

New Zealand Law Society Library Collection Policy

2026

1. Collection Policy: Purpose and Scope

The Collection Policy provides clarity and purpose to the development and ongoing management of the Law Society Library collections.

2. Library Overview

The New Zealand Law Society Library provides an essential service to the legal profession in Aotearoa New Zealand by ensuring access to authoritative legal information for all practitioners. This supports the rule of law and access to justice which, in turn, supports the Law Society's vision that all people in Aotearoa benefit from a strong, progressive and trusted legal profession.

The Library houses an extensive print and online legal collection for New Zealand, Commonwealth and other selected jurisdictions. There are three staffed research libraries, in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, and access to online subscription databases in an additional 33 locations around the country.

The Library collections provide value to the profession in several ways: serving as the principal library for many smaller firms and sole practitioners, as a backup library for major law firms, as a research and document supply facility for all firms and practitioners, and as a unique repository for superseded and historical material not easily available either nationally or internationally.

Library services are funded from practising certificate fees and from income generated from research services and document delivery. All lawyers with a current NZ practising certificate can use the Library.

3. Key Criteria for Selection, Retention, and Disposal

The Library collection supports the practice of law in New Zealand by providing lawyers with authoritative, relevant, and current legal information.

Audience

- Resources are for practising lawyers in New Zealand. The collection is maintained at a professional level and material must be relevant to NZ law and the NZ legal profession.

Jurisdiction

- Priority is given to New Zealand material.
- Following this, priority is given to law reports and legal texts for Australia, United Kingdom, and Canada.

Material type

- Priority is given to:
 - legal texts
 - law reports
 - commentary and practice guidance
 - legal journals
 - legislation and parliamentary materials
 - judgments
 - legal seminar papers.
- Lower priority is given to law firm management and legal practice texts.

Currency

- Priority is given to materials that contain current legislation, case law, commentary and practice guidance.
- Superseded and old material which is relevant to current legal practice is held. Consideration is given to material providing an enduring record of legal development in NZ.

4. Collection Description

The collection is comprised of both physical (print/hardcopy) and online resources.

Physical collections

Research collections are held by the Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury libraries. Each library maintains a comprehensive collection of legal texts, including all New Zealand texts, and selected Australian, UK, and Canadian texts. A current collection of texts and seminar papers is maintained in the Otago Branch office.

The collection ensures access to current core legal information for New Zealand and associated jurisdictions and is a unique repository for superseded and old material which is relevant to current legal practice.

The Library recognises its informal position as the law library of last resort for New Zealand's legal profession and, as such, the necessity of holding a comprehensive current and historic collection of legal resources that continue to be relevant to NZ law and the NZ legal profession in the libraries.

All hard copy materials are for reference use only, with occasional court use permitted as agreed by a law library manager or delegate.

Online collections

This hardcopy research collection is supported by access to subscription online databases, available through the research libraries and selected locations throughout New Zealand [see Appendix Three for locations].

Library catalogue

The library catalogue, which is open access, has a record of all library holdings. Holdings are also added to Te Puna, the combined catalogue of New Zealand libraries. Access to items, however, whether hard copy or electronic, is restricted to Law Society sites.

Subscription Online Databases

The Library has comprehensive subscriptions to LexisNexis, Thomson Reuters and Wolters Kluwer content with most New Zealand content included in the schedule, ensuring broad practice area coverage.

Other subscriptions to selected international resources include ICLR, i-law, and HeinOnline.

Access levels to online content varies with some content being available for lawyers to search and view at libraries and kiosks, some content only being available at the research libraries, and some content being staff access only. Decisions on access are driven by contractual agreements, publisher licencing requirements, and, in some instances, pricing considerations.

See Appendix One: Subscription online databases and access restrictions.

Users

- Law practitioners with current practicing certificates
- Associate members with Library access
- Other associated legal professionals i.e. law librarians
- Agents, and organisations acting as agents, of registered law practitioners.

5. Collection Development and Selection

1. Introduction

The Library aims to maintain a current, reliable and authoritative collection that reflects contemporary law, legal practice and research needs. The Library balances these factors to ensure both up-to-date legal information and an enduring record of legal development are available to users.

Resources are reviewed regularly for currency and relevancy to practitioner needs. Priority is given to materials that contain current legislation, case law, commentary and practice guidance, or otherwise fill identified gaps in the collection. Superseded or outdated materials may be withdrawn, replaced, or retained where they have recognised historical, precedential or research value. Older editions retained for historical purposes are clearly identified as such.

Selection

A. Texts

New Zealand legal material is the primary focus of the collection, followed by material from selected Commonwealth jurisdictions (Australia, the UK, and Canada). Resources from Asia-Pacific, America, and other jurisdictions are considered with reference to the key criteria above (audience, relevancy to NZ lawyers, currency).

Resources are selected for legal practitioners, specifically practising lawyers, and are therefore maintained at a professional level rather than for law students or general public interest. Recommendations for texts from lawyers or law librarians are made from time to time and are evaluated using the same criteria. At times the National Law Librarian may decide it is appropriate to test needs with the profession (users and non-users).

