

# IHR Library’s Collection Development Policy

IHR Library, October 2023

## Contents

Introduction .....	1
Collection Scope.....	1
Geographical, Temporal and Linguistic Scope .....	2
Subject Areas .....	2
Primary and Secondary Materials.....	2
Formats .....	3
Collecting for Teaching and Learning.....	3
IHR’s Archives.....	3
Digital Collections .....	3
Collection Digitisation .....	4
Journals and E-journals .....	4
The Collection “Lifecycle” .....	4
Contact and Feedback.....	4

## Introduction

IHR Library has a collection development policy to explain what is found in its holdings and to make clear the future direction of the collection for researchers and others. As a central component of the Institute, we help to fulfil the IHR’s mission and strategy through our collections, and as part of a wider community we welcome diverse perspectives on our collections..

The library collection must also be seen as part of a greater whole: complementing the secondary sources and special collections of Senate House Library (SHL) and the specialist libraries of the School of Advanced Study (SAS) and those elsewhere in central London, as well as complementing and providing access to materials in ways that other institutions, such as the British Library, cannot. We also support the work of the libraries of the Federal Institutions of the University of London and the wider network of libraries and information providers in the UK. This policy defines and provide focus for these undertakings.

## Collection Scope

The library serves several functions, and its collections are closely related to others held nearby in London. With the support of Research England, we help to underpin the UK’s “research infrastructure” through the provision of historical research materials for research and training, and as part of the University of London we support advanced study of history across the Federation. As part of the broader historical community and wider society, we also make our collections available to all those undertaking historical research. We help to maintain and make apparent standards of historical research and methods, but like the IHR more widely we seek to be a “historical laboratory” and develop the resources needed for twenty-first century historians. A full analysis of the library’s collection profile can be found in the [IHR Library Collection Profile document](#).

## Geographical, Temporal and Linguistic Scope

The library serves researchers in all periods from Western Late Antiquity to Contemporary History. Our researchers focus on Britain, Europe, and the Americas, but are also increasingly concerned with global and transnational history. We increasingly support research on British and European Colonial history and Post-Colonial societies, as well as transnational and Global study. We welcome input from others about the direction of collecting in these areas (for example in our annual user survey or via our other channels of communication), and we seek to acquire materials from smaller publishers, notably those providing a voice for underrepresented groups and publishers from the “global south”. British local history, the history of London and of place more broadly are also particular collection and researcher foci. In terms of the Middle East, our collection strengths have focused on the Crusader Kingdoms and the Latin East and we continue to support research in this area.

We collect in all major Western European languages, and in a limited number of Eastern European and other tongues. We also acquire material in translation.

## Subject Areas

We do not limit our collecting to particular subjects, but aim to support the wider range of historical work that is undertaken, as well as acknowledge the unknown future interests of historians: the history of place, space, time, gender, sexuality, the emotions, the body, technology, politics, war, childhood, health, food, material culture and more are all of interest. We also recognise the interdisciplinary impulse and the broad range of historical interests, and we ensure that our collections represent a diverse range of historical experience.

## Primary and Secondary Materials

Our collections aim to support training in historical research methods as well as advanced historical research. As such, our collections focus on “published primary” materials, such as editions of letters and journals, photo books, memoirs, edited collections of government and official documents or edited collections of sources. These are supported by reference materials, notably historical dictionaries, companions, encyclopaedias and biographical works. Guides to library, archive or museum collections are sometimes collected where they are of particular use to researchers or contain a significant proportion of facsimile or other source material, such as calendars. SHL collects more widely in archives studies, palaeography and codicology and the history of the book.

As the national centre for history, we welcome donations of (but we do not actively collect) materials relating to the profession and heritage more widely, including grey literature (e.g. reports produced by the Royal Historical Society and others) and ephemera relating to historical exhibitions, community projects and exhibition catalogues, and on occasion “pop” history (e.g. graphic novel histories or other cultural interventions such as the *New York Times* 1619 Project supplement). For information on Donations please see [our Donations Policy](#).

The library collects widely in historiography, historical methodology (including digital methods and digital humanities), the philosophy of history, public history and more selectively in heritage and memory studies. We acquire materials more selectively related to the profession and teaching of history, including guides to doctoral study, history publishing and humanities higher education pedagogy.

## Formats

The library collects material in any appropriate format, and in consideration of user need and preference, whether print, microform/microfilm or digital. We continue to privilege print, in part because few other institutions are able to provide access to runs of published primary research material on open shelf, for long-term collection access reasons, and to help to train the next generation of historians in the ways that print has underpinned historical methods, research and scholarly communication. The great majority of our acquisitions are current publications, but we will continue to undertake a certain amount of “gap filling”, including “heritage” or “rare” materials, and replacement of damaged or, on rare occasions, lost items.

