Archives and Special Collections Access Policy

1. Introduction
1.1 This policy documents how the University of Leicester Library provides access to its Archives and Special Collections for: Learning and teaching; Research; Public engagement and outreach.
1.2 The policy refers to all materials managed by the University’s Archives and Special Collections team, comprising: archives; rare books; medieval manuscripts; digitised primary source collections.

2. Core principles
2.1 Archives and Special Collections are open to all who wish to make use of them. Access is as unrestricted as possible.
2.2 Access arrangements take into consideration the need to preserve and secure these collections as part of the University Library’s permanent collections.
2.3 Access is subject to statutory and legal requirements, as defined under data protection, freedom of information, copyright and other relevant legislation.
2.4 Access to Archives and Special Collections is guided by the Public Service Quality Group, Standard for Access to Archives.

3 Our community
3.1 Archives and Special Collections serves the following communities, within the UK and overseas, who access our collections on site and remotely:
   - University of Leicester students and staff
   - University of Leicester alumni and supporters
   - Students and staff of other academic institutions
   - Partner organisations of the University of Leicester, including local schools, museums, cultural organisations, charities and businesses
   - The general public, including local and family historians, local history and community groups, private and commercial researchers and exhibition visitors
   - Donors and depositors of collections and their heirs and representatives

4 Reading Room Access
4.1 The Kirby and West Special Collections Reading Room is located in the Basement of the David Wilson Library. It is open 9-5, Monday to Friday, and provides accommodation for up to 16 readers consulting archives, rare books and manuscripts.
4.2 Collections are accessible to all who wish to use them, subject to registration as a library user.
4.3 All University of Leicester students and staff become members of the Library on commencement of their studies or employment. Members of other Universities and members of the general public are entitled to apply for membership of the Library. This involves completion of an application form and presentation of proof of identity and address and two passport photographs. Details of membership arrangements for different categories of user are published on the Library website.
4.4 Users consulting Archives and Special Collections are required to produce their Library card on entry to the Library and on arrival in the Reading Room. New users who are unable to complete the Library’s application process on their first visit are permitted day access, provided they can
provide proof of their home address or current academic affiliation. Such users will be required to complete the application process prior to any subsequent visit.

4.5 All users consulting Archives and Special Collections must be registered as a library user. Users are required to produce their Library card on entry to the Library and on arrival in the Reading Room.

4.6 Non-members visiting the reading room without the necessary proof of address or passport photographs are permitted day access, provided they can provide alternative proof of identity (e.g. bank card) and must sign in with their home address.

4.7 The University Library operates within the framework of the University of Leicester’s Equal Opportunities Policy, which is to positively advance equality of opportunity for all current and potential students, staff and other stakeholders.

4.8 The David Wilson Library is an accessible public building. The Library has step-free access, lifts to all floors, automatic doors and adapted toilets. Parking is available for blue badge holders.

4.9 The Reading Room is used during opening hours for small group teaching, public engagement activities and private research. Individual researchers are required to book an appointment during the advertised opening hours to consult material.

4.10 All users are required to adhere to the rules for accessing and handling the collections, copies of which are displayed on desks in the Reading Room. The Reading Room is invigilated whenever a user is present. Reading room staff receive training on collections handling, and intervene to ensure that appropriate practices are being observed.

5 Discovery

5.1 Archives catalogues: Archive catalogues are made available online at http://archives.le.ac.uk and in hard copy in the Reading Room.

5.2 Rare book and manuscript catalogue: Rare book catalogue records are made available via http://librarysearch.le.ac.uk.

5.3 External platforms: Catalogue data is regularly contributed to federated discovery platforms including Archives Hub, Worldcat, Copac and SUNCAT.

6 Archive production

6.1 We aim to make Items in catalogued collections stored in the David Wilson Library available for consultation within two working days of request. Retrieval times for uncatalogued items and materials stored offsite may be longer. On initial receipt of a request, users are provided with a timescale for production of their material. Best efforts are made to retrieve items requested on the day, depending on their location and available staffing levels.

6.2 Items from archive collections must be requested on paper document production slips. For security reasons only one item is issued at a time. Bundles of loose documents are weighed on issue and return.

7. Rare book and manuscript production

7.1 Rare books and manuscripts are requested via Library Search. Production times are 8.45am and 12.45pm. We aim to make books requested before 8.45am available by 9.30. Books requested before 12.45pm are made available by 1.30. A small number of items are held in the External store. Requests received before 4pm are available for consultation by 2.15 the following day.
8. Restrictions on access
8.1 Relevant legislation: Most holdings are freely accessible. However, some archive material is subject to access restrictions under the relevant legislation, including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act. Decisions on access are taken by the Archivist and Assistant Archivist, in consultation with the University’s Information Assurance Team. Where material may contain sensitive personal information, users are asked to sign a Data Protection form explaining their responsibilities. Access restrictions are recorded in the ‘AccessConditions’ field in the catalogue record.

8.2 Uncatalogued material: Where practicable, access is provided to uncatalogued collections. In the case of material likely to be covered by legislation referred to in 8.1 above, the Archivist or Assistant Archivist conducts an assessment to determine whether access restrictions should apply.

8.3 Preservation: Access is withheld if an item is unfit to be handled. Items identified as unfit for production are recorded on a list of items requiring conservation treatment. High demand items on this list are prioritised for conservation. We work with researchers to offer alternative means of accessing the information where possible.

