

Collection Development Policy
Documentary Material
Including Routine Disposal Policy

January 2021

National Art Library

V&A

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1 The National Art Library

1.1 Preface

This iteration of the National Art Library's documentary collecting policy (last revised 2010) was substantially completed just before the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. One year later, the V&A's far-reaching recovery programme and restructure will include a 'root and branch' review of the library, perhaps rendering it obsolete. Furthermore:

- existing aims for increasing online content as well as services will have been accelerated by social change during the pandemic – if resources can be produced, and sustained, to create or purchase access to them (see below, 2.6.3);
- new V&A policy themes have emerged, including equity, decolonisation and sustainability, that challenge responses in terms of library content;
- reference content and services both need reconsideration in relation to the developing multi-site V&A, with V&A East sites coming on stream in 2024/5.

This paper may thus serve as a line in the sand, or a point of departure. *10 March 2021*

1.2 Introduction

The National Art Library (NAL) at the Victoria and Albert Museum is the foremost British research and reference library on art and design and one of the world's top libraries in its field.

In identifying and collecting art and design documentation, literature and online resources, the NAL preserves and promotes research and knowledge for anyone who needs or wants to know about art and the designed world. Within the V&A, the library supports the research, teaching and learning of museum staff and students, including collaborative higher education programmes, especially the V&A / Royal College of Art History of Design.

The definition of 'documentary resources' is comprised in the categories of sections 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 below: published and unpublished resources in any media whose main content is discursive or evidential. (This is not hard and fast: research perspectives can render any publication a primary object.) 90% of the library's acquisition funds are devoted to documentary resources.

As well, the library has responsibility to collect and curate *examples* of the art and design of the book. This curatorial collecting is governed by the V&A's Collections Development Policy, 2019, section 8.1.6, 'The Art and Design of the Book', which should be read in conjunction with the present document for a full understanding of the library's collecting and collections.

The library does not receive publications as of right on legal deposit. Its national significance is in the depth and breadth of its collections and the fact that it is open to all.

1.3 History

Originating in the 1830s as an art school library, by 1852 it had opened up, alongside a nascent museum, 'for the use of students and manufacturers and the consultation of the public', managed by a government department. At South Kensington the institution expanded, and by 1884 the library was installed in the handsome reading rooms that it still occupies.

The museum fostered links between fine and applied arts, intended to improve the design of British products. The library set out to document both subject areas. A comprehensive bibliography of art and design literature was compiled (Pollen, 1870) and over time most of the key historical as well as contemporary titles were acquired.

Thus was formed a world-class foundation for the necessarily more selective collecting of mainly current publications that continues today. In print and manuscript the library holds nearly a million items.

1.4 Change

The NAL's collections are designated heritage assets, generally acquired for permanent retention. Thus they evidence change. For example, the original emphasis on art-historical and technical information supporting contemporary design and manufacture (and improve consumer taste) expanded to embrace the development of art history, and design history as 20th-century academic disciplines in their own right.

The 21st century is characterised by diverse and interdisciplinary intellectual approaches, not least within the V&A. The library, with relatively shrinking resources, aims to maintain consistency in its core subject collecting, and to support complex and frequently shifting research agendas through other services. Conversely, some electronic resources bundle together content on a wide range of subjects, not all of which is intentionally selected.

Print publishing in art subjects continues apace, but the NAL is changing the balance of provision towards digital resources, transforming research for users. Few of these can be meaningfully 'acquired'. The library may not come to embody the history and development of art and design studies for the present era, in the way it does for the previous 150 years.

The library must not fossilise, but maintain relevance to users through modern services and content provision based online. The changing gamut of available resources will be served, and the most valuable and distinctive holdings prioritised for digital delivery. In these ways the NAL will continue to define its identity, as a core part of the V&A and in its own right.

2 Documentary Collecting Policy 2020

2.1 Relation to other libraries

2.1.1 The British Library, universities and museums

The NAL must balance a responsibility to represent current mainstream publishing on art and design, providing a coherent collection that meets readers' expectations, with a focus on less widely available material and not unnecessarily duplicating holdings available elsewhere.

The majority of NAL readers are members of, or have access to academic institution libraries, thus the NAL should maintain a distinctive collection, complementary to art and design collections in the academic sector. Particular attention should be given to identifying relevant items issued abroad, since the British Library collects every UK-published title.

