

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Fine and Decorative Arts: Books and Periodicals (Class N and selected sections of Classes G, and T)

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I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement (CPS) covers materials in all formats that contribute to research in the fine arts and the decorative arts. Fine arts consist of theory, techniques, history, and criticism of architecture, sculpture, drawing, painting, and prints. Decorative and applied arts consist of theory, technique, history, practice, and criticism of objects and areas of study including such items as such as furniture, textiles, ceramics, silver and metalwork, and personal items or collections of items such as clothing and jewelry. The field of Decorative Arts strongly relates to the study of Material Culture, which focuses on the interpretation of objects, and contributes to an understanding of cultural and social relationships.

Fine Arts, as defined in the Library of Congress classification scheme, class N includes visual arts, painting, drawing, sculpture, architecture and decorative arts. Additionally, this CPS covers decorative arts topics covered in portions of the subclasses of GT for costumes; GV for collectibles; TS manufactures; TT Handicrafts, arts and crafts; and TX for home economics.

This CPS does not cover the acquisition of artwork, such as fine prints, posters, reproductions, artists' drawings, and architectural drawings, which are housed in the Prints and Photographs Division and are covered in the [Fine and Applied Arts: Non-Book Materials](#). Additionally, books and serials about photography and photographic processes are covered by the Collections Policy Statements for [Technology](#) and the [Chemical Sciences](#).

II. Diverse and Inclusive Collecting Statement

As the nation's de facto national library, the Library of Congress strives to build an expansive, yet selective, collection that records the creativity of the United States and is reflective of the nation's diversity and complexity. The Library's mandate is to have collections that are inclusive and representative of a diversity of creators and ideas. A priority includes acquiring material of underrepresented perspectives and voices in the Library's collections to ensure diverse authorship, points of view, cultural identities, and other historical or cultural factors. The Library also seeks to build a research collection that comprises a globally representative sample of international materials that are

diverse in voice and perspective, relative to their places of origin, further supporting the Library's mission to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for Congress and future generations.

Diverse collecting is mentioned within many of the Library's Collections Policy Statements. In addition, the Library has adopted several specific collection policies in an effort to ensure it is building an inclusive and representative collection. For more information, see the Library's Collections Policy Statements on [Ethnic Materials](#), [LGBTQIA+ Studies](#), [Women's and Gender Studies](#), [Independently Published and Self-Published Textual Materials](#), and [Countries and Regions with Acquisitions Challenges](#).

III. Research Strengths

The Library's collections of fine arts monographs and serials are unrivaled in their breadth primarily because of Copyright deposit and exchange agreements with other institutions. Due to the comprehensive nature of its holdings on American culture, the Library of Congress is uniquely able to support interdisciplinary research in numerous aspects of American fine and decorative arts. The general book and serial collections are supplemented by extensive holdings of doctoral dissertations, microform collections related to art such as collections of auction catalogs, and online, often full-text, sources. The Asian and African and Middle Eastern area studies divisions contain the majority of published print materials about fine and decorative arts from their respective regions. The Library's Rare Book and Special Collections Division also contains print material related to Fine and Decorative Arts. Materials from the Latin American, Caribbean and European division are part of the Library General Collections.

The Asian Division's Japanese collection covers all topics and periods of Japanese Fine Arts, with publications from the late nineteenth century down to the present day, many of them richly illustrated. A strength of the Japanese collection is the large number of books that contain not only illustrations of fabric and textile designs and patterns, but actual physical samples as well. The Chinese collection contains titles on important works on fine and decorative arts such as [Song hua quan ji](#) and [Yuan hua quan ji](#). Selective works of important artists are collected, as well as catalogs of major exhibitions and major auction houses. One example is the 600 volumes of art catalogs of auction houses AD received recently as a major gift, covering the 1980s to 2020.

