Alexander Turnbull Library Collecting Plan
Photographs Collection: 2015 - 2018

Email: natalie.marshall@dia.govt.nz

Purpose
The Photographs collection is a national collection, developed to sustain in-depth research in New Zealand and Pacific studies, and to preserve documentary heritage.

The purpose of this collecting plan is to describe the extent of collecting to be undertaken, and any subsequent priorities, for the Photographs collection of the Alexander Turnbull Library, part of the National Library of New Zealand.

This collecting plan was developed in accordance with the collecting principles outlined in the National Library of New Zealand’s Collections Policy.

Scope
The Photographs collection at the Alexander Turnbull Library (the Library) is one of New Zealand’s foremost collections of photographs. The existing collection comprises approximately 1,600,000 items dating from the 1850s to the present, covering most parts of New Zealand. The collection contains a wide variety of formats, including born digital photographs.

Emphasis is placed on photographs that document New Zealand and its peoples, and support advanced research in all aspects of New Zealand studies, from the origins of photography until the present. In keeping with the objective of building a collection relevant to all New Zealanders, emphasis is placed on material of national significance.

The work of professional and amateur photographers is collected, especially that which documents significant national experiences, events, cultural practices, and social developments that have affected the lives of all New Zealanders.

Supporting material is also collected, including negative registers, indexes, and job lists.

Material that falls outside the scope of this plan may be accepted if it forms part of a larger multi-format collection that the Library wishes to acquire, or if it provides context for other items in the Library’s collections.

In addition, photographs, monographs and serials relating to the history of
photography in New Zealand are also selectively collected.

**Pacific Scope:** The Library selectively collects photographs relating to the Pacific Islands and Pacific Islanders, in addition to photographs of and taken by New Zealanders active in the Pacific. Priority is given to those countries that New Zealand has had a strong historical involvement and where there has been significant New Zealand activity in the Pacific, documenting the peoples, landscape (both urban and rural), and relations with New Zealand.

**Antarctic Scope:** The Library selectively collects photographs relating to the history of Antarctica and the Sub-Antarctic Islands, with an emphasis on photographs that involve New Zealand and New Zealanders, such as expeditions which travelled via New Zealand, and that document land and seascapes, expeditions and explorers, and natural history.

Photographs of other parts of the world may be collected where they document the experience of New Zealanders overseas, for example, where they relate to theatres of war in which New Zealanders have served or are currently serving, places associated with expatriate or travelling New Zealanders, places of origin for immigrants to New Zealand that provide context for the process of their immigration, or photographs which are regarded as antiquities as defined by the Protected Objects Act.

**Exclusions**

- Non-representational or abstract photographs.
- Gallery prints, by purchase, from currently active photographers are not generally collected, with the exception of prints that assist with filling a significant gap in the collection.
- Photographs in poor condition or whose physical condition poses a risk to the Library’s collections.
- Copies of original photographs (digital and physical), including electronic scans. Copies lack evidential value and the Library is concentrating on collecting the most original versions of unique materials. The Library does not offer a copy and return service.
- Photographs created by government departments and other photographs covered by the Public Records Act 2005.
- Collections from a community, or on a regional theme (apart from the Wellington region), which have particular relevance to their local area, where there is a suitable local collecting repository.
- Collections of national significance that have a more appropriate fit with the holdings of another collecting repository.
- Duplicated items or collections already held by the Alexander Turnbull Library, the National Library of New Zealand, or in another repository or institution within New Zealand.
Collection strengths are identified as subject areas or formats that the Library is already strong in. Highlights in the Photographs collection include:

- Portraits of Māori and Pakeha New Zealanders.
- Photographs relating to the service of New Zealanders in wars and conflict zones, in particular the New Zealand Wars, the South African War, and the two world wars.
- Māori life, people and activities.
- Human settlement, including rural and urban.
- Major holdings of glass negatives dating from the 1860s.
- Antarctica and the Sub-Antarctic Islands, including the expeditions of Scott, Shackleton and the Ross Sea Committee.
- Polynesia, especially Samoa and Fiji.
- Photographs from the *Evening Post, The Dominion, The Press*, and other newspapers.
- Photographs relating to the arts, including opera, ballet, and theatre.
- Work of prominent New Zealand photographers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- Coverage of a wide range of historical photographic styles and processes.
Collecting Principles

The National Library of New Zealand Collections Policy provides a suite of principles that guide all collecting across the published and unpublished collections by the National Library and Alexander Turnbull Library.

