



University of Essex



Content development & management policy

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Content development and management policy

Overview

Library & Cultural Services supports the University in its mission of excellence in education and research, for the benefit of individuals and communities. Our Content development and management policy outlines our principles for the active management and development of our content in support of the [University Strategy, 2019-2025](#) and its sub-strategies.

Throughout this policy the term 'content' is used to describe information resources in both digital and physical formats. The term is used with growing regularity as libraries increasingly provide access to a range of digital resources, both paid for by the library and those which are available open access, in addition to the traditional 'collection' of owned physical stock.

Scope

This policy applies to the physical content owned by University of Essex Library & Cultural Services and held at the Albert Sloman Library (Colchester campus), the Library & IT Centre (Loughton campus) and the Forum Library (Southend campus), and to the digital content available on-and off-campus. It does not apply to the Art Collections or Special Collections and Archives, for which separate management policies apply.

Principles

In managing and developing our content, we:

- work in partnership with our users to ensure that our content is diverse, inclusive, accessible and reflects the teaching and research requirements of the university
- prioritise digital content where possible, taking into account pedagogical needs and user preferences
- support open research by incorporating open access material into our discovery systems and making financial contributions towards making content available as open access
- subscribe to the principles of intellectual freedom, facilitating access to all kinds of ideas and opinions without endorsement or censorship

- purchase a range of content, both academic and industry-based, to reflect the wide range of educational and research interests across the University, thereby supporting real-world learning and research and contributing to the employability of our students and graduates.

Budget

Library & Cultural Services is allocated an annual Content & Collections budget which is aligned with the University's financial year, August to July. Budget requests are made via the annual planning round process in November-February, and the final allocation is confirmed in May/June.

The cost of acquiring content generally increases above the standard rate of inflation, and for subscription content the annual increase in cost is frequently in excess of 5-6% per annum. In recent years a limited annual uplift in budget has been applied to the subscriptions portion, but otherwise there are no automatic increases in the total budget. In particular the budget is not linked to student numbers, and any increases in budget must be requested and approved via the planning round.

The Content & Collections budget is top-sliced to fund recurrent expenditure (subscriptions to journals, databases, e-book packages, courseware) and ancillary costs (cost for processing and cataloguing), with the remaining funds nominally allocated to non-recurrent activity (e.g. outright purchases of e-books, individual payments to support the open access landscape).

Although the majority of the budget is for content directly related to teaching and research, some funds are ringfenced for library initiatives (e.g. wellbeing collection, leisure reading collection).

Audience

Our key audience is current staff and students of the University of Essex.

Content access arrangements for affiliated organisations including (but not limited to) partnership, franchise and validation arrangements must be discussed with the Library & Cultural Services Leadership Team. There is no automatic entitlement to library facilities as existing content licences may explicitly exclude affiliate members and it may be necessary to negotiate new licences at additional cost.

We value our engagement with wider local and academic communities, and welcome use of our content by our alumni, members of other institutions and members of the public. Print content is available for use within the owning library's building or via interlibrary loan to other UK libraries, whilst 'walk in' access to digital content is available on site where licences allow.

Content acquisition

Selection

Selection is undertaken as a partnership between our users and Library & Cultural Services staff.

Content acquisition suggestions from individual students, researchers and staff are encouraged. Suggestions may be acquired either temporarily (on loan from another library) or permanently (as a purchase) depending on the needs of the user and type of request.

Content included on online reading lists is made available as soon as possible after the list is published by the module leader. Essential resources are made available digitally as e-books, digitised extracts, or streaming video. Recommended resources are made available in line with our digital first approach.

Other content is selected as a partnership between each academic department or school and members of our Academic Liaison Group (ALG), comprising the Assistant Director for Academic & Research Services, the Academic Liaison Librarians and the Southend Campus Librarian. This may include specific resources, at the request of each department or school, or curated lists or packages of content selected by ALG members in response to expressed teaching or research needs.

