

Collecting Drivers for Higher Education Institutions with Archives and Unique and Distinctive Collections



© Crown copyright 2016

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence or email psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available for download at nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Foreword

Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and The National Archives (TNA) are working together on matters of shared interest to the archive and research library sectors, to improve understanding, share good practice and to help institutions develop. They are facilitating enhanced collaboration between the archive and academic sectors, working closely with special collections and archives, to add value based on deeper knowledge of what is happening on the ground and to help strengthen communities of practice.

This report presents the findings of research commissioned by RLUK and TNA into the nature of archive material held in higher education institutions; the rationale for its collection; and how it is used to contribute to institutional missions, aims and objectives. The outcomes from the research will serve to inform future support for the higher education archive sector in the areas of advocacy, collaboration and information-sharing; and will further strengthen the working relationship between RLUK, TNA and the constituencies they represent.

Dr Jessica Gardner, RLUK Board Member, Director of Library Services & University Librarian, University of Bristol

Cathy Williams, Head of Collections Strategy, The National Archives

Rachel Beckett, Associate Director of The John Rylands Library and the John Rylands Research Institute, University of Manchester

Executive Summary

The research into collecting drivers for higher education institutions with archives and unique and distinctive collections is one of the outcomes of the agreement between Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and The National Archives (TNA) to work together to share knowledge, expertise, best practice and intelligence in matters of mutual interest.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) hold a substantial proportion of the UK's archival heritage. The aim of the research was to examine the collecting drivers for archival collections within HEIs with unique and distinctive collections (UDCs) and to consider the degree to which these drivers align with changing drivers in contemporary research and learning environments.

In addition to scrutinizing existing literature, outputs were derived from original research into unique and distinctive collections using survey, in-depth interview and workshop approaches. Research yielded 42 survey responses representing a broad constituency of HEIs and 7 in-depth interviews.

Drivers were considered in relation to core HEI aims. Within the cohort, excellence in research and teaching were the highest priority (for 95%), followed by student experience (93%) and excellence in learning (88%). Other objectives such as internationalisation and partnerships were also relevant to the collecting function.

Substantial information about collections and content indicate wide subject coverage; and the existence of gaps, risks and vulnerable collecting areas were identified. Most Special Collections and Archives (SCAs) collect material in support of institutional research, teaching and learning, supplying many useful examples of innovative practice.

A significant majority (83%) maintain a policy that outlines their collecting ambitions. Over half support a pro-active Collection Development Policy setting out what an SCA more actively seeks to acquire (59%). For many, access to information about the content of UK Unique and Distinctive Collections (UDCs) and collecting policies would assist pro-active collecting and the development of the 'national distributed collection'.

SCAs and others holding UDCs operate most effectively in developing collections when:

- Direct access and the opportunity to contribute to HEI policy, aims and objectives enable the SCA to respond effectively and appropriately
- Robust and regular links between the UDC and the academic environment are in place so that proactive and relevant research, teaching, learning and engagement activities can be developed
- Able to pursue the HEI's 'unique and distinctive' requirement while maintaining genuine collaboration with professional colleagues and in partnerships
- Capable of balancing the long-term requirements and curatorial responsibilities for collections with the agility to respond proactively to shorter term institutional requirements

Findings from the research, including the contributors' 'wish list' suggest the following next steps:

1. The development of SCAs stated **aims and objectives** (where these do not exist) would improve their planning and management of the service.
2. The development of **key performance indicators** in relation to collection development might assist SCAs to focus on service delivery and measurement of outcomes in support of institutional requirements.
3. A **collection development policy** (in addition to a collection policy) is an important tool of pro-active collections management and might be developed by all SCAs.
4. A method for **sharing information** about collection policies, subject areas collected across HEIs, and inter- and multi-disciplinary research trends might be considered in order to assist with strategic planning, developing the national distributed collection, the re-location of collections and the prevention of overlaps.
5. Targeted research into **vulnerable subject areas** not currently robustly collected would further support the development of the national distributed collection.
6. Establishing the **nature and extent of the risk of loss of digital records** and the potential impact both on the institutional record and wider collections could be a first step to further activity in this area.

7. Means to develop **formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration** and guidance in negotiating the tensions between competitive and collaborative approaches would assist the HEI collecting community.
8. Exploration of **methodologies for undertaking significance assessment, proactive deaccessioning and fundraising** (especially when speed is required) would support SCA collecting practices.
9. The development of **advocacy skills** (e.g. to gain ambassadors/champions internally and externally) with government, funding bodies, institutional managers and across the profession would help address issues of tension between professional and institutional agenda and between collaborative and competitive requirements.
10. The development and enhancement of **skills for managing born-digital and digitised material** including research data are much needed in order to manage growing requirements in these areas.

This report can be used as:

- A resource to support the further development of programmes that align with RLUK and TNA current agenda
- A basis of shared information which can inform HEIs about wider collecting practices and support future planning, collaboration and use of their collections
- A means to enhance the visibility of HEI unique and distinctive collections in Special Collections and Archives to the wider academic and archival communities to encourage further collaboration and partnership
- Evidence of the benefits and constraints accruing from aligning collecting drivers with strategic policy objectives to inform future initiatives
- A means of advocacy for and dissemination of information about the contribution that Special Collections and Archives with UDCs make to institutional research, teaching, learning and wider community objectives

Contents	Page
1. Introduction and Aims	7
2. Scope and definition of terms	8
3. Approach	9
4. The Collecting Environment	10
5. The Collecting Imperative	15
6. Collecting Approaches and Behaviours	19
7. Supporting the Institutional Mission	26
8. Ambitions, Opportunities, Challenges	33
9. The Wish List	37
10. Conclusion and Next Steps	39
Appendix 1 Sample Questionnaire	43
Appendix 2 HEIs Contributing to the Survey	50
Appendix 3 Analysis of Topics Collected By HEIs	51

1. Introduction and Aims

The research into collecting drivers for higher education institutions with archives and unique and distinctive collections is one of the outcomes of the agreement between Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and The National Archives (TNA) to work together to share knowledge, expertise, best practice and intelligence in matters of common interest. Their mutual interest in this project is clear: TNA has been responsible for leadership in the archive sector, including archives held in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their Special Collections and Archives (SCAs), since 2011; and RLUK is the leading consortium of the research library community.¹

The aim of the research study was to establish and examine the collecting drivers for archival collections within HEIs with unique and distinctive collections (UDCs) and to consider the degree to which these drivers are aligned with changing institutional drivers in contemporary research and learning environments. A further objective was to identify areas of perceived vulnerability in collecting, whether in collecting themes or contexts.

The initial findings of the research were presented at the RLUK/TNA's DCDC16 Conference in October 2016. The complete findings will enable RLUK/TNA to plan future activities on the basis of this evidence.

This report aims to provide:

- A resource to support the further development of programmes that align with RLUK and TNA current agenda
- A basis of shared information which can inform HEIs about wider collecting practices and support future planning, collaboration and use of their collections
- A means to enhance the visibility of HEI unique and distinctive collections in Special Collections and Archives to the wider academic and archival communities to encourage further collaboration and partnership
- Evidence of the benefits and constraints accruing from aligning collecting drivers with strategic policy objectives to inform future initiatives

¹ Memorandum of understanding between The National Archives and Research Libraries UK (RLUK) 2014-16.
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/mou-tna-rluk-2014.pdf>

- A means of advocacy for and dissemination of information about the contribution that Special Collections and Archives with UDCs make to institutional research, teaching, learning and wider community objectives

The research underpinning the report:

- Examines a representative selection of HEI SCA collecting aims and objectives
- Analyses HEI collecting approaches and behaviours and allied policies and procedures
- Identifies a range of collecting drivers and imperatives for HEIs with UDCs
- Explores the degree to which collecting drivers align with research council challenges, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and incipient Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- Recognises the ways in which collecting in HEIs supports institutional missions
- Considers subject collecting areas and vulnerabilities in collecting
- Identifies collecting ambitions, opportunities and challenges in HEIs
- Provides evidence on which to base future activities

2. Scope and definition of terms

The research focused on collections and collecting drivers and practices in unique and distinctive collections in a representative selection of 42 HEIs across the UK, sufficient to provide a good cross section of institutional approaches. RLUK uses the term ‘unique and distinctive collections’ to ‘broaden the focus from material defined by age, financial value, or location within an organisation, to a potentially more meaningful consideration of the intrinsic values of a much wider range of collections, and the significance of their contribution to research, learning, engagement and the overall institutional mission’.² Much of such material is held in the Special Collections and Archives (SCA) component of the HEI, and this report uses ‘UDC’ and ‘SCA’ almost interchangeably while recognising these distinctions. UDCs may also include museum, gallery and other collections which may be variously located, but are not generally included here.

