

# THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG LIBRARIES

## Rare Book Policy

### Purpose and scope

The University of Hong Kong Libraries collects, preserves and makes available Chinese and western rare books (including books, manuscripts and other materials) to advance the teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange pursuits of the University.

The purpose of this policy is to guide the way in which the rare book collections are developed and managed, from collection development to processing, access to preservation.

This Policy should be considered in conjunction with the following individual policies/guidelines:

- a. Collection Development Policy;
- b. Policy for Digitization of Library Materials;
- c. Guidelines for Handling Requests of Digital Images from Library Collections;
- d. Loan Agreement and Policy for Loan of Special Collections.

### Collection development

The Libraries generally seeks to collect rare books which support, complement or enhance its ability to advance the teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange pursuits of the University. Additions to the rare book collections may be made through transfer from the general collection, or by purchase or donation.

### Selection

For Western language materials, there are no clear-cut definitions for what makes a book a rare book. Different libraries adopt various criteria and these criteria can change over time. The terms “rare”, “old” and “antiquarian” are not clearly defined.

At HKU Libraries, assigning a book to the rare book collections/purchasing a rare book or rare book collection hinges on one or a combination of the following criteria:

Criteria	Western Languages	Chinese Language
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In general, books printed until the mechanization of printing in the first half of the 19th century; i.e. 1850 can be considered rare.</li><li>- Books printed in the 19th century i.e. until 1899, are increasingly rare, due to poor paper quality.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Books printed on or before 1795, the 60th year of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆六十年), are classified as rare books (善本)</li><li>- Books printed before 1911 (古籍) are increasingly rare.</li></ul>
Place	In general, books published in China before 1949 deserve special consideration.	

Association	Through ownership or relationship to an individual, group or event of importance.	
Scarcity	A printed book can be rare because there were very few copies printed or only very few copies have survived. Bound and unbound manuscripts, especially by historical figures, are also generally considered rare.	
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apart from scarcity, the condition of the item will also affect its value. Obviously, a complete copy of a book is more valuable than an incomplete one, even if only a single page is missing. The same applies to multi-volume works: a complete run is more valuable than scattered single volumes. Autographed copies, or those containing original photographs/ illustrations, are of special value.</li> <li>- Market value is yet another consideration but given escalating antiquarian book prices and the fact that obtaining proper valuation in Hong Kong can be problematic, these guidelines do not attempt to spell out the minimum per volume price of an individual rare book.</li> </ul>	
Format	- Finely bound or historically significant production processes.	
Subject	- No specific preference, but priority should be given to titles that can add to the strength of our existing collection, which is works on China and the Far East.	No specific preference.

Decisions on assigning library materials to the rare book collections/purchasing a rare book or rare book collection should be made by:

- a) Western languages – Faculty Librarians/Head, Collection Development/Head, Preservation & Conservation/Acquisitions Librarian in consultation with Special Collections Librarian
- b) Chinese language – Faculty Librarians/Head, Collection Development/Head, Preservation & Conservation/Assistant Fung Ping Shan Librarian/Acquisitions Librarian in consultation with Special Collections Librarian

The University Librarian/Deputy University Librarian will make the final decision when needed. They also play a key part in the acquisition of rare books.

### **Processing**

#### ***Accessioning & cataloguing***

All rare books must be accessioned, including stamping and labeling as well as creating holdings and item records in the library system. They should be catalogued in accordance with prevailing cataloguing standards and practices.

#### ***Binding or repair***

Decisions on binding, conservation treatment, and enclosures should be made by Head, Preservation & Conservation. Technical Services should contact Head, Preservation & Conservation when a custom-made enclosure is needed.

#### ***Accession stamp***

- ◆ Stamp [figure 1] on the verso (back) of the first page of text along the lower inner

margin (near the bottom of the printed area). As recommended by the Library of Congress Preservation Directorate, “use permanent, indelible, neutral-pH ink that will not bleed if exposed to water or other solvents, that is resistant to fading, and that has not demonstrated adverse effects on paper substrates during testing”.

