



Natural History Society of Northumbria
North East Nature Archive
Draft Collections Development Policy

POLICY INFORMATION	
Policy applies to	The policy applies to all staff, trustees and volunteers.
Supporting documents	This policy should be used in conjunction with other NHSN policies and documents including the Equity Policy, Data Privacy Notice, Safeguarding Policy, Library Collection Acquisition and Disposal Policy (yet to be adopted)
Adoption Date	Anticipated November 2023
Version number	1
Review date	Every five years or earlier as needed

1.1. Introduction

The North East Nature Archive (NENA), which is part of the Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN), holds internationally significant collections on the lives and work of naturalists with links to the North East of England and nationally significant collections relating to the history and activities of NHSN and its members. NENA has the potential to be a significant regional resource for the study of local natural and social history of natural history.

This policy sets out what NENA collects, areas for collection development, and the methods used for the development of NENA's archival holdings. The policy applies to both analogue and digital materials selected for preservation. This policy will be reviewed every five years or earlier if required.

1.2. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of NENA is to collect, preserve and provide access to regionally, nationally, and internationally significant material about nature, the study of nature, and its significance to communities across the North East.

As part of NHSN, NENA's purpose is also to document and preserve evidence of the history and activities of NHSN, and to contribute to our vision of many more people and a wider range of people enjoying, understanding and protecting North East nature. NENA will achieve this by engaging many more and a wider range of people with the archives and by collecting to improve the representation of marginalised communities and their relationship with nature in its collections.

1.3. Introduction to this Policy

This policy outlines what is currently in the NENA collections and provides a strategy and standard for accepting new material in accordance with NENA's priorities and aims. The policy will also allow for the deaccessioning of material that does not fit within NENA's collection remit.

This policy also highlights NENA's role as an archive within a regional network and makes clear its commitment to working with other relevant conservation and heritage institutions and redirecting materials to more appropriate repositories.

1.4. Collections Statement

NENA will continue to collect in its existing areas of strength, as outlined in Section 2.3. NENA will also proactively collect in priority areas for collection development, in particular records relating to marginalised communities in the North East. All collecting activity should take into account the following priorities:

- Items collected should have a strong connection to the natural history and naturalists of North East of England or with existing NENA collections.
- Items should add to understanding of people's relationship with nature in the North East

- Where possible, items should be original. However, the acquisition of copies will be considered, particularly if this is preferred by record creators from marginalised communities.
- Where possible, items collected should be in good condition and require minimal or no conservation treatment in order to be accessible. Born digital items should be in approved file formats. **NB these have yet to be defined – forthcoming.**

Offers of material should not be accepted without appraisal of its suitability for acquisition in line with this policy, in consultation with the Archivist and Director. Our collections policy is flexible in order to allow potential acquisitions to be judged individually.

2.1. Ways We Collect

- Donated collections: NENA is not able to accept all offers of donation due to limitations on space and resources. Offers of donations to the archive will be evaluated in accordance with the Collections Development Policy and, if accepted, will be governed by NENA's Donor Agreement. Where possible, recommendations for alternative repositories will be made for material not selected for acquisition.
- Purchase: NENA may purchase material if the material is judged to be of exceptional importance to the archive.
- Passive accrual: material created in the course of NHSN's activity, such as promotional material, minutes and magazines, is passively accrued and periodically transferred to the archive.
- Active collection: NENA will actively collect in priority areas for active collection development. These have been identified as: a) material which adds to areas of collection strength, b) material relating to marginalised communities in the North East, as an area of collection weakness.

2.2. What We Have Already Collected

NENA's existing collections include:

- Manuscript and printed material: illustrated journals, diaries, correspondence, notebooks, local natural history records, logbooks, newspaper articles, plans for the Hancock Museum, geological plans and diagrams, annotated books.
- Art works: drawings, sketchbooks, watercolours, paintings, sculptures, prints.
- The historical records of NHSN from its foundation and of its associated museums – the Newcastle Museum and The Hancock Museum from 1829-1992.
- Historic items of furniture and objects of memorabilia.
- Photographic material, glass plates, a range of recorded media such as video and oral histories in analogue formats.

