

# Typography & graphic communication

## Collecting policy

## User profile

This collection statement covers provision for the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication.

The collections serve all staff and students in the Department, for both their theoretical and historical studies; and some are also relevant to staff in English Literature with an interest in the history of the book, and some graphic design materials of interest to Fine Art.

Related areas:

- prints, shared with history of art
- computing and ergonomics, shared with systems engineering and psychology
- social and economic history, shared with history and psychology
- typographic design for children, shared with education
- book history, shared with English literature

## Research interests

The Department has an international reputation for research into what is broadly summarised as 'design for reading'. This encompasses history, theory and practice in information and editorial design, typeface design, and design and printing history.

The Department is the home for the Centre for Information Design Research, which is devoted to the University research priority investigating how to make complex information accessible to all.

Individual and departmental research interests also include:

Publishing history; printed ephemera; design of everyday information printing in nineteenth-century Britain; history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century wood-engraving; work of Robert Gibbings; colour printing; history of lithography; Isotype; post-War typography in Britain; New Typography and Modernism in continental Europe and Britain.

Typography in digital environments; typography and language; graphic language; pedagogical and human aspects of electronic publishing; evaluation of multimedia; evaluation techniques in typographic research; perception and classification of symbols; legibility on screen; the use of colour on screen, and visual perception; document description; specification procedures.

The role of typography, especially 'house typefaces', in corporate identity schemes; design methods; design practice; information design; typographic design for children; typographic design in dictionaries; electronic interface design, with particular application to the history and form of types; design for electronic media, particularly of text-intensive documents; the design process as influenced by the originating and rendering technology; design of complex reference works such as dictionaries for both printed and on-screen use; museum exhibition design; documents for conceptual artists 1960-1979; design for newspapers and magazines.

The history of lettering with stencils; stencil letterforms; lithographed lettering; the history of typefounding; non-Latin typography; inscriptional lettering; the history of letterforms as an index of cultural change.

There are two Research Centres:

- Centre for Ephemera Studies
- Centre for Information Design Research

## Dimensions of teaching and learning

The department offers a unique undergraduate degree in Graphic Communication. There are four taught postgraduate programmes for Book Design, Information Design, Creative Enterprise and Typeface Design.

Details of the taught programmes available within the department are available at: [www.reading.ac.uk/typography](http://www.reading.ac.uk/typography)

## Current holdings

Many materials fall into the 070, 090 and 655 sections of the classification, but typography is a very eclectic discipline, and includes material in 000, 100, 700, 900 and other areas. For more detail see the Typography & graphic communication *Finding your way* guide.

### Books and e-books

The Library holds a wide range of relevant material, including many items at research level.

The Library maintains a Teaching Practice Collection of children's books for use by students within the Institute of Education. There is also a collection of twentieth century children's reading books. Many of these are of interest to Typography & Graphic Communication from a design perspective.

Individual e-books are occasionally purchased via aggregators such as MyiLibrary and EBL to help meet concurrent demand.

### Periodicals

Typography have a number of directly relevant periodical subscriptions however, the department's interest in periodicals is wide ranging and covers significantly more titles than these.

Significant sets of non-current titles include: *British printer*, *Printing trades journal*, *Offset printing*, *Typographical circular*, *Electrotypes / stereotypes journal*, *Typographica*, *Penrose annual*, *Signature*, *Typography Alphabet & Image*, *Motif*, *Design*.

## Reference/bibliographic

The Library has a good reference collection for this subject.

The Nineteenth-Century and Illustrated Incunabula Short Title Catalogues, and the Bodleian Library pre-1920 Catalogue are available on CD-ROM. The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography is available online.

The Library subscribes to the following relevant electronic services:

- Arts and Humanities Citation Index (via Web of Knowledge)
- British Standards Online
- Early English Books Online
- Eighteenth Century Collections Online
- English Short Title Catalogue
- Grove Dictionary of Art (via Oxford Art Online, also held in print)
- Index to Theses
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences
- LLBA (Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts)
- MediaHub
- OED ( Oxford English Dictionary)
- PsycINFO
- Social Sciences Citation Index (via Web of Knowledge)

Use is made of the Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA) which covers material published between 1975-2007, and The Royal Historical Society Bibliography.

In print, there is a full run of *Annual bibliography of the history of printed books and libraries*, plus *ArtBibliographies Modern* (1969–1987). The Library holds the Art Institute of Chicago *Index to art periodicals* (1962), the Dictionary Catalogue of the History of Printing of the Newberry Library (1961), the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, and the British Museum Catalogue of Books printed in the XVth century, *Catalogue of the technical reference library of works on printing and the allied trades* [1919], Bigmore and Wyman, *A bibliography of printing* (1880, reprinted 1969)

## Related special collections

The **Overstone Library**, the **Cole Library** and the **Children's Collection** provide many specimens of early books, famous presses, illustration processes and binding design. Of the other special collections at UMASCS (University Museums and Special Collections Services) the most relevant are:

- H. Baron Collection of lithographed music
- Beckett Collection
- Gibbings Collection
- Great Exhibition Collection
- Michael Harvey Collection
- Spellman Collection of Victorian music covers

The Printing Collection is a general collection of items relating to printing, typography and book design, primarily from an artefactual point of view, formed to facilitate the teaching of graphic design.