The Near East Section in African and Middle Eastern Division houses major collections covering all the Fine and Decorative Arts categories in Arabic, Persian, Armenian and Turkish languages in various forms: book, manuscript, bound periodical, microfilm, DVD videos, as well as digitized collections. The African section holds the Professor Marilyn Heldman Collection of Ethiopian Sacred Art, which includes books, periodicals, and also a collection of slides documenting sacred artistic production from the 4th to the 18th centuries.

The great bulk of the Library's collections that support Africa-based research are located in the General Collections, but African Section staff have been active in developing those collections for more than 60 years. These collections provide comprehensive coverage of scholarship on African fine and decorative arts published in the United States, Europe, and Sub-Saharan African for more than 200 years.

In addition to monographs and serials, The Library has rare collections of fine and decorative arts. In Asian Division, there are Tibetan thangkas, Mongolian and Tibetan calligraphy scrolls, a [pattern book](#)

[from Jaipur](#), Rajasthan in India and hundreds of rare books with woodblock print art in the Japanese Rare Book Collection, such as [Hokusai hyaku monogatari no uchi gomai](#). The Ethiopic collection holds around 200 manuscripts of richly illustrated art, and many that utilize or catalog Solomonic magical symbols. The Library's Hebraic Section has a rich collection of [Hebrew and Yiddish artist's books](#), and its Near East Section holds a rare pattern book with women and children's clothing in Ottoman Turkish and hand-colored illustrations of Ottoman military uniforms.

The Library has rare catalogue raisonnés and exhibition catalogs of noteworthy artists, including James McNeill Whistler and Mary Cassatt, located in the Rare Book & Special Collections Division. The Rare Book & Special Collections Division has custody of the Artists' Books Collection, which features books illustrated and/or created by famous artists, such as Georges Braque, David Hockney, Jacob Lawrence, Henri Matisse, and Joan Miró. The Aramont Library in the Rare Book & Special Collections Division contains *livres d'artiste* (books by artists), including illustrations by post- Impressionists Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse, Fauvists George Rouault and André Derain, Cubists George Braque and Jacques Villon, and Surrealists Joan Miró, Marc Chagall, Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning.

The Fine and Decorative Arts collections in the Library of Congress have developed over time and are the natural outgrowth of the nucleus of materials included in Thomas Jefferson's library. The Library has several seminal architectural treatises from Thomas Jefferson's personal library, including eminent architects from antiquity (Vitruvius), the Renaissance (Palladio, Serlio, Vignola, Alberti), and from Britain (Inigo Jones and James Gibbs). The Library has items from Thomas Jefferson's collection on decorative arts topics. Among his collections were Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet makers Director*; *Chambers Chinese Designs*; *The Builder's Dictionary, or the Gentleman and Architect's Companion*; and *James on Gardening* which includes information about garden ornamentation.

The Library's General Collections contains extensive holdings of books and serials regarding a variety of artistic movements and styles, including, but not limited to, Abstract Expressionism, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Avant-garde, Baroque, Bauhaus, Bengal School of Art, Black Arts Movement, Classicism, CoBrA, Color Field Painting, Conceptual Art, Constructivism, Cubism, Dada / Dadaism, Digital Art, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, Harlem Renaissance, Impressionism, Installation Art, Italian Renaissance, Land Art, Minimalism, Neo-Impressionism, Neoclassicism, Neon Art, Northern Renaissance, Op Art, Performance Art, Photorealism, Pop Art, Post-Impressionism, Precisionism, Rococo, Street Art, Surrealism, and Symbolism.

The Library has an extensive collection of U.S. Doctoral dissertations in the fine and decorative arts and a selection of non-U.S. dissertations. The Library also has an extensive historical collection of exhibit catalogs in both the Fine and Decorative Arts, which it continues to attempt to collect comprehensively from major museums and other large state or private run cultural institutions. Exhibit catalogs issued by commercial galleries and smaller art museums are collected on a selective basis. In many cases, exhibition catalogs on Decorative Arts topics are the most representative publications about unusual objects, collections, or collectors.

