

Heritage Acquisitions Policy

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6 th draft	11/6/21	Updated membership of HAG

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1. DEFINITIONS

1.1. Purpose of this policy

The following document sets out the broad criteria and processes by which potential heritage acquisitions are reviewed, at both local and corporate levels, and by which the Library ensures compliance with its regulatory obligations. It will be reviewed by the Head of Collections and Curation annually.

1.2. Heritage acquisitions

Heritage items include those within the broad definition of Cultural Property as endorsed by the British Library Board in 2006:

original engravings, prints and lithographs ... rare manuscripts and incunabula, old books, documents and publications of special interest (historical, artistic, scientific, literary, etc.) singly or in collections; postage, revenue and similar stamps, singly or in collections; archives, including sound, photographic and cinematographic archives

Heritage items, of unique or highly distinctive status, regardless of their format (manuscript, printed or digital), are also considered preponderantly to be used as primary sources for research. They are therefore distinguished from contemporary research level academic publications which are preponderantly acquired to be used as support for research and from modern compilations of source materials which are acquired while the material is still "in print".

The definition of acquisition adopted by the Board is 'buys, hires, borrow, or accepts', this being broad enough to include all forms of purchase, donation, loan, bequest of other form of acquisition. For heritage acquisitions priority is given to ensuring permanent incorporation of items within the Library's collections; in general loans are agreed only when either transfer of ownership is not possible or assurance is given that full transfer will occur at a later date.

2. CRITERIA

The following criteria build on the Arts and Humanities Strategy and the Archives Strategy, as approved by the British Library Board in 2012. They should be applied when reviewing any item or collection of items for acquisition as defined above in section 1.2, whether locally within the curatorial departments or by the Heritage Acquisitions Group:

2.1. Priority areas

Areas of focus for active heritage collection development, through purchase, donation, or acceptance in lieu of tax are:

- Historical manuscripts and archives of national importance and substantial research value that reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the British experience
- Archives of modern politicians, statesmen and public figures of national importance and substantial research value that reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the British experience
- Literary and performance manuscripts and archives of national importance and substantial research value that reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the British experience, and the dissemination and reception of works, as well as their creation
- Musical manuscripts and archives of national importance and substantial research value that reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the British experience
- Maps of national importance and substantial research value that reflect the cultural and geographical diversity of the British experience
- Items of outstanding intellectual importance that enhance the research potential of existing collections
- Supplements to the national printed historical archive in the form of items that are of major historical or literary significance or redress the imbalance of historic legal deposit, e.g. women writers, provincial publishing, political, religious or ethnic minorities, ephemeral and commercial printing documenting the changing structures of British society
- Selective examples of contemporary British book bindings, artist books, book art, fine printing and private press printing
- Surrogates of heritage items the export of which is conditional on the creation and retention of such surrogates

2.2. Some areas of very selective acquisition

- Two-dimensional works of art, including paintings, drawings and prints
- Separate or single leaves (see further in separate policy document)
- Views
- Photographs
- Stamps and other philatelic materials

3.3. Areas without future active heritage collection development focus, except in very exceptional circumstances, e.g a strong historic connection to the British Library, minimal associated life-cycle costs and no other more appropriate institution:

- Archives consisting primarily of state papers
- Public records
- Archives of contemporary scientists
- Archives of authors who primarily wrote children's books
- Business and industrial archives (excluding those relating to the book trade)
- Political, historical, or literary archives primarily of local interest
- Archives of community and faith based organisations

- Coins, medals and paper money
- Three-dimensional artefacts, including furniture, sculpture and memorabilia
- Human remains
- Non-British artists books
- National printed archive material which falls within the exclusions for printed legal deposit as in the staff manual prepared by the former British Collections for the LDO teams.

3. PROCESSES

3.1. Due diligence

In making Heritage acquisitions curators must comply with the Due Diligence Guidelines approved by the British Library Board in July 2006. Training is available and mandatory for all who wish to make heritage acquisitions for the Library. For details see the Intranet at <http://intranet.ad.bl.uk/how-to/work-with-cultural-property>.