² RLUK. Unique and Distinctive Collections: Opportunities for Research Libraries (2014), p. 12. <http://www.rluk.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RLUK-UDC-Report.pdf>

3. Approach

The research drew on existing literature and previous studies including:

RLUK. *Unique and Distinctive Collections: Opportunities for Research Libraries* (2014). Many of the findings of this current Collecting Drivers project teased out some of the issues discussed in this report, in particular in ‘examining ways in which UDCs can contribute to institutional missions, including research, student learning, public engagement, fundraising and enterprise’ (p.10).

TNA. ‘Accessions to repositories’. This database was scrutinised for details of top-level accessions received by universities from 2009-2015 inclusive. Accessions are currently classified into 38 subject areas from which the most and least collected themes can be identified. It can be used to identify thematic vulnerabilities.

J.M. Dooley et al. *Survey of Special Collections and Archives in the UK and Ireland* (OCLC/RLUK, 2013). This report investigated 41 UK universities as well as independent research libraries, and some museums and public libraries. It clearly recognised that ‘Alignment of special collections with institutional missions and priorities is an ongoing challenge’ (p.5).

TNA. ‘Collections and collecting: a survey of university archives’ (2009). This investigation provided a useful benchmark for the current study. It mapped developments in the university archives sector, generating 77 responses to a wide ranging survey. Its section on Collecting allowed comparisons between 2009 and 2016 about collecting attitudes, policies, capacity and potential challenges.

New quantitative data and qualitative information were generated through:

An advisory group. A newly-created advisory group comprising members and attendees of the Higher Education Archives Programme (HEAP) provided significant input to the scope and content of the survey, together with recommendations as to its distribution.³

A survey. The core investigation was undertaken through an online survey. Participants were invited from a sample of 57 HEIs representing geographical spread and type of

³Higher Education Archives Programme. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/the-higher-education-archive-programme/>

foundation. The survey comprised 7 sections and 65 questions relating to Identity and governance; Mission, aims and objectives; Collection policies, drivers and approaches; Collecting ambitions, opportunities and challenges.⁴ 42 responses were received. This represented 75% of those invited, and roughly 35% of the UK HEI population.⁵ Survey respondents were mainly at the Heads of Archives and Special Collections level (62%) with a few above (10%) or below (24%) this, where titles were provided.

In-depth interviews. 7 HEIs were selected from those completing the survey for further study through an in-depth interview. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain a strategic view at Director level of the role of the SCA in relation to HEI objectives and its approach to collecting. Interviews with Directors (e.g. of Culture, of Libraries and Learning Services, of Academic Liaison) in HEIs with differing aims, drivers and cultures explored issues of governance, funding, SCA profile and objectives. Contributors of the in-depth interviews were the Universities of Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff, Durham, Kingston, Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores.

A workshop. The findings of the survey and interviews were presented at a workshop at the DCDC16 Conference in October 2016 in order to share the outcomes, and to discuss some of the issues that the research identified and how RLUK and TNA might respond.

The findings from the literature review, the survey, in-depth interviews and workshop have been integrated below.

4. The Collecting Environment

In identifying the context within which Unique and Distinctive Collections are held in HEIs, background information was obtained on:

- The type of HEIs represented in the research
- The core aims and objectives of these HEIs
- SCAs' aims and objectives
- Institutional collecting structures and models
- How HEIs perceived SCAs

⁴ See Appendix 1 for sample questionnaire.

⁵ See Appendix 2 for details of contributors. Statistics vary, however the Guardian named total of 119 universities in 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2015/may/25/university-league-tables-2016>

4.1 The type of HEIs represented. HEIs in the UK exhibit a range of missions and cultures which this research aimed to reflect. A representative cross-section of the HEI community was selected to participate in the study. With 42 completing the survey a reasonable spread across ancient, red brick, 1960s, new, and London-based institutions was ensured (Chart 1). Two responses were received from Wales and one from Scotland and there was a useful overlap (34) with those responding to TNA's 2009 survey to allow comparisons. Membership and non-membership of RLUK were evenly split at 50% and membership of TNA's Higher Education Archives Programme (HEAP) was well represented.

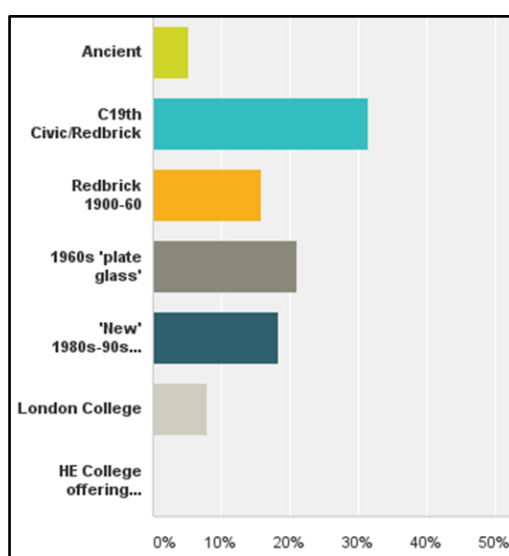


Chart 1 Type of HEIs represented

4.2 Core aims and objectives of HEIs. The broader aims and objectives of the HEIs were examined in order to place the collecting function in SCAs in context. While there is a degree of commonality in core aims of all HEIs - for example, in response to such government agenda as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) - emphases can vary: for most research is of primary importance, others might prioritise teaching, or civic engagement. The activities of those who are responsible for collecting unique and distinctive material are influenced by these institutional priorities.

Key aims and objectives for HEIs were prioritised by respondents as:

- Excellence in research (95%)
- Excellence in teaching (95%)

- Student experience (93%)
- Excellence in learning (88%)⁶

Other common objectives that align with national political and academic agenda are:

- Internationalisation and globalisation (95%)
- Partnerships and collaboration (86%)
- Engagement with the regional or local community (74%)
- Innovation (74%)
- Widening participation (67%)

HEIs also pursue other objectives such as Recruitment of Best Staff and Students; Knowledge Exchange; Transforming Lives; Professional Services; Employability of Graduates; Environmental Sustainability.

4.3 Special Collections and Archives aims and objectives. A clear majority of SCAs (88%) have stated aims and objectives and most provided links to these. A third of these are integrated within wider Library service policies, while two thirds have independent Special Collections and Archives statements. In either case, aims and objectives usually provide high level information about approaches to collecting. One might speculate as to whether greater or lesser integration is desirable, but the 12% that appear not to have either might consider doing so in the future. While most SCAs take part in an annual business cycle, and half are involved with key performance indicators (KPIs), only 11% have KPIs relating to their collecting function.

4.4 Institutional collecting structures and models. The focus of this research was the collecting function in relation to unique and distinctive collections. UDCs exist in a range of institutional structural and collecting models which directly or indirectly influence curatorial and collection activities, in both institutional records and archives management and special collections management. The following structures were observed:

- The SCA are maintained within the Library Service
- The library service incorporates an archives service holding institutional holdings as well as Special Collections which include rare books and personal libraries

⁶ Percentages throughout represent a proportion of the 42 survey responses.

- The institutional archives and records management is located separately, but with regular communication with the SCA
- The institutional archive is totally separate from the SCA with little communication
- A collection is based in an academic department, separately maintained from the university's main SCA located in the Library Services
- SCAs comprise part of a wider cultural 'offer' where collection management is integrated across libraries, museums and galleries as well as archives and special collections

Acquisition and collecting models also take a variety of forms:

- SCAs collect material both from the institution and external sources to align with identified collecting themes and policies
- The focus is on collecting from external rather than internal sources
- Only material derived from or relating to the parent body is collected
- There is a collection but no records management function

The first of each of these groups appears to be the most common since for most survey respondents (70%) the content of collections is held in the Special Collections section of the library. In about a third of cases (30%) content is held in institutional archives and/or records management services. A few (8%) acknowledge that collections remain within faculties.

In-depth interviews confirm that where SCAs are involved in wider HEI initiatives and objectives or are embedded in an academic department, profile and engagement can be enhanced. Conversely some SCAs based in the university library sometimes find it difficult 'to get to the heart of the conversation' for example in relation to collection development, institutional knowledge and corporate memory; others needed to 'shout to get attention as the University's agenda is bigger than the SCA's'.