The Library subscribes to electronic resources that cover the study of fine and decorative arts, including: *Art Full Text*, *Art History Research net*, *Art Index Retrospective*, *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, *ARTstor*, *AskART Academic*, *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, *Cahiers d'Art Institute*, *Design and Applied Arts Index (DAAI)*, *Index to 19th Century American Art Periodicals*, *Invaluable*, *National Palace Museum Journals Archive* (part of *Taiwan Academic Classics*), *Oxford Art Online*, *SCIPIO*, and numerous

other resources. Some databases offer both current and retrospective coverage, and many provide full-text coverage.

The Library's Digital Collections provide free online access to manuscripts, historical newspapers, audio recordings, photographs, and prints relevant to the fine and decorative Arts. The Library collects websites related to fine and decorative arts via the [Library of Congress Web Archive](#), including the Art and Design Web Archive. The proliferation of digital content has created a wealth of social and cultural data appropriate for long-term access. Many important contributions in fields related to art and design are being published exclusively online, and therefore can represent vulnerable cultural artifacts to be preserved for current and future generations of researchers. Recommending Officers will prioritize unique and current web content, including sites for art-projects that intersect with social justice issues and cover inequities in disenfranchised communities, such as black, indigenous, and other communities of color. This work represents an intentional branching out of focus beyond Euro-centric collecting in this area. Web archiving these sites allows the Library to both complement and strengthen the collections with content that has historically been difficult to collect.

IV. Collecting Policy

Overall, the Library collects at Collecting Levels 4 or 5 for the fine and decorative arts. Material relating to all aspects of American art and specific art forms and media (e.g. prints, graphic design and illustration) approaches a more comprehensive level (Level 5). For non-book art materials, see also the Collections Policy Statements for [Fine and Applied Arts: Non-Book Materials](#) and [Photography](#).

Most material on photography from an aesthetic, artistic, and technical perspective is found in class TR, which is covered by the CPSs for [Chemical Sciences](#) and [Technology](#). In its capacity as an international research library, the Library of Congress collects photographic monographs and serials that document topics of global and international interest, the work of individual photographers or groups of photographers, trends impacting or affecting American and global histories and achievements, and matters that document American interests, influences and concerns. Most materials addressing the creation and fabrication of decorative objects (i.e. silver, clocks, ceramics, etc.) will be found in various T sub-classes (see the CPSs for [History of Science](#) and [Technology](#)). Materials on costume and clothing are found in the GT sub-class, while works on clothing designers are found in the TT subclass.

Museum, exhibit, and auction catalogs constitute a unique resource for study in the history of art. The Library of Congress collects exhibition and museum catalogs from larger museums on a comprehensive basis. Museum and exhibition catalogs are collected on a global basis. The collections of auction catalogs are comprehensive only for very few of the largest American auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christies, and a few European auction houses. To supplement auction catalogs the Library currently subscribes to databases that include information on auction records such as *AskART Academic*, *Invaluable*, and *SCIPIO*.

Research value remains an essential selection measure. The Library tends to avoid the acquisition of repetitive and derivative works offering virtually no new information, including those consisting primarily of illustrations already available in other published sources. Additionally, "do-it-yourself" publications and other books for creative or teaching purposes are acquired on a selective basis except for books on handicrafts, including glass, fiber, wood, ceramics, needlework, sewing, textiles, and

related materials. As of 2007 craft brochures that are comprised of handicraft directions for one or two projects that have no implicit research value, and are usually printed as a double-sided booklet are set aside and reviewed on an annual basis so that a representative sample can be added to the collections.

