The Catholic University of America Libraries
Collection Development Policy

Subject

Semitics/ICOR

Mission

Semitics and ICOR materials are acquired and maintained by the Library to support the research, teaching and learning of the Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures and the Institute of Christian Oriental Research (ICOR). Library holdings reflect the University’s interest in the study of the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures in their historical and cultural contexts, and also in the study of the Christian literatures of the Near East in their historical and cultural settings. This includes Christian interactions with Muslims, especially in the early Islamic period.

History

The department embodies CUA's historical commitment to integrate religious studies with the arts and sciences. From the beginning, the study of biblical and Christian Near Eastern languages and literatures was part of the university's curriculum. The department's commitment to research and instruction in the languages, literatures and history of the Christian Near East is unique in this country, and it is one of the few academic centers where such studies are actively pursued.

When the Catholic University of America was founded in 1887, the study of Semitic and Egyptian languages and their associated literatures and cultures was designated an area of special concern. From the start modest “departmental” library collections were supplemented by access to the 20,000 vol. private library of Henri Hyvernat (1858-1941), founder of the department. In 1931 Hyvernat arranged for the establishment of what is now the University’s Institute of Christian Oriental Research (ICOR), to which he bequeathed his library and other possessions. The ICOR endowment supports ICOR acquisitions. Today the Semitics/ICOR collections include some 50,000 vols. of books and serials, along with a variety of research collections (manuscripts, artefacts, photographs, and archival and epigraphic collections). The Semitics/ICOR library is one of the Library special collections. It functions along the lines of an academic seminar, with resident department faculty, graduate students and postgraduate ICOR fellows.

Clientele

Clientele served by the Semitics/ICOR collections in the Library include:
• Faculty and students of Semitics, Theology and Religious Studies, Early Christian Studies, Medieval and Byzantine Studies, Greek and Latin, Philosophy, and Anthropology.
• Other researchers who need to consult materials not available to them in the libraries which ordinarily support their study.
• Members of religious communities whose literary and cultural heritage is represented in the collections.
• Other University faculty, students, and staff of the University, and other WRLC institutions and local consortia.

Geographical

• By subject: Near East; Ethiopia; Armenian and Georgia; India and China (as sites for Syriac Christianity); diaspora Christian Near Eastern communities (especially Coptic and Syriac) in Asia, Europe, and America.
• By publication venue: United States and Canada; Europe; Middle East; Armenia and Georgia; India.

Language

• Ancient languages of the Near East, with an emphasis on those regularly taught and studied in the department.
• Translations and supporting works in modern European languages, including English, French, German, Italian; to a lesser extent Dutch and Spanish.
• Translations and supporting works in modern languages of the Near East, including Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac and Neo-Aramaic; to a lesser extent Armenian, Georgian, Amharic.
• Other languages, including antiquarian and rare book materials in Latin and Greek; Malayalam materials pertaining to Syriac studies.

Publication Dates

Current and recent; retrospective and antiquarian.

Formats

Formats include: monographs, serials, periodicals, online databases, microforms, audiovisual media, pamphlets, maps and atlases, facsimiles, antiquarian and rare books, other library materials that support teaching and research.

Subjects

A. Subjects include:
• Ancient Near East: Semitic philology; Hebrew Bible; ancient Aramaic dialects; Akkadian language and literature within its Mesopotamian historical, cultural context; Northwest Semitic languages and literatures within their Syro-Palestinian historical, cultural context.

• Christian Near East: Coptic language and literature; Christian Egypt; Syriac language and literature, Syriac studies; Christian Arabic literature, Arab Christianity in its historical context; also support collections for the study of the languages and literatures of Classical Ethiopic (Ge`ez), Classical Armenian, Old Georgian, Old Nubian.

• Islamic Near East: Classical Arabic language and literature; Qur’an, early Islamic theology and philosophy; kalam; Muslim-Christian dialogue in its historical context and today.

• A detailed list of collection subjects and levels can be found in the CUA Libraries Conspectus.

B. Subjects excluded:

• The library does not collect systematically in the areas of Near Eastern art and archeology of the Near East; non-Semitic languages of the ancient Near East; Islamic studies.

• The library does not collect routinely in the areas of Judaica and modern Jewish studies; late medieval, modern and contemporary Hebrew language and literature; Middle East area studies; modern Arabic literature; modern Arabic dialects.

The collections are arranged by three different classification systems. Many holdings are unclassified. At this time only a small part of the collection is represented in ALADIN. Local finding aids are available in the Semitics/ICOR Library. Contact the curator for help and guidance.