
The locked case

Policy on items held in closed access collections

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When is a closed access collection not a closed access collection? When it is an open access collection.

At the University of Edinburgh library, we want people to know that our off-campus 'closed access' store is anything but closed access. The Library Annexe (www.ed.ac.uk/is/library-annexe) is actually a facility where we can make our physical collections open up for our users. We do, however, have certain rules for running an off-campus collections facility at the University of Edinburgh

COMPARE DEMAND: STUDY SPACE

Stores are rarely popular in a community that needs and enjoys direct access to print material. At Edinburgh, we have had the same challenge that other libraries are facing world-wide, in balancing the space needed for physical collections, staff and students. This reached a turning point in 2006, when our Main Library building commenced an eight-year redevelopment project. A high priority at the start of the project was maintaining an open building, with consistent numbers of study spaces throughout the process. Collections began being decanted to our off-campus store, the Library Annexe, at this point.

As the project successfully progressed and demand on study space increased, partly to do with an increase in student numbers (for example, over the course of two years in the Main Library, demand increased by 110%), it became clear that the Annexe was required as a more permanent facility. Pressure from our nine other site libraries for space to accommodate the print collections and more study space further reinforced the point. In 2010, a second, adjacent warehouse building became available and ready to occupy – increasing our maximum capacity at the Annexe to 33 linear kilometres. This was not a comfortable moment for the academic community, particularly

our primary users of print material in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, as we were seeking to move tens of thousands of items some six miles away from our central campus.

MAKE CLOSED ACCESS SELLABLE

Fortunately, we were in a position to enhance the collections that were being moved to the facility, by making sure the older lending material was added to our online catalogue in advance. This collection was known to be heavily browsed, perhaps because much of it was not discoverable on our catalogue previously. The process of identifying the exact material to inhabit the store was consultative and lengthy. Discussions with our academic colleagues brought us to an agreement that we should accommodate those journals with a current electronic subscription out at the store, together with books not identified as used for current research or teaching from our older lending Dewey classified collection. We also agreed that a recommendation for the return of an item or a collection to the campus libraries could be made, and that usage of material in the Library Annexe would be carefully reviewed to ensure high-demand material could be returned.

Additionally, we were able to implement a new range of weekday services to keep the collections open. This was our real selling-point. We introduced a full-time team of three staff to provide scan-on-demand services for book chapters and journal articles, with four-hour turnaround; a twice-daily courier delivery service for physical items to all the libraries across our three campuses; and reading rooms available for visiting researchers to access collections in different formats. The scanning service operates through an existing inter-library loans digitisation service on ILLiad (<http://oclc.org/illiad.en.html>), where users can access the article / chapter in PDF format for thirty days.

To a considerable degree, the Annexe transfer and remote collections services exceed those available at the campus libraries. Our users can get a scanned copy of a print article / chapter without even having to get out of their bed, and it is easier and cheaper than having to come into the library for a photocopy. Certainly for our growing cohort of off-campus, distance education postgraduate students, the facility for having access to digitised chapters and articles will become increasingly significant.

Feedback on our services have been very positive, and conversations about the Library Annexe are no longer strained, as they once were. We host an annual Library Annexe Service Development Group meeting with a range of stakeholders; frequently update the community through our committees and on our blog (<http://libraryblogs.is.ed.ac.uk/annexe/>).

The recent revision of our Library Collections Policy (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/operational-policies/collections>) sets out the priorities for closed access collections, and this statement has been uncontroversial, as the Annexe facility and services have become mainstream:

The most heavily used print General Collections are openly accessible and located where they can best be utilised by the greatest concentration of users.

- Items in store will have demonstrated lower usage than the centrally located collections.
- Stored items remain available through appropriately managed request and delivery services.

Additionally, we have kept to our promises and remained watchful of the demand on the collections and services at the Annexe. In 2013, we were in a fortunate position to have additional shelving space available in our Main Library and we decided to return the highest demand section of material in the Library Annexe to this open access space – our social sciences sequence from the older lending collection. We have also paid attention to demand across our Special Collections and Inter-Library Loans teams for theses, and in late 2012, launched a pilot in-house digitisation-on-demand service for theses held in the Annexe.

This particular service further opens up the closed access collections as it feeds into our institutional repository, the Edinburgh Research Archive (ERA – <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/>). Enquirers make contact with our Centre for Research Collections (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/crc>), where they identify the thesis they wish to have digitised, make the payment which is a set fee for any size of thesis, and which is delivered within twenty working days by a file transfer protocol through email. After a period of time, and checking for

embargo notices, the digitised copy is then made available freely in ERA in line with our current policy on thesis submission (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/research-support/publish-research/scholarly-communications/requirements>). This new service has had dual benefits for the community, and the theses we have made openly available online have been accessed on numerous occasions as a result – something that does not happened in print to the same degree.

DO NOT TRY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE, DEVELOP THE FUTURE

Our current challenge with the Library Annexe is unfortunately that same old one of limited space. We could not have predicted that the demand for study space in our libraries would ever be so high when we first moved into our Annexe. Our student numbers have increased by over 25% in five years, and we have sought to create a corresponding equivalent of additional study spaces in the Main Library. Additionally, we could not have predicted the growth in physical collections, when our electronic collections have developed exponentially. We have been fortunate enough to have acquired a number of unique print special collections, archives and artworks over the last few years, as well as ingested material as a result of campus capital projects and institutional mergers. The result is that the capacity at the Library Annexe will be exceeded at some point within the next three to five years. And that is in the context of an ongoing process of strategic collection rationalisation across our library facilities.

Acknowledging this, the university has awarded funding for a feasibility study on the future of the facility and anticipated service requirements. The library is confident that an adequate case can be made for an enhanced and enlarged service for the next twenty years, able to afford an increasing array of study space on campus whilst physical collections grow (albeit, overall, more slowly, focusing on collections that are rare or unique, in a variety of formats).

In response to the feasibility review, we shall be extending the use of offsite storage to encompass the movement of staff in ways that enhance collections and free up study space. This approach will be transformative for the library, taking the Annexe to the next stage of being a vibrant, multi-purpose service. Already the 'closed access' collection is strengthening links between sites and bringing teams together, while also uniting collections of various disciplines so that they can be

accessed in a useful way for teaching and research. Our future developments will offer the opportunity for further growth and collaboration that otherwise would not be possible without such a facility.

The future will involve running projects that speed up workflows, focusing on our vision for rapid and seamless services; introducing new models of care for the collections; and balancing demand with our responsibility as stewards of the collections. We shall open up the collections differently by delivering on a digitisation strategy that will take into account the range of services already present at Edinburgh, as well as services that are *possible* – particularly around digitisation-on-demand for our rare and unique collections. We shall be working on this in line with an updating of our preservation strategy, where our policy on the Special Collections transfer date will move from pre-1850 to pre-1900. This will act as a catalyst for implementing the new range of supporting services, to open the collections up beyond the physical.

These integrated plans for the future will enable the library to remain at the heart of teaching, research and engagement at the University of Edinburgh.

For any questions relating to this article, please contact Laura Macpherson, whose contact details are at the top of the article.