The University of Durham's Archives and Special Collection is part of the Culture Durham whose mantra is 'Collection centred, audience focused'. It fosters interdisciplinary research and student learning and brings together both academic departments and professional services, including the Archives, Library and Museum.

Bristol Theatre Collection is an autonomous service within the Drama Department and Faculty of Arts. Flexibility and a budget have enabled a range of projects and initiatives over the past 10 years.

4.5 How HEIs perceived SCAs. SCA staff think their service is primarily viewed by their institution:

- As a resource for research (88%)
- As the institutional memory (81%)
- As a resource for teaching (81%)
- To contribute to the HEI's reputation (76%)
- To stimulate a distinctive profile (64%)

While it is acknowledged that 'we are viewed in different ways by different parts of the institution' comments reflect on the importance of perception:

- 'We are seen as a key part of the university's engagement with the local and regional community, potentially (and increasingly) also part of a distinctive student experience of the city's cultural offer'
- 'As university libraries increasingly subscribe to identical digital archives, their HEIs are looking to Special Collections and Archives to create a high public profile and distinctive holdings'

Collecting environment: next steps

- **The development of stated aims and objectives (where these do not exist) would improve SCAs' planning and management of the service**
- **The development of key performance indicators in relation to collection development might assist SCAs to focus on service delivery and measurement of outcomes in support of institutional requirements**
- **The development of skills in influencing and advocacy might assist in 'getting to the heart of the conversation' at an institutional level whether or not organisational structures are in place**

5. The Collecting Imperative

Determining the drivers for collecting required analysis of:

- The nature of collection themes and formats
- Recognised gaps and risks
- Collecting policies and their alignment with institutional objectives

5.1 The nature of collection themes and formats. These were investigated primarily in order to understand how far what was acquired reflected an alignment with institutional drivers and objectives. Information about areas of vulnerability in collecting themes was also pursued.

Substantial information about collections and content was made available, primarily through access to institutional collecting policies. This is an extremely rich resource whose content could not currently be fully explored but which would benefit from further analysis to gain a clearer subject-based snapshot of current HEI holdings: a goal that many respondents supported.

Separate analysis of TNA's Accessions to Repositories database for 2011-2015 inclusive aimed to identify collecting themes. It shows that by 2015, 83 universities (including all RLUK members) had contributed data on accessions received during the previous year. Accessions information is currently classified into 38 thematic categories. Areas of strength include literary history, women's history and education with over 60% of HEIs collecting in these areas from 2011-15. Over 50% of HEIs are collecting business, cinema, drama and performing arts archives. It is perhaps surprising that at the other end of the scale, 5% or fewer are collecting in the areas of black history, disability and LGBTQ+.⁷ Further research into vulnerable areas would be useful.

It was anticipated that records of science, engineering and medicine might fall into the 'vulnerable' category. While one or two note that it was difficult to collect in all subjects the survey showed that 60% of HEIs do collect in these areas. For some these are core areas while others note that many collections include records relating to scientific topics even if not specified in a collection policy.

⁷ See Appendix 3 for an Analysis of Topics Collected by HEIs 2011-15.

Records are held in a wide variety of media and formats, from parchment, papyri, clay tablets and palm leaf to more commonly held paper, photographic, magnetic and digital media, both born digital and digitised. Both hard copy and digital media are in general located in the Special Collections and/or Institutional Archives: collecting digitised and born digital material is increasing significantly. Digital material is held in a variety of storage environments: university servers, digital preservation systems digital libraries, and digital repositories (Rosetta, Hydra). Some SCAs are increasing their capacity to manage born digital and digitised material themselves.

5.2 Recognised gaps and risks. 83% recognise gaps in collections and 43% are aware of records at risk. Many identify specific themes that need development (e.g. steel industry, coalfields, publishing, prisoner of war theatre, child psychology, Roman Catholicism, politicians, engineers and scientists, and major demographic surveys). Examples of archives deemed at risk include those of heavy industry, agriculture, engineering and science, education and religion. For some there are worrying gaps in the institutional record (e.g. departmental records; staff and student files) perhaps due to a lack of records management. Great concern was expressed in relation to digital records being at risk of loss.

5.3 Collecting policies and their alignment with institutional objectives. The adoption of policies as statements of intent to guide decision-making and contribute to balanced outcomes demonstrates a level of maturity that can enhance collecting activities, especially in co-operative and collaborative ventures.

A collecting policy is a basic statement that defines the outer boundary of what an archive repository would or would not accept, and the procedures by which this takes place. It defines a collecting remit and is permissive, rather than active.

By 2016 83% of HEIs had a formal collection policy. This compares favourably with 2009 when 69% had such a policy, although there is still room for development in this area:

- 'Publishing explicit collections policies and procedures appears to have reduced the number of 'simple' questions asked'

A collections development policy sets out what HEIs are more actively seeking to acquire. It does not replace a collecting policy, but actively identifies priorities and strategies for fulfilling the collecting remit. The key difference is that a collections development policy is

pro-active and may be time-limited: a 'strategic five or ten year plan to develop the way an archive service collects'.⁸ collections development policies are required as part of TNA's Archive Service Accreditation process and are now being developed more widely, although still to be adopted by a number of HEIs.

In 2016 59% of SCAs in HEIs had collections development policies: there is therefore scope for further development of such policies:

- 'A tightly focused policy is necessary due to currently extremely limited staffing and space, but in the longer term, with growth, a more expansive policy might result'

In general, where a collections development policy is in place it supplements and builds on an existing collection policy: however, in some HEIs the collections development policy stands alone.

In-depth interviews show that collections development policy's exist in a variety of forms. A comprehensive example is the University of Bradford's, which adopted some of the guidelines developed by the University of Leeds when categorising the significance of unique and distinctive physical and digital collections as heritage, legacy, self-renewing and finite.⁹

University of Bradford Developing Heritage Clusters

Bradford's collections development policy identifies specific heritage clusters e.g.

- *J.B. Priestley*
- *Jacquetta Hawkes*
- *The history of the University*
- *Peace and non-violent social change*
- *Bradford, the West Riding and Yorkshire Dales*

For each of these the collections development policy describes

- *Current holdings*
- *Collecting priorities: archives and publications*
- *Stakeholders with an interest*
- *Other organisations and Collections elsewhere*
- *What is not collected*
- *Future Directions*

Responsiveness to change and flexibility are key elements in successful collections development: some respondents noted that all policies were regularly reviewed. Over half

⁸TNA Collection Development Tools and Guidance (2011). <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/collection-development-tools-and-guidance.pdf>

⁹ Collections Strategy for Leeds University Library August 2013. https://library.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/217/collection_development

(57%) of SCAs have materially changed their collections development policy over the past ten years, reflecting openness to adjustment and development. Reasons for such changes include:

- Targeting distinctive collections (60%)
- A new research strand in the university (20%)
- To save records at risk (20%)
- Change in governance (16%)
- Response to a donation (8%)

A number of practical effects of materially changing a collections development policy were cited:

- A more strategic, focused and targeted approach to collections development
- Expansion of remit and holdings, and raised profile as a result
- Greater focus on mission and thus more effective use of resources
- Improved skills e.g. when handling wider research resources (e.g. art, objects)

Further incentives for changing a collections development policy were identified as the need to:

- Include born-digital records, and oral history
- Ensure compliance with applications for funding and accreditation
- Ensure currency with research priorities
- Become more discriminating and formalise structures
- Support decisions to refuse donations

These responses provided evidence that a proactive collection development policy can be used as a tool for:

- Demonstrating the value of collections
- Aligning with the institutional mission
- Managing and controlling the collecting function
- Assisting future planning
- Managing resources

Interest in what other HEIs were collecting was frequently expressed. As collections development policy's are increasingly adopted so the capacity for collaboration and information sharing might be developed.

