
Cloisters Library and Archives Collection Development Policy

**The Metropolitan
Museum of Art**

1000 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10028
metmuseum.org/
cloisterslibrary

I. DEFINITION OF THE COLLECTION

The Cloisters Library collects research material for the study of medieval art and related topics. The collection of approximately 15,000 volumes encompasses medieval architecture, painting, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, sculpture, and decorative arts. Works on medieval history and gardens are also collected.

The Cloisters Museum and Gardens, the branch of The Metropolitan Museum of Art devoted to the art and architecture of medieval Europe, was assembled from architectural elements, both domestic and religious, that largely date from the twelfth through the fifteenth century.

The Library opened in May, 1938, at the time of the museum collection's rehousing into a new building in Fort Tryon Park in northern Manhattan. Its initial holdings were amassed thanks to a financial commitment from John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and book donations from the medieval Art scholarly community, given in honor of founding Director Joseph Breck, who had died in 1933, during the time that the Cloisters was preparing to expand and move from the smaller museum originally created by George Grey Barnard in 1914.

II. DEFINITION OF AUDIENCE

Constituency of the library is The Cloisters and Metropolitan staff, lecturers, and volunteers and outside researchers of medieval art and The Cloisters itself. Along with the library holdings, the 50+ archival collections held and overseen by the Library are of regular use to both in-house and outside users.

Cloisters Library materials can be requested through Watsonline for use at the Watson Library or in Met staff offices or for use at outside institutions through Interlibrary Loan.

III. SUBJECT SCOPE

The Library's holdings reflect the scope of The Cloisters art collection and are not intended as a global, comprehensive medieval studies collection. Areas of medieval art studies outside of the following scope are to be collected by the Thomas J. Watson Library or the departmental library in the Medieval Art Department (at the request of Medieval staff). Additional copies of titles that fall within the Cloisters collection scope may also be acquired for the Watson Library or one of the other libraries in Metropolitan Museum, and the existence of a title in another Met library should not necessarily preclude the acquisition of a Cloisters Library copy.

While the following guidelines are intended to guide the general practices of Cloisters Library acquisitions, its full holdings displays a valued diversity that reflects a history of exhibitions and scholarly projects by curatorial, educational, conservation, and garden staffs that have generated purchases that, at times, fall outside of the scope of the museum's collection (and, indeed, outside of art-specific research). Therefore, there will be instances of museum staff-driven suggestions and requests that expand on these parameters, and will only add to the richness of the full Met libraries' holdings.

Time Frame:
800-1525



Geographic focus:
Northern Europe, England, Iberian Peninsula, Western and Central Europe

Subjects (* =Areas to be collected in depth):

*Decorative Arts

Enamels

Ivory

Tapestries and Textiles

Metalwork (Gold and Silverwork)

*Illuminated Manuscripts (see also Special Collections, below)

*Painting (fresco and panel)

*Sculpture

*Stained Glass—(up to early 16th C, excluding Italian and Scandinavian)

*Iconography

*Liturgical Objects

*Relics and Reliquaries

Architecture (Monastic and Church)

Architects

Domestic Architecture

Art and Architecture Patronage

Gardens (design, history, and plants of Middle Ages; related medicinal and culinary subjects; herbals and botanicals (see also Special Collections, below))

Christian Monasticism

Conservation and Materials Studies (in medieval art and monuments)

General History of the Middle Ages—(scholarly references only)

Hagiography

Heraldry (general references only)

Medieval Clothing and Costume

Medieval Music, Theatre, and Pageants

Subjects Specifically to be Collected at the Watson Library, to the exclusion of the Cloisters:

Byzantine Art and Architecture

Islamic Art and Architecture

Russian and Slavic Art and Architecture

Arms and Armor

Subjects to be generally excluded:

Fortress and Castle Architecture

Numismatics

City Planning

Museology

IV. CATEGORIES AND FORMATS

Monographs

Monographic titles that fall within the parameters of its collecting scope are selected for their scholarly content.

Oeuvre Catalogs

Catalogues of Western European visual artists working between 800-1525 are collected extensively.

Collection Catalogs

The library acquires catalogs of both public and private collections that have relevance to The Cloisters collection.

Exhibition Catalogs

Exhibition catalogs from museums, art galleries, foundations and other venues are collected when they fall within the scope of the library collection.

