

# LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

## Classics and the Ancient, Medieval, and Byzantine Worlds

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### I. Scope

This statement explains the classics, ancient history, Byzantine, and medieval studies collections policies of the Library of Congress. Defined geographically and temporally, classics refers to the culture and history of the Greek and Roman worlds which correspond to Greece, Cyprus, Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, Asia Minor (modern Turkey), Gaul (modern France), Syria, Egypt and Northern Africa (Tunisia and Libya). Ancient history denotes the histories of the Greco-Roman world, the Caucasus, and the area known as the Fertile Crescent. It is generally thought to end at the close of the late antique period and commencement of the early medieval period (late fifth/early sixth centuries AD). Medieval and Byzantine include the history of Europe and the Greek-speaking Byzantine Empire from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 until the fall of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 and the onset of the Renaissance in Western Europe. This document does not cover early modern history. Thus, the chronological terminus of this collection policy statement is 1453 for Greek material, and 1500 for the Latin language. Similarly, secondary scholarship in English is concerned with texts and the history of the Byzantine East up to 1453 and 1500 for the Latin West respectively.

Moreover, it is difficult to define the breadth of these fields as they touch upon a multitude of ancillary areas including, but not limited to, art, architecture, philosophy, history, archaeology, economics, military history, music, numismatics, papyrology, paleography, linguistics, etc. Given the vast amount of auxiliary subjects these disciplines have, it would be a difficult task to enumerate the Library of Congress classification schedule for each of the ancillary fields.

### 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 classics, medieval and Byzantine collections have numerous strengths. A very important collection of Greek and Latin texts comprises over 7,000 incunabula housed within the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. Moreover, the Law Library has a collection of legal incunabula and manuscripts on Roman law, including more than 70 incunabula, pre-Justinian Roman law sources, many early editions of Justinian's Corpus juris, medieval sources of Roman law, glossed editions of Roman texts, commentaries, and later humanist interpretations. These collections of early printed books are among the largest of their kind on the western side of the Atlantic. While the majority of these early printed books are in Latin, the Library does have some Greek incunabula by Aldus Manutius and other early printers. It should also be noted that even though Patristics falls under the purview of classical and late antique history, for most inquiries in this area, the primary point of contact should be the religion specialist.

The Microform and Electronic Resources Center is the repository for microfilmed collections of Latin, Greek, and other ancient language texts. Included in these collections are manuscripts from the Greek and Armenian Patriarchates of Jerusalem, various monasteries of Mount Athos, and the Monastery of St. Catherine's on Mt. Sinai. These collections, microfilmed in the 1950s by the Library of Congress remain a major resource for scholars here and abroad. Acquired in 2005 was a set of over 8,000 microfiche based on the Incunabula Short Title Catalog (ISTC) at the British Library. This collection reproduces full-text editions of incunabula (i.e., fifteenth century printed works, chiefly in Latin) from libraries around the world, including the earliest printed textual documentation in a wide range of subjects such as mathematics, medicine, philosophy, law, geography, cosmography, and travel literature, as well as early translations of core classical authors. Another significant collection is *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile* which contains a myriad of different facsimiled Old English texts in 534 microfiche.

The Main Reading Room contains many reference works on ancient history, classics, medieval and Byzantine studies in addition to the ancillary fields associated with those disciplines. Well known academic publishers such as Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard are represented in these reference works. These include multivolume dictionaries, concordances, and encyclopedias. Examples are the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, and *Handbook of Medieval Studies*.

In the General Collections, which form the bulk of these collections, strengths are centered on primary texts, secondary scholarship and reference works. The Library has a rather rich collection of manuscript and incunabula catalogs. These catalogs, primarily occupying the Z6620 ranges and the Z7016- Z7028 class are very extensive in scope and point researchers to most libraries in North

America and Europe with collections in medieval and Byzantine manuscripts, as well as incunabula.

The Library seeks to obtain as complete a collection as possible of primary Greek (classical and Byzantine) and Latin texts. It is the Library's goal to make sure all known primary texts are in the collections.

Concurrent with this goal is the objective to collect new annotated versions of primary texts whose editions hold significantly updated scholarship compared to previous annotated editions of the same text. As yet, the Library has all primary texts of the surviving works from every known ancient Greek and Roman author in the Loeb Classical Library. Since the corpus of surviving classical literature from major authors is much smaller than that of the medieval and Byzantine eras, a higher degree of acquisition of primary texts in the classics is much more feasible to accomplish compared to a similar proportion of primary texts from the medieval period. While not every medieval or Byzantine author is represented in the Library's collections, a large proportion of authors are represented in the Library. Translations acquired by the Library are almost always in English (save for notable texts whose supplementary material represents extraordinary scholarship in non-English language) and can be found in the Library's collections for all classical Greek and Latin works.

