

# Subject Level Collection Statement: Religious Studies

**Subject Librarian:** Maria El-Chami

**Subject Librarian Contact Details:** [maria.el-chami@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:maria.el-chami@vuw.ac.nz)

**Academic Liaison:** Geoff Troughton

**Reviewed:** 27 May 2011

**Minor changes:** 14 February 2014

## ***1. Purpose of the Statement***

The purpose of this statement is to provide a framework to guide the collection development and management activities for Religious Studies. The statement supports the teaching, learning and research activities of Religious Studies within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This statement is developed in accordance with the principles outlined in the [Collection Development and Management Policy](#) (CDMP).

## ***2. Description of the Academic Subject***

The Department of Religious Studies was established with the appointment of Professor Lloyd Geering in early 1971 (retired 1985). Geering and James Veitch (appointed 1978, went to School of Government 2005) were long-standing members of faculty, and had a formative effect on the department and Religious Studies at Victoria. Their main interests were in modern Christian theology.

Professor Paul Morris was appointed as a result of the 1993 review. After this, the department began to grow, with growth especially rapid after 2000. Staff expertise in this era moved beyond modern Christian theology and included politics and religion, religion and psychology, Asian religions, and Islam. Each of these appointments resulted in some growth in the library collections. The Religious Studies programme currently forms part of the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies.

The Religious Studies programme offers instruction at all levels, from 100 level to PhD. See the programme's [website](#) for more details.

There are currently seven academic staff members teaching in the Religious Studies programme.

## ***3. Focus of the Subject***

The Religious Studies programme offers instruction in a wide range of religious topics. See the Religious Studies Courses [page](#), for a complete list of courses.

The current research focus of staff in the Religious Studies programme includes politics and religion, Judaic Studies, Islam, Sufism, Persian cultures, Indian religions, South Indian and especially Tamil Studies, psychology of religion, religion and biological theory, history of religions in NZ, Buddhism (in particular, classical Buddhism, Chinese Buddhist, and Buddhist philosophy), Chinese and Japanese religions, mysticism, Restorative Justice, religion and law, and New Testament Studies. Post-graduate students engage in research in these areas and others.

Religious Studies staff teach courses on specific traditions and on specific themes. Traditions covered include Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Chinese and Japanese religions, and traditions in the Pacific. We offer thematic courses on religion and law, religion and psychology, death and religion, religion and politics, new religious movements, and religion and identity.

All religious studies courses require students to write research essays using library-based research. Students draw heavily on journal articles and books in writing these essays, so it is important that the library collection continues to acquire a range of general and specific studies that cover these teaching areas.

#### ***4. Overview of the Current Collection***

The current research focus of staff in the Religious Studies programme has meant the acquisition of expertise in large new subfields in a short amount of time. Since the early 1990s, when the current phase of growth began, library holdings have grown significantly stronger in general religious studies and theory, and in subfields like Judaic studies, Buddhism, Islam, Indian religions, mysticism, religion and politics, psychology of religion, and Chinese religions. There is a need to keep up with current publication in the field, and also to redress gaps in the library collection.

The Religious Studies programme is now regularly attracting students from overseas in a number of subfields, and strong library holdings is a significant factor in this.

Religious Studies also benefited greatly from two rounds of contestable funding for extraordinary purchases, which supported the purchase of the Chinese Buddhist canon, the Daoist canon, the Tibetan Buddhist canon, Tamil texts, books in Buddhist studies, and a number of Hebrew texts.

Religious Studies is a book-based research discipline. The nature of the subject material, the methods used, and the skill sets involved mean that work remains current and relevant for centuries. This means that work takes a much longer time to go "out of date", and it is typical, and necessary, for staff to regularly use scholarship decades old as part of their active research. In addition, many of the areas taught and researched in the Religious Studies programme involve textual traditions.

Note should be made of the subfields of psychology of religion and biology of religion, which follow the sciences in their reliance recent journal coverage.

The Religious Studies programme is also heavily reliant on Interloans, making good use of the strong collections at Auckland, Canterbury, and Otago. This is a key service that is much appreciated.

## **Gaps/weaknesses**

While the library collection is strong in Christianity, there are gaps in the areas of New Testament studies, Christian ethics and Christian theology in general. Other weaknesses in the collection are in the areas of Islam and Qur'anic studies (both primary texts and secondary literature); Tamil primary texts; Buddhism (both primary texts and secondary literature), Jewish texts in translation, and the general theory/methodology of religion.

In addition to keeping abreast with currently published scholarship, the Religious Studies programme aims to fill the abovementioned gaps in the current collection.

## **Databases**

Databases for the Religious Studies include the ATLA Religion database, the ProQuest Religion subset of ProQuest Central, and Index Islamicus. In addition, much use is made of a wide range of other databases (e.g., JSTOR, WorldCat, PsycINFO, etc).