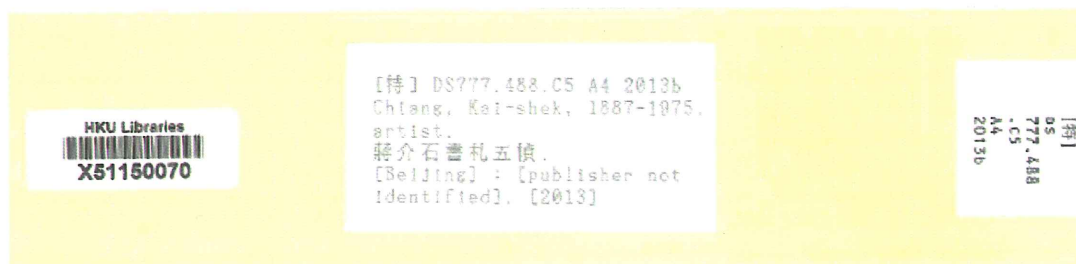
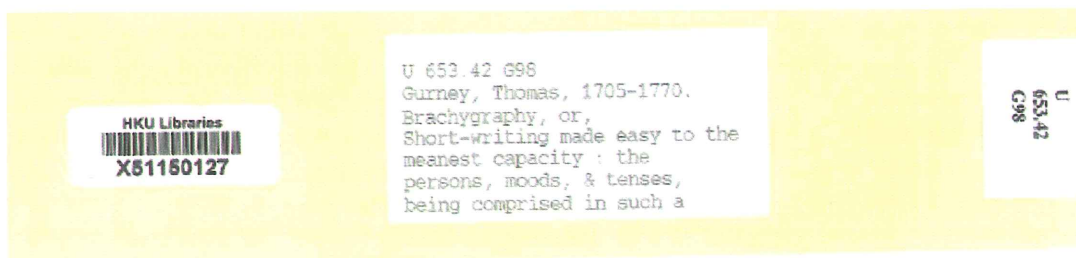
- ◆ Thread bound materials
  - Stamp with the traditional Fung Ping Shan Library stamp [figure 2]
  - Do not stamp over the text.
  - Do not stamp obliquely.
  - Stamp on the lower right corner of chapter one (卷一) within the border. If our set does not have chapter one, stamp on the first chapter available.
  - If the lower right corner has already been taken, stamp a bit further up to avoid stamping over the existing one.
  - If all stamping spaces have already been used, stamp on the top of the page outside the border.
  - A piece of acid-free paper should be added to blot the ink. The blotting paper may be removed after the ink is completely dry. Paper is provided by Preservation and Conservation Division.
  - Physical processing colleagues should seek help from their supervisor(s) if they have difficulties in deciding the right place to stamp.

### *Bookplate*

- ◆ Do not directly affix a bookplate to the rare book.
- ◆ Affix the donor bookplate to the enclosure when there is one.
- ◆ Insert the donor bookplate in the rare book when it is not kept in an enclosure.

### *Label*

- ◆ Do not directly affix a spine label to the rare book.
- ◆ Affix the spine label, title label and barcode to a label slip (see samples below). Label slips are supplied by Preservation and Conservation Division.
- ◆ Affix the spine label to the spine of the enclosure when there is one.
- ◆ Insert the label slip in the rare book.

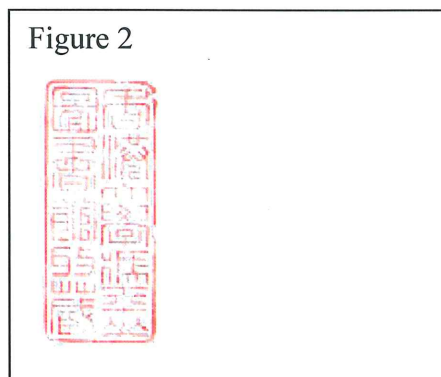
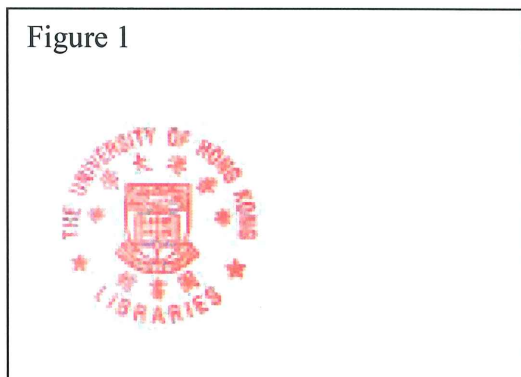


### ***RFID tag/Barcode***

- ◆ No need to affix RFID tags to rare books. Affix the print barcode to the label slip (see samples above).