Recent decades have seen increased commitment to public access in other specialist art libraries, including London art museums (though this could change, post-pandemic). While collaborative collecting is not formalised, active professional networks enable libraries to communicate and confer on these matters.

2.1.2 V&A libraries

The V&A contains numerous library collections in addition to the NAL. It is museum policy that all should be discoverable on the same online system, and available to the public, although some are essentially curators' working tools (Bloomfield and Brandes, 1989). Books for reference are available in most study rooms.

Several voluminous documentary libraries in the V&A are managed directly by the NAL, notably the 19th-century Dyce and Forster bequests, mainly literary and historical, and the Royal Photographic Society Library (transferred to the V&A in 2018). The very large Renier collection of children's books (bequeathed 1970s) is a rich source for literature and social history as well as book design and illustration. None of these is added to.

Library and archive materials are central to the V&A's nationally leading Theatre and Performance collections. The NAL avoids duplication in these subject areas.

Most of the V&A's curatorial departments have long-established working libraries, covering Ceramics & Glass, East Asia, Furniture & Woodwork, Metalwork, Middle East, Prints, Drawings & Paintings, South & South East Asia, Sculpture, Textiles and Fashion. The Conservation department also has a working library. They are independently managed but their disposals are offered to the NAL. Over half their holdings are accessible via the NAL Discovery catalogue.

There is duplication across some of these collections; today the NAL may for financial and space reasons prefer not to acquire a second copy of an item already held in another V&A library. Curatorial needs, reader demand and efficiency are always to be taken into account.

Publications out of scope for the NAL but needed for museum research are expected to be acquired by departments. The NAL does obtain additional material for V&A staff on Inter-Library Loan, while through its membership of the M25 consortium they can also gain access to many academic libraries.

2.2 Selecting principles

2.2.1 Level / approach

The aim is to select the most relevant, useful and authoritative works to support specialist research and advanced study. They should contain new research or interpretation or a distinct contemporary perspective. Works which essentially repackage existing information, textual or visual, should not generally be selected (unless as examples of book design).

'Quick reference' titles and basic introductions to established topics are no longer prioritised if the subjects are well-covered and with good information available online.

A range of intellectual approaches is represented, but the emphasis, derived from the museum context, is on scholarship based on the study of material objects, evidence and history. Theoretical debates in design history should be represented however.

The focus is typically on artistic and design aspects and not on functional or technical information, insofar as these can be treated separately.

It must be acknowledged that the library is unable to resource the acquisition of every item which fully meets selection criteria, even if offered for free. A decision not to select a work does not necessarily imply any negative evaluation.

2.2.2 Language

For core subjects, and in relation to V&A collections, works are collected on the basis of their usefulness and the value of text and images, regardless of language. In practice, library materials acquired today are predominantly in English, followed by other European languages (more dominant in earlier holdings) with a significant minority in Asian languages.

English editions are not routinely acquired if the original language edition is already held, unless the content has been significantly revised or updated.

2.2.3 Currency

2.2.3.1

Retrospective acquisitions to fill gaps in the collection are rarely made if the item is readily available elsewhere. Exceptions might include works closely related to the V&A, replacements for missing or damaged items, desiderata that had been unaffordable, works required for display. An important item that may have gone unnoticed, e.g from a non-mainstream source, may be acquired up to 10 years after publication.

Antiquarian or manuscript material of a documentary nature is acquired *exceptionally*, requiring strong justification of value and potential use in the NAL's context, and giving full consideration to other potentially appropriate repositories.

2.2.3.2

A different perspective may pertain in the case of digitised versions of pre-existing resources (which may already be held in print). The cost-benefits of expending purchase funds on (for example) voluminous collections of journals or early printed materials need careful consideration in relation to the digital objective, factoring in potential savings in storage space and staff time as well as relevance and scale of demand.

2.2.4 Number of copies

Only one copy of a publication is normally acquired, apart from publications of the V&A.

2.3 Subjects: core

The core subject areas collected are the decorative and fine arts and design in the Western European and Asian traditions, from medieval to modern times. Ancient and classical art and archaeology, once fundamental to all art history, are well represented in early holdings and not now prioritised.

The geographical range reflects that of the V&A's object collections: Britain, Europe, east Asia, India and south east Asia, the Middle East; with selective expansion latterly into works on art from sub-Saharan Africa and South America. North America also features strongly.

