

Collection Subject Statement: Japanese Studies

Last Reviewed: March 2025

The University of Pittsburgh Library System began assembling its Chinese Studies collection in 1960, after the University was selected as one of twenty National Defense Education Act Centers for Chinese Studies. Five years later, the East Asian Library (EAL) was established to include the Japanese Studies collection. Since then, the Japanese Studies collection has been developed to support the Japanese Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh. The collection is located in the East Asian Library at the Hillman Library, the Archives and Special Collections, and LCSU. Materials related to Japanese studies can also be found in the Frick Fine Arts Library.

Collection Purpose/Audiences

The primary purpose of the Japanese Studies collection is to support undergraduate and graduate teaching, learning, and research in the Japanese Studies program at the University of Pittsburgh. Programs leading to the Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees with a concentration in Asian Studies are offered in many departments and schools of the University. These include the departments of Anthropology, East Asian Languages and Literatures, Economics, Film Studies, History, History of Art and Architecture, Linguistics, Music, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Sociology.

Guiding Principles and Areas of Focus

Areas of focus include economic history, art history, linguistics and pedagogy, contemporary religious studies, film studies, medical history and ukiyo-e, Japanese woodblock prints. Among the monographs focusing on economic history, EAL has more than 2,600 volumes of shashi, company history books, making it the second largest collection of shashi in North America. The repository also includes a comprehensive collection of business reports, financial institutions, monetary situation, and statistics since the 1920s.

Historically, faculty members have been interested in the studies of the Japanese religion Soka Gakkai, of one of his leaders, Ikeda Daisaku, and of Naikan, a form of psychotherapy originally developed as a self-cultivation method, for medical and clinical psychological purposes. More than 600 volumes in the collection relate to this area of focus.

Thanks to generous gifts and targeted acquisitions, the Archives & Special Collections Department holds more than 1,700 ukiyo-e, Japanese woodblock prints, including 800 artworks by Tsukioka Kōgyo, a famous ukiyo-e artist of Noh and Kyōgen.

This collection of Kōgyo prints is the largest outside of Japan. More than 1,000 prints have already been digitized and are available online.

Other woodblock prints are actively collected, especially representations of Noh and Kabuki and of daily life in the Edo and Meiji periods. This collection is complemented by a rich selection of art catalogs and research studies.

Collection Scope

Materials include print and electronic monographs, print and electronics journals, databases and DVDs. Per our 2024 statistics reports, the Japanese collection holds about 148,000 physical monographs and about 2,000 volumes of electronic monographs. We subscribe to 9 databases. Language is mainly Japanese, some bilingual works, limited works in English. Geographical focus is on Japan and Asian countries in relation to Japan. The chronological focus is medieval, pre-modern, modern, and contemporary eras.

Library of Congress Classification

The Japanese Studies Collection focuses primarily on materials classified under the following:

- **BQ** – Buddhism
- **DS** – History of Asia, Japan
- **HC** – Economic history and conditions
- **HD** – Industries, Land use, Labor
- **HQ** – The Family, Marriage, Women
- **JQ** – Political institutions and public administration in Japan
- **NC** – Drawing, Design, Illustration
- **PL** – Languages and Literatures of Japan
- **RC** – Internal medicine

Connections & Collaborations

Because Japanese Studies faculty members work in several departments and schools across the university, many subject areas are relevant. These include Anthropology, East Asian Languages and Literatures, Economics, Film Studies, History, History of Art and Architecture, Linguistics, Music, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Sociology.

Subject Experts

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Sources of Information

Internal notes on the history of East Asian Library and Japanese Studies collection, inventory data, and faculty and student consultations