4.3 Collections Development Policy, Gladstone’s Library

This document establishes the specific depth and breadth of the various Library collections and Archives, as well as the institutional commitment to maintaining those collections to certain conspectus levels. It also lays out the principles under which archives and special collections are accrued. This policy assists staff in meeting the recognised needs of all stakeholders. It ensures continuity and consistency in collection development and maintenance, and is key to the training of new staff and the preservation of institutional memory.

It covers:

a. The purpose of the collections at Gladstone’s Library, including historical imperatives laid down by its founder (p. 1);
b. Collection Development since 2010 (p. 2);
c. Purpose of the Collections (p. 3);
d. Archives at Gladstone’s Library (p. 4);
e. Conspectus Commitment and Collection Depth (p. 4);
f. Continuing Collection Development (p. 5);
g. Selection, Purchase and Acquisition Principles (p. 5);
h. Retention and Accrual Principles (p. 6);
i. Weeding, Deaccessioning and Disposal (p. 6);
j. Donations and Deposits (p. 6);
k. Specific Collection Development Principles (p. 6);

This document is much longer than a comparable collection development policy. This is due to the lack of written policies prior to 2012. This document represents all that is known of historical policies and decisions.

a. History of the Collections and their Development

The primary task of the Reading Rooms is to provide physical access to material collections in a silent environment. Historically this was the only task; Gladstone founded the Library as an exclusively residential community. Guests would live and work in the Library for periods of days, weeks, or even months, pursuing personal study. Conditions of residence were reasonably non-prescriptive; while a reference of good character had to be supplied, Gladstone’s only stipulation was that residents should be occupied ‘in the pursuit of divine learning’. Residents were supported in their studies by a large reference library.

In the 1880s and 90s this reference library consisted of approximately 22,000 books that had been the personal reference library of William Gladstone. Previously located in his study, the ‘Temple of Peace’ (approximately 10,000 volumes remained there as his own working library, and remain there still), the books had long been arranged and classified by their owner. Records suggest there were 21 classmarks (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, W), ranging from biblical archaeology, to law, to classics, to travel and typography. The collections were multi-lingual, including Latin, Greek, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Both the humanities and the sciences were represented.

Gladstone died shortly after establishing the Library as an independent institution with a librarian, a Warden and a board of Trustees. Gladstone endowed his library with around £40,000 as a book fund, indicating that collection development was a priority. Accession registers suggest that the collections were maintained much as Gladstone had left them. Acquisitions were theoretically made in all areas until approximately 2008, although in practice acquisitions were constrained by varying budgets. Gladstone’s own books were mixed in with new acquisitions, with no distinction made between them. They remained formally unidentified until an AHRC-funded ‘Gladstone’s Reading’

1 Referred to in Gladstone’s diary
2 Evidence located in uncatalogued institutional archive papers.
3 Arthur Tilney Bassett, Gleanings from Gladstone’s Papers, pts 1 and 2
project in 2006-2009. This produced an electronic catalogue, including ‘GladCAT’, an enhanced online catalogue of Gladstone’s annotated books. The Library’s card catalogue was retired shortly after the completion of this project.

Throughout the Library’s history a number of special/distinctive printed item and/or mixed media collections have been deposited. These have not been acquired according to any particular acquisition policy; rather, they reflect the character and scholarly interests of the Warden who oversaw their deposit.

Up until approx. 1930 (TBC – date varies according to source) there were no archive holdings at Gladstone’s Library. After Gladstone’s death his papers had been made the property of the British Museum. Arthur Tilney Bassett inventoried the papers at the Museum, and in the early 1930s remitted over 200,000 papers (approximately) to the Library in Hawarden. This is known as the Glynne-Gladstone Manuscript Archive. Until 2013 this was administered via the Flintshire Record Office. The archive remains the property of the Gladstone family but is now fully administered by Gladstone’s Library.

