

Library Services Content Strategy

1. **Aims and scope.** Library Services aims to maximise the availability of relevant content to our users, using a range of approaches to ensure they have timely (though not necessarily always 'immediate') access to the resources they need. We aim to deliver this content to users in the most efficient and cost-effective way, making best use of Library budgets and space. Library Services collections consist of three distinct elements:
 - Externally-created content to which Library Services facilitates access, including open, licensed and purchased content, and both online content and physical resources.
 - University-created content that Library Services supports, including research content (such as research data, publications, and theses) and teaching-related content (such as exam papers).
 - The Archives, Special Collections, Rare Books and Art Collections that Library Services curates.

This strategy outlines our broad approach to managing Library Services collections. Further documents outline the policies and practices specific to each element of the collections.

2. **User communities.** Our core user communities are the students and staff of the University, and the Content Strategy is underpinned primarily by their needs. However, our aim is for the collections to be used as widely as possible and so we also support access for Alumni, members of other HE/FE institutions, local schools, and members of the public. We work with our user communities to shape our collections, and actively seek insights into their needs and views to determine both the range of content that we provide, and the approaches that we take to managing our collections. This includes close engagement, at least annually, with Schools and their constituent Departments to plan for both their education and research needs.
3. **Range of content.** Our focus is on providing access to content in support of the dual track education and research endeavour of the University, guided, as advised, by its strategic priorities. This includes resources which maintain the University's reputation at the cutting edge of scientific and scholarly enquiry.

Library Services also holds and provides access to 'unique and distinctive' collections of significant depth and/or breadth in particular subject areas, including special collections such as archives and rare books. These collections have enduring intellectual and cultural value beyond their relevance to immediate teaching and research needs of the University, and Library Services has a national role to develop, preserve and promote these collections.

4. **Inclusivity.** We seek to ensure that the range of content we provide reflects a plurality of viewpoints and represents our users who come from diverse disciplinary, social and cultural backgrounds. We actively support diversity and inclusion in our collections by continuously reviewing them to identify marginalized groups which are under-represented and adding voices from those groups.
5. **Intellectual freedom.** Library Services provides access to a wide range of content, some of which may be controversial. Content is provided to support the development of critical perspectives, and the presence of material within the Library's collections does not imply endorsement by the University of the ideas or opinions expressed within the content. In line with legislation and the University's values around intellectual freedom, we do not exclude content from collections because of the ideas or opinions expressed, provided the content is within the law.
6. **Accessibility.** We seek to ensure that content is made available in accessible formats, so that all users are able to access and use our content. Wherever possible, we ensure that original

content is provided in accessible formats by default, but where this is not possible, we seek to provide alternative formats.

7. **Digital provision.** Content is increasingly shifting to digital formats. For education resources, digital provision supports the University's blended learning strategy, and particularly benefits the diversity of our student body. For research content, access to digital content directly supports the execution of research as well as the preparation of research proposals and participation in the wider research ecosystem. It enables digital scholarship and research by, for example facilitating computational approaches to content such as text and data mining. It also enables broader access to the Library's collections beyond those who are able to visit in person, for example through digital exhibitions of our Art collections.

In response to this digital shift, Library Services follows a digital first strategy. Published content of all types is provided in digital formats where possible, with selective provision in physical formats where appropriate. University research outputs are provided digitally and include non-text formats such as datasets. Archive and Art collections include born-digital and digitised content, alongside physical collections. As well as providing access to digital content, we work to make access as seamless as possible for our users, for example by embedding digital educational resources into online learning environments. Library Services also seeks to make space and facilities available which enable access to digital collections by all members of our user communities.

8. **Open access provision.** To support the widest possible access to our collections, Library Services supports Open Access and open scholarship. We seek to make content available to all, where we have the right to do so. We seek to make the University's research outputs openly available for access and re-use, including publications and research data. We support changes in scholarly communication business models and infrastructure to enable sustainable, ethical Open Access publishing for both research content and education resources.
9. **Collaborative provision.** The volume of scholarly content that is now available means that no single library can provide access to all the content that our users need. We therefore provide access to content both through our own collections, and by facilitating access to other libraries using regional, national and international collaborative networks to enable access to a far wider range of content than can be provided locally. This includes participating in access schemes that support in-person visits to other libraries, and reciprocal lending schemes such as inter-library loans that enable us to borrow or obtain content from other libraries on behalf of our users. Conversely, we are also an active participant in supporting access to our collections by other libraries, in particular promoting access to research published by University authors.
10. **Dynamic content management.** Changes in the teaching and research profile of the University mean that the range of content that Library Services offers must continue to evolve. New resources may be acquired to support the development of new courses, or emerging research areas. Conversely, resources may be withdrawn in subject areas which are no longer taught or researched.