The aim is to maintain a balance of subject coverage, of high quality material, reflecting new knowledge and current debate, useful to readers and complementary to that readily available to them elsewhere. A higher proportion of the available output will be acquired

for subjects that are both core collecting areas for the V&A and typically produce fewer publications, especially Ceramics, Glass, Furniture, Jewellery, Metalwork, Textiles, than for subjects with huge annual outputs, e.g Fashion, Graphic Design, Interiors, Painting, Photography and Contemporary / Modern Art generally.

- Specific relevance to V&A object collections is always a strong criterion.

2.3.1 Architecture

The NAL has solid holdings on architecture, with standard works and some noteworthy historical items. Collecting is very selective, relative to the large quantity published, emphasising works treating the subject in the wider context of art history, reflecting the influence of architecture on artistic movements, ornament and design. For British architects, the RIBA library is recommended. As 'Town planning' was explicitly excluded from earlier collecting policies, the NAL offers relatively minimal support for the V&A's new interest in social housing (pace Robin Hood Gardens acquisition).

2.3.2 Arms & armour

Basic holdings; not actively collected.

2.3.3 Art, craft and design: history and theory

Works with a wider perspective than the individual subjects: chronological, geographical, biographical and thematic treatments of decorative and/or fine arts production, reception and consumption. Coverage, and contents of works held, reflect typical hierarchies of their time, e.g subordinating traditional or folk arts, and cultural products of non-literate peoples and subjugated nations. European 'manners and customs' entailing artefacts, costume and structures are represented (viz. 'festivals'); and South Asia better covered than other cultures. Outsider art is included. Contemporary and post-modern non-media-specific art.

- Encyclopaedic, authoritative and original treatments should be preferred.

2.3.3.1 Ancillary aspects

Include arts policy, administration and education (especially as related to the V&A's history); aesthetics and philosophy selectively, especially writings on art by artists and by culturally influential figures in other fields; art movements, politics and campaigns.

2.3.4 Book arts and design

Very strong holdings. Design aspects of artistic, deluxe and commercial book production, including typography, illustration, illumination, decoration and ornament, bindings and covers, artists' books and book art, children's books, comics. (Historical bibliography and printing history are well covered in other London libraries.) Focus on historical / critical treatments, and key figures / topics. For policy on collecting *examples* of the art and design of the book, see the V&A Collections Development Policy (2019) 8.1.6.

2.3.5 Ceramics

Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary. Craft, 'art', product and architectural applications. Priority subject.

2.3.6 Collecting; provenance; the art market

Very strong holdings (see also 2.5.5, below). Private and institutional collecting; particular attention paid to works related to the history of the V&A and its collections. Works also collected on the history of art crime, notably forgery and the loss of art works through theft, iconoclasm, vandalism and wartime spoliation.

2.3.7 Computer and digital art

Good basic holdings. Prioritising history of computer art since the 1950s, relating to the national collection at the V&A, and building on the Patric Prince Archive. Selective on key developments in subsequent digital art.

2.3.8 Costume / Fashion

Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary; couture, counter-cultural and influential high-street. Priority subject. A strength is non-mainstream, marketing/publicity materials; carefully selective. A focus on fashion and art world links.

2.3.9 Design: process, history and theory

Key names and styles, in bespoke, industrial and product design, with focus on aesthetics and use, taste and consumption; production aspects where appropriate. Design analysed in social history / material culture contexts (as studied on the V&A/Royal College of Art programmes). Including the impact of digital tools on design process. Historically the notion of **Ornament**, essentially surface design, was central.

2.3.10 Drawing

Relevant in aspects of art education and artists' practice, design and illustration; and as a distinct art market. Focus on topics relating to V&A collections.

2.3.11 Furniture & woodwork

Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary key designers and product lines. Priority subject. Includes **musical instruments**, insofar as relevant to V&A objects.

2.3.12 Garden history and design

Basic and some historical works held, but not actively collected (occasional artists excepted e.g Ian Hamilton Finlay).

2.3.13 Glass

Very strong holdings. Art glass; architectural and stained glass; products. Priority subject.

2.3.14 Graphic design / Digital design

Design for print, advertising, branding, packaging; and for digital media. Aiming to be carefully selective, in a copious field of attractive publications aimed to 'inspire' designers. Focus on historical / critical treatments; technical principles; key figures.

2.3.15 Iconography

Essentially a contextual field, for which extensive references are held and new works unlikely to be required, unless with novel content or focus; or treating the subject as a research topic in its own right.

