



National Gallery
of Canada

Library and Archives Acquisitions Policy

Approved by the Board of Trustees on Monday, September 26, 2005

1. INTRODUCTION

Between 1991 and 1994, the Library of the National Gallery of Canada completed the most ambitious and thorough collection analysis and collection policy review in its history. The project was piloted through stages of analysis, consultation, writing and editing by Jo Beglo, now Bibliographer at the National Gallery Library. The first edition of the Library and Archives Collection Development Policy was a document of 90 pages, approved by the Board of Trustees in March 1995, and subsequently published as the first number in the Library and Archives Occasional Paper series. It has been widely distributed in Canada and abroad, and is recognized as a model for the profession.

It was intended that the Collection Development Policy would be a working document, kept under critical review. This Library and Archives Acquisition Policy updates the former Collection Development Policy, taking into account significant opportunities and challenges presented by factors such as the advancement of technology, the steadily diminishing purchasing power of library acquisition funds and the increasing leadership role of the Library and Archives in resource sharing and outreach initiatives. This document serves as the basis for a more detailed work plan that will guide the collecting of the Library and Archives into the future.

2. PURPOSE

The Library and Archives Acquisitions Policy serves two functions:

- to describe the collections and services of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives;
- to indicate how the Library and Archives contributes to the mandate of the National Gallery of Canada.



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3. INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES

As an integral component of the National Gallery of Canada, the Library and Archives finds its fundamental mandate in the Museums Act (1990):

- to develop, maintain and make known, throughout Canada and internationally, a national collection of works of art, historic and contemporary, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada; and
- to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of art in general among all Canadians.¹

The Library and Archives operates within the institutional objectives of the National Gallery, outlined in the Corporate Plan:

1. to acquire, preserve, research and record historic and contemporary works of art, both national and international, to represent Canada's visual heritage;
2. to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts among all Canadians and to make the collections known both in Canada and abroad;
3. to provide direction, control and the effective development and administration of resources;
4. to provide secure and suitable facilities, which are readily accessible to the public, for the preservation and exhibition of the national collections.²

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Under the Research Policy of the National Gallery of Canada, the resources of the Library and Archives facilitate the study and research of the National Gallery fine art collections, all aspects of Canadian art, the history of Western European and American art in particular, and the history of art in general.³ The Library and Archives meets these institutional objectives by:

- developing Library and Archives collections for present and future needs;
- cataloguing Library and Archives collections and making them accessible to users;
- maintaining and preserving Library and Archives collections for present and future use;
- providing user services, including reference and research, internally, nationally and internationally;
- undertaking and disseminating bibliographic and scholarly research, including research on library, archival, documentary and bibliographic holdings;
- developing and disseminating tools (digital and electronic resources, finding aids, bibliographies, indices and other documentation) to assist researchers;
- initiating and promoting collaborative projects in fine art librarianship and bibliography;
- sharing resources with other institutions throughout Canada and abroad.



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1. *Bill C-12, An Act Respecting Museums, 1990, Part I, subsection 5.*
2. *National Gallery of Canada, Summary of the Corporate Plan and Operating and Capital Budgets for 2004-05 to 2008-09, pp. 19-25.*
3. *Research Policy of the National Gallery of Canada, 2004, p. 9.*

5. AREAS OF ACTIVITY

The program of the Library and Archives encompasses four areas of activity:

- a. Collections Development: acquisitions, exchange program, withdrawals, duplicates distribution program, and donations, including appraisals, and Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board submissions;
- b. Custodianship: cataloguing, classification, name authority and vocabulary control, indexing, database management, journal and auction catalogue maintenance, digital resources development, preservation, binding, shelf preparation and collection storage;
- c. Research Services: reference and research services, interlibrary loan, document delivery, reading room registration, assistance and supervision, orientation and user education;
- d. Resource-Sharing: exchange program, distribution of duplicates, membership in national and international bibliographic utilities and consortia, creation of web-based resources, interlibrary loan and document delivery, exhibition and publication programs, external exhibition loans, participation in international projects, sharing skills and knowledge with professional associations such as the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), Art Libraries Society of Canada (ARLIS/Canada), and International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), internships, and the Research Fellowship Program.

6. CONTRIBUTION OF THE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY'S MANDATE

The historical function of the Library and Archives has been to serve as the National Gallery's research collection and archive. In this capacity it provides fundamental support to the scholarly research activities of the National Gallery.

