University Library and Collections Access Policy

1. **Purpose and Access Statement**
   Our Access Policy sets out our commitment to providing access to Durham University's archives and special collections, libraries and museums. The policy relates to collections and buildings managed and supported by the department of University Library and Collections. Though this we contribute to Durham University's widening participation aim of making Higher Education more accessible.

   University Library and Collections is committed to welcoming all members of society regardless of sex, gender, age, social status, ethnic origin, ability, language, faith, location, economic, and cultural or social background, by minimising or removing barriers to engagement with our collection. This sits within the context and policies of Durham University.

2. **Enabling access to collections**
   We will enable access to our collections by ensuring:
   - We have free access to the majority of our museums, galleries and visitor attractions
   - A fair entry price for paid-for attractions, events, tours
   - Online information about collections
   - Online digitised collections
   - Online exhibition programme.

3. **Research access to collections**
   We enable and support research access to our collections through the following,
   - Free reference access to Bill Bryson Library and Barker Research Library
   - Free research access by appointment to items from the museums, archives and special collections not on display.
   - Clear communication will be provided in relation to any rules and regulations for research access (eg providing photo ID, handling requirements).

   3.1 **Access considerations and possible constraints**
   To meet our responsibility for care of collections we will:
   - Ensure access is compliant with licence conditions for electronic resources & publications
   - Ensure access provision protects Intellectual Property Rights (including copyright), confidentiality (eg in the case of archives) and ensures protection and preservation of collections
   - Recognise resource constraints on providing research access eg availability of staff, consideration if an object is on loan and any collection care or security requirements.

4. **Borrowing**
   Borrowing rights for people external to the University for items held at Bill Bryson Library is offered (subject to eligibility criteria where required) through:
   - Sconul Access scheme.

- o Reciprocal arrangements eg NEU, CA, SG
- o DARO retired and emeritus Durham University staff, casual staff and college mentors
- o Annual subscription.

4.1 Loans to external organisations and collections
We will consider requests for loans of items for inclusion in temporary exhibitions from our museums and archives and special collections. This will be contingent on meeting requirements for insurance, preservation and security.

5. Accessibility
- o We will make our main galleries, libraries and research facilities physically accessible; recognising that there are limitations with some of our historic buildings.
- o We will provide online and digital experiences to enable digital access to spaces not accessible for those with restricted mobility (eg Cosin's Library and the Castle)
- o We will develop audio description of key objects and places.
- o We will provide Braille and/or large print guides in our museums and visitor attractions.
- o We will provide a variety of aids for use in our buildings, including hearing loop at reception desks, magnifying sheets, coloured overlays, fidget aids, noise cancelling headphones, etc.
- o We will train our staff on EDI awareness and targeted training for Customer Services staff and other colleagues to support visitors in our spaces.

6. Encouraging access and ongoing commitments
ULC is committed to maximising access, for example by:
- o ULC EDI Committee: to provide a forum and support discussions, issues and training regarding access and use of our collections in relation to EDI.
- o Bidding for project and initiative funding to support Access. This includes bids to the University EDI fund and external sources of funding. Examples of access projects include:
  - ▪ Oriental Museum Sensory mapping 2024
  - ▪ Bill Bryson Sensory Mapping project 2025
  - ▪ Museum of Archaeology Inclusive Access Visitor Toolkit 2025
- o Removing barriers, eg by providing free access
- o Working towards alternatives, eg by providing online experiences
- o Planning events and exhibitions that build in accessibility and inclusivity.

7. Engagement
Ways we seek to enable and encourage access includes:
- o Sensory mapping
- o Information provided in advance to enable visitors to plan their visit
- o Staff training
- o Provision of sensory aids
- o A range of taught programmes and events for schools, community groups, families and lifelong learners
- o Events, workshops and activities that are inclusive and/or designed for specific groups to meet their needs.

8. Related ULC information and policies
Information for visitors and researchers for access to resources and services

- o Archives and Special Collection: [Using Our Collections - Durham University](#)
- o Library: [Information for Visitors - Durham University](#)
- o Museums and Galleries: [Using Our Collections - Durham University](#)
- o Museum and Galleries opening times: [Things To Do - Durham University](#)
- o University Libraries and Collections: [Charter and Code of Conduct](#)
- o [Online exhibition programme](#)
- o Durham University ULC Archives and Special Collections Access Policy