We use a range of content acquisition models including leasing, demand-driven acquisition (DDA), evidence-based acquisition (EBA), subscription and outright purchase, in order to maximise the content we can make available and obtain best value for money. DDA and EBA purchase models are usage-driven, allowing opportunities to make purchases in response to proven user need.

We actively select material which helps to diversify our content and provide a more inclusive range of resources which better reflect our community at Essex and the world beyond our campuses. We encourage our users to make content recommendations to help co-produce a diverse collection.

Responsibilities

Library & Cultural Services staff proactively engage with users to understand their needs and make available the content they need.

Members of the ALG arrange regularly-scheduled meetings with academic departments or schools to discuss their content needs. These meetings form the basis of planning for the management and development of Library content to support education and research activities, and in return provide opportunities for ALG members to contribute to discussions around strategic planning within departments and schools.

In addition, module leaders are responsible for:

- maintaining course reading lists in the reading lists management system
- marking as “essential” those resources which meet the following definition: “all students must read or watch this resource to be able to complete the module or engage with the teaching for that week” ([Senate 169/21](#))
- working with Library & Cultural Services staff to ensure “all “essential” resources should be available online, with academic staff choosing alternative resources where this is not possible” ([Senate 170/21](#))
- working to the following timeline to ensure that all “essential” resources are available online to students:
 - rollover of reading lists on Talis by end of first week in April
 - resources for Autumn and Full Year modules to be available to students by 1 October
 - resources for Spring and Summer modules to be available to students by 1 January

To ensure that resources are made available by the start of the academic year, essential reading on Autumn or Full Year reading lists should be updated and published by 31 July. Spring or Summer modules should be updated and published by 31 October.

A departmental approach will be used to ensure that lists are published in good time and within each department the Director of Education will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating this. The Library will provide statistics and support with engagement to these colleagues and in return they should liaise with their Academic Liaison Group member and the reading list team with any queries or concerns they have.

Lists and readings submitted after the deadlines will be processed by Library & Cultural Services staff, but it should be recognised that content which needs to be newly acquired may not be made available in time for the start of term.

Module leaders should seek to ensure that students are given enough time to consult the resource before the class for which they are required, noting that those students who have additional needs are likely to require additional time to prepare.

It is recognised that some module leaders are not assigned or appointed until near or after 31 July. Staff who are appointed late should publish their lists as soon as practicable and contact their ALG link to ensure that the acquisition of new content can be prioritised.

Further information on our support for reading lists, including frequently asked questions around publishing lists and acquiring new content, is available [on our website](#).

Formats

Except where there is a compelling pedagogical or accessibility requirement, or where the physical item is key to an initiative (e.g. book displays for Library & Cultural Services events) we apply a “digital first” approach to all content.

Digital formats are favoured as they provide equitable access for users, allowing multiple concurrent users to access content from anywhere at any time. Licences which permit unlimited concurrent users are prioritised for purchase.

E-books must be available for Library purchase as an institutional licence. Not all e-books are available for libraries to purchase –in particular, we are unable to buy Kindle versions. Audio-visual formats, where possible, are provided by Library streaming services in preference to DVD and CD formats for the reasons outlined above.

In support of our digital first approach, information literacy and digital skills training is available on a self-service basis from the Library website, via our open workshop programme and can also be integrated into the curriculum via the ALG. Further information on our current teaching offering is available [on our website](#).

Obsolete formats are not acquired (e.g. VHS, microforms). Out of print material is not normally sourced as a permanent acquisition but is prioritised as a temporary acquisition via interlibrary loan.

Intellectual freedom and censorship

In acquiring content to support education and research, we commit to the principles of intellectual freedom and universal access to information, and in particular the [RLUK and IFLA statement on libraries and intellectual freedom](#). We facilitate access to all kinds of content and oppose any form of censorship, but as responsible custodians and curators we may take steps to minimise offence.

