

## University of Adelaide Special Collections Collecting Plan Rare Books Collection: 2022-2024

### Purpose

The University of Adelaide's rare books is a rich collection, built up on the original foundation collection of books belonging to the University Library, as listed in the 1878 University Calendar. Developing a collection of rare books to support teaching, learning and research at the University, is stated as a purpose of the University of Adelaide Collections Policy 2021.

The purpose of this collecting plan is to describe the extent of collecting to be undertaken, and any subsequent priorities, specific to the Rare Books Collection of the University Library's Special Collections during the period 2022–2024.

This collecting plan was developed in accordance with the collecting principles outlined in the University Library, [Collection Development Principles](#), and the University Library Collection Strategy, 2021.

### Definitions

The term 'rare books' is used by institutions in different ways depending upon the context of the collection. In the University of Adelaide, 'rare books' refers to overseas books published before 1840, and Australian books published before 1900. It also includes other published items, including maps, music, pamphlets, posters, broadsheets, serial issues, or other printed materials judged to be of rare or special value as defined by local practice (see further Appendix 1).

### Scope of the Collection

The Rare Books Collection at the University of Adelaide is one of the oldest and most extensive university collections in Australia. It includes overseas published materials from before 1840 but also rare and valuable items up to the end of the 19th century.

Recognized collection strengths include Indigenous Australian, Pacific and European History; Natural History; Theatre Performance; World Wars; English Literature; Voyages and Discovery; Medicine and Anatomy; Early Printing; Fine Bindings and Private Press editions.

HPECM File No: D2021/167003	Rare Books Collecting Plan	Effective Date: August 2021		Version 1.0
Authorised by:	Teresa Chitty, University Librarian	Review Date:		Page 1 of 7

The collection is housed in a secure area on Level 1 of the Barr Smith Library with limited access, and includes approximately 85,000 items, sub-divided as follows:

- **Strong Room Collection:** of c. 1,500 volumes, includes books published before 1700, unique or limited printings of 20 copies of less, works of high monetary value (> \$15,000), works of extreme rarity, association and autographed copies of significant first editions, annotated works by persons of significance, books of distinctive and fine formats, Indigenous material classified as secret or restricted, or embargoed publications
- **Rare Books Collection:** of c. 45,000 volumes, based on definitions of 'rare books' given above, but also includes books satisfying one or more of the criteria mentioned in Appendix 1.
- **Pacific Collection** of c. 12,000 volumes, based on the library acquired in 1972 from Professor H. E. Maude, includes books and journals on the history, culture, art, fiction and language of the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, with additional strengths in mission history and Pacific anthropology/ethnology journals.
- **Theatre Collection** of c. 7,500 volumes, based on the collection acquired in 1976 from Angel Symon, includes play texts, works on the history of 19th century and early 20th century British and Australian theatre, biographies of actors and directors of the period, works on performance and stage design.
- **University Collection**, of c. 7,500 volumes, embodies the published output of the University, includes staff and student publications, from the earliest times to the present day, and offers a valuable reflection of both academic and student life since its inauguration in 1874.
- **Minor collections**, of c. 8,500 volumes, across twenty-three 'formed' collections built up over time by individual collectors. These are kept together because of their provenance, research interest or format. These are closed collections and are not added to.

Formats include:

- Bound monographs (printed and manuscript)
- Serials (18th and 19th century)
- Newspapers
- Music scores
- Maps and prints (bound in as originally issued)
- Ephemera
- Printed broadsheets

Material that falls outside the scope of this plan may be accepted if it forms part of a larger multi-format collection that the Library wishes to acquire, or if it provides context for other items in the Library's collections.

---

**Exclusions** Copies of rare books in poor condition are excluded, unless they are very rare, e.g. fewer than twenty known copies in the world, or include significant and important provenance evidence or content, based on the Manager's discretion.

Duplicates of existing collection items within the Library's main print collections are not necessarily excluded, as no two copies of early printed works are exactly the same – these are acquired at the discretion of the Manager.

The Library formerly acquired material in certain subject areas that will no longer be developed. Special Collections no longer actively collects works on:

- Theatre or performance.
  - World Wars
  - Rare printed material that does not build on agreed collections strengths
- 

**Collecting Principles** The University Library Collection Strategy, 2021, outlines the general principles that inform the Library's collecting strategies for acquiring material for the collection. The Library collects books and other items which meet the learning, teaching and research needs of the University, including rare and unusual material not generally available.

Special Collections aims to collect a range of books on subjects that have a continuing interest to readers as well as books that have intrinsic value as physical items. Rare books are collected to meet the needs of readers, support key collecting areas, enhance existing collections, complement ongoing collection of historical material, and to build a collection about the history of the book and the value of the book as an object.