- Born digital material relating to NHSN and important local naturalists, members or benefactors.

2.3. Priority Areas for Active Collection Development

Two main areas have been identified as priority areas for active collection development. These are:

- Areas of collection strength: NENA will continue to actively collect material which enhances areas of strength in its existing collections. The main areas of strength in the NENA collections are:
 - North East naturalists. This includes material relating to prominent North East naturalists such as Thomas Bewick, James Alder, John, Mary and Albany Hancock, as well as material relating to more recent and living North East naturalists.
 - The history of NHSN. As part of NHSN, NENA includes the complete historical record of an early natural history society and the related museums from its formation in 1829 to present day. It compliments both the NHSN library and the Great North Museum: Hancock.
 - The social history of natural history in the North East. The collections offer insight into the social history of the North East through the lens of the activities of a natural history society.
 - The history of art in the North East. NENA holds a small but important collection of local art works including portraits of naturalists, genre works and anatomical studies of mollusca, birds, butterflies etc. Internationally significant artworks held in the collection include the prints and watercolours of Thomas Bewick and the illustrations of Albany Hancock and Joshua Alder.

Actively collecting in areas of collection strength allows NENA to maintain and enhance its role as a significant regional resource for the study of natural, local and social history of natural history in the North East.

- Areas of collection weakness: NENA recognises that its existing collections are not representative of the diversity of communities in the North East or the diversity of ways that people connect with nature in the region. In accordance with NHSN's vision to engage more and a wider range of people and the related reorientation of the archive's purpose, NENA will actively work to collect records created by and about individuals and communities not well represented in the existing archival holdings. This includes, but is not limited to, material created by young people, women, minoritised ethnic communities and people from areas of multiple deprivation.

NENA will also work with individuals and communities on projects which create records as part of their output. With the agreement of the record creators, these records will be preserved in the archive.

2.4. What We Do Not Collect

It is not our policy to collect archival records or management material from the GNM: Hancock dating from 1992 onwards, when the University of Newcastle contracted with TWAM to manage the Museum under a Service Level Agreement. This material is held in the TWAM Archive in Discovery Museum.

NENA does not accept natural history specimens i.e. bird eggs, taxidermy specimens, mineral specimens. Items of this nature will be referred to the Curator of Biology at the GNM: Hancock which has its own Collections Development Policy.

NENA is unable to accept long-term loans due to limitations on resources and finances.

NENA will not generally accept material requiring immediate interventive conservation to be accessible.

NENA will not generally accept material in obsolete analogue media formats, although exceptions may be made if the material is sufficiently important. NENA does not accept born-digital material that is not in approved formats.

NENA does not generally accept material with lengthy closure periods or significant restrictions on access, but exceptions may be made in relation to sensitive material.

NENA will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by factors such as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

2.5. Deaccessioning

In some instances, historic collecting activity may have resulted in items having been acquired which do not align with NENA's statement of purpose. Items such as these will be selected for deaccessioning if they are judged to:

- Have no relevance to the collecting areas outlined above.
- Be more appropriately held by another repository.
- Duplicate records already held by NENA.

Every effort will be made to redirect material to other relevant organisations and, wherever possible, donors of material will be contacted prior to the disposal of material. NENA reserves the right to dispose of purchased material.

Material will be destroyed where no other relevant repository can be identified, the donor cannot be contacted or located, or if it presents a threat to the wider collections – for example if it contains active mould – and is judged not to warrant extensive conservation intervention.

2.6. Legal Frameworks

Wherever possible, copyright will be transferred to NENA on acquisition.

Acquisitions will be assessed in line with relevant legislation, such as GDPR (2018) and managed accordingly.