



LIBRARY SERVICES CONTENT FRAMEWORK AND INFORMATION RESOURCES POLICY

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Library Services Content Framework and Information Resources Policy

Library Services Content Framework

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

User communities. Our core user communities are the students and staff of the University, and the Content Framework 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 Faculties and their constituent Departments to plan for both their education and research needs.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 policy. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Framework, 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.
- ii. This policy also covers the funding of initiatives that enable Royal Holloway authors to publish Open Access (OA). Such initiatives may also, but not always, involve providing access to content.
- iii. This policy follows the principles outlined in the over-arching Library Content Framework and should be read in conjunction with that framework.
- iv. 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.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- i. Library Services: responsible for developing and managing content and OA initiatives within the scope of the Policy, including managing allocated budgets effectively and liaising with Schools around the provision of required content within the resources available. Final responsibility for acquisition decisions within agreed budgets rests with the Director of Library Services. Library Services will escalate any significant academic and/or financial risks relating to Policy implementation. Under Academic Board's scheme of delegation, University Education Committee and Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee will act as formal consultative and advisory governance routes.
- ii. Executive Deans: overall responsibility for ensuring effective implementation of the Policy within Schools across teaching and research agendas, including ensuring consideration of library requirements in annual budget planning processes.
- 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.
- vi. Course convenors/programme leads/departmental education leads: responsible for ensuring implementation of this Policy across all aspects of taught courses that they are responsible for.
- vii. Module leads: responsible for ensuring implementation of this Policy for all taught modules they are responsible for.

3. Budget

- i. The information resources and OA initiatives 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 or OA initiatives through that process. Library Services does not allocate funds to Schools or Departments according to an algorithm or formula. The advantage of this approach is that it has the flexibility to enable Library Services to optimise the Information Resources Fund to support resources that most align with the principles of the Content Framework and this policy.

4. Selection

- i. Library Services selects content and OA initiatives in line with the principles outlined in the Content Framework, 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, affordable and effectively delivers strategic objectives. In particular, we work in partnership with Senate House Library, University of London, and through national collaborations, including JISC to constrain costs.
- ii. Library Services takes a strategic, evidence-led approach to selection of both education and research content to align collections to current needs. Library Services actively collects evidence and data to better understand user needs, including seeking regular feedback from users to ensure their voices are heard. Library Services consults with Schools to determine priorities, considering 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 independent essays, projects, reports or dissertations. 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:
 - It is expected that every taught module where students are expected to access information resources for their learning should have a reading list.
 - To ensure a consistent student experience, lists must be provided using the University's reading list system. Resources will be purchased based on the reading lists submitted through the reading list system. If no reading list is supplied, or is supplied outside this process, Library Services cannot guarantee that the resources will be purchased.
 - Teaching staff should review their module reading lists for currency and confirm their accuracy at least 12 weeks before the start of the course or in accordance with advertised deadlines.
 - Reading lists should be structured to effectively scaffold student learning and be realistically aligned to the module's pedagogical requirements and learning outcomes. Ensuring pedagogical alignment of reading lists falls within the remit of the Vice Deans of Education and Student Experience.
 - Library Services will prioritise purchasing essential reading, followed by recommended reading as finances allow, to optimise the student experience. In

- cases where resources are unaffordable, Library Services will liaise with the module convenor and/or course leader to identify an alternative.
- Where there is doubt about the legality in copyright law of content hosted online, module convenors may seek the advice of Library Services. Linking to such content does not carry any endorsement by the University of the content hosted by such platforms.
- iv. Module convenors may provide supplementary 'further reading' 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, further 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).
 - v. Content may be acquired for research and knowledge exchange activity, either through Inter-Library Loan or purchase, that supports the University strategy, including, where sustainable, resources which will directly enable growth in external funding and improvement in knowledge exchange metrics.
 - vi. Additional content may be acquired to support the University strategy where the budget allows. 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, as outlined in the Collection Framework.

Content which does not form part of a reading list but which meets these criteria should be requested through [Library Service's Teaching and Engagement team](#). These requests will be considered on a routine basis throughout the academic year where funds are available.
 - vii. 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, Library Services considers not only the relevance of the content, but also resource implications including the costs of access, metadata, storage, digitisation and preservation. Library Services only accepts donations of printed books and journals in limited cases, where they support 'Flagship' collections, as outlined in the Collection Framework. 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 acquires content according to the following principles:
 - Financial sustainability and value for money
 - The feasibility and availability of collaborative provision
 - Digital first
- ii. Library Services seeks to achieve best value and ensure financial sustainability through procurement practices and procurement frameworks. Large resources are generally licensed through nationally negotiated agreements. Library Services

supports acquisition models that offer financial sustainability and value for money. Library Services does not support certain acquisition models. Acquisition models that work on a cost-per-student model and charge on an annual basis, for example e-textbooks, are not financially sustainable and do not represent value for money for the University.