## Collecting Guidelines

---

Criteria to consider when selecting rare books for the Library include:

- **Reader demand:** Reader needs as reflected in suggestions for purchase, usage data and availability in other Australian libraries.
  - **The Library's subject strengths:** Special Collections collects across key areas as outlined above. These continue to be developed along with current and emerging areas of interest to ensure research level collections in selected fields of knowledge.
  - **The Library's existing holdings:** Consideration should be given as to whether the work on offer provides context to existing collections, is complementary to material already held or fills a gap in the collection.
  - **Significance:** Priority is given to authoritative and seminal works. Of particular interest are books that identify concepts in the development of knowledge, have received wide circulation, recount or illustrate significant events or movements or have affected the lives of many.
  - **Provenance:** Out of print material selected for the collection should be authenticated and of good provenance. Stamps, bookplates, labels and annotations can contribute to provenance research.
  - **Condition:** Material should be in good condition, preferably with the original binding or dust jacket.
  - **Edition:** First or best edition copies are usually preferred unless a specific edition is required for a specific aspect of its content.
  - **Country of Origin:** Country of origin should not be a barrier to collecting as the Library has a brief to develop a wide-ranging collection of international interest for readers in South Australia.
  - **Rarity:** The Library has guidelines relating to rare printed material (Appendix 1) and this is useful background information.
  - **Value:** The copy selected should provide value for money in accordance with current legislation and guidelines.
- 

## Collecting Strategies

---

Strategies to identify suitable books for acquisition include:

- Reader suggestions and staff recommendations
- Reviews of key collecting areas to identify gaps in the collection
- Desiderata list reflecting the Library's long-term requirements as well as current collecting priorities

- Bibliographies
- Reviews in relevant publications and websites
- Significant publications identified through collection research projects related to exhibitions, publications and the findings of academics and fellows.

Special Collections welcomes expressions of interest and donations from a range of people, communities and organisations.

---

### **Collecting Priorities 2022–2024**

Rare books are selected to provide context to the collections and to respond to the current and continuing needs of staff, students and readers and researchers of the University. Additions are made selectively by building on existing strengths, filling notable gaps within the collection and identifying new collecting streams.

There are few specific priorities identified for the collection, as the ability to collect depends on what is made available on the market or, in a limited number of cases, what is offered for donation.

In general, the rare books collection will continue to develop in line with the topical, geographical and chronological parameters outlined under Scope of Collection. Further to this, the following categories of topics have been identified as having priority within the 2022–2024 plan:

#### **Priority 1:**

Special Collections actively collects rare published material in these areas:

- Rare materials that document the history of University life and the local context of South Australia.
- Pacific studies
- Indigenous Australian, particularly local and Kurna language material
- Architecture, particularly South Australian heritage architecture pre-1900, but also authoritative and seminal works from overseas pre-1840

#### **Priority 2:**

Special Collections selectively collects rare published material in these areas:

- Voyages and discovery, Australiana pre-1900 and particularly South Australian
  - Natural History, particularly colonial, South Australia and Australian pre-1900
  - British History Studies, English literature and poetry from pre-1840
  - History of Science, incl. medicine, physics, mathematics etc. pre-1840
  - Early Printing; Fine Bindings and Private Press editions to the present
- 

### **Supporting Documentation**

This collecting plan is supported by further documentation that outlines some of the criteria and objectives for assessing and documenting Rare Books collecting decisions, including University Library, [Collection Development Principles](#), and the University Library Collection Strategy, 2021.

### **Related Collecting Plans**

- To be added
- 

### **Responsibilities**

The Special Collections Manager is responsible for leading the implementation of this collecting plan, ensuring consultation, and approving or endorsing recommendations for selected books. The Assistant Librarian, Special Collections, is responsible for updating these guidelines and coordinating the selection of published material. Selectors are responsible for understanding and adhering to the collecting plan in their selection of books for the collection.

### **Attachments**

Appendix 1: Definition of Rare Printed Materials

## **Appendix 1: Definition of Rare Printed Materials**

This definition applies to all published material from across all special collections, of rare books, manuscripts, archives, as well as arts and heritage objects, at the University of Adelaide. It does not apply to published materials contained within the University Library's main print collection. It was reviewed by the Special Collections Manager and endorsed by the Library Leadership Team in 2021.

### **Purpose**

The definition will be used in the formulation of guidelines and procedures related to collection development, management and access.

### **Definition**

- Overseas monographs, ephemeral material including pamphlets, sheet music, posters, maps bound as atlases, and broadsheets published before 1840, and serial issues published before 1840.
- Australian monographs, ephemeral material including pamphlets, sheet music, posters and broadsheets published before 1900, and serial issues published before 1900.
- Overseas manuscripts including medieval and renaissance material.
- Special or formed collections, containing both rare and non-rare material, which need to be kept together due to a significant provenance or subject strength.

In addition, material may be considered rare if it meets a combination of the following criteria

- High monetary value (e.g. \$500 or more with the exception of textbooks)
- First or other important editions of authors agreed to be collected 'in depth'
- Limited editions of value in respect to design or content (e.g. 300 copies or less)
- Association copies i.e. Material containing marginalia, signatures, bookplates, or evidence of significant ownership or provenance
- Aesthetic importance including original or fine bindings or significant graphic elements including hand-coloured plates, woodcuts and maps
- Bound volumes less than 7.5cm in height and width (e.g. miniatures)
- Publications of special note including first editions, pirated editions or surreptitious editions.
- 'Only known copies' of cultural or historical significance

Material that falls outside the scope of this definition may be accepted if it is considered to be especially vulnerable because of its social/sexual content, loose plates, fragility, paper composition.