Collecting imperative: next steps

- **A method for sharing information about the subject areas collected across HEIs might be considered in order to assist with strategic planning, developing the national distributed collection, the re-location of collections and the avoidance of duplication**
- **Targeted research into vulnerable subject areas not currently robustly collected would further support the development of the national distributed collection**
- **Establishing the nature and extent of the risk of loss of digital records and the potential impact both on the institutional record and wider collections could be a first step to further activity in this area**
- **A Collection Development Policy (in addition to a Collection Policy) is an important tool for collections management and might be developed by all SCAs**

6. Collecting Approaches and Behaviours

Collecting methods and approaches are usually determined by their institutional context. These include:

- Collecting approaches: proactive, reactive, collaborative
- Conditions for accepting material
- Institutional acquisition arrangements
- Significance assessments and de-accessioning
- Co-operation, collaboration and competition

6.1 Collecting approaches: proactive, reactive, and collaborative. TNA's 'Collections and Collecting: a Survey of University Archives' showed that in 2009 62% of HEIs actively

collected but that 21% were not accepting new material. In 2016 the availability of resources continues to impact directly on collecting approaches and practices and collections have to be built within prevailing physical, financial and staff resources. While resourcing issues force some SCAs to operate reactively, it is recognised that a reactive or passive approach does not focus sufficiently on the institutional mission and would not be viable for digital collecting. Some recognise the importance of collaboration with 17% identifying their approach as 'collaborative'. Although this number might be greater had the question been differently phrased, further collaborative approaches might be developed.

Survey respondents were asked to define whether their collecting behaviour was proactive, reactive or collaborative. However, it is clear that these choices are not in fact mutually exclusive:

- 'All of the above. We are offered high quality collections on a regular basis and we assess their fit with our collecting policy (passive/reactive); we see ourselves as playing a role with others in preserving unique materials and we are mindful of other repositories strengths, including referring potential acquisitions to others where appropriate (collaborative); we have undertaken joint acquisitions in the past (collaborative); we reach out to people and organisations about archives of potential interest (proactive).'

For others, developing from a reactive to a proactive approach is an ambition:

- 'We are in the process of changing from a reactive department, functioning as a lock-up for academic collections, to a more professional department with acknowledged strategic aims. This will take time and careful negotiation with academic schools, but it is an important change that is facilitated by the University's current need for a more distinctive identity.'

-

6.2 Conditions for accepting material. All institutions are happy to receive accessions as gifts, and most accept them on long term loan. For many institutions purchasing material is possible (70%) but occasional, a rare occurrence governed by the availability of funding

and/or terms of endowment and legacy funds. Academics are often expected to do the necessary fund-raising. Like any other acquisition, purchases have to fit in with a collecting policy and have potential for supporting research, teaching and learning and public engagement. They should also satisfy a business case and condition report, and be independently valued. While some are concerned to avoid inflating the market, others note that when bidding at auction the key requirement is speed for fundraising whether internally or externally: one or two would welcome guidance in this area.

Collecting beyond the stated remit can occur. Most SCAs (79%) have been approached to accept material outside their policy; 25% have done or would do so in future in exceptional circumstances. Reasons include:

- A reluctance to say 'no'
- Pressure from senior managers, and academics with special interests
- Risk of loss of exceptional material
- Political reasons

Most HEIs suggest alternative repositories for unwanted material, many being aware of other institutions collecting in the same or comparable areas. It is easier to know of a suitable repository where these are geographically oriented (e.g. a local authority) or subject themed (e.g. Museum of Rural Life) than to know precisely what other HEIs are collecting.

- 'As we are planning to extend our collecting policy with new stated specialisms for 20th and 21st century material, we would be interested to know about perceived 'gaps' in this area and/or records at risk, which might be beneficially included within our collecting remit.'

6.3 Institutional acquisition arrangements. In all cases of acquisition, the existence of internal structures and processes can provide support and a framework within which to operate. They can be used to:

- Help identify effective institutional levers for encouraging continuing investment in the service
- Assist decision making at a strategic level
- Identify priorities in collections development and in relation to existing collections

- Gauge audience interest and potential use
- Consider acquisition, documentation and conservation cost, and available storage space
- Explore intellectual property status (including copyright)

Examples include:

- Acquisitions and Disposals Panel: to approve acquisitions where significance and value of material, as well as its relevance to collecting policies and priorities is demonstrated
- Collections Development Group: to assess proposals for acquisitions of new material across Archives, Special and Modern printed collections
- Special Collections and Archives Steering Group: to make decisions on what to collect; to endorse policies before going to main university committee for sign off

6.4 Significance assessments and de-accessioning. Such groups and panels will occasionally use 'significance' as a benchmark against which to assess the potential value of a collection. While 63% claim to undertake significance assessments, comments show that this is undertaken routinely as part of the accession and appraisal process rather than through the application of a specific 'significance' methodology. The use of significance assessment as a qualitative technique to evaluate the relative importance of cultural heritage items, including archives, might be further investigated within HEIs.¹⁰

Scoring criteria are sometimes used to aid decisions; more frequently significance is determined through working closely with academics to identify historical/research value of potential collections.

The interviews generally confirmed survey findings about the use of significance in estimating the value of collections. However, Bristol Theatre Collection expressly uses it as part of the acquisition process.

'As a result of an increase in offers of donations and decrease in resources (mainly space) we have recently implemented a scoring criteria to help decide on whether or not to accept archives into the Collection -

¹⁰ Developed in Australia and used in the museum environment e.g. *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections* (2009). <https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/significance-2.0.pdf>

significance is one of these criteria, as is resource implications.’ – Bristol Theatre Collection

One aspect of a proactive collecting approach is the capacity and confidence to de-accession material previously acquired. However, while 68% did indeed de-accession material this was undertaken on a carefully qualified basis: ‘rarely’, ‘on a small scale’, ‘duplicate printed material’, ‘when returning to depositor’, ‘when transferring elsewhere’, ‘individual items of indeterminate provenance’, ‘items that should never have been taken in in the first place’, ‘limited weeding’, ‘very occasionally, after consultation with academic colleagues’. Further guidance on approaches to pro-active de-accessioning might be welcomed.

One or two were actively appraising and deaccessioning in line with TNA standards and in negotiation with interested academics, recognising that ‘de-accessioning is likely to be a more prominent activity in future, which will need careful negotiation with academics and schools’.¹¹

In-depth interviews show that de-accessioning is perceived as a useful tool with Cardiff, Bradford and Liverpool John Moores Universities actively developing systems. Kingston University staff suggested that a national system to support de-accessioning (e.g. similar to the UK Research Reserve process) would enable redistribution of material where appropriate.

The University of Liverpool recently de-accessioned and returned to the depositor a large charity archive, the primary drivers being ‘lack of space, lack of institutional relevance and lack of a convincing reason for the acquisition in the first place’.

6.5 Co-operation, collaboration and competition. The requirements for an HEI both to demonstrate distinctiveness and to support collaborative working with others can be a source of tension. ‘Distinctiveness’ is an element of many SCA policies:

- ‘The Library Services 2025 vision statement highlights the importance of ‘unique and distinctive’ material as part of the offer to attract new students’

¹¹ TNA Deaccessioning and disposal: Guidance for archive services. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/Deaccessioning-and-disposal-guide.pdf>

- 'We aim to collect distinctive material that has a resonance with the University's past, present and future. This is generally at a higher level than thinking about the specifics of current strategy'
- 'Unique and distinctive collections contribute to the reputation of a university. They might support the recruitment of staff and students, research projects, contribute to the student experience'

While 'distinctiveness' encourages a competitive element many SCAs are also involved in collaborative projects: collaboration is still seen as a key professional duty:

- 'There is a temptation, in the current commercialism of higher education, to follow university management in seeing other comparable institutions as rivals. But we still work within a professional context in which we learn from, collaborate with, and support rare books, special collections, and archive departments in other Universities, and have similar relationships with museums, archives, and galleries. We are also distinct from the university to which we belong, in having a duty towards the collections we hold that comes before our duty to the institution and its current policies.'

Issues of both collaboration and competition arise in relation to SCAs' collecting activities, prompting discussion as to how both imperatives can be negotiated. It was commented that it was possible to be collaborative and open about a collections development policy, as this set out what would be collected at a headline level (and also what would not be collected):

- 'However, a collections development plan has to be internal, as (within the bounds of ethical practice and in awareness of others' policies) you might be competing for an item or collection, whether by purchase or donation. And as such, organisations need to recognise that this is an environment in which people are competing to gain resources.'

A collaborative approach remains important to many. While collecting policies have been developed jointly with internal library or other services (45%), some (17%) have policies of collaboration with other collecting institutions. This is often informal with SCAs collaborating with:

- Local and regional archives and others with similar collecting responsibilities: e.g. Hull with LSE and Warwick; Leeds with Feminist Archive North and Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society
- Interest groups to share awareness of collecting remits and good practice: Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts, the Religious Archives Group, Association of Performing Arts Collections
- Regional collaborations: Universities Museum Group, North West Academic Libraries, Northern Collaboration, Travelling Exhibitions Group; Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum and local networks such as Greater Manchester Archivists' Group, Liverpool Libraries Together; Durham and NE Cultural Partnerships

Though these were all positive collaborations, some respondents would welcome more formal arrangements:

- 'We would benefit from more formal mechanisms for collaboration, and wider dissemination of collecting policies amongst special collections libraries and archives'

All participants of the in-depth interviews strongly support and were, to some degree, dependent on collaboration.

