



## WILLIAM READY DIVISION OF ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH COLLECTIONS COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

### MISSION

The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections is the principal repository for rare books, archives, antiquarian maps, and related historical material at McMaster University in support of teaching, education, research, and scholarship.

Our collecting philosophy is generally that materials in our care are held in trust for humankind. In its day-to-day operations the Division serves a broad range of users, including:

- McMaster students, faculty, staff, and alumni
- The national and international community of researchers and scholars
- Members of the public, both locally and worldwide

In a local context, the Ready Division aims to be an engaged participant in the scholarly work of the University, especially through collecting and helping to interpret unique materials that will support the research and teaching activities of the McMaster community.

### EXISTING COLLECTION STRENGTHS

The Division has built strong collections in several areas; these form the core of its holdings. A number of these have been active collecting fields since the 1960s, while others are more recent additions to, or expansions of, historical areas of activity.

#### Archives:

- Bertrand Russell
- Canadian publishing, literature, and authorship
- Pacifism, peace, and disarmament — activists and movements
- Canadian political radicalism, activism, and labour unions
- First and Second World Wars
  - Canadian and British experiences during wartime
  - The Holocaust
  - Resistance movements during the Second World War
- Canadian music and musicians' archives

#### Rare books, ephemera, and contemporary publications:

- Early printed works (1450-1699)
- Eighteenth century books, journals, broadsides, chapbooks, and pamphlets
- Canadian poetry
- Irish and Anglo-Irish books (Irish Texts Society, Lady Gregory, &c.)
- History, environment, and culture of the West Indies

## **CURRENT COLLECTING AREAS**

Collecting activity for the Division is guided by the general philosophy that we seek collections which are national and international in scope. This is in keeping with our larger goal to maintain a research- and teaching-oriented collection that supports an active program of scholarship at McMaster and beyond.

### **Archival Fonds and Collections**

#### ***Primary Collecting Areas:***

- Canadian authors and literature
  - Primarily (but not exclusively) authors working in fiction
  - Developing interests:
    - Indigenous writers
    - Emerging writers
    - Genre fiction, especially science fiction
    - Graphic novels and narrative
- Canadian music (performers, composers, and conductors)
- Canadian participation in war or armed conflict
  - Experiences of the First and Second World Wars are our main focus; experiences of Canadian involvement in other conflicts will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- The Holocaust and resistance
- Pacifism, peace, and disarmament movements
- Bertrand Russell & Russelliana

#### ***Secondary Collecting Areas:***

- Canadian publishing, especially small and private presses
- Canadian business and advertising
- Canadian labour unions and organising
- The West Indies and West Indian diaspora in Canada
- Canadian and local history
  - This includes Hamilton history, with due consideration given to the collection mandates and strengths of neighbouring institutions such as Hamilton Public Library and other university special collections
- Communities/groups that may be under-represented in our collections (e.g., Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA, etc.). Ideally, collections in this area will be related to the Division's primary collecting fields, but other areas will be considered as opportunities arise.

### **Areas Not Collected or Collected Selectively**

- Temperance  
*Though a historical collecting area for the Division, these materials see relatively little research use. Collecting additional materials in this area is not currently a priority.*
- Contemporary ephemera and exhibit pieces  
*While these do have a role in research and teaching activities that we aim to support, they are not a primary collecting focus in themselves and will be acquired only selectively.*
- Research data  
*The archiving of research data is a growing role in research libraries but is out of scope for the Division's activities. Support for archiving and using archived research data is available elsewhere in the McMaster Library.*
- Records of McMaster University offices, officials, faculty, or programs  
*McMaster has not established a formal university archives program. While the Division is in many ways a logical home for such a program, it is not staffed or resourced nor does it have an official mandate from the University to collect such records or faculty papers. Only selective materials are acquired in this area.*

### **Printed Materials and Publications**

In collecting books, journals, and other publications, the Division's interests lie in the following areas. In addition to building on the many existing strengths of the collection, we actively seek new initiatives and acquire new collections in anticipation of or response to changing academic needs and interests. We are also committed to developing unique and distinctive collections in areas which have little coverage elsewhere.

#### ***Rare (pre-1800) books:***

- Time periods and geographic areas:
  - Early printed works (1450-1699), particularly from Italy and the Low Countries
  - Printed works of the Long Eighteenth Century (ca. 1688-1815), particularly from Britain, France, and their North American colonies
  - Pre-Confederation Canadian imprints
  - Groupings or libraries of such material gathered by knowledgeable collectors will be considered selectively
- Subject areas:
  - Works of natural history and philosophy, especially illustrated or otherwise technically significant works
  - Botanical texts, herbaria, and works on arboriculture and silviculture, especially illustrated works