Traditionally the Library has not considered itself an archive but as of 2017 it has twenty-four archives, a considerable number. Like special/distinctive collections, they have not been acquired according to any particular acquisition policy; rather, they reflect the character and scholarly interests of the Warden who oversaw their deposit. Since 2014 the Library has taken steps to improve archive deposit, storage, and access (see part d).

b. Collection Development since 2010

Since 2010 the collections have been reduced in size and refocused in subject. Storage became an issue, as had effective development of the collections. After much stakeholder consultation it was clear that several areas were obsolete within the context of the contemporary Gladstone’s Library. Law, European languages, the sciences, geography and elements of archaeology were all ably represented at university libraries close to Gladstone’s Library; other subjects, such as Classics and anthropology, were only of interest insofar as they represent William Gladstone’s reading in the context of the long nineteenth century.

Other subjects, in contrast, were in relative demand. These areas matched the largest areas of Gladstone’s own reading: theology, history and politics, and literature and literary culture. Pamphlet and periodical collections also saw their heaviest use in these areas. These would go on to become the collection’s ‘core’ areas (outlined below).

At the same time a quantitative survey was taken of available data on collection use (Maxine Melling, approx. 2010). The survey showed that approximately 1% of the collections had been used in the previous two years. Of the periodical collections, then stored offsite, the majority had not been requested in seven years. Despite offering more than at any time in the Library’s history, stakeholder engagement with the collections was minimal. A review was put in place to suggest strategies to grow stakeholder engagement.

A review of the collections, in consultation with the Trustee board and external expert advisors, recommended that the collection be divided into ‘core’ and ‘non-core’ subjects (2010). Material owned by or pertaining to Gladstone remains the centre of the collection; this would remain the centre of the collection. Outside of ‘Gladstonian’ material, non-core material would be de-accessioned. Collection development would then focus on the core areas. Tighter and more focused collection development would increase both physical and online stakeholder access.

In 2010 the institution as a whole had also changed name, from St. Deiniol’s to Gladstone’s Library. The emphasis on the Library as the National Memorial to William Ewart Gladstone lent a renewed imperative to develop access to material generated and collected by the Founder. The Gladstone Foundation Collection was created in 2012 in order to preserve the order and cataloguing principles of

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4 REF Impact Case Study available here: https://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/CaseStudy.aspx?Id=7748
our founder. The collection is held in a discrete room – the History Room – and is catalogued with the prefix ‘WEG’. The rest of the collections currently maintain Gladstone’s cataloguing system (which uses running numbers). The use of running numbers in the main collection is intended to be eliminated by 2030.

The collection is now in four main areas:

1. **Gladstone Foundation Collection**

21 classmarks, arranged in Gladstone’s original order and arrangement, as far as is known.

2. **Main Collection**

16 classmarks arranged around the three Gladstone foundation areas: Theology and Religion; History and Politics; Literature and Literary Culture.

A second subsequent level of arrangement is ‘Timeline’: material published between 1780-1914 and post-1953 are kept in the main building; material outside these areas is stored offsite. **Please note that ‘timeline’ will come to an end in 2020 with the loss of onsite store Stephen Gladstone Hall.**

**Distinctive Collections**

Discrete collections that are donated or acquired to support research into foundational areas. We avoid the term ‘special’ due to its connotations of exhaustive completeness (see ‘Conspectus Level 5, below).

**Archive Collections**

Discrete collections that are donated or acquired to support research into foundational areas. We do not purchase archives, but will purchase main collection material that supports archival content. We actively pursue the creation of digital elements.

c. **Purpose of the Collections**

The collections serve a community of residential and day readers in the study of the humanities in the nineteenth century and the present day. The collections principally support undergraduate, postgraduate and academic research and study. Titles either represent subjects as they were in the nineteenth century or engage with those subjects in a contemporary way. The collections are reference only.

Collections come almost exclusively in the form of books, journals, pamphlets, periodicals, newspapers and microfilm; there are a small number of paintings and physical objects. These are accessed in silent Reading Rooms. Until 2018, digital access was limited to an online catalogue and an outreach programme across social media platforms.