In many respects the Library of the National Gallery is also the country's national art library, although through a de facto rather than a legislated charge. The strength of its collections and



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the national programs and services the Library and Archives provides have evolved through long tradition and a strong sense of national purpose and commitment. The Library and Archives has also forged strong links with institutions worldwide. Within each area of activity, the scope of the Library and Archives contribution to the National Gallery's mandate is international. As accessibility to the holdings of the Library and Archives is facilitated by the World Wide Web, the volume of inquiries from academic and cultural institutions in Canada and abroad has markedly increased.

7. DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTIONS

To serve the research objectives of the National Gallery of Canada, the Gallery's existing library encompasses the history of art and artists worldwide, as well as the literature of related areas such as museology and conservation. Canadiana collections are comprehensive and outstanding. Other notable collection strengths include the art of post-medieval Europe and North America, with special emphasis on painting, sculpture, the graphic arts and photography.

The Canadiana collections of visual arts materials are the most extensive and important in existence. These collections are rich in 19th and 20th century published materials that include scholarly and popular monographs, books illustrated by Canadian artists, periodicals, museum publications, exhibition catalogues, sales and auction catalogues, catalogues of public and private collections, theses and dissertations, and artists' books and multiples. The Library and Archives has also developed outstanding special collections of Canadian artists' files, press clippings, ephemera and other unpublished documentation, including an extensive documentary fototeca and visual resources collection. Archival collections focus on the National Gallery of Canada, its history, collections, research interests, and affiliated personalities.

The Library also has significant holdings related to the history of western European and North American art from the post-Medieval period to the present, with notable strengths in American, British, French and Italian painting, sculpture and graphic arts. Although more limited in scope than the Canadiana collections, these are collections of depth and diversity that number among the foremost research collections in Canada. The European and American collections are rich in current and retrospective scholarly monographs, periodicals, exhibition catalogues, museum publications, historical reference works, catalogues raisonnés, and auction catalogues, as well as documentary photographs and other visual resources.

Photography is an area of strength in which the National Gallery Library and Archives holds the finest collection of literature in Canada. The history of photography and its development as an



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art form are covered comprehensively, with secondary emphasis on technical aspects. The collection is international in scope, with particular attention to developments in North America, Western Europe, the Middle East and former colonies of the British Empire. The collection is notably rich in archival photographic material, rare books and exhibition catalogues.

Collections Development

For areas of strength such as Canadian, American and post-Medieval European art in the western tradition, and the history of photography, the Library's collections focus on the art object in its global context. In these areas collections of visual arts materials are enriched with interdisciplinary and ancillary publications that provide a broad frame of reference for the art object and its interpretation. In areas of peripheral interest where the Library does not collect heavily, study collections of standard titles are maintained. In areas of minimal interest, bibliographic tools are emphasized and collected extensively. Core collections are supplemented by a reference collection of broad, international scope, with particular emphasis on the history of art.

In areas of strength, collections are actively and continuously developed through acquisition of current and out-of-print materials, as well as electronic resources. An ongoing effort is made to identify lacking materials, record and search for desiderata, and retrospectively fill gaps. In secondary areas, acquisitions are focussed, for the most part, on current materials, which are selected at the appropriate collecting level.

Although systematic retrospective collection development is not generally undertaken in areas of secondary and peripheral interest, current material is added as basic, standard titles are published. The arts of Central and South America, Asia, Africa and Australasia, as well as prehistoric and ancient art, Classical art and archaeology, Medieval art, architecture and the decorative arts--with the exception of silver--are represented by selected exhibition catalogues and basic works of history, reference and bibliography. In support of outstanding Gallery collections, the Library's literature on silver is comprehensive for Canadian material and representative for the material on the American and European traditions.

8. SELECTION

a. Responsibility for selection:

Effective selection requires unremitting attention to current publishing, continuous communication between library and curatorial staff regarding the availability of materials, state of collections and status of orders, and ongoing collection evaluation to identify lacking



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materials. Selection of materials for the National Gallery Library is the shared responsibility of the Chief Librarian, Bibliographer and delegated Library staff, working in close collaboration with the Gallery's curatorial staff. The Library welcomes purchase recommendations from users for consideration by the Chief Librarian or Bibliographer.

b. **Criteria for selection:**

The major selection criterion for Library materials is their relevance to the research mandate of the National Gallery. According to the Library of Congress definition, a publication of research value is "one which presents new information, interprets a field in the context of current concepts, presents the point of view of prominent or influential practitioners of a discipline, or organises existing literature in a field into coherent bibliographies." 4 These criteria are seriously considered during the acquisition process, as the Library endeavors to build collections of highest quality and lasting value.