8.4 Surrogates: Where appropriate, surrogate copies are created to protect fragile original material and support specific teaching or research needs. Wherever possible, digital surrogates are made freely available online via [http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk](http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk). Where copyright restrictions apply, access is provided onsite only or via the University’s virtual learning environment. In order to continue to promote physical access to our collections, we do not restrict access to items for which a surrogate exists unless 8.3 applies.

9. Enquiries
9.1 We handle all enquiries in accordance with the Library’s Customer Charter. Email enquiries receive an acknowledgement within 24 hours, outlining next steps and requesting further information as required. We monitor our performance against the Library’s service standards for handling enquiries.

9.2 We provide basic information about our collections and services free of charge. A fee of £25 per hour applies to more in depth enquiries requiring original research.

9.3 We maintain an up-to-date knowledgebase of answers to frequently asked questions on the Library’s help page [http://libraryhelp.le.ac.uk](http://libraryhelp.le.ac.uk/).

10. Reprographics service
10.1 Copying of Archives and Special Collections material is permitted, subject to the conditions outlined in the Archives & Special Collections Copyright Guidance. Users may take their own digital photographs free of charge. A staff-operated copying service is available for photocopying and scanning. Up-to-date information on charges is made available via the Library website.

11. Online access
11.1 We provide free public access to our digitised collections of primary source materials via our Special Collections Online website [http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk](http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/).

11.2 We ensure our digitised content is discoverable by creating high quality descriptive metadata that conforms to international standards. As a minimum, all digitised items are associated with a Dublin Core metadata record.
11.3 We share our metadata records with appropriate discovery platforms, under a Creative Commons Zero ‘no rights reserved license’.

11.4 All digitised content includes a statement of copyright, including end-user rights. Wherever possible we make our digitised collections available for re-use and adaptation under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License. Where copyright restrictions apply, we seek agreement to make content available under this or another Creative Commons License.

11.5 We collaborate with our academic community to establish priorities for digitisation of collections in support of learning, teaching and research. When identifying material for digitisation, we take account of emerging national strategies for digitisation of library collections.

12. Audience engagement

12.1 Learning and teaching: We collaborate with members of our academic community to provide a wide range of opportunities to engage students with our collections. These include lectures, seminars, and one-to-one consultations. Where resources permit, we support similar activities involving other universities, schools and colleges.

12.2 Research: We collaborate with our academic community and Research and Enterprise Division to develop new opportunities to exploit our collections for research. Activities include participation in and organisation of research and enterprise networking events, involvement of Archives and Special Collections staff in research projects and grant applications, and participation in researcher development programmes.

12.3 Public engagement: We support the University’s Outreach and Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy by creating opportunities for members of the general public to engage with our collections. This includes participating in annual events such as Literary Leicester and Heritage Open Days, hosting visits and tours from local groups and societies, and organising special events showcasing our collections.

12.4 Exhibitions: We promote our collections to Library visitors by staging three free exhibitions a year in the Basement of the David Wilson Library. We collaborate with our academic community and local stakeholders to produce exhibitions for display at other locations across the University and elsewhere. Items may be loaned for display by other institutions where appropriate environmental and security conditions can be met, as stipulated in PD5454 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival documents. Additional conditions for loan are set out in the standard loan agreement form.

12.5 Media: We collaborate with our academic community and Press Office to promote our collections and through national and local print, online and broadcast media.

12.6 Website: We provide up-to-date information about our collections and services via the Library website.

12.7 Social Media: We promote our physical and online collections through the Library Special Collections and Library’s social media channels.

12.8 Alumni Engagement: We collaborate with our Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) to create opportunities for members of alumni to engage with and enhance our collections and services. This includes providing training and support for DARO staff on use of our collections, outreach by Archives and Special Collections and DARO to encourage donations and deposits of material that enhances our collections, exhibitions and attendance at alumni gatherings.
13. Enabling staff
13.1 All Library staff working with Archives and Special Collections receive regular training on access procedures and correct handling of collections. Staff who are not permanently based in Archives and Special Collections are offered annual refresher training.
13.2 We support the Continuing Professional Development of staff from other sections of the Library by providing them with opportunities to learn about the content, management, and exploitation of our collection. This is through staff training events, one-to-one guidance, and the provision of opportunities to collaborate with Archives and Special Collections staff on projects, use of collections for teaching, and delivery of outreach and engagement activities.

14. Customer care
14.1 Archives and Special Collections staff comply with the University Library’s Customer Charter to treat customers with ‘courtesy, professionalism and efficiency’, ‘provide an environment which is conducive to study’, and ‘provide information, resources and support for research, learning and teaching’. We monitor our performance against service standards, which we review regularly. We deal promptly and appropriately with complaints in accordance with the Library’s Feedback and Complaints procedure.

15. Consultation
15.1 Feedback is gathered from different stakeholder groups to improve our services, through the following mechanisms:
   • Academic staff library user panel
   • Student library user panel
   • Student staff committees
   • College and departmental academic and research committees
   • Feedback forms for teaching sessions and outreach events
   • Library representation on University Executive Board
   • Collaboration with the Library’s User Engagement Manager on individual projects / focus groups
   • Consultation with individual academic staff on specific courses / projects
   • Library customer satisfaction survey (LibQUAL methodology)
15.2 Actions arising from user feedback are incorporated into the Archives and Special Collections Access Plan, which in turn informs the University Library’s planning process.

This policy was adopted in April 2017 and will be reviewed no later than April 2022.