



## HARRY RANSOM CENTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

### **Collection Development Policy**

#### **Purpose**

The Harry Ransom Center's Collection Development Policy provides a framework for the acquisition of original cultural materials to support the Center's mission to advance understanding of the humanities. The Ransom Center builds collections to support scholarship, education, and the engagement of The University of Texas at Austin community, international students and scholars, and the broader public.

#### **Collecting Rationale**

The Ransom Center seeks collection materials that

- enrich or complete established holdings
- foster connections among the Center's existing collections
- document the creative process of diverse individuals or organizations working in literature, the arts, and the humanities
- support the broader research, teaching, and community engagement mission of the Center and The University of Texas at Austin

The Ransom Center seeks collection materials through donation or purchase that fulfill the above criteria. Acquisitions that do not fall into existing collecting priorities may be made in anticipation of changing research needs and interests.

In evaluating a prospective acquisition, the Center also considers the attendant costs of processing, housing, preserving, and providing long-term access. The Center reviews its Collection Development Policy on a periodic basis.

#### **Current Priorities**

The Center's current collecting priorities have been defined against a backdrop of collection development practices that date back to the early twentieth century. A brief [history of the institution](#) can be found on the Center's [website](#). Organized by areas of study, the Center's [Guide to the Collections](#) demonstrates the diverse fields in the arts and humanities that our materials support, including racial, ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies.

## Types of Materials

The Center collects manuscripts, archives, books, photographs, artworks, film, audio and moving image recordings, and other formats. The Center collects both analog and digital materials, and emphasis is placed on acquiring items in their original states.

## Literary Manuscripts and Archives

The Ransom Center actively collects archives of prominent modern (active ca. 1880–1950) and contemporary (active 1950–) writers of fiction, literary non-fiction, poetry, and drama. We evaluate potential acquisitions on the basis of their literary merit and research value. Priority is given to archives that document the creative process of an entire body of work or that complement existing holdings.

The Center also acquires archives of publishers, editors, agents, and others who are instrumental in the creation, publication, and distribution of modern and contemporary literary texts. We make limited acquisitions of scholars' and translators' papers when they enrich existing collections with substantial primary materials, such as original correspondence or interview recordings.

Selective additions are made to existing modern and contemporary manuscript collections, particularly when the Center houses the principal archive or is considered the repository of record. We rarely consider individual manuscripts or small collections when the Ransom Center is not the principal repository for an author's works.

The Center will consider manuscripts from the pre-1880 period that fill gaps in existing collections or support the teaching and research of the University's faculty and students.

## Books

The Ransom Center collects first and revised editions of modern and contemporary authors when we house the author's principal archive or are considered the repository of record. We selectively collect later printings, limited editions, translations, and periodical appearances for these authors. We are also interested in electronic publications that contain text or other features not available in printed form. Secondary works other than biographical, bibliographical, and reference materials are not acquired. We also collect first editions (country of first publication only) of select authors whose archives we do not own.

The Center selectively collects books annotated or inscribed by the creative figures whose archives we hold when the books have strong research value.

The Center selectively collects artists' books that foster connections among existing collections or that support research and teaching.

The Center selectively acquires books that enhance existing strengths, especially the Pforzheimer library of English literature (1475–1700), Aldine imprints (1495–1588), Recusant literature

(1558–1829), the Queen Anne collection (1702–1714), Victorian fiction, mystery and detective fiction, and science-fiction. Priority is placed on books that contain copy-specific information, such as manuscript annotations and other evidence of use.

The Center will consider book collections that complement or enhance existing holdings or that add strength in under-represented areas. We do not typically acquire generalist, personal libraries.

The Center acquires primary works related to the history of the book, authorship, reading, publishing, and the literary marketplace, as well as other standard reference sources for special collections research.

### Photography

Building on the Gernsheim collection, the foundation of its photography collections, the Ransom Center acquires photographs spanning the history of the medium. We acquire single works as well as carefully assembled collections that enhance our established holdings.

The Center seeks twentieth-century works that trace the evolution of photography as an art form, especially works by pivotal figures of the European avant-garde and American modernism, as well as works that document the major creative and conceptual developments of the post-war era up to and including postmodernism. We also seek works of leading contemporary photographers. We seek photography acquisitions that are international, rather than regional or local, in scope.

The Center selectively acquires the working archives—including negatives, contact sheets, prints, and papers—of individual photographers. The papers of other figures, including historians and collectors, who have made a significant impact on the medium are also of interest. We also selectively acquire correspondence by major photographers, annotated books from photographers' libraries, and audio and moving image recordings of photographers' interviews or lectures with strong research value.

The Center very selectively acquires cameras and photographic apparatus based on rarity, historical significance, or relevance to existing collections.

Photographs related to other Center collections are selectively acquired in consultation with curators in those areas.

### Film

The Ransom Center collects archives documenting creative and business activity related to important Hollywood feature films, particularly those from the post–World War II era, with a primary focus on the archives of prominent producers and screenwriters. We also selectively collect the papers of actors, art directors, costume designers, production designers, cinematographers, editors, and sound designers. Priority is given to collections that complement existing holdings.

The Center collects avant-garde, animation, and documentary film only when it relates closely to other Center collections.

The Center very selectively collects costumes and props featured in important films that are documented in our archives.

The Center collects materials related to film exhibition, including distribution and business records of theater circuits and movie theaters.

The Center selectively collects lobby cards, fan magazines, film stills, industry newsletters and publications, posters, and other materials to fill in gaps, document film and broadcast history, or support teaching and research.

### Performing Arts

In addition to collecting the archives of prominent British and American playwrights, we selectively collect materials that document the collaborative nature and performance history of dramatic works. Special emphasis is given to archives of producers, directors, and theater companies who have worked closely with these playwrights. We collect a wide range of formats, including production scripts, photographs, audio and moving image recordings, costume and set designs, promotional materials, clippings, legal and financial records, and correspondence.

The Center is interested in enhancing its holdings in popular entertainment pertaining to the circus, minstrelsy, and magic between 1880 and 1950 and its holdings of stage photography for theater and dance productions.

The Center selectively collects playbills and programs, set models, lighting designs, costumes, published playscripts, books, periodicals, and other items that fill gaps in existing collections.

### Art

The Ransom Center selectively collects artwork by or portraits of writers when we house the principal archive or are considered the repository of record. We place emphasis on works created from life or during the subject's lifetime and on original drawings, sketches, proofs, or preliminary studies that document the creative process. We are also interested in the artwork of prominent visual artists whose subjects complement the Center's literary collections. We evaluate potential acquisitions on the basis of their literary associations and their art-historical significance.

The Center selectively collects limited edition prints that complement and fill gaps in our existing print collections. The Center is also interested in the working states of prints, drawings, and correspondence that document the collaborative process between writer, artist, printer, and publisher.

The Center selectively collects other works that add to areas of existing strength in American, British, French, and Mexican modern art.

### Additional Collection Strengths

Beyond the priority collecting areas described above, the Ransom Center has particular strength in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French literature, Italian literature, music, and the history of science. We welcome conversations about materials that could potentially be donated to enhance these important collections.

### **Related Collecting Institutions**

The Ransom Center is complemented by a rich community of cultural institutions at The University of Texas at Austin, including the [Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection](#), the [Dolph Briscoe Center for American History](#), the [Blanton Museum of Art](#), the [Alexander Architectural Archive](#), the [Fine Arts Library](#), the [Tarlton Law Library](#), the [H. J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports](#), and the [Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum](#). In considering potential acquisitions, the Center recognizes the collecting strengths of these institutions and other peer institutions.