V. Acquisitions Sources

Whenever possible the Library attempts to acquire materials through non-purchase means, such as copyright, exchange or gift. The Library of Congress collections are heavily dependent upon materials received through the copyright deposit provisions of U.S. copyright law ([17 USC section 407](#) & [17 USC section 408](#)). For copyright demand, the U.S. regulations allow for the Library to receive analog and some digital materials. When items are offered in both formats the Library's default is normally the Best Edition print version, unless the publisher has arranged a special relief agreement with the Copyright Office. For materials not available to the Library through copyright deposit, or other non-purchase means, the Library acquires materials through purchase. Purchase is used predominately for foreign publications that are not widely available within the United States. The Library utilizes an array of traditional methods of library acquisition (firm orders, subscriptions, and approval plans) with vendors located in different areas of the world. In addition, the Library uses its six Overseas Operations Offices to broaden its foreign acquisitions opportunities. Copyright deposit plays an important role for the collecting of work by and about new religious movements in the United States. These movements are broadly collected, even those not enumerated in this document. See Collecting Levels Chart for more information.

VI. Best Editions and Preferred Formats

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, see: <https://copyright.gov/circs/circ07b.pdf>.

For guidance regarding recommended formats for material acquired via all other means; e.g., purchase, exchange, gift and transfer, see: <https://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs>.

For information regarding electronic resources, open digital content, web archiving, and data sets, see the following Supplementary Guidelines: <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/opencontent.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.pdf>, and <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/datasets.pdf>.

VII. Collecting Levels

The following section details some specific collecting levels for class N (Fine and Applied Arts). Collecting Levels are defined in the Acquisitions section of the LC home page. When two numbers appear, the first refers to materials relating to the U.S.; the second to other areas of the world. In instances when non-U.S. collecting levels are set lower than U.S. levels, please note that these levels do not indicate the inherent importance or value of international collection materials, but provide a structure for the Library to focus limited resources.

Meeting the Library's Diverse and Inclusive Collecting Statement (see Section II) and the collecting levels outlined below requires continual evaluation of the publishing landscape, sources of expression, current

events, and socio-cultural trends to thus maintain effective collecting policies and acquisitions methods. Changes in publishing or in the creation of materials covered by this policy statement may necessitate collecting efforts not explicitly referenced here. Such efforts will be handled on a case-by-case basis while the Library evaluates the need for policy statement updates.

For explanation of the Collecting Levels used by the Library, see <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/cpc.html> .

It should be noted that these collecting levels are aspirational in nature. That is, they are goals for guiding the Library's collecting policies. Changing resources in, for example, budgets or human capital, may require adjustments in collection building, especially at the comprehensive level (level 5).

LC Classification	Subject	US Levels	Non-US Levels
N	Visual arts, including history of art	4	4
N5300	General Histories	4	4
N5310	Prehistoric Art	5	4
N5350	Egyptian Art	5	4
N5630-N5790	Classical Art	5	4
N6000-N6318	Medieval, Islamic Art	5	4
N6502	Latin America	5	4
N6502.57-N6538	American Art	5	4
N7800-N7840	Early Christian	5	4
NA	Architecture	4	4
NA707-NA712	American Architecture	5	4
NA2695-NA2793	Architectural Drawing and Design	5	4
NA7100-NA7884	Domestic Architecture	5	4
NB	Sculpture	5	4
NC	Drawing, design, illustration	4	4
NC845-NC915	Graphic Art Material	5	4
NC950-NC996	Illustration	5	4
NC1280-NC1284	Printed ephemera	5	4
NC1300-NC1766	Pictorial humor, caricature	5	4
NC1800-NC1850	Posters	5	4
ND	Painting	5	4
ND2889-ND3416	Illumination of manuscripts and books	5	4
NE	Print Media	5	4
NK	Decorative Arts	5	4
NK1-NK1678	History, movements, decoration and ornament	5	4
NK1700-NK3496	Interior decoration, furnishings, rugs	5	4
NK3600-NK9955	Other arts and industries, ceramics, glass	5	4

NX	Arts in general	4	4
GT1-GT420	Manners and Customs; household arts	5	4
GT500-GT2370	Costumes, fashion	5	4
GT2600-GT3913	Customs	5	4
TS	Manufactures	5	4
TS538-TS999	Metalworking, jewelry, millwork, paper, textiles	5	4
TT	Handicrafts, arts & crafts, handwork, painting	5	4
TX1-TX340	Home economics	5	4

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