undergraduate and postgraduate)
- University of Bradford academic staff
- Other University of Bradford staff (e.g., administrative, arts, marketing)
- Alumni and former members of staff
- Students and academics from other UK and international HE institutions
- Independent researchers
- Media, marketing and publishing
- Schools and young people
- Local community groups

Access to the collections

Special Collections Reading Room

The Special Collections Reading Room offers facilities for internal and external visitors to consult collections in person, supervised by our staff. Visitors use materials fetched for them from our stores and can browse the printed book collections in the Reading Room. We also have reference books and audio-visual facilities to hand. The Reading Room is open on Monday to Wednesday 09:30-16:00 by prior appointment, including a lunchtime closure. Appointments at other times may be possible.

All new visitors receive an induction explaining how to handle collections and sign a registration form detailing access and handling rules.

At present the Reading Room has space for 2 researchers. Researchers requiring wheelchair access can be accommodated in other spaces within the Library that are fully wheelchair accessible.

Enquiry service

Special Collections staff encourage enquiries relating to the collections via email, telephone, post or social media. We aim to send an initial reply within two working days (postal enquiries will take longer), but the time it takes to answer an enquiry will vary depending on the nature of the request.

We manage enquiries using our Excel Enquiries spreadsheet. Research enquiries are “triaged” depending on the time-scale of the enquirer and their relevance to mission i.e. we give highest priority to time-sensitive University business.

Special Collections does not currently offer a paid research service as we do not have resources available to undertake extensive research, but we will provide enquirers with as much detail as possible within our resources.

Reprographic services

Special Collections offers a range of reprographic services to meet user needs. All are subject to copyright law and preservation concerns. We encourage visitors to take their own digital photographs of collections for non-commercial research purposes (subject to copyright) free of charge.

We offer charged services for remote non-commercial research. This includes photocopying, digital scanning and digital photography. Price lists and full details of services are available online. We operate a separate set of charges for commercial use, where we are licensed to do so.

Special Collections online

Collection descriptions and details about our services can be found on the University's dedicated Special Collections webpages. A hosted service Vital is used to hold records of archive and book collections. The University Library Discovery system Summon harvests records from Vital which allows many of our archive and book collections to be easily searched. At present the number of items on Vital is small. Archive catalogues can also be searched on the Archives Hub and printed collections are searchable via JISC Library Hub Discover and World Cat.

Special Collections is also represented on the University Library's social media via Twitter and Instagram.

Exhibitions and events

Special Collections does not currently have dedicated space for physical exhibitions of originals. We aspire to create this in future redevelopment of our building as we believe this would enable us to bring collections and visitors together.

Special Collections does engage where appropriate in university exhibitions and seminars and promotes engagement through tours and induction activities for staff who are new to the university. Special Collections also holds events for groups of students linked into their studies, for example, seminars exploring resources for Archaeology dissertation students.

We are happy to lend objects for display to any exhibition which can demonstrate it can care for them and otherwise meet our requirements (more detail in the Collections Care Policy).

Volunteers

Special Collections does not currently have the space or staffing levels to accommodate external volunteers and we concentrate our resources to provide valuable experiences for our internal placement students.

Restrictions on access to collections

Access to collections is subject to various restrictions, including legal and preservation issues. We may not be able to offer access to uncatalogued archives because of data protection and security concerns.

Barriers to access

We are committed to removing barriers which prevent those who might gain from the collections seeking them out. Such barriers include geography, cost, perception and disability. Our audiences include many people who have mobility or hearing problems, and a high proportion of university students have dyslexia or other learning disabilities. Special Collections is part of the University Library in terms of strategic planning and adhering to the University's policies on equal opportunities, access, disabilities and has access to help and advice from expert colleagues in the University Disability Service, Health and Safety and Estates Teams to help ensure access for all staff, students and visitors.

The Reading Room has been set up with the needs of disabled users in mind: for instance, lift access, level floors, space for wheelchair and walking aid access. While the space is not ideal for all situations, as we operate by appointment only, we can make other arrangements in our building for users who cannot access the space (wheelchairs with a very long wheelbase for instance). We plan to further enhance access for disabled users when the Reading Room is relocated Summer 2023 (originally planned for Summer 2020 but put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions), for example incorporating adjustable height tables for users in wheelchairs or who prefer to stand: there is not space for these in the current Reading Room.

Accessibility is a key consideration when arranging events off-site.

Our website is fully compliant with disability legislation and all documents loaded are tested for accessibility.

Feedback and complaints

Special Collections encourages comments, feedback and complaints. Staff and students at the university can use an online form which is available from the library website. This is linked to a standard which states: 'We will acknowledge your email enquiry, feedback or complaint within 1 working day and will provide an initial response within 3 working days'.

Feedback and complaints can also be received from both internal and external service users via the library chat service, phone and emails (library@bradford.ac.uk). The Library has a formal complaints procedure which will includes Special Collections.

Service continuity

Service continuity is a critical part of our planning. It affects the events we run, the appointments we take and the way we make services available online. We maintain service continuity procedures as part of our emergency planning work. There is a Business Continuity Plan for the Library which includes Special Collections, this should be read in conjunction with the Library Emergency Plan.

We also develop continuity plans for significant access projects, such as major exhibitions.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually.