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## **Philosophy**

**(Classes B, BC, BD, BH, BJ, Z7125-Z7130, some Z8000s)**

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### **I. Scope**

This Collections Policy Statement covers material within the scope of Philosophy, i.e., “The branch of knowledge that deals with the principles of human behaviour; the study of morality; ethics. Also: practical or proverbial wisdom; virtuous living” (*Oxford English Dictionary*); it entails “a search for the underlying causes and principles of reality; ... a quest for truth through logical reasoning rather than factual observation; ... a critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs and an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs; ... [and] a synthesis of learning” (*Webster’s Third International Dictionary*). Philosophy as a whole seeks to deal with those *why* questions that can be answered by appeal to reasons rather than physical causes; it concerns itself especially with “perspective hypotheses,” seeking to explain data or experience by viewing them from a certain perspective as to their mutual relations, coherence, and weightings of significance. Traditionally, philosophical enquiry has been divided into subfields such as metaphysics, ontology, logic, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics. It has also been traditional to speak of the philosophies of the various individual disciplines, which seek to determine for each what areas of inquiry and methodological goals are appropriate, as well as what counts as evidence in each specialized area.

The core materials covered by this statement comprise physical collections in Classes B, BC, BD, BH, BJ, and Z7125-Z7130 and also electronic, microform, manuscript or other formats of material whose subject areas would be encompassed by the coverage of these class designations. Descriptive/enumerative or subject bibliographies on individual philosophers, found alphabetically-cuttered at various points within the Z8000s, are also within scope.

For practical purposes of defining boundaries between philosophy and other subjects, the collections policy set forth in this statement is necessarily linked, to a considerable extent, to the Library’s classification scheme, which in turn incorporates a traditional Western framework of categorizations and distinctions. In a real sense, however, philosophy cannot be entirely captured or bounded by the scope of the B categorizations alone, and this is particularly true of non-Western philosophies. The great works of philosophical significance in non-Western cultures are often to be found in forms unlike conventional Western monographs and treatises; these philosophies may find their best expression in epics, biographies, folk tales, poetry, aphorisms, and other forms of literature.

## II. Research Strengths

The Library of Congress lies in the unique position of receiving the nation's copyright deposit materials in all subject areas, and, further, benefits from national taxpayer support in maintaining both blanket order arrangements in countries with developed book trades, and overseas acquisitions offices in less developed regions. For these reasons alone, the Library's General Collections in philosophy are almost automatically of world-class extent and depth.

One area of particular strength is our unique collection of virtually all American doctoral dissertations. According to the subject coding of the ProQuest *Dissertations & Theses* database, there are over 40,800 works under the headings philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, ontology, logic, or epistemology. The Library of Congress, unlike other libraries that subscribe to this same database, owns all of these works in preservable microfilm and microfiche formats.

Philosophy, being very much dependent on extended expository written expression, does not lend itself to visual or aural formats (or to short attention spans). While the Manuscript Division does hold the papers of individuals known for their philosophical acumen (e.g., philosopher Hannah Arendt, novelist Ayn Rand, President James Madison), the papers of most American philosophers tend, as a rule, to be collected by their home academic institutions.

Our collection of non-English monographs and journals in philosophy is one of the Library's major strengths in comparison to other libraries, as is the very size and breadth of the General Collections. Philosophy appears in all classes from B through Z, particularly in connection with philosophies of disciplines, ethics, and aesthetics (see section III below). Moreover, for reasons given above, non-Western cultural expressions of world views are often found in non-expository texts; and no other library matches the reach of LC, with its many overseas offices, into the publications of developing countries.

## III. Collecting Policy

The Library shall acquire:

1. Important current reference works (especially encyclopedias and bibliographies), monographs, and serials, in all languages in the major branches of philosophy as outlined in the Library of Congress Classification (Class B), with its subclasses BC (Logic), BD (Speculative philosophy, including Metaphysics, Epistemology, Methodology, Ontology and Cosmology), BH (Aesthetics), and BJ (Ethics). "Complete" or "Collected" *Works* of individual philosophers, worldwide, are especially to be sought.
2. Significant written human expressions, in all languages and from all cultures and all time periods, which seek to provide answers to the great why questions of life that appeal directly or indirectly to reason or perspective hypotheses as justifications, regardless of the areas of the class scheme into which they may ultimately fall. As mentioned in Section I above, relevant materials from non-Western cultures may appear in formats such as epics, biographies, folk tales, poetry, and so on. Selection Officers and acquisitions staff must be conscientious in seeking out such materials; the deciding criterion shall be the consideration of whether the work in question offers significant insight into the world view or ethical values of a culture, regardless of whether or not the work is written in an expository format.
3. Relevant subject bibliographies and indexes in philosophy, in classes Z7125-Z7130 (Subject bibliography: Philosophy), and bibliographies on individual philosophers classed in the Z8000s range.

4. Remote access to electronic resources whose content corresponds to the subject(s) of the above class designations, if such resources are offered on platforms maintained by reasonably stable institutional publishers or other providers. If there are corresponding print versions, as in the case of some serials, the Library shall, as a rule, endeavor to acquire such copies for preservation purposes. Minor journals in electronic format that are bundled within larger subscription aggregations may be excluded from consideration. In the case of book-length monographs or bibliographies, paper copies shall be preferred to e-book formats, for preservation purposes; but if paper copies are not available, e-books are acceptable.

5. Selectively, U.S. and foreign published textbooks on philosophy and its branches if they are written at the college level. Textbooks published in the U.S. on the *methodology* of teaching philosophy below the college level are also to be selectively acquired.

Beyond the class areas specified in #1 and #3 above, Recommending and Selection Officers shall also be alert to acquiring works on the philosophies of disciplines (e.g., philosophy of history, philosophy of education, or philosophy of medicine, etc.) in, literally, all classes from B through Z; the deciding criteria here shall be whether the work in question treats of the methodologies of inquiry relevant to a particular subject area—i.e., what “counts” as evidence within it—or of what is allowable as a valid investigative approach. Such works related to the philosophies of specific disciplines, however, must usually be considered primarily as parts of the intellectual corpus of those disciplines, and thus, accordingly, are to be covered by the Collections Policy Statements for those subjects.

In a similar manner, Recommending and Selection Officers must be alert to works on ethics within the various subject areas (e.g., engineering ethics, biomedical ethics, military ethics, etc.)—works that can appear in all classes from B through Z. While these works, too, must be primarily regarded as falling with the Collections Policy Statements of the disciplines themselves, nevertheless, recommenders and selectors concerned with philosophy must offer a “second pair of eyes” in seeking out such materials.

Another example of the impossibility of confining Philosophy within B classes is provided by aesthetics. This subject has its own formal class designation in BH; but relevant works cannot always be clearly segregated conceptually from treatments in the various other classification areas such as N for Art or M for Music.

The overall collection policy consideration must therefore be kept in mind: important works on Philosophy cannot be straight-jacketed within limited classification ranges. Selection and Recommending Officers responsible for Philosophy are therefore encouraged to be aware of the unusual cross- and multi-disciplinary nature of subject, and not to be strictly confined to B areas of the classification system when judging the appropriateness of philosophical material for the Library’s collections.

The Copyright Best Edition statement provides guidance for selecting materials for the philosophy collection.

#### **IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future**

The major unit of knowledge transmission in philosophy continues to be the published, book-length monograph; journal articles are at the secondary level, and do not generate the levels of discussion (often over decades and even centuries) that monographs do. Formats such as preprints or “grey literature” that are important in other disciplines are not major factors in philosophy. This may be because what is regarded as the “best” philosophy continues to be characterized by longer rather than shorter expositions; the main, or the difficult, topics in this discipline do not lend themselves to simple solutions—which is to say that philosophy is seldom

about “pinning down” determinable “facts.” Rather, it is much more concerned with the larger conceptual and ethical frameworks (perspective hypotheses) within which all such facts must be considered and interrelated, and must therefore appeal to the coherence of an extensive variety of considerations. The major acquisition channels continue to be copyright deposit, blanket order approval plans, and paid subscriptions. As more journals appear in electronic forms, the Library will have to rely increasingly on commercial aggregation services (EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale, etc.) to provide access to these formats from stable institutional platforms.

The best electronic resources within philosophy continue to be subscription databases such as Philosophers’ Index or full-text sources (for journals) such as Academic Search Premiere. The web sites in philosophy that are most useful provide mainly directory type information regarding organizations, meetings, and memberships; and in enabling philosophers to find and communicate with each other. Expository discussions of actual issues remain, on the web, at survey or introductory/encyclopedia levels, largely duplicated by comparable print encyclopedias and surveys. Blogs and discussion lists are noticeably devoted to expressions that, while sometimes insightful, would not meet the publication-worthiness standards of peer-reviewed journals. Substantive philosophy has just not “taken” to the open-web environment in these two relevant senses: 1) the Internet material itself, at present, is largely ephemeral or lacking in depth, and not worth the expense of preservation when comparable or superior resources exist already in our print and microform collections; and 2) adequate means for finding the relevant Web resources already exist in mechanisms such as *Librarians’ Internet Index*, and do not require LC cataloging or classification for their discovery. For research level collections in philosophy, the Library needs to concern itself primarily with the substantive work, in preservable formats, appearing in book-length monographs and peer-reviewed journals that are not accessible on the open Internet.

## V. Collecting Levels

The Library’s philosophy collections, in general, are to be maintained at Collecting Level 4, although occasional references will be made below to Levels 3 and 5.

### A. Philosophy (General)

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
B1-20	Periodicals, serials, societies, congresses	4	
B40-51	Dictionaries and encyclopedias	5	
B52.8	Study and teaching, research	3	See III.5
B69-99	General works	4	
B108-708	Ancient philosophy	4	
B720-765	Medieval philosophy	4	
B770-785	Renaissance philosophy	4	
B790-5739	Modern philosophy (1450/1600-)	4	

### B. Logic

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
BC1-5	Periodicals, serials, societies, congresses	4	
BC9	Dictionaries and encyclopedias	4/5	5 for encyc's.
BC11-39	History	4	
BC60-99	General works, treatises	4	
BC121-199	Logic (including various divisions)	4	

#### C. Speculative Philosophy

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
BD10-28	Introductions to Philosophy	4	
BD95-131	Metaphysics	4	
BD143	Epistemology	4	
BD240-255	Methodology	4	
BD300-450	Ontology	4	
BD411-417	Finite and Infinite	4	
BD419-428	The soul, spirit, immortality	4	
BD430-435	Life	4	
BD493-701	Cosmology	4	
BD530-595	Teleology, causation, etc.	4	
BD620-655	Space, time, matter and motion	4	

#### D. Aesthetics

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
BH1-19	Periodicals, series, societies, congresses	4	
BH56	Dictionaries and encyclopedias	4/5	5 for encyc's
BH61-63	Study and teaching. Research	3	See III.5
BH81-208	History	4	
BH221	By region or country	4	
BH301	Special topics	4	

E. Ethics

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
BJ1-19	Periodicals, serials, societies, congresses	4	
BJ63	Dictionaries and encyclopedias	4/5	5 for encyc's
BJ66-68	Study and teaching. Research	3	See III.5
BJ71-1185	History and systems of ethics	4	
BJ1188-1295	Religious ethics	4	
BJ1400-1500	Special topics	4	
BJ1518-1697	Individual ethics, character, virtue	4	
BJ1725	Professional ethics	4	
BJ1801-1295	Social usages, etiquette	4	

F. Subject bibliography: Philosophy

LC Classification		Collecting Level	Comments
Z7125-7130	Subject bibliography: Philosophy	5	
Z8000s	[Bibliographies on individual philosophers]	5	

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