

Northwestern University Library Collection Development Policy Statement

African Studies
by David L. Easterbrook
March 31, 1999

I. Brief overview of the collection

A. History of the collection

Formally established as a separate library in 1954, the origins of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies can be traced to the arrival of Melville Herskovits on the Northwestern campus in 1927 as the first anthropologist on the Northwestern faculty. He remained very active on campus until his death in 1963. From his earliest days on campus, he had a focus on the library and the need that it collect materials related to his research. The library responded very positively to his requests. As his research interests during the 1940s became more clearly focused on Africa, his interest in the library grew more intense. In 1948, he received a grant from the Carnegie Foundation to establish at Northwestern the Program of African Studies, one of the earliest centers of its kind. A major focus of the proposal to the Carnegie Foundation was for the establishment of a library of African studies. One third of the total grant was given to the library for this purpose. The library administration agreed to establish a separate library for African studies and to gather into it all existing Africa-related collections. It took until 1954 to complete this project. During the 1950s, Herskovits received numerous grants including major awards from the Ford Foundation. From each of these grants, he allocated funds to the library which allowed for comprehensive retrospective collection building. At the same time, increased allocations from the library for the purchase of current materials allowed for a dramatic growth in the comprehensive collecting of both African imprints and Africana published world wide. During this period, an assistant university librarian was assigned primary responsibility for overseeing the establishment and growth of the collection. In 1959, the first curator of the African studies collection was appointed. Additional librarian staff appointments were made in subsequent years. These appointments allowed for expansion of not only collection development and public services but also led to the development of technical service expertise, in particular in the development of an Africana Cataloging Unit in the library's Catalog Department. Following the opening of the new university library building, the African studies collection was formally named the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies on October 20, 1970. Over the last 25 years, the Herskovits Library has benefited greatly from many grants coming from such sources as the Department of Education (both Title IIC and Title VI), the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today, the Herskovits Library is the largest separate library for the study of Africa in existence. Its collections are comprised of over 245,000 volumes and 2,800 current serials of which nearly 300 are newspapers. Included in the collections as well are over 12,000 books in African languages. Vertical file cabinets consisting of slightly over 250 drawers hold an extensive collection of government documents and publications of international and intergovernmental agencies, trade unions, political parties, national liberation movements and religions and social organizations. A broad range of formats is collected including archival, electronic, ephemera, maps, posters, and videos. The collection's stature as a national and international resource is attested to by the large number of visiting researchers not affiliated with Northwestern University who come from the region, all of the United States and from many foreign countries.

B. Broad subject areas emphasized or de-emphasized

The intention is to be as comprehensive as possible. Subjects collected cover the humanities, social sciences, applied sciences, popular culture, and law. Natural sciences are collected but not in as comprehensive a manner

C. Collection locations

Offices for the Herskovits Library and the primary site for its collections are found on the fifth

floor, east tower of the University Library. Significant portions of the cataloged book and journal collections are also found in lower level storage. Certain formats within the Herskovits Library's collections are found elsewhere: Africana archives relating to Northwestern University are in the University Archives, language tapes are in the Multimedia Learning Center in Kresge Hall, maps are in the Government Publications & Map Collections, newspapers and microforms are in the Periodicals and Newspaper Reading Room, and videos are in the Marjorie I. Mitchell Multimedia Center.

II. Purpose or objectives

The Herskovits Library supports the curricular and research programs of the Program of African Studies. In addition, it supports all Northwestern University colleges, departments, programs and schools that include an Africa focus in research and curricular programs. In many cases, these are not formally linked with the Program of African Studies. Examples include but are not limited to the following: graduate study of post colonial literature in the English and French Departments and the Comparative Literary Studies Program; The Global Initiatives in Management Program (GIM) in The Kellogg Graduate School of Management; The Interdisciplinary Group on French Culture and Society in the Weinberg of Arts and Sciences (WCAS); The Center for International and Comparative Studies. Herskovits Library staff works closely with faculty and administrators in support of expanding curricular and research programs in particular the Assistant Dean for International Studies in WCAS. Because of the comprehensiveness of the collections, the Herskovits Library contributes substantially to research in African studies, within the region, within the Committee for Institutional Cooperative (CIC) and beyond. Herskovits Library materials are widely lent on interlibrary loan and on site use of the collections by visiting researchers is constant and includes researchers from all over the world.

III. Library unit or title of the selector responsible for this collection

The curator has overall responsibility for the collection. All librarians in the Herskovits Library participate in collection building.

IV. Scope of the subject coverage

A. Language

Materials are acquired in many European and African languages Arabic materials are selectively acquired

B. Geographical scope

Africa and the surrounding islands of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Materials are also acquired that highlight issues relating to the African diaspora in other parts of the world in particular contemporary African immigration

C. Chronological scope

There are no limitations in chronological scope of publications.

D. Publication dates collected

There are no limitations in publication dates collected.

E. Formats and genres

1. Inclusions

1. Inclusions (include electronic materials)

Archival and manuscript collections

Dissertations and theses

Electronic resources

Ephemera

Journals

Maps

Microforms

Monographs

Newspapers

Official publications

Pamphlets

Photographs

Posters

- Realia
- Serials
- Videos
- 2. *Exclusions*
 - Not Applicable

V. Acquisitions procedures affecting collection policies

A. Standing Orders

Standing orders are maintained for relevant monographic series, annuals, journals, periodicals and newspapers.

B. Approval plans and blanket orders

Extensive approval and blanket order plans exist with a variety of vendors who supply both African imprints and materials published about Africa in other parts of the world. This includes participation in the Library of Congress' Nairobi Office Participants Program.

C. Gifts and exchanges

The Herskovits Library receives many gifts from a wide range of sources. Exchange lists are maintained and offered to those institutions interested whenever practical.

VI. Duplication with other NU library units

Core

- Galter Health Sciences Library
- Government Publications and Maps
- Law Library

VII. Expensive purchases

Expensive purchases are made as funds permit

VIII. Interdisciplinary collections

- Galter Health Sciences Library
- Government Publications and Maps
- Law Library
- Music Library
- Transportation Library
- United Library

IX. Purchases with endowed funds

The Herskovits Library has six endowed funds. These are

1. The Gwendolen M. Carter Fund
This fund supports collections relating to Southern Africa
2. The James F. and Mary Guy Danielli Fund
This fund supports collections relating to Madagascar
3. The George M. and Mary LeCron Foster Fund
This fund is for general use
4. The Jack S. Harris Fund
This fund is for general use
5. The Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits Fund
This fund is for general use with a focus on diaspora studies whenever possible
6. The Laura G. and James J. Ross Fund
This fund is to build the collection of materials held in the rare bookcases.

X. Cooperation with other libraries

A. Other resources, including local, regional or national libraries

Within the CIC, the University of Chicago Library and the University of Michigan Library maintain comprehensive collections in Middle Eastern Studies that include major acquisitions of Arabic language materials from North Africa.

B. Consortia

Membership in the Cooperative Africana Microform Project (CAMP), headquartered at the Center for Research Libraries; longstanding participation in the CIC cooperative preservation microfilming projects has resulted in preservation of a portion on the Herskovits Library's brittle materials.

XI. Policies for purchasing journal article reprints or electronic files on demand

Not applicable

XII. Other factor of local importance

Not applicable

XIII. Collection levels

The Herskovits Library's existing collection strength is 5, its current collecting intensity is 5, and its language coverage is W with very few exceptions to this latter category, notably its Afrikaans language and literature materials language coverage which is Y.