B. Journals

Journal subscriptions are managed across the Library as a whole. Preference is given to the online format over print, and most journals are now available as electronic-only. For some journal subscriptions, the package includes both print and online access; in these instances, we hold the journal in both formats.

The Library holds all New Zealand legal journals and selected international journals. Frequently used and high authority print journals may be held in all three libraries. Highly specialised or high-cost journals are held at one designated main library and made accessible to all users through document delivery

C. Online and looseleaf services

Loose-leaf services, databases and online subscriptions are updated as releases become available. Publisher schedules are reviewed annually. Print texts are assessed for retention periodically, taking into account publication date, citation frequency, jurisdictional relevance, and continuing professional demand.

D. Court judgment PDFs

The Library maintains a complete set of judgments in PDF format for all cases included in the LINX database. These files are stored on SharePoint and are restricted to Library staff access. Copies can be provided to lawyers upon request.

In addition, the Library receives newly published judgments in PDF format from the Ministry of Justice. These are held on a temporary basis until the full text becomes available through a subscribed database, at which point the locally stored PDF is deleted.

See Appendix Two: Selection guidelines by jurisdiction.

6. Gifts and Donations

Gifts and donations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and accepted or declined by the relevant Law Library Manager, in consultation with Library staff and with reference to this policy.

Issues for consideration include relevance, legal importance, existing holdings across all collections, and storage/space capacities.

It is recognised that not all texts warrant permanent retention and that collection decisions necessarily involve trade-offs. As a library of last resort, this does not mean that all collections will be accepted. The acceptance of collections that are of significant size, high value, or require specialist storage or insurance is subject to approval by the General Manager Representative Services and Strategy.

7. Special collections

Each of the Auckland, Wellington, and Canterbury libraries contain special collections within their broader holdings. These collections originated as donations to the library. These are listed separately as below due to their age, rarity, or by being part of a special donation.

Items are not typically added to these collections on an ongoing basis. Additions are infrequent and generally occur by way of donation, subject to the criteria set out under *Gifts and Donations*.

Newly purchased items are ordinarily acquired for the main collection, even where they align with the subject matter of a special collection. However, at the Library's discretion, such items may be incorporated into a special collection where appropriate.

[Auckland Historic Books Collection](#)

This collection includes printed works, particularly those printed before 1801 but also rare and valuable items up to the end of the 19th century. Most of the collection is English and represents important aspects of our common legal heritage with England. There are also New Zealand texts from the late 1800s and early 1900s. These were texts that were previously stored in the basement and placed in the Rare Books Room for preservation purposes.

It also includes Minute Books and financial ledgers dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s from the former Auckland District Law Society.

[Roger Haines Collection \(Auckland\)](#)

This collection was donated by immigration lawyer Roger Haines QC upon his retirement. Roger was one of the original appointees to the Refugee Status Appeal Authority in 1991 and remained a member until its disestablishment in 2010, serving as Deputy Chair from 1994 onwards.

The collection comprises over 100 books of specialist New Zealand and overseas texts on international human rights law and refugee and immigration law. This collection is stored in a staff-only storage area. Items can be identified through the catalogue and accessed with staff assistance.

[Wellington Historic Books Collection](#)

The majority of the pre-1800 texts held by the Wellington Library were deposited with the Alexander Turnbull Library in 1979 pursuant to a deed of arrangement. These are listed on the Law Society Library catalogue and access is by arrangement with the Alexander Turnbull Library.

[Cleary Room Collection \(Wellington\)](#)

This collection holds items donated by Justice Cleary, the estate of Chief Justice O'Leary, and the Medico-Legal Society (the Theo Gray Collection). These are both pre-and-post-1900 texts, are held on open shelving although separate from the main collection and can be borrowed on request. The Wellington Library continues to collect the occasional legal biography, and other quasi-legal books to add to this collection when they are deemed to be of interest to the legal profession.

Canterbury Historic Books Collection

This collection of largely British pre-1900 texts are housed in the Judges Lounge on Level 4 within the Justice & Emergency Services Precinct, Christchurch. This arrangement is covered by a memorandum of understanding signed in 2017. This memorandum also covers the accommodation of some international report series on the Level 4 Judges Floor shelving.

Appendix One: Subscription online databases and access restrictions

Database	Publisher	Accessibility
Bestcase (WestlawNext Canada)	Thomson Reuters	Libraries and kiosks – via Westlaw NZ
CCH iKnowConnect	Wolters Kluwer	Libraries and kiosks
HeinOnline	Various	Libraries only
ICLR	ICLR	Libraries and kiosks
Informa (i-law)	Lloyd's	Staff only
Lexis+	LexisNexis	Libraries and kiosks
Lexis Red	LexisNexis	Lawyers (not location fixed)
New South Wales Law Reports	Council of Law Reporting for NSW	Libraries only
Westlaw Australia	Thomson Reuters	Libraries and kiosks
Westlaw International	Thomson Reuters	Staff only
Westlaw NZ	Thomson Reuters	Libraries and kiosks
Westlaw UK	Thomson Reuters	Staff only

