

Cambridge University Library ethical policy

1. A number of laws and guidelines have informed the development of this policy, including:
 - The Museums Association's Guidance on the ethics and practicalities of acquisition (<http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=11114>)
 - The UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Cultural Property (1970)
 - The UK's Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003
 - The British Library's Ethical Future Acquisitions Policy (<https://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/contstrat/ethical.pdf>)
2. Cambridge University Library (CUL) has been acquiring material for more than 600 years and recognises that the ethical standards governing its acquisitions, whether by purchase, exchange, legal deposit or donation, have varied over that time. CUL has an outstanding record of administering and extending access to its collections, providing a world-leading scholarly resource and highlighting the written culture of more than three millennia, and the institution is committed to sustaining and improving this resource.
3. Given recent legislation and a wider adoption of ethical policies by libraries and museums, as well as the increased complexity of the global marketplace particularly for heritage and Special Collections material, CUL will ensure that all future acquisitions will be governed by the guidelines set out in this ethical policy.
4. CUL commits itself to collecting according to detailed, published policies (eg the Collection Development Policy), and will take into account the long-term value to the institution of items to be collected and the requirements of their storage and accessibility. CUL will not collect items that it can neither provide appropriate storage for or satisfactory access to.
5. CUL recognises that it is operating within a wider world of academic libraries, museums and institutions with similar goals, and therefore will always aim to cooperate rather than compete in the field of acquisition, recognising, for instance, that some other institutions might have a stronger claim to particular items than CUL.
6. CUL will only acquire items (through purchase, exchange, donation or bequest) after performing a level of due diligence appropriate to the item and its provenance.
7. In line with the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Cultural Property (1970), CUL will not acquire material that it suspects, since 1970, may have been illegally sold, acquired, exported or otherwise transferred contrary to local or international law. CUL will reject the acquisition of any item lacking verifiable ownership history or for which it cannot acquire reliable documentation to show it was exported from its country of origin before 1970. Furthermore, CUL will not acquire any item if there is a suspicion that it was wrongfully taken during a time of conflict. Where doubt remains concerning an item's provenance, CUL should exercise caution and decline to acquire items.

8. Where necessary, CUL will seek information or advice from other institutions or authorities before making a decision on acquiring an item, in order to establish its legitimacy or importance.
9. CUL should not accept items with unreasonable or overly onerous conditions attached.
10. CUL staff should not offer expertise, authenticate or otherwise assist the possessor of an item that may have been illicitly obtained. Staff will decline to offer information if there are suspicions concerning the ownership status or doubts about the provenance of an item, and staff will not provide valuations of external items under any circumstances.

Version	Authors	Date	Date of last review	Date of next review
1.0	Ben Outhwaite	November 2017		November 2019