

Law Library Collection Development Policy

Revised and updated July 2007

Purpose and scope

This policy provides guidelines for the selection, development and management of the Law Library collection. It forms part of the University Library Collection Management Policy.

The Law Library is a branch library in the decentralised University of Otago Library system. The Law Library collection supports the teaching, study and research needs of the Faculty of Law. The collection also supports law-related courses throughout the University.

The Library provides access in a variety of ways to the information resources that are required by academic staff and students. Traditionally such access has been assured by purchasing materials and adding them to the Library's collections of books, serials, and other materials. Increasingly, access is provided by means of managed licenses to electronic databases and collections of full-text materials that are accessed from the desktop. The Law Library provides a gateway to online legal information to support the activities of the Faculty of Law but it is important to recognize that legal research remains heavily dependant on print collections and that study of the law requires ready access to historical material.

Collection description

The main collection was established in 1959 when the Faculty of Law was operating in the (then) Supreme Court building, Lower Stuart St, under guidance of the Deans, Professors F W Guest and P B A Sim. The first Library staff appointment was made in 1973. The Law Library is currently located on parts of floors 7 – 9 of the Richardson Building, adjacent to the Law Faculty.

The collection is focused on common law jurisdictions and public and private international law, comparative law and criminology. The holdings of printed nineteenth century English law journals and common law texts (over 320 titles), and historical Australian and Canadian statutes are notable strengths from a national perspective.

The Library's physical collections are enhanced by a growing range of subscription-licensed electronic resources including LexisNexis, Westlaw and HeinOnline. These are available to authorized Library users both on- and off-campus via the Internet.

Microfiche are housed in the Central Library. Holdings of audiovisual materials are housed at Audiovisual Services in the Central Library. Historical research into New Zealand Parliamentary sources is supported by the complete runs of material such as

Gazettes, Debates, Journals and Appendices to the Journals held in the Central Library and the Hocken Collections. Pre-1800 imprints are housed in Special Collections in the Central Library.

A duplicate of each higher degree Otago Law thesis is normally held (originals are held securely in the University Library). Otago LLB Honours dissertations are held.

The collection is arranged according to the Moys Classification Scheme. All holdings, including electronic resources as far as is possible, are listed in the library catalogue. Serial material is bound using methods appropriate to the value and expected pressure of use of the material and is not for loan.

Users

- permanent staff of the Faculty of Law (27.6 EFT in 2007)
- postgraduate students (15 in 2007)
- academics, researchers and general staff from elsewhere in the University
- Law students (790 EFT in 2006)
- students in other University of Otago courses with a law component, such as Business, History, Maori Studies, Medicine and Surveying
- Law graduates enrolled in the Institute of Professional Legal Studies
- approved borrowers, including law practitioners.

Members of the public use the Library for reading and reference.

To support the research needs of senior students and staff of the Faculty, the Law Library has developed an efficient interlibrary loans system that allows staff to borrow materials and receive photocopies from participating libraries worldwide.

Otago participates in the Borrow Direct service, which allows registered borrowers to initiate loans of circulating items held in any of the four partner libraries (Victoria, AUT, Waikato and Otago). The Library's resources are made available to other institutions, law firms and individuals using the cost-recovery Document Delivery Service.

Curriculum and research areas

Around 650 first year students take The Legal System. The second year intake is capped at 200 students. The LLB is a 4-year professional degree. Around two-thirds of LLB students undertake a 5-year double degree programme. The Law Faculty normally offers some 50 papers each year. Faculty staff actively research in over 90 areas of law. New Zealand law is a research strength.

Funding

See section II.10 'Finance' of the University Library Collection Development Policy.

Gifts and donations

The Library actively seeks donations of relevant monographic and serial publications, particularly in the area of current New Zealand law reform. Older material is acquired by gift only if its likely use warrants the costs of storage, preservation, and listing or cataloguing.

Limited numbers of copies of the Otago Law Review and the New Zealand Universities Law Review are purchased and used as a cost-effective method of obtaining regular issues of other law journals of similar academic standing. In particular, the Otago Law Review is exchanged for all available Australasian law school journals, under the auspices of the ALTA Exchange Agreement.

See section II.11 'Donations' of the University Library Collection Development Policy.

Cooperation and Rationalisation

Where possible, efforts are made to avoid duplication of resources and to co-operate in the acquisition of resources. This applies within the University, locally, and nationally, particularly with other university law libraries.

Locally, material on aspects of New Zealand law which are of interest only to practitioners would be left to the Otago District Law Society to acquire. Legal material addressed to the lay person would generally be left to the Hocken and Dunedin Public Libraries to collect.

The Library works with the New Zealand Law Librarians Association and others in their efforts to encourage national co-operation in collection building.