2.3.16 Illustration

Strong holdings in book illustration history (not a large field), and works about artists known as illustrators. Priority subject, for works with substantial historical and critical content. Noteworthy late-19th / early-20th-century manuals for professional illustrators are held. Illustrated books as examples are governed by the curatorial policy.

2.3.17 Interior design

Strong holdings. Priority subject, but selective: key developments or individuals, and historical / critical emphasis.

2.3.18 Jewellery

Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary. Priority subject.

2.3.19 Lettering and calligraphy

Solid historical holdings. Today, key references only collected, as background to type design or in relation to NAL's special collections of illuminated books and modern calligraphy.

2.3.20 Metalwork

Art blacksmiths; architectural ironwork; use of metal in the production of furniture/architectural elements. Also **clocks and watches**. Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary. Priority subject.

2.3.21 Museology, art libraries and librarianship, art archives

Often acquired primarily for staff development or as working tools, publications on these subjects are retained in the collection if of historical interest.

2.3.22 Painting

Very strong holdings. Selection to focus on V&A collection topics: portrait miniatures, British watercolours; mural, fresco, illumination and other kinds of decorative painting; painting in relation to interior design or industry. Greater selectivity concerning painting in general, especially artists (masters and contemporaries) not represented in the V&A; but admitting works on painters influential on the way the arts in general were seen and discussed at any particular period, particularly those associated with movements that encompassed the applied and decorative arts.

2.3.23 Photography

The NAL has good holdings on photography primarily regarded as an art medium, and this remains the focus of the NAL's documentary collecting. The Royal Photographic Society's library at the V&A provides near-comprehensive coverage of early publications internationally, on all aspects of photography, its technologies and applications. Collecting of photo books as examples is covered by the curatorial policy.

2.3.24 Prints and printmaking

Very strong holdings. Historical and contemporary. Priority subject, though necessarily selective. Fine art, decorative and ornamental prints. Works on individual artists collected more selectively, focussing on those represented in the V&A's collections, and/or who have developed printmaking techniques.

2.3.25 Sculpture

Strong holdings. Works on pre-1900 to be prioritised, especially as relating to V&A's object collecting. Coverage of modern / contemporary, including the expansion of sculpture into the avant garde from 1970s -- installation, multi-media, performance etc -- to be more selective from 2021, focussing on historical or otherwise relevant approaches. Works on *Medals* acquired if related to V&A collections; contemporary art medals at basic overview level. *Numismatics* is out of scope.

2.3.26 Textiles

Very strong holdings. All aspects, including Carpets, Embroidery, Tapestry. Historical and contemporary. Priority subject.

2.3.27 Theatre, stage design and costume, etc

Not actively developed today in the NAL. However works with repercussions for art, craft and design beyond theatre studies, especially non-British, may be relevant (the V&A's Theatre and Performance Archive and Library currently has a solely British focus).

2.4 Subjects: contextual / background / reference

2.4.1 Genealogy

Good holdings for reference; updated where appropriate.

2.4.2 Heraldry

Solid holdings. New works acquired if necessary to support study of objects.

2.4.3 History

Strong holdings of major reference sources for general histories of nations / regions, social history etc. Not prioritised today, as the NAL emphasises its specialities and readers have alternative options. Local history outputs include many societies' newsletters, also de-prioritised today unless containing significant, unique, relevant information. Evidence and discussion of the *history of the V&A* is collected as comprehensively as possible.

2.4.4 Literature and myth

Extensive references held; new works unlikely to be required.

2.4.5 Topography and travels

Strong holdings, of a field formerly very important for art, design and collecting information, and still valuable as historical evidence. Not actively developed.

2.5 Formats and collections: publishing genres

Included here for the purpose of providing guidance; not a comprehensive list.

2.5.1 Biographies / biographical monographs

On artists, designers, makers, and other art world individuals. Selection is to be based on quality and substance; attractive 'potboiler' short biographies, or illustrated selections of work, are rarely justified for the library.

2.5.2 Catalogues raisonnés

Very strong holdings; selection priority.

2.5.3 Catalogues of collections

Very strong holdings; priority. Consideration is always given to the relevance of the subject as well as the level and value of the work. Preferred catalogues are comprehensive, systematic, detailed and scholarly.

2.5.3.1 *Museum collection catalogues*

Non-comprehensive publications by museums, based on their collections, from major scholarly essays to souvenir 'spin-offs', are selected on their merits.

2.5.3.2 *Private collection catalogues*

Personal and corporate collections. These can document otherwise unseen important objects, and/or include scholarly discussion. They were often presented to the library, and continue to be selected, with discrimination.

