

Rare Books Collections, UH Special Collections

Collection Development Policy

The Rare Books Collections in Special Collections at the University of Houston Libraries support the [mission](#) of the University of Houston and more specifically, that of the Libraries:

University of Houston Libraries advances student success, knowledge creation and preservation, and globally competitive research.

The goals of collecting are:

- To support teaching and learning in order to encourage student success through activities that increase learners' critical thinking and primary source literacy skills
- To support research by UH faculty, staff, and students, and scholars and members of the general public locally, nationally, and internationally
- To strengthen the holdings of selected archival collecting areas that are targeted for national prominence by adding complementary books, magazines, and other published materials
- To advance Special Collections' commitment to relevant and inclusive resources and services through the acquisition of materials that represent a variety of historical and cultural actors and events, including those related to communities that have been historically underrepresented
- To preserve rare materials that are found in very few or no other publicly accessible library collections
- To continue to enrich selected areas of strength while also responding to new trends and opportunities in research and scholarship
- To support Special Collections' program of outreach and engagement through physical and virtual exhibitions, digitization, and other activities

The collecting methods and principles are:

- Materials are collected through both donation and purchase, primarily purchase made possible by endowed funds. Occasionally rare or fragile materials are acquired through transfer from the Libraries' general collections.
- Materials are collected with the intention of providing an enduring commitment that is resource intensive.

Traditional areas of strength are:

- Medieval and Renaissance manuscripts
- History of the book, including rare Bibles
- American literature of the 19th century
- Texas history
- Dictionaries
- Maps, general
- Fine press and artists' books, general

Special Collections continues to acquire materials in these areas in a limited manner with a focus on particularly rare examples and those that support teaching and learning.

The current collecting priorities are:

- **Materials that support teaching and learning**
 - Focus is on materials that support teaching areas of emphasis within and across classes, or specific materials requested by faculty or identified by Special Collections librarians who teach
 - Geographic and chronological coverage is broad
- **Energy and sustainability**
 - Deep and extensive collection of materials that complement archival collections in Energy & Sustainability Research Collection
 - Focus is on materials that document the history and impact of oil & gas and alternative energies on global industry, economy, politics, culture, security, environment, and sustainable development
- **LGBTQ+ history and culture**
 - Deep and extensive collection of materials that complement archival collections in LGBT History Collection
 - Focus is on materials that document major issues and movements within LGBTQ+ communities
 - Geographic coverage is primarily the United States
 - For books, serials, and ephemera focused on a local audience, geographic coverage is primarily Houston and secondarily Texas.
- **University of Houston publications**
 - Coverage is comprehensive
- **Houston-related publications**
 - Focus is on selected materials that complement archival collections in Performing & Visual Arts, Contemporary Literature, and Architecture and Planning, and materials that reflect Houston's diversity
 - Coverage is selective
- **Hispanic history and culture**
 - Focus is on selected materials that complement archival collections in Hispanic Research Collection
 - Geographic coverage is primarily the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean
- **Feminism**
 - Focus is on selected materials that complement archival collections in Carey Shuart Women's Research Collection
 - Focus is on 20th and 21st century feminist movements and politics, plus women's suffrage
 - Geographic coverage is primarily the United States
- **Colonialism and exploration**
 - Geographic coverage is primarily Latin America and the Caribbean
 - Selected materials are collected from other geographic areas
- **Natural history**
 - Focus is on natural history of Texas, the Southwest, and the Gulf Coast, especially birds
 - Geographic coverage is the United States
 - Many of these acquisitions are supported by endowments

- Artists' books, Latin American
 - Focus is on experimental artists' books of the 1970s, an area of interest for a faculty member
 - Some selective acquisition of more contemporary Latin American artists' books
- Zines
 - Zines related to Houston are of particular interest

Books and other publications that are not typically collected include:

- Materials that are out of scope for Special Collections' collecting priorities
- Materials that are not significantly rare
- Materials that are not in excellent condition
- Collected works or broken sets