'Working in Wales is a pleasure: there is genuine collaboration. We collaborate closely with the National Library of Wales; the Welsh Government through Museums, Archives and Libraries Division; with WHELF and with other universities in Wales on a range of projects.' – Cardiff University

Culture Durham aims to be the 'partner of choice, a gateway to cultural engagement and the broker and manager of relationships'. Partners include the County Council, Durham Light Infantry, Bowes Museum, Auckland Castle and others.

Collecting approaches and behaviours: next steps

- **Means to develop formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration, together with support in negotiating the tensions between competitive and collaborative approaches, would assist the HEI collecting community**

- **Exploration of methodologies for undertaking significance assessment, proactive deaccessioning and fundraising (when speed is required) would support SCA collecting practices**

7. Supporting the Institutional Mission

A core aspect of this research was to test the degree to which UDCs, whether in a SCA or other institutional setting were generated and maintained to support the institutional objectives identified by survey respondents. Issues related to:

- Supporting institutional mission, aims and objectives
- The relationship between academic departments and the library-based SCA
- Professional curatorial imperatives and the changing aims and needs of the institution

7.1 Supporting institutional mission, aims and objectives

Respondents were invited to identify priorities for collecting:

Why you collect what you collect	%
a) There is an established collecting tradition that does not change	80
b) We collect to support our institution's research programme	74
c) We collect to support our institution's teaching programme	64
d) We collect to support our institution's learning programme	55
e) We collect to support other institutional objectives	62

Table 1 Collecting drivers

Table 1 indicates the collecting priorities of SCAs in relation to core institutional objectives.

a) Institutions of longstanding acknowledge that tradition continues to play an important part in their collecting, but recognise the need for more focused strategic priorities:

- 'An established reputation is core to our work.'
- 'We collect records with long-term value and usefulness, selected for permanent preservation that act as the corporate memory of institutions and businesses and/or as testament of individual experience.'

b) Whether or not the Research Excellence Framework (REF) was referred to by name most SCAs collect specifically to support research and the research impact agenda:

- 'Drama archives collected to support a/the new Department of Theatre, Film and Television; social welfare archives collected to support research in History and Social Policy; environment archives to support research in Biology and Environment.'
- 'A modern literary archive for its research potential within English and American Studies; print material in Early Modern Studies, e.g. magic and witchcraft, because of interest from researchers in History.'
- 'Developing performing arts collections in line with the newly-established Research Centre for Popular and Comic Performance within the School of Arts.'
- 'Archaeological collecting directly links to the specialisms e.g. osteology of our Archaeological Sciences Department.'

Most university research strategies are expressed in quite general terms. However, 33% have a strategy that refers to specific research subject areas:

- 'Current strategy emphasises business, science and technology: the Archives have important holdings on the History of Science.'
- 'Totally - both the organisation and the archive service are focussed on education as a subject.'
- 'The university has recently restructured its research themes and is in the process of examining the relationship between these and our collecting. We collect across all 5 themes: environment, food, health, heritage and creativity, prosperity and resilience.'

Not all are able to support research in all areas and few are able to fund collections sought by academics:

- 'Our archives are not comprehensive in that they don't support all areas of teaching and learning – subjects most supported are those within the Faculty of Arts and Social Science. We did look at developing archives to align with all 12 of our

Research Centres but it has not been possible for example in Science and Engineering, Health and Social Science, and Contemporary Art.’

Others note that research areas are so broad that current and intended holdings are almost certain to be relevant. One issue is where collections represent previous rather than current active research themes and how these should be managed:

- ‘It is almost impossible to meet research needs which are constantly changing and developing. We have a relatively “focused” collecting policy which is now academically “unfashionable” but we cannot suddenly stop collecting in this area. Archives cannot react quickly or change policies in this way and must therefore find better ways to support research and institutional needs through more “agile” discovery mechanisms and content description.’

And

- ‘There is a level of care needed here, since too close alignment to a time-limited strategy could lead to pressure to deaccession archives - the Women's Library is a good and spectacular recent example. But it's a constant problem, as archives acquired for a particular purpose might be seen as dead once the researcher associated with that purpose leaves.’

Contrasting statements highlight different institutional approaches:

- ‘Research use is given the highest priority and the collections will change over time to reflect current research interests.’
- ‘The other way round. People look for research opportunities in the collections.’
- ‘We do support our institution's research programme, but that is not the only reason for collecting - we have in mind that our collection strengths have a longer life than institutional research programmes.’

In general, the in-depth interviews were selected to reflect a range of research drivers and approaches. While some e.g. Durham and Liverpool John Moores universities consider their HEIs to be research intensive and research led, Kingston University’s emphasis is different.

'The culture is not competitive in the sense that building a research collection is a priority. Our focus is on teaching and learning which is pragmatic and research-informed rather than research led.' – Kingston University

c) A majority collect to support teaching. Some use such collected material in providing induction and training sessions for students. Others use it to support teaching, noting that although teaching did not drive acquisition, collections would be acquired with teaching in mind, often in consultation with academics:

- 'We are heavily involved in direct teaching within the Drama Department and on a module within History of Art.'
- 'The Mary Hamilton Papers (blue-stocking archive) is used extensively in undergraduate and MA teaching across disciplines, e.g. Linguistics and English Language, History, English and American Studies.'
- 'Undergraduates use the Barry Hines Archive as part of module "Imagining the North": access to original materials greatly enhances their enthusiasm, interest and understanding.'
- 'Foundations of British Sociology archive, rare books and medieval charters are regularly used in teaching. We develop the Local Collection in support of teaching - our new Liberal Arts programme will make greater use of our collections.'

For some institutions, non-traditional archives can be used creatively in teaching.

Bristol Theatre Collection found that the acquisition of the object-rich Live Art Archive in 2005 had 'a transformative effect on teaching e.g. in the history of art, modern foreign languages and through exhibitions: it has been a huge profile raiser.'

d) Just over half collect to support learning; however, many commented that as learning and teaching are so closely integrated it was hard to separate the two. One noted 'Teaching and learning aren't separated from research, as the developing York Pedagogy shows'.

Others accept collections for working on by student volunteers or for use in teaching research skills, in dissertations and projects; or as a 'handling' collection derived from duplicates and de-accessioned material.

e) Other institutional objectives are also supported by two thirds of respondents.

Other institutional objectives supported	%
Local/regional objectives	81
Partnerships and collaboration	69
Widening participation/inclusion	50
Internationalisation	46
Innovation	39
Recruitment of best staff and students	39
Knowledge exchange	31

Table 2 Other institutional collecting objectives

Local community engagement includes events such as a Great War Bake Off, Archives Alive, Open House; annual outreach tents at local fairs, and welcoming the local community into the library for exhibitions; access to local/family history collections, and help with local heritage and regeneration projects; open days, visits to schools, with children working on collections.

'There was nothing in 2003. So we had to start with engagement and promotion – the infrastructure came later. And we still walk the streets during local events and festivals, keeping in touch, seeing what is going on, making sure we can document where we can.' - Liverpool John Moores University

Partnerships include involvement in collaborative bids; ongoing collaborative partnerships with depositors, local institutions, and external partners including national organisations; with other organisations to digitise and exhibit material; accepting records as part of Heritage Lottery Fund partnership projects with local organisations.

Internationalisation includes welcoming international researchers, holding internationally important collections, working with international partners; contributing to international films and exhibitions; international conference participation; working with marketing and alumni offices to build recruitment.

7.2 The relationship between academic departments and the library-based SCA

The nature of the relationship between the academic departments and 'professional' library and archive services impacts directly on collecting ambitions and activities. In general, the more direct the links between the two the easier it is to work collaboratively. In one or two instances, where links between academic departments and the Library, Special Collections and Archives are not close, the latter expressed slight feelings of isolation or distance.