2.5.3.3 *Dealers' stock catalogues*

Considerable holdings exist, as some dealers have deposited their catalogues recurrently. Selectively retained today, with reference to content.

2.5.4 Catalogues of exhibitions (public museums / galleries, and commercial)

Very strong holdings. Exhibition catalogues constituted a discrete collection of the NAL until the late 1980s, and still make up a high proportion of acquisitions. Of popular subjects, especially major artists, exhibitions are so numerous that it is necessary to be highly selective, prioritising substantial, scholarly works that add to knowledge or present significant new interpretations.

2.5.4.1 *British gallery exhibition catalogues*

Responsibility for comprehensive coverage of gallery outputs is accepted by the British Library through legal deposit, which increasingly also archives gallery websites; thus the NAL today selects only items of substantial content and relevance. (A loan collection of smaller catalogues received through legal deposit was transferred to the British Library in 2020. Around 30% were duplicated in the NAL.)

2.5.5 Catalogues of sales

Perhaps the largest collection anywhere of publicly-accessible art auction catalogues (around 140,000), a vital and well-used art-historical source. Many runs are annotated with names and/or prices. 21st-century sale details on auction house websites greatly facilitate research but they are untrusted by provenance researchers as liable to alteration, omission (unsold lots removed) and eventual disappearance; thus the NAL continues to collect printed copies.

2.5.6 Catalogues: trade literature

2.5.6.1 *Historic*

Good holdings of historic trade catalogues retrospectively acquired, invaluable as sources for decorative and industrial art and products. Selected today if strongly related to V&A objects.

2.5.6.2 *Contemporary*

A discrete, substantial collection of contemporary trade material, solicited at large from both manufacturers and retailers, was amassed from 1990 until c.2015. Today, all acquisitions are individually selected, according to the present policy (see 2.8.4.2 below).

2.5.7 Facsimiles

Physical facsimiles of unique material in the NAL's collection are always acquired if available. There is a good collection of facsimile illuminated manuscripts from other sources, often with valuable scholarly apparatus, to contextualise the NAL's holdings and facilitate teaching etc. Facsimile printed publications are selected according to relevance and likely demand, whether or not the original editions are also held (e.g influential modernist magazines); but also take account of online alternatives when available.

2.5.8 Guide books

A discrete, strong collection of country house guide books is held, with other types. Selected today only if they represent the sole or main published information on a particular monument, building or collection.

2.5.9 Manuals

Earlier holdings reflect the library's function in supporting the vocational training needs of art and design students, including works of practical instruction, in drawing etc. This type of 'how to' publication is not generally selected today. Occasionally a manual may be the first document of a very new field of art, and works containing evidence of historic art techniques may still be relevant.

2.5.10 Serials

The NAL has unrivalled holdings of art periodicals published up to the mid-20th century. Subsequently the huge increase in publications reduced the proportion that could be acquired. This was mitigated by the growth of indexing and location tools, and the collections have also benefited greatly from donors' generosity. Today, other things being equal, retrospective acquisitions are not sought (see 2.2.3).

2.5.10.1 Subscriptions

The portfolio of subscriptions is actively managed to ensure coverage and represent new developments. New titles may be selected, especially if they concern core V&A subjects. Availability in other London libraries is taken into account. Main types subscribed today are:

- scholarly journals, the traditional vehicles for serious research in art, craft and design;
- journals and magazines on contemporary activities and practice or trends in art, craft and design, including those produced as part of a relevant campaign or movement;
- popular or mass circulation magazines, as primary sources for studying relevant aspects of contemporary culture, e.g fashion, interior design.
- Titles concerned with museum, arts, library, and archive administration are acquired in numbers, not all retained long term.

Of lower priority today are journals of contextual relevance (see 2.4), local history and topography, technical and scientific titles. General bibliographic listing and review journals used for book selection (*Bookseller*, *TLS* etc) are no longer retained long-term. Long runs of national 'in print' bibliographies have been withdrawn.

2.5.10.2 Incomplete runs and single issues

It is not automatic policy to fill gaps in serial runs. Reference is always made to holdings elsewhere, with regard both to current needs and heritage retention. Titles on core subjects that were subscribed by the NAL contemporaneously with publication are strong candidates for completion, if opportunity arises.

- Part-runs, and single issues, may be selected, or retained, for their specific contents.
- A small selection of single issues of magazines on fashion, lifestyle and contemporary arts is made annually, to identify and document trends in contemporary magazine publishing and design.

