



Library Disposal Policy

1. Context

In accordance with the College and University Statutes, Schedule 4 (Treasures and Heritage), the Library manages its general contents and collections, as well as its treasures, 'for the benefit of the College Community and the Wider Community.' To do so, the Library adopts an approach of perpetual and sustainable stewardship. Through this approach, the Library has built up sizeable and internationally significant collections over the past 400 years, including in digital format during recent decades. Preserving them, and making them available to present and future generations, remains important. In an era of seemingly endless content freely available online, research libraries such as Trinity's play a critical role as trusted repositories of original sources. A sustainable approach means there are certain situations and certain categories of material where disposal must be considered.

2. Purpose

This Policy clarifies which kinds of library materials can be disposed of, as well as the guiding principles that need to be considered in the process.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to the University Library and all of its content and collections (in all formats), including materials that are under consideration for accessioning. It excludes the Library's working equipment, which is entered into the University's Asset Register; disposal of this is regulated by Trinity's Procurement Policy, section 5(d). Similarly, working data, documents, and websites that are not explicitly accessioned into the collection are not in scope.

4. Principles

The core principles underpinning this Policy are stewardship and sustainability. They require that all disposal activities, while important and necessary, must follow clearly delineated criteria, be transparent, and not endanger items in the permanent collection.

5. Definitions

This Policy uses the following terms with these specific meanings:

- 'material': format-agnostic umbrella term for anything the Library regards as part of its collection or considers adding to it; used for an undefined number of things.
- 'item': generic term similar to 'material' but used for a singular thing.
- 'collection': assembled material owned and controlled by the Library, and which the Library designates for reading or use in teaching, learning and research; other things are excluded, for example the Library's working equipment, data and documents.
- 'content': generic term similar to 'collection' but emphasising digital formats.
- 'copy': a published item identical to other items at the time of production; minor differences in format are generally ignored, e.g. a paperback version of a hardback book is regarded as a copy, albeit an inferior one.



‘derivative’: a copy of a digital file with different format characteristics, usually such that it is not possible to re-create the original from the copy, but more copies in the new format can be derived from the original (i.e. the master file).

‘edition’: a different version of a published work, e.g. updated text, added illustrations, and translations.

‘accession’: to add to the collection (‘de-accession’ meaning to remove from the collection).

6. Policy

General Rules:

- a) Manuscripts, archives, maps, early printed books, special collections, and legal deposit materials, once accessioned, are not subject to disposal scheduling.
- b) Prior to accessioning, items may be de-selected and disposed of.
- c) Duplicate copies of material not listed under (a) are subject to regular de-accessioning and disposal.
- d) Digital copies and derivatives can be deleted only if the master files are sufficiently preserved.
- e) A unique item, and any item from a category listed under (a), is considered for disposal only if it is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be repaired, consulted, or photographed.
- f) Born-digital, digitised, and print versions of a work are not considered duplicate copies under this Policy.
- g) Decisions to dispose of items are not made with the aim of generating funds.
- h) In the event of the University authorising the Library to form shared collections with partner institutions, the Library may need to re-define what constitutes duplicate copies for collection items outside of the categories listed under (a) above.

Specific Considerations:

- i) In the case of disposing gifted material, the wishes of the donors or their executors are sought and enacted, where practicable.
- j) Items de-selected from accessioning may be offered to another institution that is considered more appropriate to curate or house them. In the case of a transfer, the Library supplies all associated documentation, but retains on file relevant information for future reference.
- k) Duplicate copies routinely withdrawn from stock, de-accessioned and disposed of relate to:
 - i. Superseded editions
 - ii. Texts purchased for taught courses but no longer in use
 - iii. Copies in poor condition or little use
 - iv. Back runs of periodical titles purchased for two or more reading rooms



- l) At least one copy of an edition, once accessioned, is retained in the permanent collection. As far as practicable, this copy must not be inferior in quality or condition to the de-accessioned copies.
- m) De-accessioned copies have their details removed from the public catalogue and are carefully disposed of through a secure process.
- n) The environmental impact of disposal is minimised by making the copies available for further use, or by recycling. External services may be engaged for re-sale or donation, but at no cost to Trinity. Where available, relevant metrics are gathered on an annual basis.
- o) Disposal is carried out in ways that eliminate the risk of loss to the Library's permanent collection, and that minimise the risk of damage to the Library's reputation.

7. Policy Owner

The Librarian and College Archivist is the owner of this Policy.

8. Responsibility and Implementation

- a) Decisions to de-select acquired items from accessioning rests with the archivist or librarian charged with assessing the acquisition, in line with the current content and collection development policies and guidelines.
- b) Disposal of unique items (following irreparable damage or deterioration) must be authorised by the Librarian and College Archivist, and, in the case of high-value items, ratified by the Board of the University.
- c) Responsibility for de-accessioning duplicate items rests with the Head of Content Management & Open Scholarship. The day-to-day implementation of the disposal procedures is delegated to a named member of staff, who acts as the disposal officer.
- d) Any deviations from, or changes to these procedures must be authorised by the Librarian and College Archivist.

9. Related Documents

- The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College Dublin and of the University of Dublin, including updates to 6 March 2025: <https://www.tcd.ie/registrar/statutes/>.
- The 20th edition of the Trinity Procurement Policy & Procedures, July 2024, is also referenced as a 'manual' on the Procurement web page: <https://www.tcd.ie/financial-services/procurement/policies-procedures/>.

10. Document Control for Revised Policies

- 10.1 Date of initial approval: May 2021 (Library and Information Policy Committee)
- 10.2 Date revised policy approved: 28 January 2026
- 10.3 Date policy effective from: 28 January 2026
- 10.4 Date of next review: Academic Year 2028/2029