The Due Diligence Checklist should be completed for each acquisition as appropriate. If a petition is being made to HAG, the Checklist needs to be completed **in advance** of that petition to provide the appropriate reassurance to the Group when they are considering a prospect.

3.2. Local

The Heads of the four curatorial departments within Collections and Curation oversee heritage acquisitions that do not require approval by the Heritage Acquisitions Group. These acquisitions must each be lower in value than £10,000 and all purchases over £5,000 require single tender documentation.

Such acquisitions are selected by specialist curators in the four departments, based on their knowledge of the Library's existing collections and those of other institutions, on their expertise in a particular subject, on their assessment of the research potential of the item/s and on their knowledge of relevant specialist markets and values. The curators will also refer to local collection development policies, as well as corporate policies on due diligence, donations, use of public money and other relevant matters. They may consult colleagues in other collecting institutions, external subject experts or researchers to supplement their own collection and subject knowledge.

Such acquisitions are made by both purchase and gift. Purchases are financed by separate local budgets administered by individual curators, but overseen by the head of department. The acceptance of gifts needs to be in line with corporate policies on donations. Regardless of their monetary value donations of heritage material with either significant cultural sensitivities or significant life cycle costs needs approved by HAG.

Any item or property here for any other purpose than outright acquisition, or pending outright acquisition should be covered by a Temporary Deposit Form. All those giving cultural property outright to the Library should also sign an Acquisitions Form. Those private individuals or sources selling the Library cultural property should also complete the same form. If the donor wishes to amend or derogate from any of the terms in the deed gift this can also be discussed so that a mutually agreeable arrangement can be achieved. This may happen, for instance, where there are

questions of copyright, or where the donor wishes to impose access restrictions on the property that comprises the gift.

3.3. Heritage Acquisitions Group

3.3.1. Terms of reference

The Heritage Acquisition Group oversees all major acquisitions. Its official remit is to:

- Oversee policy and strategy relating to major heritage acquisitions
- Prioritise major acquisition prospects
- Oversee donations of material over £10,000 and those with significant cultural sensitivities or life cycle costs
- Oversee management of cultural property and due diligence risks
- Identify fund-raising prospects, including for conservation, cataloguing, digitisation, etc.
- Oversee budget allocation for acquisitions
- Oversee use of funds for valuations and agents' fees
- Oversee the realisation of the potential benefits of major heritage acquisitions
- Direct advocacy for major acquisitions
- Oversee long-term in-loans and related risk management
- Oversee regular reporting on major heritage acquisitions to the BL Board
- Oversee compilation of the register of heritage assets

3.3.2. Membership

The Heritage Acquisition Group is constituted as follows:

- Head of Western Heritage Collections (Chair)
- Head of Collections and Curation
- Head of Asian and African Collections or appointed depute
- Head of Contemporary British Collections or appointed depute
- Head of European and American Collections or appointed depute
- Representative from Western Heritage Collections
- Head of Content Acquisition
- Head of Research Development or appointed depute
- Head of Development or appointed depute
- Collections Finance Manager
- Nominee as Secretary

3.3.3. Meetings of HAG

HAG meets bimonthly to review and prioritise prospects and address other relevant issues of policy and practice

- The Chair and the Secretary prepare agenda.
- The Secretary circulates meeting papers in advance
- The Secretary invites curators making submissions to HAG and any other ad hoc guests
- The Secretary takes minutes of HAG meetings and is responsible for internal communication
- The Chair informs curators of HAG's decisions on their submissions

3.3.4. Prioritisation of prospects

Most prospects will be reviewed at the regular Heritage Acquisitions Group meetings. In these circumstances:

- In advance of a HAG meeting curators submit to the Secretary for each prospect (including donations of material with significant cultural sensitivities or significant life cycle costs) (a) a

“Heritage Acquisitions Prioritisation Matrix”, (b) a discursive report, and (c) the signed Due Diligence Form. The report is based on an agreed template. The matrix contains three parts: (1) a curator checklist, itemising the basic information relating to the prospect; (2) eight evaluative questions, the answers to which have associated weighting; (3) a summary of the predicted lifecycle costs. It is the responsibility of the curator to complete all parts of the form, including draft scorings in response to the evaluative questions. Each submission must have secured in advance the support of the relevant departmental head. Consultation with further colleagues on specialist aspects of the evaluative questions is advisable.