2.5.10.3 Retention review

A review of the NAL's print periodical holdings commenced in 2019, aiming to identify any that can potentially be relegated to remote storage, or withdrawn completely, without compromising foreseeable research needs or the library's heritage commitments and historic identity.

2.5.11 V&A publications

The NAL collects comprehensively the published output of the museum, for both archival and research purposes. A browsing collection is provided for V&A staff and students.

Included are works published by the museum, alone or in partnership with other publishers, and also slighter items such as display guides, thematic trails etc. Most are normally acquired in all editions and versions and in either 2 or 3 copies.

2.5.12 Ephemera

The NAL holds c.29,000 Information Files, built up between 1989 and 2013 to provide a compact home for relatively insubstantial but useful material, mainly on artists, designers or craftspeople. Items include exhibition ephemera, press releases and news clippings, photographs, cvs and statements, occasionally correspondence. Some of the material was derived from working files of V&A curators, and also independent scholars, notably Edward Lucie-Smith from whom a large quantity was acquired in 1991. As so much information of this kind is now disseminated electronically, the collection is no longer actively developed. The files remain open to any member of V&A staff who wishes to contribute material directly.

2.6 Formats and collections: media

2.6.1 Microform

The first medium to support both preservation and supplementation of library collections, the NAL has fairly extensive holdings. Content includes reproductions of manuscript and print material, some of which it holds in the original; visual works from the V&A and other museums; thematic sets of books and serials. Microform remains a valid archival medium, but unpopular for access. The library remains committed to maintaining access to material held (so long as reading equipment is available) but will not acquire in future unless unavoidable and will manage down holdings, especially where content is now available online.

2.6.2 Audio, video, digital multimedia

Fairly extensive documentary holdings ranging from artist interviews, fashion shows, reference works, monographs, supplements to print books (e.g illustrations), etc. Much of the content remains valuable, but both hardware and especially software (for the digital media) are liable to obsolescence, and not all such holdings are now readily usable. The NAL aims to avoid acquiring further material with these disadvantages, and to manage down its existing holdings.

2.6.3 Online

The primary criteria for selection are relevance to the NAL's subject areas and quality of content, irrespective of medium. However, as the transformation of 21st-century scholarly communications catches up with the humanities, it is now a main objective for the NAL to increase online resource provision and usage, in order to furnish its readers with the best and most usable information; and also to reduce the growth in storage requirements.

Resources include new/original material, especially abstracting and full text databases, auction house results, image resources, reference works and large numbers of academic and other journals; as well as reproductive collections of e.g early printed books, auction catalogues, thematic groups of material.

The majority require recurrent subscriptions to externally-hosted material. In some cases, access is wholly dependent on current subscription status, but for others (especially academic periodical titles) access is retained for past parts even if the subscription is discontinued, e.g due to funding constraints. The probability of long-term sustainability also depends partly on the resilience of the provider.

By 2021 the NAL has begun to explore hosting documentary material locally, both under the V&A aegis (CMS, IIF etc, mainly for fully digitised unique manuscripts) and independently, using Content DM, a digital collections facility ancillary to its OCLC WMS library management system. This could enable digital items to be acquired in a more literal sense, and managed by the library itself.

2.6.3.1 Serials

The current trend in journal publishing is for academic titles to offer online as well as hard-copy print versions, at similar cost: if so, the online version only is taken. The Library now favours the print version only if the subscription price is significantly lower, if not all content is satisfactorily reproduced online, or if the design of the print format is noteworthy.

2.6.3.2 E-books

E-books are acquired where possible; however the range of appropriate titles in relevant subjects remains limited. Remotely hosted, and with varying access arrangements, they cannot be considered secure permanent acquisitions, so print is still preferable for titles that are likely to be of lasting importance in core subjects.

2.6.3.3 Open-access

Open access publications and resources cannot be acquired as such, and are not catalogued as acquisitions or subscriptions by the NAL. However, they can be, and are, made available to readers anywhere, through the library's Discovery catalogue, as well as promoted on its E-resources web listings.

Policy on links and recommendations to open-access resources is not in scope of the present policy, although readers may be oblivious to the distinction between collected, subscribed and open-access content. It can however be said that links will always be intentionally provided when an NAL item itself is fully available digitally and freely, and frequently also for very *similar* items (e.g another copy of the same edition of a book).

