

National Maritime Museum Archive & Library Acquisition Statement

Working to illustrate for everyone the importance of the sea, ships, time and the stars, and their relationship with people.

1 Introduction

The Archive & Library Acquisition Statement relates to modern books, serials, pamphlets and electronic subscriptions, and includes CD Rom holdings and microfilm holdings. These are known as ‘the working collection’.

The working collection also includes material relevant to the professional functions of the Museum. These ‘tools of the trade’ include general reference texts such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, manuals, handbooks, directories and periodicals. These are subject to regular weeding to ensure relevance.

The working collection is differentiated from the Permanent Collection (defined as ‘formally accessed objects acquired in accordance with the NMM Collection Development Policy’). The Permanent Collection of the Archive & Library includes the rare printed collection (rare books, folios, pamphlets and atlases) that date prior to 1850, ephemera (including posters), maps and charts, sheet music, stamps and all manuscripts. 1850 is the cut-off date for printed works in the Permanent Collection. The Permanent Collection is subject to the procedures laid down by the NMM’s Collection Development Policy (2008).¹

The Archive & Library aims to support and enhance the work of the National Maritime Museum (NMM) by delivering accessible research resources to all. The Library provides public access to the NMM’s archive and library collections. It provides readers with facilities for research and reference in every aspect of maritime history including the Royal and Merchant Navies, emigration, navigation, exploration, piracy, slavery, shipwrecks, Maritime Greenwich, maritime art, as well as astronomy and horology.

For information on donating items to the Museum and borrowing from the collections see <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/explore/collections/borrowing-and-donating/donating-objects/> and <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/explore/collections/borrowing-and-donating/borrowing-from-our-collections/>

¹ See <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/explore/collections/development/development-policy/> The Archive & Library Acquisition Statement (2009) and the NMM Collection Development Policy (2008) replaces the Library and Manuscripts Acquisition Policy (2001) and the NMM Collecting Policy (2000).

2 Aims of the Acquisition Statement

- To provide information on how items are selected and acquired for the Archive & Library holdings
- To set out the procedures for withdrawals, transfers and disposals from the Archive & Library holdings.

3 Selection and acquisition

Modern books, serials and electronic subscriptions are currently acquired by:

- Library staff researching publishers' catalogues, booklists, online bibliographic databases, and professional press
- Personal recommendation of Museum staff, particularly the Research department, and the completion of a book request form (the Library Working Collection Steering Group assists in the selection of works, see below)
- Donations by individuals and organisations; assessed by Library staff before accepted or declined
- NMM Publications.

The Library currently acquires approximately 1000 modern books each year. Modern books are purchased through the Library's acquisition budget. Journal subscriptions, both hard copies and in electronic format, are purchased through the Library's subscription budget. Electronic resources are also purchased through the Library's subscription budget.

The Library Working Collection Steering Group, consisting of staff from the Archive & Library and curatorial departments representing the subject areas of the museum, identifies the gaps, strengths and weaknesses of the collection. Collectively the group makes decisions about acquisitions based on their professional judgement, specialist knowledge, and familiarity with the collections.

The objectives of the Library Working Collection Steering Group are to:

- Assess the key subject areas of the library's working collection, to ensure that we have only material that is relevant to the Museum collections, based on demand, or that supports research into museum subject areas
- Approve the disposal of books or serials that are not relevant to the Museum's collections or subject areas
- Review serial subscriptions and retention periods
- Assess the suitability of electronic resources versus hard copy publications
- Provide guidance on new acquisitions to support anticipated research projects or research for exhibitions.

In some cases, all the editions of a long-standing publication are acquired and maintained. An example is the modern pilot books, together with the relevant chart/s. These are acquired by the Library by direct transfer from the HMS Hydrographic office.

- Where items are only required on a temporary basis for research by Museum staff, the Inter Library Loan (ILL) facility is utilised. Other libraries such as the London Library are available to staff through the Museum's corporate membership.

Items not acquired:

- Photocopies
- Duplicate items (unless it was felt necessary to have more than one copy of a printed work)
- Works in languages other than English, unless they are significant contribution to the subject

4 Withdrawals, transfers and disposals

Items deemed suitable for withdrawal, transfer or disposal are assessed by Library staff. Items to be transferred or disposed of are approved by Margarett Lincoln, Deputy Director, and Angela Doane, Director Collections.

- 'Tools of the trade' publications and serials will be subject to review by the Library Working Collection Steering Group and will be withdrawn if they are no longer relevant. The exceptions to this will include manuals for procedures that have helped shape the modern Museum e.g. Chenhall's manual of museum classification was the first classification system used in the Museum and will be retained for historical context of the Museum itself; similarly all catalogues ever produced for the NMM will be retained even though the collections have changed since their publication. When 'tools of the trade' have exceeded their shelf life, they will be withdrawn and disposed of.
- Items identified for withdrawal may be offered to other interested organisations for transfer. These organisations and institutions are offered first refusal through the Museum Association, or through LMLAG (London Museums Librarians and Archivists Group) or NRA (National Register of Archives) listservs.
- 'Book sales' are held to dispose of unwanted books when the quantity of material warrants it, but generally it is more effective to deal with a maximum of three book dealers to purchase excess stock (as this is not a regular programme, we would not necessarily always use the same three book dealers).

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