Suppliers and pricing

We participate in national and regional purchasing consortia including Jisc Collections and the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC), whose agreements enable us to realise quantifiable cash and time savings, as well as ensuring compliance with legislative requirements. As such we are committed to their use, and the use of suppliers outside of these agreements is minimised.

Where we are purchasing resources outside of a consortium agreement, we always push for discounts from list pricing and limited annual increases (if applicable).

Where known or anticipated usage of a product justifies its continued renewal and a multi-year agreement limits any annual price increases, we enter such an agreement to maximise value for money and return on investment.

Donations

We do not actively seek donations and can only accept material which enhances content for existing teaching and research areas, taking into account the hidden costs associated with processing and storing material. Donations are only added to stock after they have been considered and accepted by Library & Cultural Services staff.

Content management and discovery

Active management of content

Active management of existing Library content is as important as the selection of new content. It is necessary to ensure that content is aligned to current teaching and research interests, that relevant material is easily found, and that there is sufficient space for new content to be added.

Superseded editions and low-use duplicate copies are routinely withdrawn, and print journal runs are prioritised for deselection where our content access is duplicated in digital form, or where print runs are short or incomplete. Other locally-redundant content (e.g. low-use content which is not relevant to current teaching and research) is considered for relegation or deselection on a rolling basis according to space requirements.

Withdrawn material is disposed of sustainably; journals are offered to the [UK Research Reserve \(UKRR\)](#), whilst unwanted books are offered to [Better World Books](#), a for-profit social enterprise who offer a small commission on resales (which is returned to the Content & Collections budget). Items which cannot be sent for further use are recycled via the [Sustainability team](#).

Usage statistics for subscribed content are monitored and resources which represent poor value for money are highlighted to the ALG for discussion with the relevant departments or schools in advance of any renewal. Where a department or school considers a low-performing resource to be important, it may be necessary to develop an action plan to increase usage to justify a continued subscription.

Usage statistics are also monitored to indicate where demand is not being met. Turnaway figures for unowned content are used to identify potential content acquisitions or additional licences.

Arrangement of physical content

New content is located on open access shelves in the relevant library building. Low demand stock which is to be retained is considered for relegation to closed access storage at our Colchester campus; closed access stock can be requested for delivery to any campus library for consultation.

Borrowing and circulation

Borrowing rules (loan entitlements, loan periods, reservation processes) are designed to maximise circulation of stock and to optimise user experience, and are reviewed regularly to maximise circulation of stock, to exploit developments of the library management system, and to respond to user feedback.

Further information on current borrowing arrangements is available [on our website](#).

Discovery and description

Content is made discoverable through our own discovery tools and also through external databases and search interfaces. We are committed to a positive user experience and regularly review and update those interfaces over which we have control. We also investigate, invest in and provide user support for additional tools such as browser plugins to streamline content access routes and simplify the login and authentication process.

We also contribute our data to a number of collaborative schemes, including [Jisc Library Hub Discover](#) and [OCLC WorldCat](#) to maximise the visibility of our content to external audiences.

Our discovery systems use international schemes for description and organisation of subjects, including Library of Congress Classification and Library of Congress Subject Headings. Such schemes can demonstrate inappropriate language and terms, and perpetuate colonial views and biases. We are committed to making local changes to resolve problematic cases and also contribute to wider efforts to change these at a national or international level.

Accessibility and alternative formats service

We are committed to maximising the accessibility of our content for the benefit of all. Where possible we acquire content without digital rights management (DRM) in order that users are not unduly restricted when copying, printing or downloading.

Accessibility levels are checked when investigating potential new content platforms to ensure compliance with current legislation and we lobby suppliers to ensure that they develop platforms as new standards emerge.

Where users have specific accessibility needs, we provide self-service tools to convert documents to preferred formats and offer a mediated service where additional support is required.