The relevant principles from the Collections Policy are provided below, with an explanation of how they will be realised for the Photographs collection.

**Principle No. 1**  
Developing breadth and depth in the Library’s research collections requires decisions to be informed by, and responsive to, current and emerging research trends as well as the anticipated needs of future generations of New Zealanders.

**Actions**  
Staff working closely with the Photographs Collection take an active role in the New Zealand research community and the New Zealand photographic community.  
The Library welcomes and encourages dialogue with any part of the research and photographic communities regarding the collection of photographs that supports an existing or identified future research need.  
The Library will investigate methods of active acquisition, including commissioning, in order to develop further breadth and depth in the Photographs collection.

**Principle No. 2**  
Active engagement with iwi, hapū and whānau helps build collections of documentary heritage and tāonga created by Māori and relating to Māori, for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

**Actions**  
The Library has a strong collection of photographs relating to Māori from the mid-1800s to the present, including photographs of Māori life, people and activities.  
The Library welcomes input and dialogue from Māori to ensure that photographs of and by Māori are collected, preserved, and made available as appropriate and to the highest possible professional standards.

**Principle No. 3**  
The Library has an important leadership role in collaborating and coordinating collection-related activities across institutional and national boundaries to enable New Zealanders to connect to information important to their lives and to support strong documentary heritage and tāonga.
collections for all New Zealanders.

**Actions**

The Library always considers the most appropriate repository for a collection prior to acquisition, which can often be a collegial institution within New Zealand or further abroad.

Potential areas for collaborative or coordinated proactive collecting will be explored with collegial institutions, especially when the Library’s born digital collecting capacity can be utilised.

---

**Principle No. 6**

The Library takes into account the cost of acquiring, storing, managing, and making accessible collection items when building its collections.

**Actions**

The Library’s process for approval to purchase collection items includes consideration of cost and benefit, and is followed at all times when the Crown’s acquisition budget is used to build collections.

For items that are acquired for the Photographs collection, the total cost of collecting, processing, conserving, and providing access is one factor considered as part of determining the benefit to New Zealand of having the items preserved in perpetuity as part of our documentary heritage.
Collecting Priorities 2015 - 2018

Introduction

The Photographs collection is built to sustain advanced research in New Zealand studies and to preserve heritage taonga in perpetuity for all New Zealanders; however it is not possible to comprehensively collect photographs of national significance across all aspects of New Zealand social, economic and cultural life.

Therefore, the Library chooses to prioritise certain areas in order to focus the limited resource to either build on existing collection strengths, to fill gaps in collections, or to respond to the changing needs of researchers now and in the future.

The Photographs priorities are grouped into three categories:

**Ongoing priorities:** Those areas in which the Library strives to build on its existing collection strengths and areas of research interest not presently well represented.

**Emerging priorities:** Those areas where there are signs of an emerging research trend, and therefore will require the Library to start developing strategies for photographic material to be collected to support this research need in the future.

**Proactive priorities:** One or two areas where there is a known gap in the Library’s collection or the national documentation and the Library proactively strives to build relationships and collect in order to fill these gaps.

The Library welcome expressions of interest and donations from a range of people, communities and organisations. However, the current priorities are provided to give a guide on areas we are likely to prefer, given limited resources. Priorities include, but are not limited to, the list provided below.

### Ongoing priorities

1. New Zealanders’ experience of war
2. New Zealand social history in the mid to late twentieth century
3. Sport and leisure
4. Businesses and business activity
5. Transport and communications
6. Built environment
7. Farming and horticulture
8. Churches and religious activity
9. Domestic life
10. Photographs that highlight the role of and relationships of women in New Zealand society
11. Gender and gender diversity
12. Working class and lower socio-economic groups
13. Māori life, people and activities
14. Migrant and refugee communities in New Zealand
15. Human impact on the environment
16. Experience of expatriate New Zealanders

Emerging priorities

1. None for 2016-2018

Proactive priorities

1. Pasifika communities in New Zealand
2. New Zealand’s cultural and ethnic diversity

Related Collecting Plans

- Manuscripts
- New Zealand and Pacific Published Collections
- Music
- Oral History and Sound
- Ephemera

Supporting Documentation

This collecting plan is supporting by further documentation that outlines some of the criteria and objectives for assessing photographs for assessing and documenting collecting decisions.