The collection of twelve incunabula is regularly used for teaching.

Relevant archive collections include the British Publishers and Printers Archive (Chatto and Windus, Hogarth Press, Bodley Head, Secker and Warburg, Longman, Macmillan, De La Rue & Company, Icoграда, Isotype, Keepsake Press, London Typographical Designers, Ltd., Ruari McLean Associates, the John Lewis Printing Collection, and the publications and ephemera of the Gaberbocchus Press, and others).

## Strengths and exclusions

The collections are strong at national, and in some cases international, level, in all areas relevant to the Department's courses, and provide significant support for research and incentives for postgraduate research.

Although the Library does collect works and textbooks on general graphic design to support students studying BA Graphic Communication, the focus is on supporting the Department's strengths in Postgraduate teaching and research: history of printing and design, book design, information design, and typeface design.

Type specimens are held by the Department. Reading Design and Print holds relevant technical publications.

Areas which would benefit from further development are those relating to information design, in particular, cognitive ergonomics, human / computer interaction, health information and design for an ageing population.

## Collecting level

Purchases are made to support undergraduate and taught postgraduate work, with reference and monograph works supporting research. As Typography is a rare discipline, and the collections are strong, efforts are made to buy as comprehensively as budgets allow. Particular items of importance are purchased in collaboration with the Library or other Departments. (Purchases for the Special Collections Printing Collection also support the Department's work.)

The subject is regarded as a research specialism by the University Library. The Library's and the Department's collections, and Special Collections, provide very good support for research at master's level and above.

## Alternative access

### **Inter-library loans**

Postgraduates pay for Inter-Library loans through their research allocation from the Department, or through funds from their sponsors. Undergraduates may request Departmental payment, which is granted if the loans are considered indispensable. Staff pay for requests through their research allocation from the Department, unless a good case is made to the Head of Department. The number of requests remains consistent and is relatively low compared to other subject areas.

### **Other information resources in the University**

The Department has substantial collections of undergraduate texts, and technical manuals in its resource centre. It holds its own teaching collection with examples of methods of

production (design preliminaries, tools, artefacts in various stages of completeness, materials).

The Department also holds major collections of graphic material (including Ephemera, Isotype, Rickards, Soulby, and Kitchin) and extensive type specimens and lettering collections.

The Department plays an active role in the development of the University's collections as a whole, including library materials, through the Committee on Archives and Collections and through cooperation with UMASCS.

The Learning Hub on the London Road campus has an impressive collection of contemporary children's books and reading schemes.

The Museum of English Rural Life's collections contain many examples of printed ephemera.

There is some collaboration between the Department and external institutions to support collections, and conversely, the University is a founding trustee of St Bride Library, London.

### **Use of other libraries**

Other Libraries used regularly by staff and postgraduates include: the University of London Library; St Bride Library; the British Library (including its newspaper collections); the National Art Library; the Bodleian Library, Oxford; and Cambridge University Library.

## **Selection, acquisition and stock editing**

See the General Collection Development Statement for general principles.

Items for the Printing Collection are selected by the University Museums, Archives and Special Collections Service (UMASCS) Librarian in consultation with the Department and University Library.

Second hand material: gaps in the collection are regularly filled by second hand purchases. The Library Representative scans second-hand booklists for relevant material.

Stock editing is the responsibility of the Liaison Librarian in consultation with the Library Representative and with other departments / Schools as appropriate, for example with English and Fine Art. In practice little stock editing is undertaken, as few multiple copies are purchased (because the Department itself makes provision for essential reading), and the subject is a research specialism, with books being preserved and collections actively developed. Earlier editions of books may be withdrawn if the later editions are not heavily used, provided they do not contain important material which is absent from later editions, or are significant for other reasons.

All liaison librarians are aware of the Department's interests in books as artefacts, and of the possible relevance of printing and illustrations when items in other subject areas and collections are considered for withdrawal. Consultation takes place with the Typography & Graphic Communications liaison librarian and the UMASCS librarian, as appropriate.

Overall this subject area is lacking in the provision of e-resources. E-books of text-based material are preferred when available, with additional printed copies of visual material where appropriate. The Department has expressed an interest in electronic versions of journals, in particular *Visible Language* which many of their academic staff contribute to. At the time of writing this is only available through large database subscriptions, but consideration will be given to purchasing in the future.

There are few relevant bibliographic databases available, though there is some cross over with wider art and design resources, and aspects of systems engineering, so the Department should be included in any consultation about new purchases in these areas.

*Policy written by Karen Drury and Ruth Ng, Typography Liaison Librarians, July 2015*