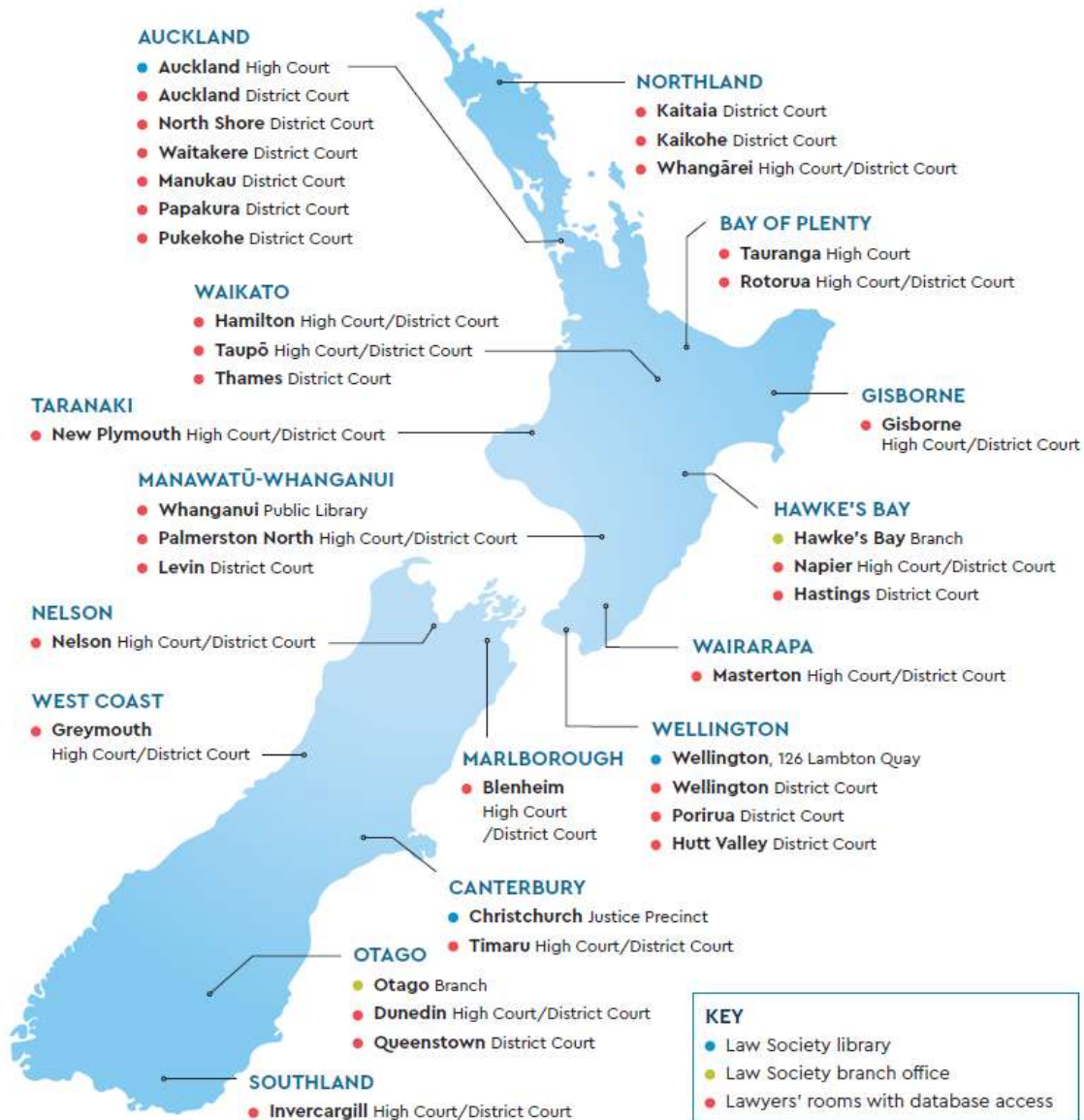
Appendix Two: Selection guidelines by jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Practice Areas	Material Type	Format	Location
Highest priority				
New Zealand	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal texts • Law reports • Legal journals • Seminar papers • Legislation and parliamentary materials • Judgments 	Print Electronic	Core print collection held at each library Access to subscription online databases in main libraries and lawyers' rooms
Second priority				
Australia	All predominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law reports (federal and state) • Legal texts 	Print Electronic	Core print collection held at each library Access to subscription online databases in main libraries and lawyers' rooms
United Kingdom	All predominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law reports • Legal texts 	Print Electronic	Core print collection held at each library Access to subscription online databases in main libraries and lawyers' rooms
Canada	All predominant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law reports (federal and provincial) • Legal texts 	Print Electronic	Core print collection held at each library Access to subscription online databases in main libraries and lawyers' rooms
Lowest priority				
Other Jurisdictions		Case by case basis		

Reference collection

A reference collection is maintained at each library consisting of dictionaries, legal encyclopaedias, legal words and phrases, citators and historic directories of legal practitioners.

Appendix Three: Location of Law Society libraries and Lawyers' rooms with database access



(Correct as of December 2025)