We therefore take a dynamic approach to managing content to ensure that it reflects changing needs, and to ensure cost-effective use of budgets, and efficient use of space for housing physical collections. However, this approach is balanced against the need to curate and preserve our unique and distinctive collections for long-term access. We also work within the wider collaborative context, for example ensuring that content continues to be held elsewhere, and is accessible within reasonable timescales, before considering withdrawal locally.

We will therefore manage content based on categorisations adopted as best practice within the library sector. Categories are based on assessment of (1) the relevance of content to the University's current academic teaching and research needs, and (2) an objective assessment of

its wider contribution to collaborative collections, based on the uniqueness of the material within national and international library collections. These categories are:

- Current collections address the needs of current research and teaching, and reflect discipline-specific requirements. These collections do not have sufficient depth or breadth to be of national significance. The material acquired for these collections is selected and retained according to its relevance to delivery of University's strategic research and teaching priorities.
- Flagship collections are in subject areas that reflect the current research and teaching of the University, and also have internationally or nationally significant depth and breadth, with a high proportion of unique or rare items. These collections will be retained and may continue to be developed. For example, this includes our archive collections on theatre.
- Heritage collections have historic strength and may be of international or national significance, with a high proportion of unique or rare items, but do not reflect current research and teaching needs. These collections will not usually be added to, but they will be preserved either by retaining them or on occasion by transferring them to another library with significant collections in a related subject area. For example, rare books on subjects not currently taught at the University.
- Finite collections that have neither historic strength, nor relevance to current teaching and research, and may be considered for withdrawal. For example, this includes collections such as textbooks in subjects that are no longer taught at the University, older editions of books, or obsolete audio-visual formats.

This categorisation will be used as a framework to guide decisions for a range of collection management activities, including setting priorities for the acquisition of new content, digitisation of materials, and the withdrawal of existing content. Where there is an anticipated academic impact on education or research, content management will be undertaken in consultation with Schools and constituent Departments. Where Schools and constituent Departments are unable to engage in consultation processes, Library Services will make decisions based on the data and evidence available.

11. **Budget management.** Content costs are supported from a range of budgets that Library Services manages on behalf of the University, including the Information Resources Fund, and other budgets that support research publications, collection management and content licensing.

Spending and investment decisions are based on the strategic principles outlined in this Content Strategy, as well as the more detailed principles outlined in the supporting documents for each collection. All decisions are made in the context of balancing delivery of academic strategy with the requirement for an affordable and sustainable approach to resource provision.

Final responsibility for operational decisions within allocated budgets rests with the Director of Library Services. Library Services escalates matters to the University's Executive Board when there is financial and/or reputational risk, including around national level agreements with major publishers. It liaises through School executives in relation to other strategic budgetary decisions, including high-cost acquisitions and collection management exercises required to deliver cost savings.

Library Services Information Resources Policy

1. Scope

- i. This policy covers the management of the externally-created content to which Library Services provides access, including open, purchased and licensed/subscribed content, and both online content and physical resources. This policy follows the principles outlined in the over-arching Library Content Strategy and should be read in conjunction with that strategy.
- ii. There are separate policies outlining the management of other content, including the Archives and Art collections, and University-created content that Library Services supports - both research content (such as research data, publications, and theses) and education content (such as exam papers).

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- i. Library Services: responsible for developing and managing content within scope of the Policy, including managing allocated budgets effectively, and liaising with Schools around provision of required content within the resources available. Library Services will also provide School Executives with information readily available that supports compliance with the Policy, and with the escalation to Executive Board of any academic and/or financial risks relating to Policy implementation. Final responsibility for acquisition decisions within agreed budgets rests with the Director of Library Services.
- ii. Executive Deans: overall responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of the Policy within Schools across both teaching and research agendas, including escalating any academic risks to Executive Board relating to the implementation of this Policy, ensuring consideration of library requirements in annual budget planning processes, and for addressing any compliance matters within the School. Decisions on allocating School funds to support information resource acquisition also rests with Executive Deans.
- iii. Vice Deans (Education & Student Experience): responsible for implementation at School level of the aspects of the Policy relating to education and student experience.
- iv. Vice Deans (Research & Knowledge Exchange): responsible for implementation at School level of the aspects of the Policy relating to research and knowledge exchange.
- v. Heads of Department: responsible for supporting Executive Deans and Vice Deans with implementation of the Policy, especially regarding compliance.
- vi. Course convenors/programme leads/departmental education leads: responsible for ensuring implementation of the terms of this Policy across all aspects of taught courses that they are responsible for.
- vii. Module leads: responsible for ensuring implementation of the terms of this Policy for all taught modules they are responsible for.

