The genesis of Birmingham Central Library’s Black History Collection was created back in the late 1990s and was formed as a response to the call for a designated and identifiable collection of materials which could be found in one centralised location in the Central Library. The collection’s governing principles were to reflect the multi-ethnic composition of the surrounding conurbation and to accommodate the needs of a wide range of users, ranging from those wanting to further their awareness of Black and Asian histories to those studying concepts such as racism and slavery through to readers attempting to develop their awareness of key historical figures such as Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Ghandi.

The mandate of the Black History Collection has been subject to several interpretations over the space of its lifetime partly as a response to the organic development of Black and Asian social awareness which has been implicit in the additions to the collection’s book stock profile over time. During its infancy, staff attempted to pull together existing texts stored throughout the Central Library which contributed to the foundations of the collection. Substantial funding was found during the course of the last decade to refresh and extend on the collection holdings and this had been a driving force behind an acquisitions policy which has attempted to promote and preserve the original collection stock by engaging in a dialogue between these and new additions to the collection.

In March 2013, a new criterion for the capture and retention of materials in the Black History Collection was created in line with the move to the Library of Birmingham. Primary attention was given to the concept of history and how this weaves its way through the contents of the collection. Therefore, the collection intends to focus on a record and commentary of the life and development of a people associated and engaged with the various forms of Black and Asian histories.
The following is a guideline of the criterion employed:

Criteria for the Black History Collection:

- Items concerned with the international development of Black and Asian histories. An exploration of how colonialism has impacted upon the development of national identity for those nations included in the geographical radius of the collection.

- Items concerned with international political struggles of Black and Asian histories. Issues such as the civil rights movement, the impact and consequences of apartheid and the fight for independence under colonial rule.

- Items connected with the contexts of Empire, slavery, abolition, ‘race’, racism and anti-racism. The Black History Collection contains a substantial repository of nineteenth century British Parliamentary papers arranged according to the following topics - Colonies, Emigration and the Slave Trade.

- Items associated with local and West Midlands based Black and Asian histories and how this contributes to a wide discussion of the Black and Asian British experience. Please be aware that material pertaining to local Black and Asian histories can be found in the Birmingham Collection and archival collections. Please see the Finding Aids resource list at the end of this sheet or please consult a member of staff on the fourth floor of the Library of Birmingham.

- Selective studies in diaspora and the culture of migration, including biographical texts relating to key individuals and/cultural movements.

- The geographical radius of nations intended for inclusion in the Black History Collection includes histories of African nations, all three nations of the Indian Subcontinent and all Caribbean nations connected with African heritage.
Archives & Collections Finding Aids:

1. **Black History Collection Subject Guide**  
(Please consult staff for further information)

2. **Slavery/Anti – Slavery Resources Guide which gives reference to the Anti – Slavery Pamphlet Collection. Entries for these texts can also be found via the Spydus catalogue.**  
(Please consult staff for further information)

3. **Birmingham Stories source guides**  
Stored in the Heritage Research Area Quick Reference sequence plus on – line via [www.connectinghistories.org.uk](http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk)

4. **Black History Sources in Birmingham City Archives (BCOL 21.85)**


For further information on connected subject areas such as geography, ancient Egypt and a wider range of biographies, please consult the library catalogue or speak with a member of library staff.

The open access Black History Collection is located on level 4 of the Library of Birmingham and can be accessed during the library’s core opening hours of 11 am - 7 pm Monday & Tuesday and 11 am - 5 pm Wednesday to Saturday.

October 2016