### ***Security strip***

No need to insert security strips into rare books.



### **Access and use**

For security and preservation reasons, all rare books should be housed in the rare book rooms in the Main Library.

Rare books should be made available to all readers, regardless of whether they are members of the Libraries, who are engaging in serious research. However, researchers not holding a HKU staff/student ID or library card are required to obtain access approval and register with Lending Services before visiting Special Collections. They will be given a temporary reader pass to access the libraries if approval is granted. Details of visitor access applications are available on the Lending Services webpage.

### ***Requesting rare books***

Readers should approach the Special Collections service counter with the title and/or call number information of the materials they wish to consult. This information is available from the Libraries' online catalogue accessible on the homepage of the Libraries' website. An initial check will be performed by staff to ascertain if a surrogate copy (i.e. reprint, microform or digital copy) of the requested rare book is available and, if so, staff will suggest the use of the surrogate copy rather than the actual rare item.

### ***Registering use***

For security and operational reasons, the name of the reader and his/her library card number will be recorded in the Rare Book Reader's Register. Visitors who do not hold a library card will only need to provide their names. The Rare Book Reader's Register records the following data:

- ◆ Date of request
- ◆ Call number of the rare book
- ◆ Title of the rare book

- ◆ Reader's name
- ◆ University ID (if applicable)
- ◆ Staff who 'checks-in' the rare book upon return by the reader
- ◆ Staff who re-shelves the rare book and the date
- ◆ Remarks (if any)

The reader must also complete and sign the *Guidelines for Using Materials in the Supervised Reading Room of Special Collections Form* (Appendix 1) once per academic year.

Staff will retrieve the rare books in accordance with the Rare Book Reader's Register and the rare books must be consulted in the Supervised Reading Room located opposite the service counter. Only paper and pencils are allowed in the Supervised Reading Room. Laptops also may be used. Personal belongings such as handbags and rucksacks should not be taken into the Supervised Reading Room. Personal items may be left at the service counter and collected from staff when leaving the Supervised Reading Room. In general, a reader is allowed a maximum of five items/volumes at a time. If a reader wishes to consult more than five items at one time, s/he will need to return the first five before further items can be loaned.

#### ***Handling rare books***

By signing the *Guidelines for Using Materials in the Supervised Reading Room of Special Collections Form*, readers agree to abide by the rules and measures stipulated in the form for preservation purposes prior to handling the rare books. The *Guidelines* are also given to the readers as a reminder whenever they consult materials in the Supervised Reading Room (Appendix 2). The following care procedures are verbally presented to the readers by counter staff so as to highlight their importance:

- ◆ Copying of rare books by photocopiers, scanners, printers, mobile phones and other devices with copying function is not allowed, unless prior approval has been given by the Special Collections Librarian.
- ◆ Hands must be washed with soap and water and thoroughly dried before touching any rare materials.

Staff will also advise if special supports or weights are required to be used with the rare books. These are supplied by Special Collections and should be returned to the service counter after use. Rare books should not be left unattended at any time, even for short intervals. Readers should return the rare books to the service counter whenever they leave the Supervised Reading Room.

#### ***Returning rare books***

Readers must return the rare books after use to the Special Collections service counter. Staff will check that the physical condition of the books is acceptable and that the books have not been tampered with while being used by the readers. Staff should alert the Special Collections Librarian of any irregularities detected. After the condition check, the rare books will be returned to the designated rare book room pending re-shelving on the following working day. The Rare Book Reader's Register will be updated accordingly.