The in-depth interview research identified several models of links between academic departments and the Library, Special Collections and Archives:

- **When a collection is located in an academic department access to academics is immediate e.g. through a Faculty Board or Academic Champion (Bristol TC)**
- **Where there is a recognised body on which academics sit, such as Acquisitions and Disposal panels or the Special Collections Strategy Group, these provide useful arenas for influence (Durham, Liverpool John Moores University).**
- **Where Subject Librarians sit on academic Faculty Boards, Research and Learning and Teaching Committees. These may seem to be at slightly greater arm's length but are useful conduits for SCAs (Bradford, Kingston)**

'There is an Information Specialist for each of the 5 faculties. These sit on the Research Committee for each faculty. Subject Librarians are well informed about the Archives, where they take turns to supervise.' - Kingston University

7.3 Professional curatorial imperatives and the changing aims and needs of the institution

The role of the professional archivist to support the curation, promotion and preservation of their collections for the long term is sometimes seen to conflict with the shorter term aims of HEIs, especially where they are tied to government, research council and other time-limited objectives: the Research Excellence Framework (REF), Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Research Council Grand and Global Challenges are seen as examples of these. This was expressed typically:

- 'When we take part in institutional strategy-making, and align ourselves with institutional policies, we are invited to look no more than three to five years ahead. When we plan our collection-building, we often work with material that is five times older than the institution to which it belongs, and we never look less than a hundred years ahead. While striving always to accommodate the needs of our parent body, we have to accept that its current drivers will endure for no more than a fraction of the lifetime of the material to which we devote our professional lives.'
- 'The problem is that the landscape is so turbulent. Collecting is a slow and long-term activity (certainly if you are not in the purchasing game), while universities are constantly responding to these changes. It is difficult to align with the specifics, easier to align more generally with mission.'
- 'All archivists must face the challenge of their institutional and broader priorities being misaligned from time to time. The approach of [this University] is an enlightened one - we are rarely put under pressure to stretch our collecting areas for short-term reasons and there is strong support for the sensible application of existing policies, and for holding to a long-term collecting vision.'

The in-depth interviews illustrate the improving relationship and interaction between academic drivers and professional curation functions. Academics increasingly understand the professional agenda.

The Head of English at Durham University said the most exciting thing was seeing how by using archives from Archives and Special Collections seven-year-olds were engaging with his research topic, masculinity in Victorian England

8. Ambitions, Opportunities, Challenges

Contributors to the in-depth interviews, survey and DCDC16 workshop identified a number of opportunities for development. In addition, they considered current challenges together with the nature of potential support which might help to address these.

Summary of ambitions and opportunities

Profile raising:

- Using increasing competition between universities to gain greater awareness of senior managers to develop opportunities within the SCA to benefit the institution
- Developing a reputation as a strategically managed and trusted professional department to consolidate a position
- Taking advantage of the increasing interest being shown in primary sources, and in archives as objects of material culture that inspire and engage, when developing initiatives and attracting high level collections and attention
- Ensuring that the SCA is made physically present and highly visible (through e.g. exhibitions) especially when new buildings and premises are in development
- Undertaking Archive Service Accreditation while validating policies, systems and processes will raise the service's profile and can be used to publicise the service both across the university and in peer and other communities

'Accolade for Archives. Archive Accreditation: A first for Special Collections! Bradford University was the first English university to achieve Accreditation. This is a great achievement for a university which until 2000 had no professional special collections staffing at all. It reflects not only the hard work of the Special Collections staff, but of colleagues throughout the library and the university.' (University website)

Future collecting:

- More focused and collaborative collecting, resulting in acquiring more relevant collections, enabling the development of specific subject themes that respond to institutional requirements and broaden the user base
- Being prepared to step in when funding cuts elsewhere reduce the capacity of other services (e.g. local authority, businesses and third sector) to acquire and

process collections: potentially productive partnerships can result, as can more holistic collecting approaches

- Establishing dependable means of funding such as a development fund or endowment that can go beyond year-on-year and project bidding and improve sustainable collecting

Digital data:

- Digitisation and digital delivery and discovery have widened the national and international reach of collections and have the potential to enable more comprehensive and collaborative collecting, building links with new depositors and improving our reputation as digital experts
- Increasing the capacity for effective digital curation and preservation, acquiring born digital records and developing digital systems and services would fulfil a growing demand
- Developing capacity for enabling digital humanities research and provide content to support this agenda can lead to important collaborative opportunities
- Universities understand the need for experts and will support the development of digital skills and best practice. Where resources are limited, posts in archives teams can be re-purposed to support the digital agenda, and IT department expertise should be sought in support

Research and research data:

- Growing inter- and multi-disciplinary research is increasingly using a wide variety of archives and special collections in innovative ways. Increasingly active research communities understand both the benefits of collecting and the resource implications: UDCs should build on this interest
- The realignment of research themes through mapping research interests against holdings would provide more focused provision. Increasing value is being placed on the physicality of archives and special collections; more joint research funding bids may provide opportunities
- Closer collaboration is needed with regard to the assessment and permanent retention of important research data including making it clear that these are archives too, part of a records management portfolio

Teaching:

- The Higher Education and Research Bill and the advent of the Teaching Excellence Framework are bringing opportunities to contribute to teaching in new ways that can increase interest in archive use and highlight the importance of UDCs for teaching purposes. However, caution was expressed as to whether the Bill would inhibit teaching where undertaken by vocational experts without a teaching qualification
- Supporting new courses and keeping abreast of innovations in teaching and learning and in digital applications may offer opportunities for UDCs and potential for developing funding

Collaboration and engagement:

- Collaboration is central to future plans, as is being more networked and proactive, and will nurture collaborative collecting approaches both at the institutional level and with regard to the wider archives and special collections community
- New opportunities for information sharing and dissemination about collections are sought, and the development of networks (e.g. through TNA initiatives) is valuable
- Collaboration is planned, e.g. with the creative and heritage industries, to explore new funding channels
- Developing research, teaching and audience (including public) engagement skills as powerful tools for demonstrating the value of collections and the service
- Key anniversaries provide good opportunities for engagement, highlight collections and raise awareness
- Maintaining relationships with donors ensures the consolidation of existing and the acquisition of new archives, and is a key form of engagement

Internal systems and processes:

- Maintaining a clear but collaborative identity between SCAs and institutional archives, and developing strong links to departments are important if services are to develop
- Developing robust records management procedures with administrative officers, including regular and assured transfer of official records, is important in guaranteeing the institutional archive

- Initiating systems for the ingest of born digital material is a key requirement
- Assuring that sound appraisal principles are applied is necessary for underpinning collecting activity, guaranteeing the continuity of collecting strengths and allowing identification of potential new collecting areas

Summary of challenges

Resources:

- A lack of physical space is inhibiting collecting activity for a large number
- Budgets, funding uncertainty and resources generally and the effect on staffing, accessioning and cataloguing are key concerns
- Lack of resources is made more acute when responsibility for other activities e.g. records management, Freedom of Information, Data Protection, image management and research data management is included

Bradford and LJMU say it is difficult to be strategic and sustainable when annual internal bidding is for funding for a year only. External funding may be slightly longer term but is essentially project-based.

Digitisation, digital preservation and born-digital records:

- The management of all types of digital data (born digital, big data, email and social media, and research data curation) is a huge challenge for many
- Managing digital assets is made harder by the lack of recognition by record creators that digital material should be identified as part of the archive
- Challenges of managing digital data is exacerbated where a university is not joined-up internally, creating difficulties when attempting to connect the people needing to work together on digital preservation and born digital issues in a silo-based environment
- A shortage of digital skills is a core issue for many, and a lack of resource inhibits the development of digital services
- The lack of an experienced research community using born digital material (except in the area of Digital Humanities) to consult with in regard to developing a research resource is a disadvantage

Institutional challenges:

- Managing the tension between professional ethics/long-term needs of collections and the aspirations of the institution where these are shorter term can be difficult
- Requirements to act collaboratively while acknowledging the sometimes competitive nature of HEIs is an issue at times
- Negotiating the tension between collecting policies and academic research collecting priorities can be a source of pressure
- Competition from abroad for materials falling within UK remit, the unpredictability of the market and the effect of changing research trends can all impact on collections
- Increasing demands and the need to manage expectations of what the SCA can deliver is a challenge, for example in terms of what collections are acquired
- Enthusiasm for acquiring new collections is tempered where there is uncertainty that sufficient resources are in place for their maintenance and to provide access
- The Brexit effect may have implications in relation to the European Data Protection Regulation; and in relation to the potential loss of EU student income

9. The wish list

Those responding to the survey, in-depth interviews and DCDC16 workshop identified development areas that they would like RLUK and TNA to consider supporting as 'next steps'.

