

Collection Development Policy

Lehigh University Libraries

January 2026

In support of Lehigh University's mission, vision and values, and guided by Library and Technology Services' (LTS) principles of academic innovation, equitable access, and the stewardship of knowledge, the Lehigh University Libraries build and maintain a world-class collection of information in support of teaching, research, learning, and service to others. Guided by Lehigh University Libraries core commitments to inclusion, access, care for the scholarly record, and collective responsibility, we commit to cultivating collections that further the scope of our community's knowledge creation and sharing across the globe; that uphold and embody Lehigh's [commitment](#) to promoting inclusive excellence and belonging; and that foster cultures of inquiry and lifelong learning.

Oversight

The lifecycle of collections work is performed across numerous groups within the library. Liaison librarians with subject expertise, knowledge of the curriculum, and deep familiarity with faculty research curate and maintain responsive print and digital resources in alignment with departmental needs and in consultation with the Lehigh community. This work is done in collaboration with the Acquisitions, Metadata and Cataloging teams which coordinate logistics of purchasing, organizing, and maintaining resources. In conjunction with and in support of the aforementioned library units, the Library Leadership Group (LLG) provides high-level oversight, including establishing and reviewing collections strategy and priorities; approving major acquisitions and cancellations; and supporting long-range planning and policy development related to access, preservation, and licensing. LLG may also convene working groups as needed to address emerging needs in scholarly communication, collections maintenance and storage, or resource-sharing collaborations.

General Processes

The Lehigh University Libraries take a data-informed approach to managing traditional research collections balanced with strategic pilot programs and new initiatives to build more agile, sustainable, practical, open and diverse collections. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, informed by patron usage, preferences, and requests, are regularly used to evaluate, monitor, and guide the Libraries' collection building expertise.

Collection Maintenance

Lehigh University Libraries' goal is to offer an active, useful collection of materials to support teaching, research, learning, and service to others, and as such are committed to preserving

materials of enduring historical, cultural, intellectual, and institutional value. Librarians engage in stewardship through ongoing collection maintenance, balancing responsible deselection with the long term retention and care of materials to ensure that collections remain relevant, responsive, and representative. Additionally, as part of its commitment to network-level preservation and sharing, the Libraries enter into collaborative and retention agreements with other libraries. As part of this ongoing work, library teams review holdings and deselect materials that are rarely used, out of date, and/or do not contribute meaningfully to the cultural or scholarly record.

The following maintenance criteria are used to make decisions to continue to sustain or remove both physical and electronic materials from the collection: damaged condition; unnecessary duplication; low usage or circulation statistics; obsolete or inaccurate information (or superseded by a new edition); availability in resource sharing networks; relevance to current programs and curriculum; incomplete sets or series; formats no longer supported by the University; and a title's presence in stable online archives either purchased or freely available. Records for deselected materials will be suppressed from the library's public catalog but may be replaced with links to free online copies if available. When possible, materials removed from the collection are donated, sold, discarded, or recycled. Any funds derived from the resale of the deselected items are returned to the Libraries' budget for future purchases.

Collection Development Evaluation Criteria

Both proposed new resources and renewals of existing resources are evaluated by liaison librarians and the Library Leadership Group (LLG) according to the following criteria:

Research support

Breadth and depth of research activity across the university are considered, including emerging areas and institutional priorities, alongside an emphasis on equitable, relevant disciplinary support. Collections decisions also draw on evidence of research output, grant activity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and accreditation standards to ensure that resources align with current and anticipated areas of scholarly inquiry.

Additionally, when cost-effective and sustainable, publisher agreements that enhance the visibility, accessibility, and impact of faculty, staff, and student research—such as read-and-publish or transformative agreements—are considered alongside other research metrics as part of how the Libraries support the University's scholarly activity.

Cost and Usage

Library materials costs are evaluated in relation to anticipated and demonstrated usage (including, but not limited to, interlibrary loan request data and turnaways, the number of times Lehigh users are denied access to a digital journal or other e-resource), institutional need, and availability through other means (e.g., open access or consortial access, holdings in database

aggregators). Pricing models are reviewed with consideration to their long-term sustainability and balance across disciplines, with recognition of specialized subject areas where higher per-use costs may be justified by scholarly and academic value.

Curricular integration

Content is selected for its ability to support teaching and learning across programs and levels. This includes materials that align with course curricula, required and recommended course texts, and a diversity of formats such as traditional text-based works, multimedia, and interactive resources. Functionality that supports instructional use—such as annotation tools, Learning Management System (LMS) integrations, instructor dashboards, and accessibility features—is taken into account when evaluating platforms to ensure resources can be effectively incorporated into varied learning environments.

