

Great North Museum:
Hancock Library



Library Collections Management Policy Appendix A Cowen Collection

1. Collection History

The Cowen Library was originally housed in the Museum of Antiquities, which was located on Newcastle University's campus. It started life as small collection to aid the curatorial staff before becoming Newcastle University's Archaeology School's Departmental Library when it was formed in 1972.

In 1976, John Cowen donated his archaeological collection to the existing Department of Archaeology. The Departmental Library was renamed the John Cowen Library. Cowen's personal Library was also donated. Funding via bequests and the Department of Archaeology budget enabled the John Cowen Library to actively increase library holdings through purchase. This brought the size of the collection to around 20,000 volumes.

In the early 1990s the creation of the Robinson Library, the main Library for University of Newcastle, led to the centralisation of university library services and a reduction in departmental provision. The John Cowen Library resisted amalgamation with the Robinson Library and retained an independent identity, but with a very limited operational budget.

As part of the Great North Museum Project, which was launched in 2008, the relocation of the Cowen Library from the Museum of Antiquities to the newly redeveloped Museum was planned. In 2009, the Cowen Library was relocated into the new purpose-built library on the second floor of the new building.

The move to the GNMH Library provided an opportunity for the holdings of the Cowen Collection to be used as reference by both students and members of the public.

2. Collection Description

The Cowen collection consists of over 9000 books and around 150 serial titles.

The strength of the library lies in its very subject-specific focus. The Cowen collection contains material which can be difficult to obtain locally or even nationally. Because of its origins as a museum and departmental library the Cowen collection is very well tailored to research and teaching interests.

The main subject areas include archaeology, ancient history and classics. Areas of strength are Roman Frontier studies (including both social and military history), local archaeology, archaeological theory and methodology, and the history and archaeology of the Byzantine Empire.

Of local interest are texts on Hadrian's Wall ranging from the mid-18th century through to newly published material. These books are also complemented by material on Hadrian's Wall held by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne (SANT).

The Cowen collection holds a substantial number of British Archaeological Reports (British and International series), many from a donation by Jean Weyman, as well as some very useful back-runs of journals. Again, the selection of journal titles is complemented by the journals held by the Society of Antiquaries and the two collections provide an extensive range of relevant archaeological and antiquarian subject-specific texts which can be accessed in one location.

Books have been acquired through donation, for example those from the library of Jocelyn Toynbee and through purchase, for example the collection belonging to George Bean relating to the archaeology of Turkey. New titles are also purchased or donated on an ad hoc basis by NU-HCA staff.

New books and periodicals that support the School of History, Classics and Archaeology are bought in and shelved at, or available electronically through, Newcastle University's Philip Robinson Library.

2.1 Oldest Books

There are a handful of pre-19th century books held within the archive store, the David Gardner Medwin Room (DGM) and at the Resource Centre (Discovery Store), including a first edition of John Warburton's "Vallum Romanum" published in 1753.

2.2 Periodicals

There is a large collection of journals within the collection, although no current subscriptions are in place.

The collection also includes bulletins, newsletters and reports which have been received periodically.

2.3 Cowen Boxes

A large number of boxes were brought across from the Museum of Antiquities Library. Each box contains a range of subject specific articles, offprints and pamphlets to assist students in their studies of individual topics.

Approximately 160 boxes are held in the Library, while around 40 are in the Resource Centre (Discovery Store).

The material is not searchable on Newcastle University's Library Search and can only be found by using the card catalogue in the Library. During 2016, a number of relevant items were added as book stock onto the University catalogue.

During 2014-2015, a student placement was established to fully review and rationalise the Cowen Boxes. This has resulted in a large proportion of this material being discarded and the number of boxes being significantly reduced.

3. Specific Collecting Principles

While the Cowen Collection is a legacy collection, some new and donated material can be added on an ad hoc basis. This will be done in consultation with NU-HCA staff, in line with the interests of the collection.

4. Responsibility for Collecting

The collection is the property of the School of History Classics and Archaeology (NU-HCA) and is managed by the GNMH Library Coordinator, assisted by Library volunteers. Advice and support can be sought from NU-HCA academic staff and the University's Liaison Librarian for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS).

4.1 Collection Fund

There is no budget allocation for this collection from Newcastle University Library. Occasional purchases can be made through the GNMH Library budget or NU-HCA.

4.2 Cataloguing and Classifying the Collection

Catalogue records for all new items are added to Newcastle University's Library Catalogue (Library Search) and classified using the Dewey Decimal System.

Most of the collection has been added to Newcastle University's Library catalogue (Library Search). Every effort should be made to get new material onto Library Search. This is done in liaison with the GNMH Library Coordinator and the Content and Discovery Team at Newcastle University Library.

4.3 Processing and Repair of Stock

All processing of new books, journals and other library items is the responsibility of the GNMH Library Coordinator. Library volunteers can carry out minor repairs to stock.

5. Location and Arrangement of Stock

Items can be found in the following locations:

- Public Access
- Public Access Stacks
- Controlled Access
- David Gardner Medwin Room (DGM – archive store)
- Resource Centre (Discovery Store)
- Newcastle University Library Research Reserve

5.1 Public Access

The majority of the book stock, around 5300 items, is held in the Public Access area of the Library.

5.2 Public Access Stacks

Journals and reports, as well as the Cowen boxes, can be found in the Public Area Stacks.

5.3 Controlled Access

Older and less used books are held in the Controlled Access area. Older journals, papers and tracts can also be found in this area. Approximately 800 books are in the Controlled Access area of the Library.

5.4 David Gardner Medwin Room (DGM)

A handful of pre-19th century books are held in the David Gardner Medwin Room (archive store within the Library).

5.5 Resource Centre (Discovery Store)

There is a large collection of around 3200 Cowen books stored in the Resource Centre (Discovery Store). This is a secure offsite location based at the Discovery Museum. Items from this area can be requested, and the material will be retrieved by the Library Coordinator or Museum Curators.

5.6 Newcastle University Library Research Reserve

Some periodical titles are located in Newcastle University's Research Reserve. This is an offsite location at Team Valley. Items from here can be requested through Library Search and retrieved by Newcastle University Library Attendants.

6. Disposal of Stock

Cowen books and journals fall under Newcastle University Library's collection management policies and agreements with UK Research Reserve (UKRR) and UK Print Book Collection (UKPBC). Any Cowen item identified for withdrawal from the GNMH Library must be listed and sent to Newcastle University Library's Content and Discovery Team for scarcity and student reading list checks before it is removed from the shelves.