3. Budget

- i. The information resources covered by this policy are supported by the Information Resources Fund, which Library Services manages on behalf of the University. The budget will be set through the University's annual planning processes, ratified by Council. Schools

will work with Library Services to articulate funding requests for any additional, strategically aligned information resources through that process.

4. Selection

- i. Library Services selects content in line with the principles outlined in the Content Strategy, and subject to affordability. Provision is necessarily selective and we therefore rely on collaborative provision with other libraries to meet users' needs, where this is appropriate and effectively delivers strategic objectives.
- ii. Library Services takes a demand-led approach to selection of both education and research content in order to align collections to current needs. We actively collect evidence and data to better understand user needs, including seeking regular feedback from our users to ensure their voices are heard. We consult with Schools and their constituent Departments to determine priorities, taking into account a range of measures of demand, identified strategic needs, and available benchmarking indicators.
- iii. Content for teaching is selected to support current courses and includes both reading list content and selective wider reading for student dissertations and independent essays. The provision of reading list content is based on the following approach, which seeks to ensure both that Library Services can sustainably provide access to the required resources, and that students can achieve required reading within expected timeframes:
 - To maintain a consistent student experience as set out in the Higher Education Framework guidance on study hours, and to avoid disadvantaging specific groups of students, lists for 15 credit modules should contain no more than 100 essential and recommended unique items combined. This number can be pro-rata'd for shorter or longer modules.
 - Library Services will prioritise the purchase of essential reading, followed by recommended reading as finances allow, to optimise the student experience and manage the budget available. In cases where resources are unaffordable, Library Services will liaise with academic staff to identify an alternative.
 - Lists should be structured and annotated in a way which actively scaffolds student learning, for example, by having weekly readings.
 - Teaching staff may provide a supplementary 'Further reading' section within their reading list to support academic stretch appropriate to the academic level. Further reading will not be checked, ordered, or reported on by Library Services. Therefore, to maintain student satisfaction, supplementary reading should only contain references to content readily available (e.g. already available through Library Services, published on open access, or accessible online through Senate House Library). As a guide, further reading should not exceed 100 titles to maintain student experience.
 - To ensure a consistent student experience, lists must be provided using the University's reading list system.
 - Lists should be reviewed by teaching staff for currency and confirmed at least 12 weeks prior to the start of the course, or in line with advertised deadlines.
 - Content may be acquired for research and knowledge exchange activity, either through Inter-Library Loan or purchase, that supports University strategy, including, where sustainable, resources which will directly enable growth in external funding and improvement in knowledge exchange metrics.
- iv. Additional content may be acquired to support the University strategy. For example, resources will be considered where they:

- provide additional support and advice to students and staff, such as resources relating to wellbeing, skills development and living sustainably;
- diversify our collections and help build a plurality of viewpoints;
- build strength and currency in the 'Flagship' collections.

Books which do not form part of a reading list, but which meet these criteria, should be requested through our advertised Book Purchase Request process. These requests will be considered on a routine basis throughout the academic year.

- v. Donations may be accepted where they are relevant to the teaching and research needs of the University and do not conflict with the University's Fraud, Bribery, Donations and Gifts Policies. When considering donations, we consider not only the relevance of the content, but also resource implications including the costs of access, metadata, storage, digitisation and preservation. We only accept donations of printed books and journals in limited cases, where they support our 'flagship' collections. Where Library Services accepts an item or collection, it is a condition of acceptance that the donation will not necessarily be retained permanently.