Materials are reference only. We do not collect duplicates, but we may acquire different editions or digital editions if they have value for researchers. We attempt to avoid duplication with the collections held by other SAS libraries and SHL, unless the material is in particular demand here, or is particularly important to the coherence of our collection.

## Collecting for Teaching and Learning

We support the teaching and learning of courses provided by the IHR, such as the [MA in History Place and Community](#), launched in 2023. We work with course convenors and tutors to develop and populate reading lists for courses and modules as they arise. We purchase materials using an “e-first” approach, for example purchasing e-books in preference to hard copy books. Where necessary (e.g. unavailability of e-book versions or if they are excessively expensive) we will purchase items in hard copy. We will also check for copyright, scan and make available online course readings such as book chapters and individual journal articles that we don’t hold in electronic versions. We will also use document supply services (primarily that provided by the British Library) to gain and make available e-versions of journal articles we don’t otherwise hold.

## IHR’s Archives

The library is also responsible for the IHR’s Archives. This is a closed collection, but we occasionally add materials in relation to the various collaborative projects that the IHR has engaged in since 1921. Since the appointment of the SAS Archivist Zoe Karens, in June 2023, more effort is being put into surfacing and promoting IHR’s archival holdings. This is reflected by the creation of a dedicated [page on the IHR website](#).

## Digital Collections

The shift to the digital also raises questions, some intellectual and some practical, in relation to our print collections, in particular our journal holdings and our collections of archival and library inventories and catalogues. Many of the latter are unavailable elsewhere in the United Kingdom, contain information not found in current online catalogues, and provide an understanding of collections, such as their intellectual arrangement, that is not reflected in their digital form; in some cases, the catalogue or calendar are all that survive of collections that were destroyed by fire or during the conflicts of the Twentieth Century. We currently see a value in holding these materials as a specialist and training resource and acquire selectively in this area.

Digital resources potentially offer wider and remote access to resources, as well as underpinning new forms of research that draw on the methods of the digital humanities. We recognise the benefit of digital resources, but also note that many of our readers have access to digital packages through their “home” institution(s). SHL has ensured that its licences allow “walk in use”, so that others may also currently access their materials within Senate House, which greatly expands the number of resources users of the IHR library can access. Recognising the limits of our resources, and the increasingly unique

or special value of our print collection means that we will focus the majority of our resources away from commercial digital packages. In collaboration with SHL and others we continue to collect comprehensive digital facsimile collections of archive materials. We will also seek to work with colleagues across the University of London to maximise the reach and availability of those e-resources we do provide, as distinct from those provided by SHL or other institutions.

### Collection Digitisation

We are developing a programme of digitisation of its collections, to open them up to research and researchers wherever they may be located. We will make digitised “surrogates” of original items using the IHR and/or SAS’ digital library facilities. The programme will also be used to support adding content to British History Online (BHO), for example digitised versions of the Victoria County Histories series.

### Journals and E-journals

We recognise the need to provide access to a wide range of historical journals, including those published by smaller societies and community groups, to help researchers keep at the forefront of historical study. Our choice of format is guided by the need to offer as current access as possible to articles, as well as the opportunities provided by working with other libraries within the University. We also see the need to collect in underserved areas, notably non-English language journals and those not served well by digital platforms, such as journals with numerous illustrations. SHL provides access to a wide range of e-journals across the humanities and related disciplines. Therefore we will continue to purchase hard copy journals while bearing in mind national drivers for rationalisation of journal holdings such as UKRR (see next section) as well as institutional drivers such as SHL’s ongoing Library Transformation Programme

### The Collection “Lifecycle”

The collection’s primary purpose is to be used by researchers. Wherever possible materials are on open access, and readily accessible. We do not distinguish between special or rare materials within the library, but instead consider the library as a special collection. Some materials are, however, given special treatment and stored and issued separately for conservation, security or other reasons.

We acquire materials for the long term. Rather than regular “weeding” of collections, we retain older materials to underpin historiographical research and to understand how the discipline of history has developed. Materials may be placed into closed storage as they fall out of use. On occasions materials are disposed of or donated to other collections if a suitable digital facsimile is available or if a more appropriate local home is available.

SHL is a member of the [UK Research Reserve](#), a national cross-library effort to de-duplicate and rationalise the holdings of hard copy journals. SAS libraries are currently considering membership of this initiative. If and when the IHR Library becomes involved, we will ensure that only non-core journals are considered for de-duplication, so that the IHR Library continues to be a repository for hard copy history journals.

### Contact and Feedback

If you have any feedback or questions about this policy, or if you wish to get in contact for any other reason, please email us at [ihr.library@sas.ac.uk](mailto:ihr.library@sas.ac.uk) or [visit us online](#).