### **Stocktaking**

Stocktaking of the rare book collections should be conducted at regular intervals, approximately once every three to five years, by Special Collections staff as part of the Libraries' ongoing preservation and management programme.

### **Loan of rare books**

Subject to prior approval of the University Librarian, rare books in good physical condition may be loaned to other archives, museums and libraries on the condition that the borrowing institution takes full responsibility for the care of the rare book while on loan and for the costs of its transport, insurance and if necessary, conservation. Terms and conditions for loan of rare books are stipulated in the Loan Agreement and Policy for Loan of Special Collections.

The use of surrogate copies of original rare books is encouraged, if such copies are also available in the library collection.

### **Preservation**

All rare books should be handled and stored with care in order to preserve their good condition or to prevent existing damage from becoming worse. The repair of rare books should be handled only by the Preservation & Conservation Division.

From time to time the Preservation & Conservation Division may run training sessions or issue guidelines on the handling of rare books so as to help preserve the rare book collections.

23 January 2017



## Guidelines for Using Materials in the Supervised Reading Room of Special Collections

By signing\* this form, you agree to the following:

1. Do not bring briefcases, backpacks, handbags, etc. into the Supervised Reading Room. You may leave these items at the Special Collections service counter.
2. Absolutely no food or beverages (including water) are allowed in the Supervised Reading Room.
3. Please use only pencils or notebook devices for taking notes. Ink will damage archival materials.
4. Copying of rare books, manuscripts and other materials by photocopiers, scanners, printers, mobile phones and other devices with copying function is not allowed, unless prior approval has been given by the Special Collections Librarian.
5. Observe advice given by library staff on handling rare and archival materials.

### Handling the Materials

1. Please wash (using soap) and dry your hands before touching rare or archival materials.
2. Do not lean on books or documents and keep materials on the table.
3. Never write or trace on books or documents or take notes on top of archival materials.
4. Be careful when opening books and turning pages, always lift the top corner of the page. Never place an open book face down.
5. Do not remove items from their clear sleeves, or from folders. Maintaining the original order is crucial.
6. Do not use paper clips, rubber bands, re-positionable notes, or any three dimensional object for place markers. Acid-free paper bookmarks are available on request.
7. Cotton or nitrile gloves must be worn when handling photographs, slides, negatives, and metal objects.
8. If the item seems too fragile to handle, please ask staff for assistance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
HKUL Stamp

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*\*Researchers need to sign this form **once** per academic year*

Thank you for your cooperation. Following the guidelines helps us to preserve our collections so that researchers can continue to benefit from their information.



## Guidelines for Using Materials in the Supervised Reading Room of Special Collections

1. Do not bring briefcases, backpacks, handbags, etc. into the Supervised Reading Room. You may leave these items at the Special Collections service counter.
2. Absolutely no food or beverages (including water) are allowed in the Supervised Reading Room.
3. Please use only pencils or notebook devices for taking notes. Ink will damage archival materials.
4. Copying of rare books, manuscripts and other materials by photocopiers, scanners, printers, mobile phones and other devices with copying function is not allowed, unless prior approval has been given by the Special Collections Librarian.
5. Observe advice given by library staff on handling rare and archival materials.

### Handling the Materials

1. Please wash (using soap) and dry your hands before touching rare or archival materials.
2. Do not lean on books or documents and keep materials on the table.
3. Never write or trace on books or documents or take notes on top of archival materials.
4. Be careful when opening books and turning pages, always lift the top corner of the page. Never place an open book face down.
5. Do not remove items from their clear sleeves, or from folders. Maintaining the original order is crucial.
6. Do not use paper clips, rubber bands, re-positionable notes, or any three dimensional object for place markers. Acid-free paper bookmarkers are available on request.
7. Cotton or nitrile gloves must be worn when handling photographs, slides, negatives, and metal objects.
8. If the item seems too fragile to handle, please ask staff for assistance.

Thank you for your cooperation. Following the guidelines helps us preserve our collections so that researchers can continue to benefit from the information they contain