

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Philosophy (Classes B, BC, BD, BH, BJ)

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I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement covers all materials within the scope of Philosophy, as defined within the LC Classification as Philosophy General (Subclass B), Logic (BC), Speculative Philosophy (BD), Aesthetics (BH), and Ethics (BJ). Many disciplines have within their subject area a tradition of applied philosophy that seeks to resolve philosophical problems of practical concern within the discipline's area of inquiry. For any "applied" philosophy materials, classed outside of the B Subclasses, the relevant subject Collections Policy Statement should be followed instead of this document. However, as this statement covers philosophy materials produced throughout the world, it is important to note that the philosophical traditions for some cultures are often expressed through religious, performative, or literary works, such as folk tales, poetry, music, biographies and other forms of literature. For these materials, this document should be consulted in conjunction with the Collections Policy Statement for the relevant subject area, such as [Folklore and Folklife](#), [Literature and Language](#), [Music](#), and [Countries and Regions with Acquisitions Challenges](#). Additionally, Classical and Medieval-era western philosophy are covered by this statement and [Classics and the Ancient, Medieval and Byzantine Worlds](#).

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 strengths of the Library's philosophy collections represent more than two centuries of collecting and the benefit of copyright deposits. The Library has strong historical and current collections in philosophers and the traditions of philosophy, including ethics, logic, metaphysics, aesthetics, and the history of philosophy. The General Collections have a particular strength in Western philosophy in English and European languages, but also include works by and about non-Western philosophers and philosophies such as those of the African, Asian, and Islamic traditions. Collections of Area Studies divisions increase this diversity with philosophical works in the languages of these cultures and traditions. In support of the Library's collections, it subscribes to electronic resources to such as Philosopher's Index, Loeb Classical Library, Bibliography of Asian Studies, and Index Islamicus.

The Manuscript collection holds the papers of Hannah Arendt and a small collection of other political philosophers such as Shi Hu, Frederic Harrison, Paul Thormeyer, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx and Jeremy Bentham.

The strength of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division lies in its holdings of first editions and subsequent early printings in Western philosophy. While the division holds many first printings of major philosophical works from the fifteenth century up to the twentieth century, holdings are selective rather than comprehensive, given the breadth and scope of the discipline. From the late medieval period, the division holds a very strong incunabula collection that contains some first editions of Greek and Latin philosophy from ancient authors such as Cicero and Aristotle. For early modern western philosophy, some first editions, such as Descartes' Discourse on Method, are held. Included within the Rare Book Collections is the Thomas Jefferson Collection. He was interested in Enlightenment philosophy and owned some first and early editions of Spinoza and Hume. Other holdings of note include the library of former Supreme Court associate justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, which included many works on legal philosophy by famous thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes as well as lesser-known writers. For modern philosophy, the Rare Book and Special Collection Division has first printings of key thinkers including Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Jean-Paul Sartre and Francois-Marie Voltaire.

The Asian Division extensively collects monographs and journals related to the study of philosophy, with coverage for languages of South, Southeast, and East Asia. In addition to contemporary scholarly publications in all areas of philosophy, the division's seven rare book collections contain works of significance related to Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist, Hindu, Jain and other philosophical traditions from Asia.

The African and Middle Eastern Division has numerous works on philosophy within its three collecting areas, Africa, Near Eastern, and Hebraic.

For millennia, African philosophical traditions have developed as a piece with regionalized spiritual traditions within robust, dynamic and highly diverse indigenous oral cultures. While from the 1920s Western-educated African philosophers began working with some reference to European traditions, African philosophy emerged robustly as a distinct field of academic inquiry in the Independence era of the 1960s. Since 1966, the Library's Overseas Operations Office in Nairobi has sought to collect comprehensively current African philosophical research from many of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Near Eastern Section has many philosophical works from the early historical periods of Classical Islam to the modern works of Middle East and North Africa. Some of the earlier works are in manuscript and lithograph forms, while others are modern publications. The earlier works contain writings of some of the most well-known authors in Islam; these include famous philosophers such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes), al-Ghazali, and al-Ash'ari among many others. There are also several translations of Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, which were completed during an early period in Islamic history. The collections also include many works of mysticism that lean to the philosophical. Works by modern Middle Eastern and North African philosophers as well as journals of philosophy published by various universities and institutions from the region are collected. These works can be found in Arabic, Persian and the Turkic languages.

