



Collections Development Policy

January 2024

Name of organisation: Working Class Movement Library

Date review completed: January 2024

Staff who undertook the review: Belinda Scarlett, Library Manager, Jane Taylor, Librarian, Nathan Godfrey, Engagement and Events Coordinator

Name of governing body: Working Class Movement Library Board of Trustees

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:

Date at which this policy is due for review: January 2029

Thank you to the support of the WCML Collections Development group for their work in supporting the review of this policy, which includes:

Dr Nick Barnett

Geoff Brown

Isobel David

Billy Godfrey

Dr Kerry Pimblott

Morgan Powell

Katie Shaw

Dr Steven Speed

Relationship to other relevant policies and plans of the organisation:

1.1 The library's statement of purpose

To provide open access to the collections, and organise programmes, events, courses and other activities so that working people can learn from and interpret their history and enable them to apply a class perspective to contemporary politics and economics.

Our Values and Objectives:

Inclusivity: We are committed to fostering a culture in which equality, diversity and inclusion of opportunity are actively promoted and in which discrimination is not tolerated. We are actively working to create and sustain an environment where equality, diversity, and inclusion are intrinsic to the library and central to its strategy and operations.

Collections development and care: We will continue to care for and build our library and archive collection so that it represents the full diversity of working class movements in Britain and Ireland including how different aspects of social and political discrimination overlap with class to impact on those who are most marginalised in society.

Learning and Engagement: We will provide access to our collection (both physically and digitally) to promote knowledge and understanding of the history of working class movements and so that it can be used to inform and support contemporary movements and understanding of class. We will continue to support the tradition of independent working class education.

Resilience and Sustainability: We are committed to developing a resilient and sustainable organization so that we can build on the achievements of our founders to realize their vision.

Empowering our communities: We will work in partnership with our communities to produce events, exhibitions and other creative activities that are inspired by our collection and reflect their needs and interests. This will include providing access to our meeting space to support their campaigning and activities.

Engaging an internationalist vision: Working Class Movements have a long history of organising around the common interests of workers internationally. We will continue to engage with this internationalist vision and anti-colonial and anti-imperial perspectives through our collection, partnerships and activities.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the library has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the Library's collection.

1.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

1.5 The WCML recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Archive Accreditation Standard. This includes using relevant archival and library cataloguing

standards. It will consider limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The WCML will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the library can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

1.7 In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, the governing body will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside the Library's established core collection

2.0 History of the collection

The material in the Working Class Movement Library Collection falls into three types, a library collection of published books, periodicals and newspapers, an archive of paper ephemera relating to individuals, organisations and campaigns, and a collection of objects or artefacts.

There are 77543 items catalogued on the library database (this includes pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers) and 28636 items on the archive catalogue as of August 2023. The collection started in the 1950s because of the efforts of Ruth and Edmund Frow who collected material that reflected their personal interests and connections with groups and individuals in the labour movement and activist communities, as well as their connection with the Communist Party of Great Britain. The material was not collected as a result of a formal collecting policy. The library has continued to collect by purchasing material or accepting donations from the public. A Collections Policy was adopted by the Trust in 2006 and last reviewed in 2018.

3.0 Core collecting areas

Our core collecting areas are:

3.1 Trade unionism, workplace rights and struggles

The story of trade unions is at the heart of the Library's collection. From the 1820s onwards it documents how workers organised to improve their rights and conditions through the journals, rule books, minutes, agreements and conference reports of a wide range of unions. The Library also holds extensive campaigning materials, often produced by the unions themselves, but also including papers of individual activists, strike committees, pit and factory papers and related solidarity campaigns. The Library is particularly keen to document the changing forms of collective action in a world of precarious employment, and the campaigning work of unions and other bodies on issues of gender, disability and racial equality both within the workplace and beyond.

3.2 Campaigning for political and social change

The library's collection aims to reflect the struggles of working people for social and political rights and freedom of expression often in the face of repression. This includes the movements that led to Peterloo through to Chartism and the women's suffrage movement. The Library will collect the material history of these campaigns and associated collective action. The Library's collection represents social movements organised around more immediate issues ranging from housing and rent campaigns to un-employment. The Library aims to document the changing forms of these campaigns as they continue to meet the challenges of neo-liberalism and right-wing populism.

3.3 Socialism and the Radical Left

The Library collects material that represents the history of Britain's socialist tradition and the political organizing and the variety of views represented by political parties and individuals within this tradition. From Marxism to Fabianism, the ideas that inspire left-wing activists are fully represented including materials from the former Independent Labour Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain, and from a wide range of individual political activists. The Library will continue to collect and represent the full scope of these views.

