
History of Printing Collection Development Policy

L. Tom Perry Special Collections
Harold B. Lee Library
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I. Introduction

The History of Printing Collection comprises examples of book technologies from antiquity to the present. It includes precursors of the printed book and non-Western book technologies, but is primarily focused on collecting high-quality examples of historical, technological, and artistic developments in book history and printing from the Middle Ages to the present. The Modern Fine Printing Collection and Rare Japanese Book Collection are two actively-collected subsets of the History of Printing Collection.

II. Position Responsible for Collecting Decisions

The Curator of Rare Books is responsible for collecting the material contained in the History of Printing Collection.

III. Scope and Focus of Collecting

The History of Printing Collection provides support for teaching and research in the history of printing and book production, with emphasis toward supporting undergraduate education. The History of Printing Collection is focused around examples of developments in book technologies throughout history as well as examples of work by specific printers and movements in book history.

IV. Priorities and Limitations

a. Priorities

i. Areas of Specialization

Pre-printing technologies, particularly medieval manuscripts (original and in facsimile); incunabula and early printing, including the work of Aldus Manutius and his successors in Venice; the work of Parisian printers of the 16th century, including Simon de Colines and the Estienne family.

ii. Major Faculty Research Interests

The History of Printing Collection supports major faculty teaching and research interests in book history, art history, medieval and early modern history, the history of technology, typography and design, visual arts, Classics, and European literature.

b. Limitations

The Modern Fine Printing Collection Development Policy governs the collection of 19th-21st century printing technology in the fine press tradition, and the Rare Japanese Book Collection Development Policy governs collecting related to Japanese book history. These collections are considered subsets of the History of Printing Collection.

V. General Selection Guidelines

a. Treatment of Subject Depth

Special Collections seeks to maintain and collect for the History of Printing Collection at a level which supports undergraduate and graduate-level teaching and research.

b. Specific Delimitations

i. Type

Pre-Printing Period (Collected at a representative level): Original and facsimile Classical, European, Middle Eastern, and Asian manuscripts and artifacts from BCE to the 17th century CE.

Pre-Printing Period (Collected at a teaching level): Original and facsimile European manuscripts of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

Incunabula (Collected at a teaching level): Examples of the work of major and minor 15th century printers and of developments in print technology of the period.

16th century printing (Collected at a research level): Examples from major and minor printers of the period, including Aldus Manutius and the Aldine Press, the Estienne family, Simon de Colines, Johann Froben, Badius Ascensius, Christopher Plantin, the Giuntas, and the Elzeviers.

17th-19th century printing (Collected at a teaching level): Examples of major printers of the period, including John Baskerville, Giambattista Bodoni, and Firmin Didot.

Developments in printing technology from the incunabula period to the present (Collected at a teaching level): Examples of innovation and developments not necessarily associated with any one particular printer, such as woodcuts, engraving, pochoir, lithography, type design, book design, etc. Examples of anomalies of the printing process and technologies, such as texts that include printing errors and mistakes, forgeries, and piracies.

ii. Physical Format

Collected at a teaching to research level: Printed books.

Collected at a teaching level: Book fragments; manuscript books (originals and facsimiles); pedagogical book structures; block books; prints and engravings.

iii. Date

Collected at a research level: Materials created prior to the late 19th century.

iv. Geographical focus

Collected at a research level: Materials created in Western Europe.

Collected at a representative level: Materials created outside Western Europe.

v. Subject Emphasis

The History of Printing Collection is not delimited by the subject of the items collected.

vi. Languages

The History of Printing Collection is not delimited by the language of the items collected (the bulk of the collection is in Western European languages, but also contains Hebrew, Coptic, Arabic, and other languages).

VI. Deaccessioning Guidelines

In accordance with current deaccession policies, the Curator of Rare Books will make proposals to deaccession materials to the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Coordinating Committee. Materials may be deaccessioned if they do not comply with the History of Printing Collection collecting policy or if they are duplicates of material already in the collection.

VII. Cooperation with other Individuals

Because the History of Printing Collection is focused on the history of book technologies rather than subject or content, the collection may at times overlap with other collecting areas in Special Collections (e.g., the Renaissance and Reformation Collection in regard to developments and major figures in early European printing or the Americana Collection in regard to developments and major figures in American printing). The Curator of the History of Printing Collection cooperates with curators of these collections when such cases arise. The Curator of the History of Printing Collection also cooperates with the subject selector for printing history in the Lee Library, who collects secondary materials that support the History of Printing Collection in Special Collections.

VIII. Revisions

History of Printing policy, n.d. [ca. 2006]