Better advocacy. The ability to influence, persuade and advocate generally, whether with senior university managers and academics, with funding bodies, government or other professionals, is seen as a key tool in making a case, bidding for resources and enabling strategic and directed collecting.

'RLUK has a key role to play. It is an influential advocate that provides direction and works with research libraries in the UK. It is essential that role continues to exist and evolves over the next few years.'

Information sharing. The benefits of information sharing are recognised by the majority of contributors. They seek to share information (and find guidance) about:

- Collecting strategies and policies as an important step in developing the national distributed collection and strategic cross-sectoral collecting. This might be facilitated via a database of collecting policies and/or directory of subject areas and/or a mapping of the geographically-focused collections across the UK. Some would like to be able to key word search across collecting policies
- How existing collection strengths, collecting activity and research specialisms connect in 'a triangle of constantly shifting proportions'
- Relocating deaccessioned collections
- Managing born-digital records and other areas of collecting expertise
- Inter- and multi-disciplinary research and how archives and special collections are being used in innovative ways
- Guidance from national bodies with regard to more integrated collection description and sharing (e.g. through Discovery); contributions to *Find an Archive* or annual *Accessions to Repositories* might support this¹²

'The question of how existing collection strengths, collecting activity and research specialisms link or align is of interest to all HEIs. The link really applies at a national (or even international) level - all archives somehow help research somewhere - but activity is carried on at institutional level - so has to meet institutional objectives. HEIs need to share a vision of the totality of archives that they collect - for preservation and research.'

Collaboration. Collaboration is seen as strongly linked to information sharing:

- Many seek collaboration with other HEIs and across the archive sector as a whole, but acknowledge that collaborative collecting will inevitably be dependent on the availability of resources
- Collaboration in collecting tends to focus on co-ordinating *actually-existing* policies between repositories; but there also needs to be capacity for collective action between repositories (and their users) to research new areas of collecting

¹² The National Archives. <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>;
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/>

because there are many contemporary themes and subject areas which do not have adequate provision for a future archival record

- Many commended existing collaborations (e.g. GLAM) as providing good models for further development, although querying whether such groups are scalable

Access to resources:

- While direct solutions may not be available, more funding opportunities for acquisition, cataloguing, conservation and digitisation would be welcomed
- Emergency fundraising and dealing with the auction side of collection purchase is a problem for some
- Resources are needed if staff are to undertake proactive collecting work and cataloguing of the resulting new archives

Skills:

- Many expressed a need for digital skills, as well as skills in both internal and external advocacy

10. Conclusion and Next Steps

This research has examined the collecting drivers for archival collections within a cross-section of diverse HEIs with Unique and Distinctive Collections (UDCs), and the degree to which these drivers align with institutional missions, and contemporary research and learning environments. It has found robust evidence of what SCAs collect, what drives them to do so, what policies assist their functions and how they plan to develop these. Their collecting approaches and ambitions are clear.

The UDC and SCA communities have been invariably supportive in providing the data needed to fulfil this research, and have gone to great lengths in doing so. They have supplied useful evidence upon which RLUK and TNA can develop future activities.

Many things have been learned. From the most ancient university to the newest, remarkable material is held in UDCs. While most SCAs describe their holdings in collection statements there is no strategic view of what is collected by which HEI across the UK or where the gaps and vulnerabilities lie.

Many UDCs proactively develop their collections although, for others, while there is a wish to do so the resources are not always available. There is good awareness of gaps and risks in collections, especially in relation to digital collecting.

Policies supporting collecting are generally in place: the 59% with collection development policies are working proactively to enhance collections and focus on identified priorities. Where UDCs have limited access to funds to purchase collections, the process can be complex and dependent on speed of response for success. Managing collections using professional methodologies such as assessing for significance and pro-active de-accessioning are not yet widely used.

Collections are often acquired in order to satisfy research, teaching, learning and engagement needs, although for many these needs are catered for from existing collections. Some note that it is difficult to cater for every research need. Many provide examples of innovative use of collections in response to such institutional objectives: more examples are provided in the arts and humanities than the sciences. Other more local objectives, such as civic engagement, partnerships and collaboration, and internationalisation are also supported.

Where structures and processes exist to support the collecting function (such as panels or groups) these can help identify effective institutional levers and assist strategic decision-making with regards to collecting. The more robust the links between the professional library and SCA staff with academic departments, the more productive the relationship.

Some UDCs feel a tension between their professional commitment to the long-term needs of collections and shorter term government and institutional objectives. Many have learned how to be agile in dealing with this agenda. While identifying that collaboration is a key part of their work, they recognise that they may occasionally need to take a competitive stance to support institutional requirements.

SCAs and others holding UDCs operate most effectively in developing collections when:

- Direct access and the opportunity to contribute to HEI policy, aims and objectives enables the SCA to respond effectively and appropriately

- Robust and regular links between the UDC and the academic environment are in place so that proactive and relevant research, teaching, learning and engagement activities can be developed
- Able to pursue the HEI's 'unique and distinctive' requirement while maintaining genuine external collaboration with professional colleagues and in partnerships
- Capable of balancing the long-term requirements and curatorial responsibilities to collections with the agility to respond proactively to shorter term institutional requirements

Each section of the report concludes with a range of 'next steps' to be considered by RLUK and TNA with the HEIs themselves. These, together with the Wish List from contributors are presented for further consideration.

Findings from the research, including the contributors' 'wish list' suggest the following 'next steps':

1. The development by SCAs of stated **aims and objectives** (where these do not exist) would improve their planning and management of the service.
2. The development of **Key Performance Indicators** in relation to collection development might assist SCAs to focus on service delivery and measurement of outcomes in support of institutional requirements.
3. A **collection development policy** (in addition to a Collection Policy) is an important tool of pro-active collections management and might be developed by all SCAs.
4. A method for **sharing information** about collection policies, subject areas collected across HEIs, and inter- and multi-disciplinary research trends might be considered in order to assist with strategic planning, developing the national distributed collection, the re-location of collections and the prevention of overlaps.
5. Further research into **vulnerable subject areas** not currently robustly collected, would further support the development of the national distributed collection.
6. Establishing the **nature and extent of the risk of loss of digital records** and the potential impact both on the institutional record and wider collections could be a first step to further activity in this area.

7. Means to develop **formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration** and guidance in negotiating the tensions between competitive and collaborative approaches would assist the HEI collecting community.
8. Exploration of **methodologies for undertaking significance assessment, proactive deaccessioning and fundraising** (especially when speed is required) would support SCA collecting practices.
9. The development of **advocacy skills** (e.g. to gain ambassadors/champions internally and externally) with government, funding bodies, institutional managers and across the profession would help address issues between professional and institutional agenda and between collaborative and competitive tensions.
10. The development and enhancement of **skills for managing born-digital and digitised material** including research data are much needed in order to manage growing requirements in these areas.

This report can be used as:

- A resource to **support the further development of programmes** that align with RLUK and TNA current agenda
- A **basis of shared information** which can inform HEIs about wider collecting practices and support future planning, collaboration and use of their collections
- A means to **enhance the visibility** of HEI unique and distinctive collections in Special Collections and Archives to the wider academic and archival communities to encourage further collaboration and partnership
- Evidence of the **benefits and constraints** accruing from aligning collecting drivers with strategic policy objectives to inform future initiatives
- A **means of advocacy for and dissemination of information** about the contribution that Special Collections and Archives with UDCs make to institutional research, teaching, learning and wider community objectives

Caroline Williams, Independent Archival Consultant

caroline@cmwilliams.org.uk

November 2016

Appendix 1

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this survey is to investigate the collecting policies and practices of archives and special collections in HEIs and how these correspond with institutional drivers in the national research environment. The survey contains 7 sections comprising 65 questions. The sections are:

- A. Identity and context: Your institution and governance
- B. Your institution's mission, aims and objectives
- C. Your collections
- D. Your collecting policies
- E. Your collecting drivers: why you collect what you collect
- F. Your collecting approach
- G. Your challenges – current/future

A. Identity and context: Your institution and governance

1. Name of HEI
2. Name of Special Collections/Archives/Library
3. Name/title of person completing survey
4. Name/title of other relevant stakeholders consulted when completing survey
5. [text box]
6. Date of foundation/incorporation of your HEI
7. Type of foundation
 - Ancient
 - Civic/Redbrick 19th century
 - Redbrick 1900-1960
 - 1960s 'plate glass'
 - 'New' 1980s-90s (former polytechnic/FE/Teacher Training)
 - London College
 - HE College offering degrees
 - Other [Please comment]
8. When did your HEI start collecting archives and special collections?