## **Journals**

The Religious Studies programme subscribes to a number of journals, in both print and electronic formats. Most major English language titles in the area are subscribed to.

## **Reference**

The reference collection has a basic collection of generic religious studies reference works, in both print and electronic formats.

## **Books**

There are approximately 29,166 titles in the BL1-BX9999 (Religious Studies) callmark range. This is the most significant single collection for the Religious Studies programme in the library, but it should also be noted that, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, many other callmark ranges are also important. The library also provides access to approximately over 10,000 eBooks on religious topics.

## **Audiovisual**

The Library's audiovisual suite holds a small number of DVDs relevant to the research and teaching of staff in religious studies.

## 5. Collection Development Guidelines

The primary responsibility for selection lies with the Religious Studies programme staff.

LC Callmark Range	Subject Area	Current Collection Level	Future Collecting Level
BL1-2790	Religions	Study	Research
BM1-990	Judaism	Study	Research
BP1-610	Islam	Study	Research
BQ1-9800	Buddhism	Study	Research
BR1-1725	Christianity	Study	Research
BS1-2970	The Bible	Study	Research
BT1-1480	Doctrinal theology	Study	Research
BV1-5099	Practical theology	Study	Research
BX1-9999	Christian denominations	Study	Research

### 5.1 Languages Collected

While there is an emphasis on English language material, especially for undergraduate use, almost any language is a candidate for research material. This depends on the composition of the staff of the Religious Studies programme. Currently languages used include: English, French, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, Sanskrit, Tamil, Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, classical Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Persian, Urdu, Turkish and Ottoman.

### 5.2 Geographical Areas Collected

In principle there are no geographic areas not included in the study of Religious Studies. This depends on the composition of the staff of the Religious Studies programme. Currently most areas of the world are researched, with Latin America and the Middle East to a lesser extent.

### 5.3 Chronological Periods Collected

Chronological periods collected in are broad, as subjects covered in Religious Studies cover a very wide span of time.

### 5.4 Publication Dates

All publication dates are collected. For primary materials in old traditions, there is in principle no date before which material could not be collected. For secondary publications in Religious Studies, material remains relevant for a very long time. In addition, given the new focus of Religious Studies staff in recent years, there are gaps in the collection for which it is necessary to acquire older material.

## **5.5. Format Guidelines**

Electronic journals are preferred, with print journals are only required if electronic access is unavailable. The purchase of eBooks will be negotiated with academics on a case by case basis.

## **5.6 Budget Guidelines**

Rapid programme growth and the appointment of specialists in new areas, plus the heavy reliance of Religious Studies on book literature, have meant that many areas of the collection are under-developed. If and when possible, the Religious Studies programme would like to urge a significant increase in allocation for book purchases in Religious Studies. It should also be noted that many areas taught and researched in the Religious Studies programme involve large textual traditions.

## **5.7 Classification Guidelines**

The Library of Congress classification system is used.

## **5.8 Preservation Guidelines**

Religious Studies programme journals are not bound. Any books that are beyond repair should be assessed for re-purchase.

## **5.9 Digitisation Guidelines**

To be developed during 2012.

## **6. *Relegation Statement***

From 2012 the following criteria apply:

### **Books**

- items which have not been issued within the last 10 years should be relegated to offsite storage.
- Any such titles should be seen by the Religious Studies Programme staff first, to make sure key works are not relegated.

### **Journals**

- Small runs of Religious Studies journals that the library no longer subscribes to may be considered for relegation to offsite storage.
- Any such titles should be seen by the Religious Studies Programme staff first, to make sure key works are not relegated.

## ***7. Deselection Statement***

From 2012 the following criteria apply:

### **Books**

- Duplicate titles, and multiple copies of material no longer required for teaching may be considered for deselection.
- Any such titles should be seen by the Religious Studies Programme staff first, to make sure key works are not relegated.

### **Journals**

- Religious Studies print journals that are now available electronically may be considered for deselection.
- Any such titles should be seen by the Religious Studies Programme staff first, to make sure key works are not relegated.

### ***Other Guidelines/Considerations***

Adequate storage space for Religious Studies resources in the Kelburn Library has been an issue for some years now. It is appreciated that this has been addressed for the book collection recently, and the journal collection shelving is being addressed.

The current research focus of staff in the Religious Studies programme has meant the acquisition of expertise in large new subfields in a short amount of time. In addition, many of these areas involve large textual traditions. This has meant that in addition to keeping abreast with currently published scholarship, the Religious Studies programme has needed to try and fill existing gaps in the current collection. Religious Studies is book-based, and often draws upon older works, as well as works in foreign languages.

### ***Links to other relevant Subject Level Collection Statements***

- [Asian Studies](#)
- [Chinese](#)
- [Cultural Anthropology](#)
- [History](#)
- [Japanese](#)
- [Philosophy](#)
- [Politics and International Relations](#)
- [Psychology](#)