- iii. 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), through access to Senate House Library's digital content, or by referring users to visit other libraries directly.
- iv. Library Services follows a digital-first policy and provides resources in online formats wherever possible and affordable. Digital provision is supplemented by selective provision in physical formats where appropriate. For reading list content, Library Services will set the ratio of students per print book based on the available budget.
 - London campus course leaders and module convenors are responsible for ensuring that the required information resources are available digitally. Library Services can check digital availability of information resources and will provide a single print copy of resources at the Egham campus library. Library Services will not buy print resources to ratio for London-based courses unless the course design sets an expectation that students will spend a period of time at Egham campus.
 - London campus course leaders and module convenors are responsible for outlining any requirement for students to utilise other libraries, e.g. Senate House Library, Wiener Library or to come to Egham campus library. This should be clearly noted in the reading list and communicated to students.
- v. Some online texts may only be available from publishers under unsustainable 'e-textbook' pricing models. For reasons explained in section 5.ii above, Library Services will not support these models. Library Services will support module convenors to find alternative texts and will only provide print access if the book is still required.
- vi. Library Services does not acquire online learning platforms. This is because these are primarily pedagogical tools rather than content. Content required for teaching will be acquired as outlined in this Policy.
- vii. Library Services does not acquire software for University users. Requirements should be discussed with IT Services.
- viii. 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 for resources that are in line with the Content Framework 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.

6. Access and discovery

- i. Library Services' plan is to make content as widely available as possible. Under the Library Regulations, any user permitted to access the Library can access the physical collections. 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. 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.
- iii. Where the University has entered into a 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, are subject to affordability, and may involve extended lead-times.
- iv. Library Services will only seek to provide access to online content for Alumni, the wider scholarly community, and the general public where this is i) permitted within the terms of existing licence agreements, ii) technically possible, and iii) affordable.
- v. Library Services will ensure resources are provided in accessible formats wherever possible and support the provision of alternative formats and access equipment where necessary.
- vi. Library Services will endeavour to provide digital content in a way that is accessible to Royal Holloway staff and students both on and off-campus to support them 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.
- vii. 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 is the University's channel for presenting reading lists to students, and for informing Library Services of resources required for education. The use of this system across all modules ensures a consistent student experience.
- viii. 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](#)).
- ix. Library Services also facilitates access to resources held in other collections and libraries, or available digitally. In particular, Library Services will promote the use of Senate House Library (the central library of the University of London).

7. Review and retention

- i. All content is actively managed to ensure the collection remains aligned with 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, as well as costs for any offsite storage requirements. The Content Framework outlines Library Services' approach to dynamic collection management, and the collection categorization framework used to support this

approach.

- ii. Subscription-based resources, including databases, e-book and e-journal packages and Open Access publishing agreements, will be considered at least annually and/or at point of renewal as to their relevance and value for money. 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. If current and newly requested subscription-based resources are not affordable within the allocated Information Resources Fund, Library Services will consult with Schools to prioritise resources for retention and identify resources for cancellation. The prioritisation of resources will be conducted through the application of the following principles.

Priority will be given to resources that:

- Are critical to the delivery of the University's strategic education and research priorities.
- Demonstrate a high degree of value for money and may be provided via a financially sustainable model of acquisition.
- Cannot be appropriately provided through methods of collaborative provision, such as Inter-Library Loan, digital copies for teaching, availability at Senate House Library or other institutions.
- Provide an excellent user-experience, including accessibility and favourable terms of use.
- Support areas demonstrating the highest level of income generation and/or growth.

Consideration will be given to the potential impact of any proposed cancellations, and Library Services will collaborate with Schools to seek to mitigate any risks posed.

Ensuring a financially equitable distribution between Schools or Departments of any savings required is not a principle guiding this process.

Library Services will undertake to provide data on costs, usage, and other relevant data. Schools and Departments will be required to supply information on relevance, strategic importance, and risk.

- iv. Print content which is no longer in active use or which no longer reflects education and research interests may be withdrawn. Withdrawal decisions will consider the collection categorisation, as outlined in the Content Framework.
- v. 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.
- vi. 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 it is not possible 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](#)
- [Freedom of Speech Code of Practice](#)
[IT Services Policies](#)
- [Library Services Policies webpage](#) (includes Library Regulations, Research Publications Policy, Research Data Management Policy).
- [Procurement Policy](#)

Glossary of some key terms

Content

A catch-all term for such items as books, journals, databases and audio-visual materials that are primarily the outputs of scholarly and artistic endeavour.

Digital first

Providing digital access is prioritised over physical access to content.

E-textbook

A textbook in digital format that is charged on a per student per annum basis. For example, if there are 100 students on a module and the per student cost for the book is £30, then access to the e-textbook for one year would cost £30 x 100 students = £3000. This is an annual fee, and the Library does not own the content. Textbooks offered on this cost-per-student model on an annual basis are not financially sustainable and do not represent value for money for the University.

Online-learning platforms

Sometimes also called e-learning systems or teaching tools. These pedagogical tools are typically provided by publishers and provide learning content, personalised learning and assessments that can be integrated into a Virtual Learning Environment. Whilst content can be provided as part of the package, their primary purpose is to facilitate student engagement and learning.

Open Access

“Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. What makes it possible is the internet and the consent of the author or copyright-holder.” (Suber, 2004)

Open Access (OA) can be delivered in two ways, via OA publication and via OA repositories (Royal Holloway, 2024). Some routes to OA publication involve a cost to the University.

Open Initiatives

A catch-all term encompassing various activities that aim to make content Open Access in a way that is financially sustainable. This is a developing field with a plurality of emerging models. Examples include, ‘read and publish’ journals packages, subscribe to Open, and Open Educational Resources (OERs).

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Version (newest to oldest)	Date of approval	Summary of changes
5	21 October 2025	Reading list management clause refinement, addressing financial and pedagogic requirements as well as student experience. Enhanced acquisition principles.

		<p>Phased transition away from the unsustainable model of E-textbook provision.</p> <p>Enhanced clauses to reflect London campus provision</p> <p>Consolidated principles for review and retention of subscriptions for both research and education.</p>
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 incorporating new principles outlined in overarching Library Content Framework. 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