The African Section, one of three units of the African and Middle Eastern Division (AMED) at the Library of Congress, was established in 1960. It was initially supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and later by funds appropriated by Congress.

The Section is the focal point of the Library's reference, bibliographic and collection development activities on sub-Saharan Africa. The Near East Section has responsibility for the North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia.

The Section plays a vital role in the Library's acquisitions programs, offers reference services and bibliographic access, and hosts special events. It engages in partnership and outreach activities with other research institutions and scholarly and professional associations in the United States and abroad. For both historical and contemporary research, the Library’s collections of Africana materials from, or relating to, Africa are substantial and include every major field of study in the social sciences and the humanities. Although the Library has holdings in the sciences, its collecting policy excludes technical agriculture and clinical medicine, which are under the jurisdiction of the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine, respectively. The collections include invaluable primary and secondary materials in diverse formats and languages, including African vernaculars.

Since 2002, AMED has provided online access for its free and open to the public video-recorded lectures given mostly at noon-time by authors, scholars and researchers on a wide range of topics.

The increasing emphasis on preservation, bibliographic control and access to the African Section’s Pamphlet Collection of over 30,000 items served to create databases and finding aides to this material.

The African and Middle Eastern Division Reading Room is the public access point for researchers seeking to use the vast Africana collections of the Library of Congress. The reading room contains a reference collection on Africa which includes yearbooks, guidebooks, atlases, directories, encyclopedias, and other specialized reference guides.

Queries are encouraged via Ask-a-Librarian, email, telephone and in-person visits.

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Library of Congress Websites Related to Sub-Saharan Africa

Homepage of the African & Middle Eastern Division.
http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed

The Library of Congress Africana Collections: An Illustrated Guide
https://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/guide/afrillguide.html

Conversations with African Poets and Writers
https://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/afs/conversationswithafricanpoetsandwriters.html

Library of Congress databases and e-resources
http://eresources.loc.gov/

Ancient Manuscripts from the Desert Libraries of Timbuktu
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/mali/mali-exhibit.html

Africana Historic Postcard Collection
http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/afs/africana-postcards.html

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