**From 2018 Digital Gladstone will begin to make Gladstone’s letters and books available to view online. Between 2018-2021 Gladstone’s Library is committed to realising an online repository which will deliver digitised collection items, as well as audio and video content, to readers anywhere in the world.**

The collections are known for their unique content, and as a repository of texts that are relatively rare. Making up a significant proportion of the collections are titles that are the only holdings in the North-West and Wales; another significant proportion is titles that exist only in the deposit libraries – British Library, National Library of Scotland, National Library of Wales, the university libraries of Oxford and Cambridge and Trinity College, Dublin – as well as major university libraries such as Dublin and Edinburgh.

Gladstone’s Library is a world centre for the study of William Gladstone, and a national resource for the long nineteenth century. Materials relating to Gladstone have international significance and form the basis for a number of collaborative working projects.
d. Archives at Gladstone’s Library

There are 24 archive collections at Gladstone’s Library. They follow the development path of the library collections. Since 2011 the current Warden, Peter Francis, has worked towards making Gladstone’s Library a centre for the study of twentieth-century Radical Theology.

In 2016 the archive of the Crime Writers Association was deposited at Gladstone's Library. The Crime Writers Association are keen to establish a centre for the study of contemporary genre fiction. This centre should specifically not be in London. This speaks clearly to Gladstone’s impulse to offer study outside of London and also to Gladstone's consumption of his own popular literary culture. Since 2017 this has included the archives of the Detection Club as well as archives of individual crime writers and is now known as the British Crime Writing Archives.

From 2016 the team are working to improve the access, arrangement, and storage of our existing archives. We are committed to achieving Accredited Archive Status.

As of 2016 the archives are closed to deposits due to a change in space and storage standards brought about by the ‘Gladstone’s Living Heritage’ project.

e. Conspectus Commitment and Collection Depth

Conspectus is a useful methodology in the area of collection development. It helps library staff remain impartial and neutral in their selections when adding and removing from the collections. Conspectus helps libraries measure and maintain their collection depth. The International Federation of Library Associations recommends integrating conspectus methodologies into collection policies. Their definitions of the five conspectus levels are:

0. Out-of-Scope: The Library does not collect in this area.

1. Minimal Level: A subject area in which few selections are made beyond very basic works. For foreign law collections, this includes statutes and codes.

2. Basic Information Level: A collection of up-to-date general materials that serve to introduce and define a subject and to indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere. It may include dictionaries, encyclopaedias, selected editions of important works, historical surveys, bibliographies, handbooks, a few major periodicals, in the minimum number that will serve the purpose. A basic information collection is not sufficiently intensive to support any courses of independent study in the subject area involved. For law collections, this includes selected monographs and loose-leaf titles in American law and case reports and digests in foreign law.

3. Instructional Support Level: A collection that in a university is adequate to support undergraduate and most graduate instruction, or sustained independent study; that is, adequate to maintain knowledge of a subject required for limited or generalized purposes, of less than research intensity. It includes a wide range of basic monographs, complete collections of works of more important writers, selections from the works of secondary writers, a selection of representative journals, and reference tools and fundamental bibliographical apparatus pertaining to the subject. In American law collections, this includes comprehensive trade publications and loose-leaf materials, and for foreign law, periodicals and monographs.

4. Research Level: A collection that includes the major published source materials required for dissertations and independent research, including materials containing research reporting, new findings, scientific experimental results, and other information useful to researchers. It is intended to include all important reference works and a wide selection of specialized monographs, as well as a very extensive collection of journals and major indexing and abstracting services in the field. Older material is retained for historical research. Government documents are included in American and foreign law collections.

5. Comprehensive Level: A collection which, so far as is reasonably possible, includes all significant works of recorded knowledge (publications, manuscripts, and other forms), in all applicable languages, for a necessarily defined and limited field. This level of collecting intensity is one that maintains a "special collection." The aim, if not achievement, is exhaustiveness. Older material is
retained for historical research. In law collections, this includes manuscripts, dissertations, and material on non-legal aspects.


