

Great North Museum:
Hancock Library



Library Collections Management Policy Appendix B NHSN Collection

1. Collection History

The NHSN collection of books about the natural world began in 1829 when NHSN was founded. The library's first books were presented by its founder members.

Donations have been the major source of acquisition. Several large and valuable bequests have made it one of the richest collections of natural history books in the country: In 1867 Sir W G Armstrong (later Lord Armstrong) presented an important and varied collection of books. Other bequests have brought in the libraries of W C Hewitson (in 1878, ornithology and entomology), Joshua Alder (in 1881, mainly molluscs and other invertebrates), Thomas Bold (in 1893, mainly entomology), Joseph Wright in 1922, Harry Tully in 1951 (ornithology) and more recently David Gardner Medwin (in 2014, which add to the early holdings of the collection). There is also an important collection of Thomas Bewick's drawings and watercolours from the estate of his daughter Isabella who died in 1883. These are located in NHSN's archive.

The collection also contains modern works that have been acquired mainly by purchase. NHSN take part in an exchange network with other societies and institutions throughout the world, which has enabled NHSN, in return for its own "Transactions" publications, to acquire runs of more than seventy periodicals.

From 1884 to 2006, NHSN's library occupied a large room at the front of the Hancock Museum (what is now the Museum café). It was for the exclusive use of NHSN members as a reference library. It remained in this location until the move to the newly and purpose-built Great North Museum: Hancock (GNMH) Library took place in 2009.

The move to the GNMH Library provided an opportunity for the holdings of the NHSN collection to be made available on Newcastle University's online catalogue and for its wealth of material to be used as reference by both students and members of the general public.

2. Collection Description

The NHSN collection consists of around 10,000 books and 600 journals. It is particularly strong in material relating to the natural history of the north of England. NHSN now has a deliberate policy of trying to acquire all important works in this field, including works by, and biographical material about, local naturalists. It is also developing its collection of nature writing and art.

The library is a useful reference resource for the geology of the region and for the identification of the flora and fauna of the British Isles, and keeps the important reference works including the Memoirs of the Geological Survey, *Flora Europaea*, *The Synopses of the British Fauna*, the British Entomological Society's handbooks for the identification of British insects, and handbooks of the Birds of the World and Mammals. To a lesser extent it tries to provide guidance on the natural history of other countries that NHSN members are likely to visit, including field guides to the birds of most parts of the world. There is also a modest collection of books on ecology and conservation, as well as sets of the publications of the British Museum (Natural History), the Ray Society and the Collins New Naturalist series. There is also a selection of material relevant to the World Cultures collections held in the Museum.

2.1 Oldest Books

The oldest books in the collection are Pierre Belon's *Histoire de la Nature des Oyseaux* published in 1555 and William Turner's *A New Herball* of 1568.

2.2 Periodicals

There is a large collection of journals within the collection. Historical and current journals are obtained either by exchange, subscription or donation.

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

2.3 Bewick Collection

Books by Thomas Bewick, as well as the Bewick Archive, are held within the David Gardner Medwin room (archive store). To add to the rich Bewick Collection, NHSN have received a donated collection from the Blavatnik Honresfield Library, made possible by the Friends of National Libraries. There is also a reference section within the Public Access area containing books about Thomas Bewick.

2.4 Collins New Naturalists Series

The collection holds, and will continue to collect, the complete set of the Collins New Naturalist series. This is comprised of volumes that provide a comprehensive overview of the natural world of the United Kingdom, written by leading experts their fields. The collection is not only richly informative but is also visually striking as each volume boasts a beautiful dust jacket that graphically encapsulates the subject matter of the book.

2.5 North East Nature Archive (NENA)

NENA is housed in the Library, but managed by NHSN.

3. Specific Collecting Principles

NHSN is a community for those who study nature and enjoy wildlife in Northumberland, Durham and Tyne & Wear. It works to inspire wonder in the natural world, from the Tees to the Tweed.

Collecting activity must take into account the following principles:

- Items should have a strong connection to the fields of interest of NHSN and its members, or to strengthen existing collections.
- Items should have a strong link to the North East, including work by or about local naturalists.
- NHSN are looking to strengthen their collection of nature writing and art.
- NHSN do not accept runs of journals or reports outside of what is already collected.

4. Responsibility for Collecting

The collection is the property of NHSN and is managed by NHSN, assisted by NHSN volunteers. Collection and disposal decisions are the responsibility NHSN.

Subscription to periodicals and Exchanges are managed by NHSN. Consideration of cost and space should be duly given and titles reviewed periodically.

4.1 Collection Fund

NHSN library matters, including the acquisition of new items, journal subscription, binding and repair of stock is agreed by the NHSN Board and managed by NHSN.

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 NHSN. NHSN and 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)
- NHSN Council Room

The location of stock is directed by NHSN.

5.1

Public Access

Newer and key texts are held in the Public Access area of the Library. There is also a reference section containing a complete set of Collins New Naturalists Series and books about Thomas Bewick.

5.2

Public Access Stacks

Periodicals, including current journals, and some reference books are stored within the rolling stacks in the Public Access area of the Library.

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.

5.4

David Gardner Medwin Room (Archive Store)

Rare and valuable books are held in the David Gardner Medwin room (archive store).

5.5

NHSN Council Room

A number of rare and valuable books, series publications and bound journals are located in a bookcase in the NHSN Council Room.