- Curators are invited to the next scheduled HAG meeting to present in person the case for their prospect and answer questions from the Group on it.
- HAG assesses each prospect, based on the associated documentation and verbal presentation and agrees a final scoring in part 2 of the matrix.
- HAG prioritises each prospect based on a review of (1) the pipeline of potential, scored and approved acquisitions compiled and managed by the Secretary; (2) the budget summary compiled and managed by the Head of Content Development Implementation. Both documents are circulated in advance of HAG meetings.
- HAG reviews and identifies funding streams available for each prospect, considering both GiA funds and externally raised, additional funds. It will review contributions from local budgets. It will also consider sources of funding for follow-through on the acquisition.
- Decisions are made on a majority vote of those present at the meeting, based on the assumption that either the head of each curatorial department or their depute is present.

However, the nature of the market for heritage items often requires fast, flexible and agile action in the open market place, where rare items are offered for sale by catalogue, auction or private sale. The appropriate selection and assessment of the material depends on significant specialist, subject expertise and a good knowledge of the operation of the specialist market. For this reason a balance is struck between the need to act quickly and the need to observe due diligence, with the Heritage Acquisitions Group exercising appropriate oversight in proportion to the value of the items in question. To enable flexible decision making for items which require immediate action, proposals for purchases mainly between £10,000 and £25,000, if funded by locally-held budgets and if backed by the relevant departmental Head and the Chair of HAG, may be circulated to the group by the Secretary for approval. The Chair will make a decision on the basis of the received responses, taking abstention for assent.

3.3.5. Oversight of expenditure

The Group ensures compliance with relevant policies and reports on the investment of public money in accordance with current statutory and regulatory obligations. For the purposes of Due Diligence, under the DCMS Guidelines on Combating Illicit Trade (2005), a threshold for reporting is set at £10,000. For compliance in matters of Single Tender authority and money laundering regulations, the threshold is £5,000. For accounting purposes all major acquisitions over £20,000 in value must also be reported and capitalised in the Library’s annual accounts. The Board is notified of the Library’s compliance in these matters in respect of Heritage Acquisitions by means of regular reports.

As a fundamental principle, any acquisition must be in line with the Library’s Corporate Strategy and/or any other prevailing document from time to time in effect. Heritage items may be acquired from locally managed budgets, from the central heritage fund, with support from trust funds, and with support from external foundations or individuals, and from a combination of these options. The following summarises the value thresholds and the corresponding level of reporting required. Commission and VAT is included when calculating the total cost of an acquisition:

a. <10K. Heritage acquisitions below the threshold of £10,000 are delegated to local decision making (see section 1 above for this process, noting that the criteria in section 2 also apply), unless financial support is sought from without the locally held budget. However, regardless of price, all items, including donations, assessed by specialist staff to be of significant public interest or cultural sensitivity and/or to pose potential reputational risks or likely to incur significant life-cycle costs must be acquired with the oversight of the Heritage Acquisition Group. It is the responsibility of the acquiring curator to alert the Heritage Acquisition Group to such acquisitions.

b. >10K. All heritage acquisitions of £10,000 or more in value require the approval of HAG, whether or not they require financial support from HAG. Items of £20,000 or more in value are considered capital expenditure and are included in the quarterly report to the British Library Board. (Before April 2015 all items of £10,000 or more in value were capitalised.) Items of £25,000 in value are reported to DCMS for inclusion in a published list of major expenditure made from public funds.

3.3.6. General oversight of major heritage acquisitions

HAG is responsible for overseeing all aspects of policy relating to major heritage acquisitions. It plays a key advocacy role on their behalf within the Library, in the wider research and heritage communities, both nationally and internationally, and in the general public domain. To enable it to fulfil this broader role it keeps abreast of and promotes awareness of important sectoral developments that relate to major heritage acquisitions. It will also commission occasional surveys, reports and promotional material.