5. Acquisition

- i. Library Services provides access to open access content, and to content acquired by purchase, license/subscription, exchange or donation. Where there is an option, the decision on whether to purchase for permanent access or license/subscribe for temporary access is based on affordability and achieving best value, taking into account the anticipated lifespan of the material's usage for either education or research.
- ii. In some cases, Library Services may not acquire content, but rely instead on collaborative provision by obtaining material on temporary loan from other libraries (inter-library loan), or by referring users to visit other libraries directly.
- iii. Library Services follows a digital first strategy and provides resources in online formats wherever possible and affordable. Some textbooks and monographs are provided in print in situations where they are not available, or are not affordable to provide online. Library Services will set the ratio of students per print book based on the available budget.
- iv. Some online texts may only be available from publishers under unsustainable 'e-textbook' pricing models. Library Services regard these models as exceptional purchases and will not automatically order content under such models. The affordability of any e-textbooks required will be considered by Library Services on a case-by-case basis.
- v. In order to control costs, for each year that an e-textbook is required, the module convenor (in consultation with the course convenor or equivalent) should communicate the requirement to their library Information Consultant at least 12 weeks prior to the start of the module.
- vi. If multiple e-textbooks are required across a course, course convenors (or their equivalent) may be asked to prioritise to constrain expenditure.
- vii. If Library Services cannot afford the e-textbook, we will discuss the matter with the module/course convenor, outline what Library Services is able to provide in terms of physical copies, and offer support in considering alternative textbooks if necessary. As a last resort, if no suitable alternative can be found, the department would need to request a transfer of School funds to Library Services to cover costs.
- viii. Library Services will support the provision of content for open-book exams only where this is affordable. Open-book exams require all students in the cohort to access a text concurrently. Neither e-books that limit the number of concurrent users, nor the provision of a limited number of physical copies, are suitable for this purpose. Acquisition models that guarantee unlimited concurrent digital access, or the provision of a physical copy for every student in the cohort, are generally unaffordable.

- ix. Each year that a text is required for an open-book exam, the module/course convenor should communicate the requirement to their library Information Consultant at least 12 weeks prior to the start of the module.
- x. Library Services will consider the affordability of any texts required on a case-by-case basis. If Library Services cannot afford unlimited concurrent digital access, we will discuss the matter with the module/course convenor, outline what Library Services is able to provide in terms of physical copies, and offer support in considering alternatives if necessary. As a last resort, if no alternative can be found, the department would need to request a transfer of School funds to Library Services to cover costs.
- xi. Library Services may contribute to the provision of online learning packages, where these include a significant content element. Requests for online learning platforms should be made through the University's course validation and business planning processes.
- xii. In general, Library Services does not acquire software for University users. Requirements should be discussed with IT Services.
- xiii. Trial access to paid-for online content may occasionally be arranged and will be managed by Library Services. Given the workload involved, trials will only be arranged to resources that are in line with the Content Strategy, and where purchase or subscription would be affordable. Trials will not be arranged purely for the purpose of providing temporary access to a resource, where there is no intention to seek longer-term access.
- xiv. Library Services seeks to achieve best value through procurement practices and supply chain management. Suppliers are selected in line with procurement frameworks to take advantage of discounts, shelf-ready supply and to ensure economies of scale to reduce staff overheads. Large resources are generally licensed through nationally-negotiated agreements for specific collections (for example, Jisc Collections or Chest agreements).

6. Access and discovery

- i. Our strategy is to make content as widely available as possible. Access to the physical collections is available to any user who is permitted to access the Library, under the terms of the Library Regulations. Access to online resources is subject to the licence terms for each resource, which determine who may use the resource, and for what purposes.
- ii. For online content, Library Services will prefer content that is made available under Open Access licence terms, where possible.
- iii. Where online content is not Open Access and licence terms limit access to particular groups, Library Services will seek licence terms that enable access for all Royal Holloway students, teachers and researchers. However, selected resources may be provided for use only by a specific group of users (for example students on a particular module), if that is the only way the content can be provided, or where it is a more cost-effective option.
- iv. Where the University has entered into partnership with another institution or commercial body to provide education or research, Library Services may seek to negotiate extended licence terms to enable students and staff belonging to the partner organization to access selected online resources. Extended licence terms may not be available for some resources and are subject to affordability.
- v. Library Services will seek to provide access to online content for Alumni, the wider scholarly community, and the general public where this is both i) permitted within the terms of existing licence agreements - for example through 'walk-in user' provisions - and ii) also technically possible.
- vi. Library Services will ensure resources are provided in accessible formats wherever possible and support the provision of alternative formats and access equipment where necessary.