While the Library emphasizes scholarly and authoritative works, these are not the only acquisitions that fulfil the Gallery's research mandate. Primary and secondary sources vary widely, especially works such as artists' writings and books, museum and small press publications, archival materials and ephemera. Additional factors considered include the strength of Gallery and Library holdings in the area, intrinsic intellectual or artistic merit of the publication, scarcity of publications on the topic, level of treatment, content of the publication and its presentation, format, special features, and cost. The Library strives to collect all works of art history written by Canadian authors or emanating from Canadian institutions.

c. **General exclusions:**

Works with elementary or popular treatment, "coffee table books", textbooks and juvenilia are generally excluded. Exceptions may be made, particularly for Canadiana, where collections are comprehensive and materials at any level may be contextually relevant. Works on techniques in arts and crafts are acquired selectively, with emphasis on research value, for specific purposes or for specialized areas such as the Restoration and Conservation Laboratory. Works on antiques and collectibles outside Canada are generally excluded, unless required as contextual research material related to objects in the Gallery's permanent collections.

d. **Primary selection aids:**

For current acquisitions, titles are selected from an array of Canadian and foreign sources including critical reviews, publishers' and vendors' catalogues, new book listings, exhibition



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listings, electronic postings and other announcements. Bibliographic networks, national bibliographies and lists of acquisitions and research in progress published by academic and professional societies are indispensable. Retrospective selection is based on standard bibliographies, antiquarian booksellers' catalogues, frequently cited references, and other references that provide historical context.

e. **Methods of Acquisition:**

Purchase: Library materials are purchased from an international cadre of vendors, through the automated acquisitions system. Library staff also maintain personal contact with antiquarian booksellers in North America and abroad, who search for desiderata on behalf of the Gallery.

Exchange: The Library serves as a facility within the National Gallery for the exchange of exhibition and collection catalogues, as well as a range of other museum publications including annual reports, bulletins, monographs, occasional papers, exhibition checklists and ephemera. Some 700 exchange agreements are maintained with selected institutions across Canada, throughout North America and abroad. The roster of exchange partners reflects the Library's commitment to comprehensive-level collecting for Canadian materials and research-level collecting for post-Medieval art in North America and Western Europe. Documents are exchanged in accordance with a collecting profile for each partner. Through the Exchange program the Library not only obtains an international array of current documents, but also ensures that National Gallery of Canada publications are available in research libraries worldwide.

Mailing list: The Library and Archives is included on the mailing lists of public institutions, private galleries, associations and individual artists. Mailing lists provide a wealth of elusive materials such as biographical information on artists, descriptive brochures, exhibition invitations and other ephemera of research and archival interest. Materials which meet the criteria of the collection development policy are retained.

Gifts: Gifts which are in accordance with the collection policy may be received at the discretion of the Chief Librarian, Bibliographer or Archivist. Gifts are received with the understanding that ownership transfers to the National Gallery Library and Archives. The Library and Archives reserves the right to determine the retention, location, cataloguing, use and disposition of gifts.

Library Deposit: Publications received by the Gallery's administrative and curatorial



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departments as courtesy copies, as well as those received by Reproductions and Rights under the terms of agreement which allow permission to copy, are Library deposit copies.

Transfer from other libraries: Materials which are in accordance with the collection policy may be transferred to the National Gallery Library and Archives from other institutions at the discretion of the Chief Librarian.

9. ACCESS AND OUTREACH

The National Gallery Library and Archives ensures that its holdings are known and accessible to researchers in Canada and abroad through the online catalogue, available on the Internet since 2000, which includes books, periodicals, auction catalogues, exhibition catalogues, artists' books and multiples, microforms, audiovisual materials and electronic formats, as well as partial listings for archives and documentation files. Links have been provided from the online catalogue to electronic archival finding aids, in Encoded Archival description format. The Library maintains Artists in Canada/Artistes au Canada, an online bilingual union list that identifies the location of documentation files on Canadian artists held by 23 Canadian libraries, participates in the Research Libraries Information Network, contributes data on Canadian auction catalogues to the Sales Catalog Index Project Input Online (SCIPIO) and bibliographic records for Canadian exhibition catalogues and art history monographs to the Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA), and houses the offices of the Canadian editor of the Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon (AKL).

10. IMPLEMENTATION

It is within the context of a national and international research environment that the Library and Archives commits itself to the systematic establishment of strong, relevant and accessible collections.