The NAL in turn contributes full text scans of selected out-of-copyright publications to the international community, via the Internet Archive.

2.7 Documentary manuscripts

2.7.1 Primary source material

Some of the most important documentary holdings in the National Art Library are unique manuscripts. These include artists' papers, correspondence of artists, designers, dealers and scholars, diaries, inventories, ledgers, treatises and other kinds of record which throw an essential light on the way art and design was and is produced, marketed and consumed. Major examples range from the mid-16th-century treatise on maiolica by Cipriano Piccolpasso to an inventory from 1942 of 'Degenerate Art' seized from museums by the Nazi government. A discrete collection of literary manuscripts from the library of John Forster famously includes most of Charles Dickens's novels – as well as a group of notebooks by Leonardo da Vinci.

The NAL's current priority is to promote the research potential of these unique resources, especially through digitisation, rather than actively pursuing additions. Relevant material will however always be given careful consideration, especially where it has a direct relationship to V&A collections.

More substantial survivals that retain their archival context are referred to the V&A's Archive of Art and Design.

2.7.2 Secondary works

Includes many items formerly identified in the NAL as 'Typewritten manuscripts': primarily notes and transcriptions, memoirs and articles by scholars. Noteworthy among them are around 1,800 ecclesiastical inventories made by the Church Recorders in Britain since 1973, and all the dissertations written by graduates of the RCA/V&A's pioneering Joint Courses in the History of Design and (formerly) in Conservation. Both have moved into digital formats. If any such material were to be acquired in future (for example, V&A staff research outputs), an online solution should be preferred.

2.8 Selection and acquisition processes

2.8.1 Selection

Selection is led and coordinated by the NAL Collections team who take into account the range of current and recent resources in the relevant subject fields with consideration to funds available. Experience, judgement and a good knowledge of existing holdings and current priorities are required. This policy is vital for guidance but is not a rule-book.

Selecting is both proactive and responsive: identifying the best titles published, and responding to museum colleagues' and library users' requests or recommendations.

Suggestions are encouraged. The expertise of specialist suppliers is harnessed in carefully profiled approval plans.

The aim is to be as efficient as possible while ensuring the quality and integrity of collection development.

2.8.2 Acquisition sources

The NAL must maximise cost-effectiveness. The majority of purchases are sourced from major consortia-approved suppliers. Otherwise, V&A-approved practices are followed to minimise costs, risks and accounting overheads. Occasional antiquarian / second-hand acquisitions are sourced from reputable dealers.

2.8.3 Subscriptions

The need for tight control of resources means that the library is less likely to commit to open-ended subscriptions (aside from regular periodicals). Instead, multi-issue publishing projects are to be monitored, and relevant volumes acquired when actually available.

2.8.4 Donations

2.8.4.1 Individual

The library is pleased to receive offers of relevant material, and the same rigour is applied to selection as to purchases. Duplicates are generally not required; see 2.2.4 2.2.3 above. On occasion the library benefits from the sale of unwanted donations, to fund other acquisitions.

2.8.4.2 Ongoing

Some sale catalogues are gratefully received by donation from auction houses; otherwise, the library does not currently operate blanket collecting programmes: all acquisitions are individually selected. Catalogues of exhibitions including V&A object loans are received as of right.

2.8.4.3 Exchanges (discontinued)

The longstanding exchange agreements with other museums internationally have been discontinued. The NAL will continue to acquire publications from these institutions, by purchase or donation.

3 Further reading

John Hungerford Pollen, ed., *Universal Catalogue of Books on Art: comprehending painting, sculpture, architecture, decoration, coins, antiquities, &c.* London, 1870. "Not only the books in the library, but all books printed and published, at the date of the issue of the Catalogue, that could be required to make the library perfect."--Page iv
Followed by various Supplements until 1890, this formed a desiderata list for the National Art Library as well as a reference for libraries around the world.

NAL collecting policies

Jan van der Wateren and Rowan Watson, *The National Art Library: a policy for the development of the collections.* London, 1993.

The first NAL collecting policy in modern times, superseded in detail but setting out many fundamental principles still relevant today.

Following the subsumption of the NAL in the Word & Image Department (2003) the library's curatorial collecting policy was incorporated in the V&A's collecting policy at large (versions in 2004, 2014, 2019). Revised documentary policies were appended separately in 2004 and 2014 (the revision dated 2010).

'The Art and Design of the Book' in *Victoria and Albert Museum: collections development policy*, 2019, 8.1.6, 41-43. Available online: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/reports-strategic-plans-and-policies#policies>.