B. Your institution's mission, aims and objectives

9. Which of the following are identified as a key aim of your institution? Excellence in
- Research
 - Teaching
 - Learning
 - Student experience
 - None of these
 - Don't know/ N/A
 - Other [please specify]
10. Are any other specific aims/objectives prioritised? For example
- Engagement with local/regional community
 - Partnerships and collaboration
 - Knowledge exchange
 - Internationalisation
 - Widening participation/inclusion
 - Innovation
 - Recruitment of best staff/students
 - Physical/digital infrastructure
 - None of these
 - Don't know/ N/A
 - Other (please specify)
11. Does your Special Collections/Archives/Library have specific aims and objectives?
12. If Yes please state the aims and objectives of your Special Collections/Archives/Library
13. Does your service take part in an annual business planning cycle?
14. Do you have to comply with key performance indicators (kpis)?
15. If you have kpis do any of these relate to your collecting function? If Yes, please describe
16. How is your Archives and Special Collections service viewed by your institution?
- As its institutional memory

- As a resource for research
 - As a resource for teaching
 - For attracting international researchers or staff or students
 - To stimulate a distinctive profile
 - To contribute to its reputation
 - Other [please describe]
17. How would you describe your approach to collecting?
- Proactive
 - Passive/Reactive
 - Collaborative

Please comment on the reasons for this response

18. [**comments on this section**]

C. Your collections

19. What main areas do your current collections comprise (including closed and areas no longer collected) (List up to 10 main areas only)
20. Do you currently collect records of and relating to the history of the institution, staff and alumni?
21. Do you currently collect material relating to specific institutional research themes/subjects/individuals/specialisms? If Yes, please list themes/subjects/individuals/specialisms
22. Do you collect material relating to science, engineering or medical subjects?
23. Is the content of collections distributed across a range of contexts and/or locations?
- In a Special Collections (or other) section of the library
 - In institutional archives and records management service
 - In an Institutional Repository
 - In individual faculties
 - Elsewhere: please specify
24. In what format (hardcopy/digital) are collections held in any/each of these contexts?
25. Are there linked collection development policies for this distributed material? [Please comment]

26. Are you aware of gaps in the coverage of your collections? Please describe specific gaps
27. Are you aware of records at risk which fall within the area of your collecting policy or in a closely related area but that you are unable to collect? Please comment on what these comprise
28. Do you undertake significance assessments? (i.e. of the historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values that collections might have for past, present and future generations?).
29. Do you deaccession material previously acquired? If Yes, please comment in what circumstances.
30. How would you like collecting in your institution to develop and why?
31. [text box for **comments on this section**]

D. Your collecting policies

32. Do you have a collections/acquisitions policy (i.e. that defines the outer boundary of what you would/would not accept?) If Yes, please provide a link
33. Do you have a collections development policy? (i.e. that sets out what you are more actively seeking to acquire) If Yes, please provide a link
 - a. (If you have both which are combined in a single document please indicate Y to both)
34. Are collecting policies developed jointly with library or other services? [Please comment]
35. Do you have any policies of collaboration (about collecting) with other collecting institutions?
 - b. [Please describe]
36. Have you materially changed your collection development policy in the last 10 years?
37. If Yes, what prompted you to change the policy?
 - Change of governance
 - New research strand within the university
 - Key donation from alumni or similar
 - Records at risk
 - Targeted approach to develop distinctive collections
 - Other

38. If you have changed your collection development policy in the last 10 years please describe the practical effect of this on your collections (e.g. subsequent accessions reflect a new theme etc.)
39. Are you considering changing your collection development policy or strategy in future?
40. If Yes what is prompting you to do this?
 - Considering new areas of collecting where there is gap in the market
 - Acquisition of funding
 - Records at risk
 - New research area, or more proactive
 - Other
41. [*text box for **comments on this section***]

E Your collecting drivers: why you collect what you collect

What factors prompt you to collect the material outlined in your collection/ collection development policy and described in C above?

42. There is an established collecting tradition that does not generally change [Please comment]
43. We collect to support our institution's research programme [Please give examples of how your collecting specifically supports research]
44. 44. Does your university research strategy refer to specific research subject areas? [If Y to what extent do your collections and collection policies reflect these research areas? Please comment]
45. We collect to support our institution's teaching programme. Please give examples.
46. We collect to support our institution's learning programme. Please give examples.
47. We collect to support other specific institutional objectives (outlined in B above) (i.e. beyond supporting university's research, teaching, learning etc.)
 - Engagement with local/regional community
 - Partnerships and collaboration
 - Knowledge exchange
 - Internationalisation

- Widening participation/inclusion
- Innovation
- Recruitment of best staff/students
- Physical/digital infrastructure
- Other? Please specify:
- Don't know or N/A

Please describe the nature of the support you provide for any objective that you have ticked

48. We don't collect for any of these reasons [Please comment]
49. We collect for other reasons [Please describe]
50. How else might your collections support explicitly institutional objectives?
51. [text box for **comments on this section**]

F. Your collecting approach

52. On what conditions of agreement do you accept material?
- Deposit on loan
 - Gift
 - Purchase
53. If you purchase material, what are your decision-making criteria for purchase?
54. How does availability (or not) of funds affect your collecting activity?
55. Are you approached to take material that is outside your policy, but then mediate to place elsewhere?
56. Have you accepted material outside your policy in the past 2 years? Please comment.
57. Would you accept such material in the future? If Yes, under what circumstances?
58. To what extent are you aware of other institutions collecting in the same area?
59. To what extent do you collaborate or consult with others collecting in the same area?
60. [text box for **comments on this section**]

G. The future

61. What challenges are you currently facing/anticipate during the next 5 years? (e.g. skills, space, digital format, financial and other resources)

62. What opportunities do you anticipate in your collecting environment during the next five years?
63. What would help you? (e.g. information sharing, collaborative collecting, advocacy, etc.)
64. Do you have any other comments you would like to add about any aspect of this survey? We are particularly interested in how collecting drivers align with changing institutional and research drivers
65. Would you be willing to act as a case study for more detailed investigation into HEI collecting drivers, policies and practices?

Appendix 2

HEIS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SURVEY

1. Bath University
2. Bradford University
3. Bristol University
4. Bristol University: Theatre Collection
5. Brunel University
6. Cambridge University: Churchill College
7. Cardiff University
8. Dundee University
9. Durham University
10. Essex University
11. Huddersfield University: Heritage Quay
12. Hull University
13. Keele University
14. Kent University
15. Kingston University
16. Leeds University
17. Liverpool John Moores University
18. Liverpool University
19. London: King's College
20. London: Imperial College
21. London: School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
22. London South Bank University
23. London University: Senate House Library
24. Loughborough University
25. Manchester Metropolitan University
26. Manchester University
27. Nottingham Trent University
28. Nottingham University
29. Oxford Brookes University
30. Oxford University Bodleian Library
31. Oxford University St John's College
32. Plymouth St Mark and St John
33. Reading University
34. Royal College of Art
35. Royal Northern College of Music
36. Sheffield University: National Fairground Archive
37. Sheffield University: Special Collections and Archive
38. Southampton University
39. Swansea University
40. University College London: Institute of Education
41. Warwick University
42. York University

Appendix 3**ANALYSIS OF TOPICS COLLECTED BY HEIS¹³**

Topics	HEIs collecting (out of 82 submitting)	%
1. Literary history	58	71
2. Women's history	56	68
3. Education	49	60
4. Cinema, drama, performing arts	43	52
5. Business	42	51
6. Politics	39	48
7. Health and medicine	35	43
8. Music	35	43
9. Publishing	34	41
10. Art	31	38
11. Military	31	38
12. Religion	30	37
13. Science	29	35
14. Imperial history	21	26
15. Natural history	20	24
16. Architecture	20	24
17. Labour movement	19	23
18. Sport	19	23
19. London	19	23
20. WW1	19	23
21. Legal history	18	22
22. Maritime	15	18
23. Building & Construction	14	17
24. Transport	13	16
25. Scottish history	13	16

¹³ TNA Accessions to Repositories 2011-15 inclusive

26. Pharmacy chemistry	10	12
27. Furniture/interior design	8	10
28. Jewish	8	10
29. Medieval & early modern	8	10
30. Gardening	6	7
31. Irish history	6	7
32. Roman Cath	6	7
33. Welsh history	5	6
34. Manorial	4	5
35. Black history	4	5
36. Brewing	3	4
37. Disability	2	2
38. LGBT	2	2