Holistic learning

The Libraries recognize that learning extends beyond formal coursework. Resources are therefore chosen to support self-guided inquiry, interdisciplinary exploration, creative and professional development, and lifelong learning. The collection aims to sustain curiosity, foster critical thinking, and encourage intellectual growth within and beyond the classroom.

Representativeness

The Libraries seek to develop collections that reflect the full diversity of human experience. This includes acquiring materials by and about underrepresented communities; ensuring global and multilingual coverage; and supporting inclusive narratives that advance equity, cultural understanding, and social responsibility. In addition to building forward-looking collections, the Libraries engage in retrospective collection development to identify and address historic imbalances or absences in the record, strengthening the representation of voices, disciplines, epistemologies, and cultural perspectives that have been overlooked or excluded in earlier collecting practices.

Quality

Quality encompasses rigor, integrity, and credibility produced across a range of scholarly, creative, and community-based practices. The Libraries evaluate quality within the context of communities, disciplines, and traditions from which the work emerges, considering established academic standards and community-defined measures of expertise, relevance, and impact.

Serious consideration is also given to the publisher's or platform's transparency of editorial practices, service standards, governance, and responsiveness. Platform maintenance and development, and compliance with recognized and open community standards in research integrity, accessibility, metadata records, data interoperability, and usage reporting.

Navigability, Discoverability, and Research Use

Resources should facilitate efficient searching, comply with accessibility standards, and integrate seamlessly with library authentication and discovery systems, offering intuitive interfaces and stable access across devices. Ease of discovery, consistent metadata, and compatibility with library link resolvers and Application Program Interfaces (APIs) are prioritized to ensure that resources are both visible and usable.

Licensing terms and usage rights should also support current and anticipated research methods, including text and data mining and other forms of computational analysis, and responsible use of generative AI tools in accordance with institutional policies and ethical standards.

Format and Library Holdings

The Libraries prioritize acquiring resources that address identified gaps or contribute distinctive content to the collection. Format decisions take into account the medium (such as journals, monographs, reference works, or video) and use of the material and the ways each best supports research and teaching. Digital formats are generally chosen when they enhance access, sustainability, and discoverability, while print may be acquired when it supports research methods, disciplinary needs, resource-sharing initiatives, or preservation goals that are not fully met by electronic versions. Duplication across format or platform may occur at librarian discretion.

For e-books and similar resources, the Libraries seek Digital Rights Management (DRM) -free licensing options that allow unrestricted downloading and multiple or unlimited concurrent users, particularly for instructional or high-demand materials. However, librarians may choose to purchase alternate options when DRM-free versions are unavailable or when other licensing models offer more cost-effective or user-optimized access. When feasible, perpetual access rights are preferred to ensure long-term availability of licensed materials, particularly as concerns content with institutional and/or ongoing research value. When possible, the Libraries prefer to license e-books from providers whose licensing terms align with the Libraries values and strategic initiatives.

Consortial and Network Availability

The Libraries also take both a local and network-level approach to collection development, seeking to build and rely on collaborations with other libraries and institutions to provide access to information more broadly. Some examples of this approach include interlibrary loan and other resource-sharing initiatives, support of national and international open access and preservation initiatives, and involvement and leadership in consortia.

Commitment to Open

In support of the University's Inspiring the Future Makers Foundational Initiative toward "[An Expanded and Strengthened Research Environment](#)", and the Sustainability Strategic Plan 2030, specifically goal 11, the Lehigh University Libraries believe the most sustainable, diverse, inclusive and accessible systems of research, education and knowledge are those that are "open." This belief is demonstrated through the Libraries' support of open research and infrastructure, including the [Preserve institutional repository](#); open source systems development; and strategic partnerships that advance open knowledge. In keeping with this broader commitment, the Libraries' collection development will, in dialogue with stakeholders, prioritize the retention and acquisition within budgetary parameters of licensing agreements and digital collections supportive of open initiatives.

Challenge Statement

Although librarians may deselect materials based on the established processes above, patron-initiated requests to withdraw items will not be granted. Items selected and acquired by Lehigh University Libraries form part of the cultural and scholarly record.

Gifts and Donation Policy

The Lehigh University Libraries appreciates inquiries about donations of books or other materials in support of the University's teaching and research. View our full [gifts and donation policy](#).

Make a Request

The library welcomes purchase requests from all patrons. To submit a request, fill out a form for [books and ebooks](#), or [streaming video](#), or contact [your subject librarian](#) to request new journal titles.

This policy, last revised on January 7th, 2026, is a living document that evolves with the University's teaching and research priorities, alongside the Libraries' values of inclusion, equity, and stewardship. The Instruction & Outreach Librarians, Technical Services, and the Library Leadership Group (LLG) commit to reviewing the policy biannually to ensure alignment with library values, institutional goals, budgets, and developments in scholarly communication.