Special Collections as a teaching resource
Integrating primary sources or rare published material into a teaching programme or class can generate new and unexpected insights. The original and sometimes centuries-old items also offer tangible links to the past and can help bring a subject to life for students.

Special Collections in the General Library is home to the University’s largest concentration of manuscripts, archives, rare books and other material selected for permanent preservation because of uniqueness, rarity, value or fragility.

You are welcome to make use of these collections and the services of our specialist staff to support your undergraduate and postgraduate teaching programmes.

Special Collections material can be explored from multiple perspectives and has relevance to many disciplines, including anthropology, literature and languages, political studies, classics, education, Māori and Pacific studies, history and sciences.

Among recent classes in the Reading Room, English postgraduates examined rare books that shed light on print practices in the 15th–17th centuries. Meanwhile, anthropology postgraduates explored the research potential of primary sources, developed archival literacy skills and learnt how to search the manuscripts and archives collections.
Special Collections staff can:

- Assist you with classes in the Special Collections Reading Room, which can seat up to 20 people.
- Deliver introductory sessions about our holdings or tailor classes to suit your specific subjects or themes.
- Recommend resources for use in classes and assignments.
- Assist students who want to pursue research using the collections.

Collection strengths

Special Collections is especially rich in archives and published works relating to New Zealand and the Pacific, and to the University.

**Manuscripts and Archives**

More than 1,000 collections of primary sources, including letters, documents, registers, photographs and audio and digital files. Among the 1.8km of material are:

- The internationally–significant Western Pacific archives, which contains the official British colonial records for the region from 1877–1978.
- Records of many Auckland trade unions, political parties and activist and protest groups.
- University–related collections, including records of student organisations and cultural groups, and the personal and research papers of staff and alumni.
- Māori and Pacific collections.
- Literary manuscripts, primarily of Auckland authors and poets.

**Published collections**

The New Zealand Glass Case has particular strengths in travel and exploration, Māori and Pacific languages, history and ethnology, New Zealand poetry and University–related material. Works in the Glass Case span the 15th–21st centuries and include literature, languages, sciences, theology and more. The pre–1900 Philson Historical Collection contains medical rare books, the Asian Languages Collection houses mostly Chinese rare books and the Paterson Collection encompasses biblical studies, classics and ancient history. The Gilderdale and Price collections are invaluable repositories of historic New Zealand children’s books, the Forder Collection houses mathematical texts and the New Zealand Illustrators Collection features works illustrated by New Zealand artists.
For more information, please contact the Special Collections Manager.

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Images

Cover, clockwise from top left:
A postgraduate class examining Glass Case books in the Reading Room.
Spotted Dog menu. Auckland University College typographical collection. MSS & Archives A-58, folder 4.

This page:

Inside, left to right:
Costumes for A midsummer night’s dream, 1970. Sydney Musgrove papers on Auckland theatre activities. MSS & Archives 2013/7, item 2/5.