The classics and ancient/western medieval/Byzantine history materials housed in the General Collections are complemented by the extensive and comprehensive ancillary holdings in the Near East and Hebraic Sections of the African and Middle Eastern Division. These are in addition to translations of texts from these areas held in the General Collections, e.g., the series *Patrologia orientalis*. The African and Middle Eastern Division has a rich collection of rare manuscripts in Arabic, Armenian, Ge'ez, Hebrew, and Ottoman Turkish, as well as scholarly resources in these and other vernacular languages. The collection includes materials such as historical journals, monographs, excavation reports, epigraphic and papyrological collections, works on art, architecture, music, and all disciplines considered supplementary to the study of the relations between the West (broadly defined) and the East (broadly defined as North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Caucasus and central Asia up to Mongolia).

The Library's Armenian collection comprises some 47,000 items, any of which are useful to researchers studying these time periods. The multi-volume *Divan hay Divan hay vimagrut'yan* (Corpus of Armenian inscriptions) includes inscriptions from the 5<sup>th</sup> century through the early modern period. The *Patm-banasirakan Handes* (Historical/Philological Journal) began in the Soviet period and has ever since been a principal journal for scholarly articles on the pagan, Christian, Cilician, and early modern periods of Armenian history, literature, art and culture.

The chart below indicates that there are over 89,000 unique titles within the classics designations of the LC classification system. These titles do not represent volumes or copies, simply unique titles of monographs and serials

#### IV. Collecting Policy

The hallmark of the ancient history, classics, medieval and Byzantine collections, of course, is the General Collection. From texts of the authors to translations, commentaries, historical discussions, excavation reports, and reference works on inscriptions, vases, sculptures, and so forth, it is a vast and still growing collection. However, other custodial divisions collect in the classics which are worth mentioning as well. Those divisions should be consulted for detailed collection policies regarding

their materials which relate to the aforementioned subjects. The Law Library has a major collection of Roman Law and Canonical Law collections; its works on the legal structure of corresponding cultures and nations are also highly useful. The Prints and Photographs Division contains numerous photographs and lithographs of the Classical monuments and works of art. Finally, the Geography and Map Division is famous for its antique map collection. This collection is important for tracing knowledge of the world at given historical points, for the study of classical atlases, and for information concerning toponyms employed on maps of various ages.

Furthermore, every attempt is made to collect texts of core authors, translations, commentaries, historical discussions, excavation reports, reference works, dissertations, publications of western art, and other pertinent resources. Seeking such a range of genres ensures that most aspects of historical scholarship are accounted for within the collections. One key requirement by the Library of Congress which has ramifications regarding this Collections Policy Statement is that only English translations of Greek and Latin texts are acquired by the Library. For example, a new edition or translation of a primary text whose supplementary material is in a language other than English may consist of the addition of variant manuscripts and other newly discovered information.

This additional record of scholarly research makes the new edition indispensable, yet it may not have been acquired because of the existence of older editions or because it includes a translation in a language other than English. Therefore, since the Library of Congress generally does not collect translations in languages other than English (see [Translations Collections Policy Statement](#)), it can be worthwhile to make exceptions when the translation and commentary are by an internationally recognized classicist.

The Library also distinguishes between ancient translations and modern translations. Ancient translations should be considered as primary sources. They often use an older textual version of the original source document and as such they may contain portions of an original work which may not exist anywhere else. On the other hand, many modern translations contain textual criticism and other pertinent scholarship which makes them more reliable.

## V. Acquisition Sources

One reason the ancient history, classics, and medieval and Byzantine collections at the Library of Congress are very strong can be attributed to copyright deposit, which requires that the major publishers of the classical, medieval and Byzantine materials mandatorily send their publications to the Library. These publishers include Brepols and Brill, as well as the chief domestic university presses, and non-U.S. university presses such as Oxford and Cambridge.

The Library also acquires materials in these subjects through approval plan purchases with domestic and primarily European publishers, exchange, gifts, and other purchases. Classical, medieval and Byzantine titles of interest routinely appear in specialty bibliographies and are readily available from non-U.S. publishers and university presses. New publications are announced in a variety of places, including bibliographies, web sites, and through online acquisition listservs. The monitoring of those sources by the Recommending Officer for these disciplines ensures the continuing development of these collections. Occasionally, special/rare editions of significant historical works become available and special funding is then needed to acquire the items for the Library. Depending on the format and type of rare or unique material which would augment the Library's collections, the cost of the item may be shared interdivisionally. The increasing presence of digital publications of materials in these

subjects, (i.e., monographs, serials, reference works, concordances) will require further attention to these media, since these fields have traditionally been mostly print-based.

## VI. Best Editions and Preferred Formats

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, see: <http://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: <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs>.

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

## VII. Collecting Levels

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

Since ancient history, classics, medieval and Byzantine studies do not neatly fall within the LC classification schedule, it would not be effective to list collecting levels by sections of the schedule. Rather, it is more useful to list the resources by type and assess their collecting levels in this way.

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

| Type of Material  | Collecting Levels |
|---|-------------------|
| Primary sources (classics, medieval, Byzantine)                                     | 5                 |
| Manuscript facsimiles   | 3                 |
| Manuscript and incunabula catalogs  | 5                 |
| Reference works on ancient history, classics, medieval and Byzantine studies        | 5                 |
| Secondary scholarship on ancient history, classics, medieval and Byzantines studies | 4                 |
| Translations in English for classical, medieval, and Byzantine primary texts        | 5                 |

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