3.4 Internationalism, peace and workers' solidarity

The working-class movement has a long history of campaigning around the common interests of working people internationally. While the Library's collection focuses on the working-class movement within the UK, the collection aims to reflect internationalist perspectives of working class activists, anti-colonial/imperial activism and the campaigns which they inspired, and the Library will continue to actively collect in these areas. The Library has particular interest in collecting anti-fascist material and the Spanish civil war and International Brigades. The library holds and seeks to collect records of peace campaigns, for example the Greater Manchester CND archive.

3.5 Working class creativity and culture

The Library collection includes how radical cultures respond to the challenges of working class life through cultural and recreational activities including theatre, poetry, music, walking and cycling. The library holds extensive archives including those of the Unity Theatre movement, the Right to Roam movement and the Workers Music Association amongst others. The Library will continue to document working class creativity and culture and will aim to nurture it in our public spaces and events programme.

4.0 Themes and priorities for future collecting

The WCML has identified priority areas for active collecting alongside its core collecting areas to help re-balance and fill gaps in the library's collection. We will give particular focus to collecting material that represent:

- Organising in informal employment
- Working class responses to the Environment and climate crisis
- Land access, land justice and food
- The intersection between class and race
- The intersection between, gender, sexuality and class
- The intersection between disability and class
- Policing, particularly policing of protest

- Migration, refugee status and worker rights

4.1 When assessing material for potential acquisition into the WCML collection we will also consider our other collecting priorities:

- The WCML will continue to prioritise the unique collections of individual activists.
- The WCML will prioritise material relating to campaigns focused in Salford and Manchester.
- We will accession collections and materials identified and/or created during WCML projects and workshops.
- The WCML will implement a 'rapid response' approach to collecting material generated during local, national and international events, in line with the overarching collecting policy.

5.0 Collecting Policies of other libraries and archives.

5.1 The WCML will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with and work collaboratively with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

5.2 Specific reference is made to the following organisations

- Peoples History Museum
- Marx Memorial Library
- Bishopsgate Institute
- Warwick Modern Records Office
- The Cooperative Heritage Trust
- The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre
- May Day Rooms

6.0 Methods and conditions of acquisition

Materials for the collection are acquired by gift or purchase. The library has a small acquisitions budget.

No part of the collection is held on loan and ownership in every case is transferred to the Working Class Movement Library.

After initial accessioning duplicate items may be removed in the course of cataloguing as long as the integrity of the deposit is unaffected.

Implementation of the Collections Development Policy is the responsibility of the Collections Development Group in partnership with the WCML Board of Trustees. The Collections Development Group will meet quarterly to review material offered to the library and to review progress against the policy. We aim for the membership group to represent the full diversity of the working class movements and to change periodically to reflect this.

The Collections Development Group are encouraged to suggest material for active collecting to fulfil the priority areas identified above.

We do not collect material not in the English Language.

Materials added to the catalogue may only be deaccessioned according to the formal procedures described below.

7.0 Deaccessioning

The original Frow collection began as one of the great personal libraries of the twentieth century. There was no formal collecting policy; the Frows adopted the statement 'Knowledge is power' and the original Frow library reflects the breadth of the cultural and political ambitions that reflect this.

The library is a unique survival of its type, and on the move to Jubilee House the library's original shelving arrangement was as far as possible retained. This commitment to the integrity of the original Frow collection remains one of the Library's core principles. There has been no attempt to rationalise these holdings according to the Library's later collecting policies and the large-scale deaccessioning this might involve. Any future deaccessioning will continue to respect the integrity of this collection.

Limited deaccessioning of later acquisitions may sometimes be essential to allow the continued development of the collections. Deaccessioning is agreed by the trustees through the Collection Development Group as advised by the Library Manager / Librarian and / or other expert advisers.

Three categories of material can be considered for de-accessioning:

1. Duplicate items with no significant distinguishing features in terms of content, format or annotation.
2. Items peripheral to the collections which are both readily accessible and more likely to be sought elsewhere.
3. Materials in diverse media which may be better conserved and made accessible by other institutions.

In both the accessioning and deaccessioning of archival materials, the integrity of individual collections will always be given priority except where there are compelling reasons concerning the survival or accessibility of these materials.

Wherever possible deaccessioned materials will be transferred to another appropriate repository. Where no transfer is possible, items may be sold, and all proceeds of such sales will be devoted to library funds. Where no other suitable repository can be identified, materials will never be deaccessioned unless these are readily accessible to researchers elsewhere.

7.1 Disposal by destruction

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.

It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition.

Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the Library staff.

8.0 Review

This collection development policy is agreed by the Library's board of trustees and may be amended by decision of the trustees at any time. The policy will be formally reviewed by the trustees as advised by the Collection Development Group not less than every five years.

9.0 Contact details

The Library is located at 51, The Crescent, Salford, Greater Manchester, M5 4WX. For all enquiries concerning this collecting policy and the potential deposit of materials in the Library, please contact the Library Manager, Belinda Scarlett: 0161 736 3601 or belinda.scarlett@wcml.org.uk.