The Hebraic Section's collection in the field of Jewish Philosophy is comprehensive. Included in this collection are academic University Press publications in Hebrew and Yiddish that encompass both general and religious philosophical publications and journals. These resources span texts dating from the earliest periods of Jewish history through the current year. The Hebraic Section has an impressive collection of first editions (15th and 16th century) of Hebrew works by various medieval philosophers, including Maimonides, the foremost Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages.

IV. Collecting Policy

For the subject of philosophy, the Library seeks to maintain a strong research collection representative of all branches of philosophy, philosophical traditions, past and present, throughout the world. This entails collecting works by historical and contemporary philosophers; secondary scholarship on these works; biographical resources on individual philosophers; and material on the history and development of philosophy, including significant philosophical movements and schools of thought from Western and non-Western traditions. Typically, the Library collects these works in their original languages.

For philosophy materials published in the U.S., the Library seeks to collect academic research materials in all formats at a level 5 (comprehensively). U.S. materials intended for popular reading are collected at a level 4 (broadly). Instructional materials are generally not collected, other than textbooks, which are discussed later in this section.

For materials published outside the U.S., the Library collects academic materials at a level 4 (broadly) and popular works at a level 3 (selectively), only when those works have reached a national level of prominence in their home country or within the United States. Recognizing the central role religious, performative, and literary works have in many cultures to communicate philosophical ideas, the Library collects these works at a level 4 (broadly).

For special collecting consideration are the many African philosophical traditions (especially from sub-Saharan Africa), these works are often distinct from European and Asian philosophical traditions. The Library broadly collects published materials documenting the philosophical works of African cultures following an oral tradition. In addition to historical works, the Library seeks modern and contemporary African philosophy, which has developed several unique schools of thought that are tied to African peoples grappling with the trauma of the slave trade and colonial-era social disruptions. Much of these indigenous philosophical traditions address themes, such as resistance and documenting individual cultural/spiritual traditions, which the Library sets as a high priority for collecting within the region.

While applied philosophies, such as feminist philosophies, legal ethics, queer theory, environmental

ethics, etc., are collected following the guidance in their relevant subject Collections Policy Statements, in cases in which the subject guidance is unclear or does not address the theory in question, the material is collected at a level 4 (broadly). Special consideration is given to works that are representative of philosophical movements or by philosophers from marginalized communities.

The Library collects on a highly selective basis U.S. and non-U.S. published college-level textbooks on philosophy and its branches.

V. 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>.

VI. Acquisition Sources

Whenever possible the Library attempts to acquire materials through non-purchase means, such as copyright, exchange, gift, or the Cataloging in Publication program. 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, which is used predominately for non-U.S. 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 acquisitions opportunities outside the United States.

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 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 in this document. 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).

The table below broadly outlines the collecting intensity for academic materials and any other type item considered impactful within the discipline of philosophy. In general, materials intended for popular reading are collected at a level 4 for the U.S. and at a level 3 for the rest of the world. Instructional materials are not collected, except for textbooks and materials classed within the “Study and teaching. Research” facet within each of philosophy subclasses (B52.3-52.65, BC59, BH61-63, BD443.8-443.9, and BJ66-68). For those instructional items that are in scope, they are globally collected at a level 3.

LC Classification	Subject	U.S. Level	Non-U.S. Levels
B1-5802	Philosophy (General)	5	4
BC1-199	Logic	5	4
BD10-701	Speculative philosophy	5	4
BH1-301	Aesthetics	5	4
BJ1-1725	Ethics	5	4

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