Core requirements for digital content acquisitions

The following criteria are considered as core requirements when considering potential new digital content acquisitions:

- compliance with relevant privacy and accessibility legislation
- availability via a procurement-compliant route
- ability to be made discoverable via Library Search
- ability to provide campus-wide access with off-campus access via anonymised authentication (proxy IP or federated access)
- availability of usage reports (COUNTER or similar) to allow usage-based decisions

Where suggestions for new digital content do not meet these criteria, ALG members provide support to users in identifying alternative resources. Digital content which does not meet the above criteria is exceptionally considered by the Library Leadership Team if all of the following apply:

- it is considered essential for either teaching or research
- no alternatives are available
- a compelling business case is submitted by the requesting department or school in conjunction with their ALG link/s

Consideration of a content request does not guarantee its acquisition, and Library & Cultural Services staff reserve the right to deny a request if, in their opinion, it is unsuitable for acquisition.

Open access

We support the principles of open research and actively monitor the developing scholarly publishing landscape. As new open access models develop, we investigate these and consider how we can engage with them. This includes making financial contributions to open access publishing initiatives.

We are committed to investigating deals which both provide Essex authors with the option to publish their research outputs open access and move expenditure away from 'pay to read' models. We also support models which do not directly provide open access opportunities for Essex authors but which further the infrastructure for sustainable open access publishing.

We work collaboratively with colleagues from the Research & Enterprise Office to assess transformative agreements which waive individual APCs for corresponding authors, and contribute to national consultation and negotiation exercises lead by Jisc Collections.

We incorporate open access material into our discovery systems and are committed to increasing the visibility of these resources for both teaching and independent research, to drive engagement with open research principles.

Glossary

Article processing charges (APCs)

Fees levied by publishers to make an individual article available open access.

COUNTER

International standard used to measure library e-resource access figures.

Courseware

Software designed for educational use (e.g. lab simulation software, interactive software to supplement/complement an e-textbook).

Demand-driven acquisition (DDA)

An e-book acquisition model where a large volume of content is made available in principle, with individual purchases being automatically triggered when a title is used. See also **evidence-based acquisition (EBA)**.

Digital rights management (DRM)

Access control technology used to prevent or restrict users' ability to create copies or print from resources.

Evidence-based acquisition (EBA)

An e-book acquisition model where payment is made to access a large volume of content for a fixed period; at the end of the fixed period the purchaser receives a credit up to the value of the initial

payment which is then used to select e-book titles for perpetual purchase. The final selection of titles is undertaken by library staff. See also **demand-driven acquisition (DDA)**.

Interlibrary loan

Temporary acquisition of content on loan from another library.

Jisc

A not-for-profit membership organisation for HE and FE institutions, which works to develop digital services and solutions for education.

Jisc Collections

A Jisc initiative to negotiate and licence digital content for Jisc members.

Open access

Free and unrestricted access to content, allowing access to published works at no cost to the reader.

Open research

A movement to make research across arts, humanities and sciences accessible to all in society.

Pay to read

Funding model where the subscription cost is used to provide reading access to the content.

Pay to publish

Funding model where the subscription cost is used to cover the cost of publishing content as open access.

Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium (SUPC)

A membership-based buying organisation for HE and FE providing members with access to framework agreements which simplify procurement and savings opportunities.

Talis

Talis Aspire is the name of our current reading list management system, provided by Talis.

Transformative agreement

Contracts negotiated between publishers and subscribers which move the funding model from 'pay to read' to 'pay to publish' by reallocating subscription spend from 'pay to read' to 'pay to publish'. These contracts aim to shift journals from a traditional subscription model to fully open access, and are also referred to as 'transitional agreements' or 'read and publish' deals.

UK Research Reserve (UKRR)

A national initiative to ensure that two copies of a journal are retained in a shared national collection, known as the UKRR. One UKRR copy is kept at the British Library and a second UKRR copy is normally held at Cambridge or Oxford. The scheme allows libraries to de-duplicate their print journal holdings on the basis of the national collection, and to make offers of titles to be transferred into the national collection. A similar initiative for monographs – UKRR(M) – is being proposed.

Document Control Panel

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Policy Classification	Policy
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Security Rationale	
Policy Manager Role	Content & Collections Manager
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