Accessibility statements of online resources will be investigated to ensure accessible use for those with additional needs. Where there is a choice of platforms, existing suppliers may be preferred as these platforms can be more easily assessed for compliance with accessibility requirements.

- vii. Library Services will endeavour to provide digital content in a way that is accessible to Royal Holloway members both on and off-campus in order to support users studying and working remotely. However, access to some resources may be restricted for users based in particular countries by factors beyond the control of Library Services.
- viii. Library Services seeks to make content easily available at point of need in users' workflows, for example by embedding access to content into platforms such as online learning environments. In particular, the Reading List system (currently Talis Aspire) is the University's channel for presenting reading lists to students, and for informing Library Services of resources required for education. Use of this system across all modules ensures a consistent student experience.
- ix. As well as embedding content, Library Services will seek to make all content widely discoverable, both through library systems (such as Library Search) and also via external search engines, including national and international catalogues (such as [Library Hub Discover](#) or [WorldCat](#)).
- x. Library Services also facilitates access to resources held in other collections and libraries, or available digitally. In particular, we will promote the use of Senate House Library (the central library of the University of London).

7. Review and retention

- i. All content, digital and print, is actively managed to ensure the collection remains aligned to academic needs and continues to offer value for money. It is also necessary to manage the finite space available to store print collections, recognising that there are other demands on space within Library buildings, as well as costs for any offsite storage requirements. The Library Content Strategy outlines our approach to dynamic collection management, and the collection categorization framework used to support this approach.
- ii. Subscription-based resources, including e-book and e-journal bundled deals, will be considered at least annually and/or at point of renewal as to their relevance and value for money, through assessing cost and usage data. Where the content is still relevant, alternative resources with similar content may be substituted if these offer improved value for money, or other benefits such as improved accessibility, or better licence terms.
- iii. Print content which is no longer in active use, or which no longer reflects education and research interests, may be withdrawn. Withdrawal decisions will take into account the categorization of collections:
 - Items in Flagship and Heritage collections will generally be retained, to maintain the coherence of that collection.
 - Items in Current or Finite collections will be withdrawn if they are no longer in active use, if they have been superseded by new editions, if they are available in digital format, or if they are damaged beyond repair and do not merit replacement.
- iv. Library Services may take part in local, national and international initiatives to relegate, withdraw or exchange items and/or collections where the initiative is based upon ensuring access to the content via alternative means. Some Heritage collections may be transferred in their entirety to other libraries, where another library has existing collection strengths in that subject area.

- v. Withdrawn print stock may be disposed of by offering it to reputable organisations and charities, from whom the University may receive a proportion of the sell-on profit. Withdrawn materials which we are unable to send elsewhere will be disposed of in an ethically and environmentally sustainable manner.

8. Related Documents

- Archives and Special Collections Management Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Financial Regulations
- Fraud, Bribery, Donations and Gifts Policies
- Freedom of Speech Policy
- IT Services Policies
- Library Regulations
- Open Access Publications Policy
- Research Data Management Policy

9. Monitoring and Compliance

- i. Library Services will provide any readily available information at key points of the financial and academic cycle to support Schools with the effective implementation of this Policy.
- ii. Library Services will provide relevant School executives (Deans and Vice-Deans) with readily available reading list, financial and usage information, as systems and team capacity allow, to inform acquisition/subscription priorities and address non-compliance.
- iii. The reading list length measures outlined above will apply for all new modules from the latest date of this Policy. The measures will apply to existing lists from June 2024 to enable module convenors to undertake the preparatory work required.
- iv. In the case of ongoing non-compliance, and after discussing with relevant School executives/Departmental management, Library Services will reserve the right to withhold purchase in order to constrain costs.

Document control information:

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Policy Owner		Director of Library, Learning Support & Culture
Approving Body		Executive Board
Approved on		25 September 2023
To be reviewed before		January 2025
Version History		
Version (newest to oldest)	Date of approval	Summary of changes
4	September 2023	Updated to revise clauses relating to Education and financial sustainability, and to include new responsibilities, related documents, monitoring and compliance sections.
3	February 2022	Completely redrafted version reflecting new University Strategy and incorporating new principles outlined in overarching Library Content Strategy. Reading list and E-textbook appendixes incorporated.
2	July 2020	Reading list and E-textbook appendixes approved as part of University's covid pandemic response.
1	October 2015	First version approved