

Collection Subject Statement: African American Collection

Last reviewed: March 2025

The African American Collection directly supports the Africana Studies Department in their interdisciplinary study, research, interpretation, production, and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to the experiences of people of African descent in Africa and the Diaspora. Similarly, the Center for African Studies is supported with materials that facilitate the interdisciplinary study of Africa. The collection contains materials on African Americans, Africans, and Caribbean cultures primarily in the following disciplines: Arts, Education, History, Literature, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, Sociology, and Sports.

Collection Purpose/Audiences:

The African American Collection was conceived to support research and teaching activities of faculty and students interested in the Black experience.

The primary audience for the collection includes Africana Studies undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty. Students and faculty associated with programs outside of Africana Studies such as Art, Education, English, History, Political Science, Religious Studies, Sociology, and Philosophy are also frequent users of the collection. The collection supports interdisciplinary research across the university and sustained independent research.

Guiding Principle and Areas of Focus:

The collection provides access to materials from the social sciences and humanities for research that examines structure, organization, problems, perspectives, analytical interpretations and prescriptions with respect to African Americans, Africans, and the African descended of the Caribbean. Approval plans, major publishers, and open access scholarship all contribute to the collection's development. New acquisitions in print and electronic format are guided by review and selection of materials, with additional items acquired through requests based on curriculum, researching, and contributions to the field of Africana Studies. Areas of historic collection strengths include but are not limited to, African culture and civilization, enslavement, abolition, the Black Church, urban history, race relations, African American literature, the Civil Rights Movement, Black feminism, Black Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, African and Caribbean literature, African political developments and liberation movements.

Collection Scope:

The African American Collection offers a wide range of print and digital materials in the form of monographs, periodicals and monographic serials, reference works, dictionaries, bibliographies, government publications, microforms, proceedings, reports etc. of associations, conferences, congresses, institutions, societies, symposia, newspapers, antiquarian titles and reprints, exhibition and museum catalogs, and private papers (to be housed in Archives & Special Collections).

Collecting is primarily limited to English language materials. Exceptions will be classic works or the only work available on a particular subject and works not yet translated into English. Materials in French will primarily consist of literature from Haiti and French speaking areas of Africa. In support of curriculum, African materials in Akan, Arabic, Amharic, Swahili, Wolof, and Yoruba will be considered in consultation with faculty. Spanish language Caribbean materials will be served by the liaison for Latin American Studies. Films and videos are purchased at the request of faculty and graduate student researchers.

Library of Congress (LOC) Classification

The African American Collection covers a wide range of LOC classifications, a general overview of subject areas are as follows:

- **B**- Philosophy
- **BL**-Religions
- **DT**-History (Africa)
- **E**-History (America)
- **F**-History (Caribbean)
- **GV**-Recreations and Leisure
- **H**-Social Sciences
- **J**-Political Science
- **L**-Education
- **PN**-Literature
- **Z**-Bibliography

Connections & Collaborations:

The ULS collaborates with other institutions and consortia to acquire specialized materials that support research, teaching, and learning in the field of Africana Studies, particularly in areas where shared resources improve accessibility to rare or costly materials. Regionally and nationally, the ULS participates in several consortia for collection development (EAST, Hathi Trust, CRL) and resource sharing (PALCI EZBorrow, OCLC Interlibrary Loan, RapidILL) that shape strategy for the African American Collection. The African American Collection is strengthened and extended by other collections in Hillman Library and other libraries in the University of Pittsburgh Library System.

Subject Expert:

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Sources of Information:

Collection history, inventories, faculty and student consultations, faculty meetings, and existing approval plans.