Collection Policy for Chinese Studies

1. Overview

General coverage of subject in the Bodleian Libraries

Teaching and first level research collections are held in the KB Chen China Centre Library. The main research collections are held in the Book Storage Facility in Swindon. Art and archaeology materials are held in the Sackler Library. Chinese special collections are held in the Weston Library.

Books in Chinese are catalogued in the Chinese allegro catalogue. Books in all other languages are catalogued on Aleph. Chinese Special Collections and digitised items are available through the SERICA interface.

Legal deposit

Legal deposit materials are held in the China Centre Library when they are necessary for reference or important for teaching and self-study, art and archaeology are held in the Sackler Library. All other material if kept in the Book Storage Facility.

Electronic resources

All Chinese Studies electronic resources are included in OXLib+ and additionally listed at: http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ccl/e-resources

Catalogues

A list of all catalogues of Chinese Studies material in the Bodleian Libraries is available at: http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ccl/catalogues

Languages

The research collections are mostly in Chinese. About 70% of the teaching collections are in English. Japanese Sinology also is an integral part of the research collection.

Bodleian Libraries Collection Management

The Bodleian Libraries have several Collection Management Policy Documents which refer to all subjects and collections. These are available on the web and deal with location, retention, disposal and transfer of library material.

2. Teaching collections

Teaching staff are contacted for their reading lists before the start of each term. Duplicate copies are only acquired on the explicit wish by students or teaching staff. Items on the reading list are put together for the reserve collection with confined status which is borrow-able up to three hours. Overnight and weekend loan are also possible when the items are checked out during the last opening hour of the library and they are due back during the first hour when the library opens again.
Books from Bodleian are also used to support taught courses. They are however strictly confined to the library.

3. Research collections

Research books

The larger part of the research collections is held in the Book Storage Facility.

Monograph serials / standing-orders

Most materials received by standing order are held in the Book Storage Facility.

Journals

The vast majority of Journals in Chinese language has only been taken in electronic form since 2008. English language journals are held in print and electronic in the China Centre Library including a number of legal deposit titles.

4. Special Collections

The Bodleian Library's Chinese collections date back to the earliest period of the Library's history. Sir Thomas Bodley himself was instrumental in building up the collection and he and his agents bought up works which Dutch East India Company merchants had brought back to Amsterdam from overseas Chinese communities in South East Asia. During the following century the Library acquired other Chinese works with the bequests of Laud (1635), Selden (1659), Thurston (1661) and Marsh (1771). The Bodleian now holds as many as a quarter of all the extant Chinese books that arrived in Europe in the seventeenth century.

Missionary collections

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Library acquired two large collections of missionary publications, the contents of the great International Exhibitions at Philadelphia in 1876 and London in 1884, bringing the corpus of doctrinal works to near 2,000 volumes, representing at least 1,500 different titles. The collection is particularly rich in tracts published during the first half of the century. The missionary works have an interest which goes far beyond their value as expositions of Christian doctrine: some are written in local dialects, others provide glimpses of the popular Chinese religious and social customs which the missionaries encountered in the course of their work; all illustrate the process whereby traditional Chinese block-printing was gradually superseded by Western typography as the missionaries strove to circumvent local prohibitions and improve the efficiency of their publishing. The Chinese Protestant missionary publications of the nineteenth century constitute a special collection whose importance is increasingly recognised and which is scarcely matched elsewhere.

Twentieth century

The acquisition of the Backhouse collection, one of the finest and most generous gifts in the Library’s history, between 1913 and 1922, greatly enriched the Bodleian’s Chinese collections. An aristocratic collection put together in Peking by Sir Edmund Backhouse in the early twentieth century as
the Qing Dynasty gave way to the Republic. Much of its content is unique in the West and exemplifies the art of Chinese printing in all its variety. And unlike many of the traditional Chinese books that European libraries acquired in previous generations, the Backhouse Collection was never rebound in Western style, so that it also constitutes an excellent resource for the study of the Chinese book as an object.

In recent years the library has been given collections by academics in the field of Sinology. Among the many items bequeathed to the Bodleian by the late Piet van der Loon there are three major collections of literature of Southern Chinese origin:

More than 450 Cantonese opera scripts (yueju) mostly dating from the early twentieth century with colourful printed covers, averaging around 30 pages long.

More than 450 popular songs from the Southern Min region (minnan gequ 閩南歌曲). Small editions of a highly ephemeral nature, mostly produced in Xiamen (Amoy), Shanghai, and Taiwan in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

More than 450 of so called “wooden-fish books” (muyushu 木魚書) from the Hong Kong and Canton region.

5. Subject coverage of selected purchased material

In addition to the legal deposit intake and general works, the Bodleian Libraries will purchase non-deposited material in the following specific subjects:

The Library aims to acquire comprehensive collections of material under the following headings:

- modern humanities – major works of modern scholarship in the areas of language and linguistics, literature, history, philosophy, religion, art, architecture, archaeology, epigraphy, music.

- reprints – reprints of classical works not already represented in the collections, together with all modern scholarly works relating to them; reprints of major documentary and archival sources, including newspapers and the published holdings of both national and local archives.

- local history – the extensive reproduction series of historical Chinese gazetteers have been acquired in their entirety, and the library is building on this foundation by acquiring all available post-1949 local histories as they are published, a corpus of material which provides material in all the subject areas described above, as well as historical and statistical data in many more besides.

Selective acquisition is made in the areas of:

- modern social sciences, including economics and law – the major yearbooks, and major collections of treaties and legal statutes

- natural science – all works of documentary importance, especially those which have a bearing on humanistic scholarship, such as flora and fauna, atlases of various types, records of earthquakes; all reprinted and newly edited works of traditional Chinese medicine and pharmacology, together with modern pharmacopoeia of traditional drugs.
rare books – these are acquired according to the availability of both the books and donors, with the aim of complementing the existing collections

6. Name of subject consultant(s) responsible for collections

Joshua Seufert (Chinese language materials)
David Helliwell (Chinese Special Collections)
Minh Chung (materials in non-Chinese languages)

Date
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