Selection

Items are selected from publishers' catalogues, flyers, reviews, sample copies, bibliographies, users' recommendations, standard lists, subject searches, and similar resources. Collecting is normally limited to English language material in print, electronic and microfiche formats. Only New Zealand material is collected intensively.

The main collecting emphasis is on primary sources (legislation and case law) and secondary sources (including journals, monographs and law reform material) from the five major common law jurisdictions

- New Zealand
- Australia
- England
- Canada
- USA.

Basic primary and secondary sources in International Law are acquired, as are journals and monographs in certain subjects not limited to the common law jurisdictions, including Criminology, Jurisprudence and Comparative Law. The latter subject is additionally supported by selected primary sources, particularly from Europe, South Africa and the Pacific.

Essential indexes and other reference material relating to all the above categories are also acquired.

Purchases are aimed at meeting current and foreseeable needs for study, teaching and research. Selections are made to ensure a balanced collection, between types of material (primary sources, journals, monographs, reference works, law reform material), between jurisdictions, and between currently-taught subjects, within budgetary constraints.

For the five main common law jurisdictions, purchasing emphasises

- all current legislation (but including subordinate and state legislation only as necessary)
- leading series of general law reports, plus essential subject series
- current monographs of relevance to taught subjects
- leading journals, both general and covering relevant subjects
- relevant government and law reform publications
- relevant looseleaf services or their electronic equivalents
- essential reference works and electronic databases

Monographs are acquired by the Information Resources Service following recommendations made by the Law Librarian, in consultation with the Information Resources Manager. The bulk of recommendations result from consultation with members of the Faculty of Law.

A large number of full-text electronic journals are available on the aggregator databases LexisNexis, HeinOnline and Westlaw. Decisions regarding the purchase of electronic resources, or access to them, will depend on a number of factors, including

- relevance to current or anticipated teaching or research
- availability of equivalent resources on the Web or in other media
- likely benefits, such as improved access to information, including desktop access; improved searching; the comprehensiveness of the information in the resource; overall cost; long-term reliability of supply

- access options if the subscription is cancelled.

Decisions to abandon the acquisition of particular material in print, when available electronically, are dependent on similar factors.

Recommendations for major works are considered by the Resources Management Policy and Planning Group. Serials and databases are approved by the Information Resources Manager following recommendations made by the Law Librarian in consultation with the Law Faculty Library Committee.

Duplicate copies are acquired according to demand and available funds. Lost books are replaced by the same title, or a new edition, if demand requires.

Standing orders are placed for selected series and updated or supplemented works expected to clearly fall within collecting policy. Blanket ordering schemes are not normally used.

Publications in languages other than English are only be collected if the content is considered sufficiently important and is not available in English.

Normally, only current material will be purchased.

Types of material not normally collected include: archives, ephemera, works for lay or school audiences, photographs and art works, university calendars and handbooks. Casebooks and compilations of reprinted articles are not purchased unless they contain significant material not already held as primary or secondary sources, or are otherwise regarded as having significant intrinsic value.

Looseleaf works and other treatise-type material requiring on-going expenditure require particularly strong justification before initial purchase. Electronic versions are preferred. Works for tertiary students are selectively acquired. Publications of government agencies, especially single items, such as those relating to law reform, are acquired only when sufficiently relevant.

Unreported decisions of courts and administrative agencies are normally limited to New Zealand material.

At least some electronic resources from each major New Zealand legal database vendor are made available, to ensure students acquire the necessary research skills.

Collection management and de-selection

Since access to historical materials is an essential part of everyday legal research and study, the emphasis is on retention on open access, rather than on routine transfer of older material to storage as would be the norm in other parts of the Library system.

Exceptions, made in consultation with the Faculty of Law, include

- older textbooks no longer attracting current scholarly use
- older material which is fragile and would be better preserved under storage conditions
- non-current runs of foreign language material
- older material of the 'current awareness' type, such as newsletters.
- reference works, such as journal indexes and case law digests, which have been cancelled in favour of online versions, once their current utility has sufficiently diminished (typically about five years after cancellation)
- historical runs readily available elsewhere on campus
- historical material not currently needed for research.

The Library seeks to preserve a copy of each edition of standard law commentaries and New Zealand legal texts. Duplicate material, such as older editions of textbooks no longer attracting significant use, is weeded and disposed of, providing one copy is retained in storage. Weeded duplicates of New Zealand items are first offered to the Hocken Collections.

Sets (other than clearly-defined editions) replaced by more up-to-date volumes or supplements are not retained unless there is strong justification, for example, if they will in future provide an historical picture of the law at a particular time and such a resource would not otherwise be easily available.

See also section III. 6 'Preservation and Security' of the University Library Collection Development Policy.