This policy guides the NAL's curatorial perspective on works collected or interpreted as *examples* of the art and design of the book. It must be read in conjunction with the present document, to gain a full understanding of the library's collecting and collections

History

Rowan Watson, 'The Growth of the Library Collection 1837-1909', in Rowan Watson, Elizabeth James and Julius Bryant, *Word & Image: art books and design from the National Art Library*, London: 2015, 27-43.

V&A libraries

B.C. Bloomfield and Lawrence Brandes, *The Departmental Libraries at the Victoria and Albert Museum: a report*, [Unpublished], 1989.

4 Routine disposal policy¹

0 The National Art Library (NAL) by default conforms to the acquisition and disposal policies of the V&A, with accessioned material in the Library's special collections regarded as museum objects.

0.1 The majority of documentary and reference material is also acquired with the expectation of permanent retention, since the history of art and design includes the artefacts of their documentation.

0.2 However, a proportion of Library acquisitions are of relatively short-term relevance and no historic importance in the NAL context. It is recognised that, for these, the full V&A disposal procedure is disproportionate. The following policy enables such items and sets to be disposed of with appropriate diligence on the authority of the Department's Keeper.

1 The Keeper of the Word & Image collection is formally authorised to dispose routinely and systematically of accessioned material which falls into the following categories, without needing to convene a disposal board to consider individual cases:

- Superseded issues of directories, almanacs, timetables, yearbooks, and similar reference works
 - which are issued on a regular basis, so that previous issues are entirely superseded by successive ones,
 - whose primary focus is not art-related, and
 - whose subject content is such that long-term retention of outdated issues is not requisite in the NAL.

Directories and like reference works which relate primarily to the art world, artists, galleries, or museums will normally be kept, as they may be useful to researchers in years to come.

- Superseded editions of bibliographies and like reference works (e.g. national listings of books in print, lists of publishers) acquired primarily as working tools, whose main focus is not arts-related.
- Professional literature and working tools, superseded or no longer required; technical and procedure manuals, and titles on librarianship
 - Except where art-related, or of relevant significance (eg sources for NAL/V&A history).
- Works of general reference without original content, that are superseded by new editions or reliable online sources, including language dictionaries, dictionaries of topics (eg Oxford Dictionaries of Philosophy, Saints, Popes etc); also works that constitute introductions to a field provided for open-access browsing by recreational researchers, when superseded or no longer required
 - Except that art and design focused titles will normally be retained.
- Reference and general publications of recent date (generally less than 30 years old), including periodicals, whose content and format are not considered requisite for long-term retention in the NAL
 - E.g. background works without a main art and design focus, acquired to support a specific curatorial project; available elsewhere.
- Duplicates of works not highly important or valuable, when they are essentially identical and where there are no specific reasons for holding additional copies.
 - Non-identical features such as format and usage / provenance evidence will be carefully assessed before disposal.

¹ Approved at V&A Collections Group, 14 April 2016

- Duplicate items of historic or aesthetic significance, rarity or value would go to a full Board.
- Non-current issues of general review periodicals (eg *TLS*) which are available online and / or in other accessible London libraries.
 - At least three immediate past issues will be kept on the shelf.
- Material withdrawn from V&A departmental libraries, unless curators advise special consideration.

2 Over and above the categories selectively listed above, the Library retains works of historiographical significance in core subjects (eg earlier editions of important titles), and works that evidence the history of the V&A and its libraries (eg *selected* items bearing historic stamps or Circulation loan records, general directories with substantive entries on the museum or the NAL).

3 Titles for NAL Routine Disposal are presented to the Keeper for approval by the Senior Librarian, NAL Collections. A list of the items is maintained on an RF, including details enabling an audit trail to acquisition records. Disposal cycles and retention decisions will be recorded on the NAL catalogue.

4 In all other cases, and in matters of doubt, material withdrawn from the NAL will be subject to the normal V&A Disposal Policy.

5 Disposal methods

5.1 Material is disposed of with reference to security, reputation and ethics.

5.2 Consideration will always be given in the first instance to whether the material can be appropriately placed in another library.

5.3 For the most part, modern material of low value is disposed of by destruction, if it bears V&A or NAL ownership stamps and cannot be appropriately donated.

5.4 Where material is to be sold, exchanged or donated, V&A / NAL ownership marks will be cancelled but not deleted, using a 'Withdrawn' stamp approved by the Registrar.