Guidebooks

The Library acquires guidebooks to museums with significant medieval holdings that may not have other published collection catalogs.

Conference Proceedings, Festschriften, Collected Essays

These works are acquired when their scope falls within the Library's collecting parameters.

Dissertations

Unpublished dissertations that are not available electronically via Watsonline are acquired when they fall within the scope of the Library's collection.

Reference Materials

Reference materials may include:

- Iconographic guides
- Reference works on artists' techniques and materials
- Foreign language dictionaries
- Historical atlases
- Medieval studies encyclopedias or glossaries
- Horticultural references (in consultation with Gardens staff)
- Specialized reference works on religion (ecclesiastical history, monasticism, and liturgy)
- A second copy of any significant publications concerning The Cloisters.

Periodicals

When considering a new periodical subscription, titles to which staff already have digital access or availability through the Watson Library should be avoided.

Electronic resources

The Cloisters Library provides access to electronic resources via Watsonline and the library portal. DVDs and other video formats are collected when appropriate.

Auction and sale catalogs

The Library does not collect auction and sale catalogs unless specifically requested by Cloisters or Medieval Art department staffs.

Microforms

The Library does not collect microforms.

Offprints

Offprints from publications not held by the Met libraries are added very selectively. Consideration is given to articles written by curatorial staff or devoted entirely to objects in The Cloisters collection.

Special collections

The Library will consider the purchase of facsimiles of notable examples of illuminated manuscripts or Medieval horticultural texts of significant artistic value. High cost facsimiles acquired by the Watson or Morgan libraries should generally be avoided.

V. COLLECTING GUIDELINES

Gifts

Gifts to the collection are added using the same criteria with regard to their scholarly value as purchased materials. Gifts are accepted with the understanding that the Library has complete discretion over the option to retain. The Library does not rely extensively on exchange programs to acquire materials.

Exhibition catalogs related to outgoing loans

The Library receives copies of catalogs of exhibitions to which art objects from The Cloisters have been lent. Borrowing

institutions are contractually required to supply at least one copy of the exhibition catalog to the curatorial department which is then deposited in the Library.

Imprint

The Library collects in-print publications and some antiquarian material.

Languages and translations

The Library acquires resources in all Western European languages for those subjects collected comprehensively. If a publication is available in more than one language, English is preferred. However, acquisition will not be delayed when a foreign language edition is published before an English language edition.

The Library collects exhibition catalogs from multiple venues in various languages. If a foreign language edition has different content from the English edition or if the English translation is poor, an additional copy in the original language may be acquired.

Multiple copies

In most instances, the Library acquires only one copy of any given publication. Added copies of selected titles may be acquired where heavy use is expected. At least 2 copies of significant works relating to The Cloisters should be collected

New editions and Reprints

New editions are acquired when they reflect significant changes and additions in comparison to the previous editions. The Library acquires reprints only if the title is new to the collection or if the Library's original copy is in poor condition or notably of heavy use.

VI. RELATION TO OTHER LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The Cloisters Library serves primarily The Cloisters staff and researchers but also, as an integrated member of The Metropolitan Museum of Art libraries, complements the holdings of the Thomas J. Watson Library and departmental libraries. Its books are available through interdepartmental mail to researchers working at the main building of the Met and also eligible for Interlibrary Loan (ILL) for use outside of the Museum.

VII. WITHDRAWAL

Decisions to withdraw specific items, like decisions to acquire new titles, are made within the context of the total collection policy, in order to maintain overall integrity of the collection.

Considerations for withdrawing materials:

- Materials outside of the scope of the Library's current collection development policy
- Excess number of duplicate copies
- Obsolete materials

Any decision to withdraw multiple titles or a serial holding should have the consent of Cloisters senior staff.

VIII. REPLACEMENT

If printed material has been lost or damaged, criteria for replacement should follow the same guidelines as acquisition of new material. Replacement copies may be ordered for badly damaged books when conservation is determined not to be appropriate.

IX. PHYSICAL CAPACITY OF THE LIBRARY

The physical capacity of the existing book shelving in the Cloisters Library is approximately 1935 linear feet, at 1 inch per volume, this allows for roughly 23,000 monographs and serial volumes.

Additionally, there are 584 linear feet of shelving for archival material.