- Works on or pertaining to the history of science, mathematics, architecture, and engineering
- Early modern humanist works and translations from the Classics, in particular the editions of Plantin and Manutius
- Polyglot / parallel works typeset in more than one script, especially those including Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew
- Dictionaries and encyclopaediae, especially general interest works
- Travel & exploration literature, especially:
  - Works about early (pre-Confederation to early twentieth century) Canada
  - Works incorporating illustrations and/or cartographic material
- Works by or pertaining to the Indigenous peoples of North America, especially works in or about Indigenous languages, in particular:
  - Iroquoian languages geographically or culturally proximal to Lake Ontario (Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora, Huron)
  - Algonquian languages in the Anishinaabemowin dialect continuum, particularly Ojibwemowin
- Other subjects that may be brought to our attention from time to time by McMaster faculty for research or graduate studies, such as:
  - Animals in literature and culture [*History and English & Cultural Studies*]
  - Buddhism, Islam, and Eastern religions [*Religious Studies*]
- Pamphlets, broadsides, disbounds, chapbooks, and other ephemeral literature that support or pertain to the subject area interests of the Division will be considered on an occasional basis

***Contemporary (post-1800) books:***

- New editions of Bertrand Russell's published works and new publications about Russell's life, work, and activism
- 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction, especially science fiction
- On a selective basis, volumes that support the Division's archival and subject-based collecting interests or form a core of research material on a topic of interest, including:
  - Canadian authors and literature
  - Canadian publishing and small presses
  - Book history, printing history, publishing history
  - Canadian popular culture
  - Canadian history and politics
  - Canadian participation in war or armed conflict, especially the First and Second World Wars
  - The Holocaust
  - Resistance movements during the Second World War
  - Pacifism, peace, and disarmament movements

### ***Areas Not Collected or Collected Selectively***

- Contemporary non-fiction  
*We do not generally acquire general interest or academic non-fiction, especially large collections of such materials, unless the works in question are both germane to the collecting interests outlined above AND highly current at the time of acquisition.*
- Publications by McMaster Faculty  
*Books' or authors' associations with McMaster University are usually not significant considerations in contemporary book acquisitions. Generally, such items will only be considered for acquisition insofar as they contribute to the collecting interests outlined above.*
- Contemporary periodicals and ephemera  
*We generally consider contemporary periodicals and ephemera only if they relate to one or more collecting areas outlined above.*

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### *Languages*

Acquisition of archival fonds and collections generally focuses on English language material. Some specialized subject areas (e.g., the Holocaust and resistance movements) are collected in other languages.

Acquisition of printed works may occur in a variety of languages, as appropriate to the subject and time period. Further details may be found under “Printed Materials and Publications” above.

### *Media Types*

The Division acquires material in all media types, including electronic/digital, with due consideration of the Division’s ability to manage such material.

## METHODS OF ACQUISITION

The Division acquires new materials primarily through donation. In such cases a Deed of Gift or Donation Agreement will be prepared and signed by both the donor and the University. All gifts must comply with McMaster University’s [Gift Acceptance Policy](#). Purchases of archival fonds or collections are exceedingly rare due to the limited funds available to support such acquisitions.

Both rare or historical and contemporary monographs and journals are purchased for the collection when they fit with current collecting interests. Purchases of large book collections are — as with archival fonds — a rare occurrence due to limited acquisitions funding.

The Division does not normally accept materials on deposit; that is, a receipt of materials without transfer of ownership to the University. Such agreements will be considered only when there is a clear benefit to the University in securing the materials in advance of a transfer of ownership. Deposit agreements will be made in writing, will contain specific details of the materials included and the Library’s commitments, and will have specified time limits after which ownership of the materials will be transferred to the University or the materials returned. No deposit agreement may be entered into without the approval of the appropriate Associate University Librarian or the University Librarian, as the situation dictates, nor may it contravene in any way the Gift Acceptance Policy referenced above.

## COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

### *Archival Appraisal*

In keeping with standard archival practice, the contents of all archives received in the Division will be assessed for historical, informational, evidential, and research value. In most cases, portions of the archive will not be kept. Material identified for removal from the archive will

first be offered for return to the donor or creator. If not returned to the donor, items will be discarded or destroyed as appropriate to the nature of the material.

Books, serials, or other published materials included with archival fonds or collections will also be appraised during processing. These may be retained in the Division's collections, sent to general stacks in the appropriate University Library collection, returned to the donor, offered to another institution, or discarded, as appropriate to the items in question.

Any collections of books, serials, or other published materials offered as gifts in their own right will similarly be reviewed for suitability by the Division's staff. As with published materials accompanying archival fonds or collections, such items may not be retained, or may be retained only selectively.

### ***Deaccessioning***

Collections or archival fonds in the Division's holdings that no longer align with its collecting areas may be deaccessioned. These will generally be offered first to another institution where they have a better subject fit and can continue to be accessible for research and study. Decisions regarding the removal, return, transfer, or disposal of previously accessioned archives will be documented in writing, approved by the appropriate Associate University Librarian and the University Librarian, and kept with other administrative records of the affected archive.

Books, serials, and other printed materials in the Division's research holdings may be deaccessioned following the same procedures. More typically, it is anticipated that the withdrawal of books or serials will focus on reference and other supporting materials, where periodic weeding is beneficial for both currency and accuracy of information, rather than on the Division's research-oriented collections.