



Joint Collecting Framework for Legal Deposit 2023-2030

Executive summary

This framework document provides the guiding principles under which the legal deposit libraries of the UK and Ireland will develop their approach to collecting and sets out their priorities for the period 2023 to 2030. It will be used to guide decisions on use of resources and shared work across the legal deposit libraries, and inform the six individual libraries' respective strategies. This framework updates and replaces the Joint Collecting Framework for UK Legal Deposit, 2015-2020.

Throughout the document there is a focus on the value of legal deposit across a wide range of users and stakeholders. There is also a focus on the resources required to maintain collecting at the levels established since the introduction of non print legal deposit regulations, and to extend collecting to an increasingly diverse and complex range of publications. This covers the whole collection life-cycle, from identifying publications through to acquisition, processing, description, preservation, discovery and access.

The experience of the past ten years of digital legal deposit implementation has shown that it is not desirable or practical to consider digital legal deposit in isolation from print. Therefore, while the balance of focus in this Framework remains on digital challenges, it considers legal deposit as a whole, including print and digital works.

As described in the Post Implementation Review¹, implementation of digital legal deposit is a complex and gradual process. During the period covered by this Framework, it is expected that the libraries will develop from collecting at scale the most commonly published formats ('Phase 1'), and developing ingest for digital maps and music scores ('Phase 2') through to 'Phase 3', which supports the collection of

¹ Post Implementation Review of the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-print Works) Regulations 2013. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Michael Ellis MP. Published 08 April 2019. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-implementation-review-of-the-legal-deposit-libraries-non-print-works-regulations-2013>



published material in complex formats. The Framework supports this development by identifying the key challenges, priorities and resource needs for the libraries. It is organised under the following headings:

A user-centred approach to legal deposit access

The libraries are committed to setting up a user forum to help understand user needs and concerns. The focus here is access, including support for the growing volume of publications made available under Open Access terms. Changing research methods, including the use of computational methods and analysing data at scale, will require new ways of supporting users.

Accessibility

Ensuring that the services and access to legal deposit content is not disabling to our users, and support the use of assistive technologies. Libraries should work with publishers, including through JCLD, to advocate for accessibility, eg in promoting the adoption of appropriate standards in publications.

Addressing complexity and inclusivity in publishing

This is at the heart of the Framework, and impacts across all stages of collection management. The data that we collect about publications in the UK and Ireland should support inclusivity in collecting. We should respond to complexity in publishing, whether that is through the use of new technologies or through changing behaviour. Additional research and data gathering should enable us to define in greater detail the full range of publications which are encompassed by legal deposit. More research is needed, for example, into self publishing behaviours. Continued development is needed for the tools and services that support deposit from small and independent publishers.

Viewing legal deposit as an integrated whole

Experience of the past ten years of legal deposit shows that choice of format for deposit is not neutral. The libraries should assess the distribution of print and digital collecting and ensure that this is an appropriate fit with the expectations of readers and authors.



Investment and sustainability

This is key to delivering the Framework. This section recognises the large scale of digital legal deposit achieved so far and the resources needed to maintain this. The period for the Framework will see significant infrastructure change, and the requirements for legal deposit need to be central to these changes. Legal deposit implementation will require continued investment and development of technology, staff roles and skills, and support for collaboration and resource-sharing, including through international networks. The scale of legal deposit means that support for cataloguing is essential to enable discovery in the ways that users' need. Sustainability will also require collection management in a way that that makes most efficient use of resources and minimises environmental impact.

Communications

There is a need to more actively communicate the value of legal deposit to a range of audiences: public, readers, authors and publishers. 2023, the 10 year anniversary of digital legal deposit regulations, represents an opportunity to re-invigorate communications. We should develop awareness of legal deposit as a collaborative network and present the value of legal deposit collections across all six libraries. There will be an important role for communications in preparing for the consultations that are expected following the Post Implementation Review.

The Legal Deposit Framework 2023-30 can be accessed at <https://www.bl.uk/legal-deposit/about-legal-deposit>

The value of legal deposit

Legal deposit ensures that the nations' publishing heritage and intellectual output - expressed through published works - is preserved and made available for consultation, research and inspiration.

The primary principle is that the legal deposit libraries, collectively and comprehensively, acquire and store permanently the national published outputs of print, non-print media and digital publications. These are then made discoverable and accessible, reflecting as far as possible user needs and preferences.



The value of legal deposit lies in its comprehensiveness and its commitment to preservation over the very long term. It aims to collect all published material from the UK and Ireland and is largely successful in that aim. Whether print or digital, academic or popular, official publication or self-published blog, this historical and current archive is an outstanding resource, freely available to all kinds of researchers, whatever their interests, in the reading rooms of the libraries, in geographical locations across the UK and Ireland. The duplication of the collection across multiple sites safeguards the publishing history of these islands in a unique manner for future generations.

The comprehensive nature of the collection process supports inclusion and reflects diversity in published communication in the UK. Though individual libraries might choose not to accept all possible additions to their collections the legal deposit system as a whole strives not to actively discriminate as regards content, recognising that the strength of the collection lies in its breadth. In addition, ensuring the output of small publishing ventures is collected, often ensures the inclusion of more marginalised groups and voices, thus further ensuring diversity in our collections.

Legal deposit ensures the long term preservation of publications. UK legal deposit libraries do not dispose of legal deposit material from their collections. It is retained in perpetuity (though this might be achieved by change of format). This helps inform the 'long view' taken by the libraries that they collect not simply for contemporary users and their needs but also for all future users who might have very different requirements from those of today and helps smooth out any contemporary biases as to what may or may not be important. Such an undertaking demands the adherence to long term preservation for traditional print materials and more problematic and continually evolving digital formats.