We are committed to maintaining all levels of the library and archive collections at a minimum of Level 3. At the level of collection, the following conspectus levels apply:

- Gladstone Foundation Collection and Glynne-Gladstone Manuscript Collection are Level 5 (at the time of writing the only exception to the level is that all contemporary works are in English).
- Main Collection is Levels 3 and/or 4, determined by classmark review.
- Distinctive Collections range from Levels 3-5 at the time of their deposit/acquisition.

f. Continuing Collection Development

The Library actively collects items in the main Gladstonian areas of interest. The Reading Room spaces are officially full and therefore acquisition takes place in partnership with weeding, deaccessioning, and disposal (see section I). In addition, development varies according to collection area:

Digital collections: From 2018 we will commit resources to projects which widen access to our unique collections via digitisation. We aim to have digital copies of every archive document relating to William Ewart Gladstone by 2021.

The Gladstone Foundation Collection is a closed collection, admitting only donations from the Gladstone family, the Temple of Peace at Hawarden Castle or those texts with a provenance indicating they were owned by William Gladstone.

The Glynne-Gladstone Manuscript Archive is also a closed collection. Active development occurs in the area of digital access and preservation.

The supporting collection of research into Gladstone, his life and work, are a priority area of development. Also a priority are the three core areas: theology, history and politics, and literature across the years 1780-1914 and 1953 onwards (please note that the timeline condition will end in 2020). The printed book collection supports and lends context to the Library’s archive holdings.

Individual Archives and Special Collections are closed to anything other than deposits from the archive creator.

g. Selection, Purchase and Acquisition Principles

Financial resources are limited. The budget for new purchases is comparatively small (between £16-20,000) and must cover new books as well as journal and periodical subscriptions. There are other small budgets for the preservation and conservation of existing material.

We prioritise the purchase of material covering three core areas – Theology, History and Politics, Literature and Literary Culture – particularly that which relates to the long nineteenth century or to the present day. In accordance with our conspectus levels, we are committed to maintaining all priority collections to a minimum level of undergraduate research.

We regularly review the collections, weeding and deaccessioning material to create shelf space for new acquisitions. We maintain a request register so that anyone, whether Friends, Readers, Residents, or staff, can offer guidance on acquisitions and purchases.
h. Retention and Accrual Principles

We are committed to maintaining collections at a size that can be housed within the main Gladstone’s Library building. All journals and periodicals are now on the open shelves. Our off-site store is projected to be removed by 2020.

Retention is based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of usage figures. The period of use is set at seven years. Full details are found in the De-Accessioning and Disposal Policy (4.3.3).

For reasons of space we cannot accept donations unless they are of specific interest to the Foundation Collection or the GG-MSS archive. It is not usual to maintain duplicate copies outside of the Gladstone Foundation Collection. Duplicate copies may also arise if a title held in the main collection is also part of a distinctive collection.

i. Weeding, Deaccessioning and Disposal

We are committed to regular de-accessioning of material that is no longer relevant. De-accessioning allows us to focus resources on relevant collections. For the specific procedure, please see relevant documents (4.3.3).

j. Donations

On average, it costs £3,000 to process, catalogue and store and archive, plus ongoing administrative costs. Cost and space are therefore principle factors governing the Library’s approach to donations.

Donations are accepted on the understanding that they are an outright gift from the donor and that the library has the right to dispose of any unwanted items. Material that is not suited to the library collections because of age, format, topic, physical condition or other factors will usually be offered for sale to charitable booksellers (a charity that makes a small profit for the library and uses other funds raised to promote literacy in developing countries) or passed on to another institution.

The library reserves the right to refuse a donation if the donor specifies special conditions, including retrieval from a donor’s home or special shelving requirements. In recent years, and particularly in light of the ongoing de-accessioning project, it has become customary to direct potential donors straight to various charitable booksellers.

Donations are covered fully in document 4.3.5 (Donation Policy).

k. Specific Collection Development Policies

Under development.