

THE
LONDON
LIBRARY

A guide to the French collections

Scope of the collections and collecting policy

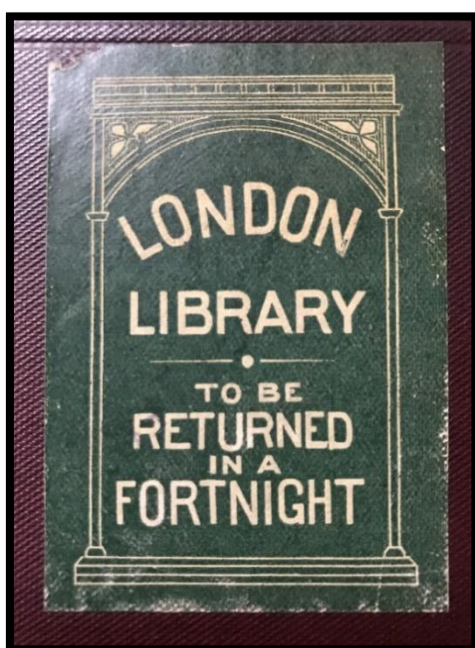
The French collection at the London Library is one of the larger foreign collections with something in excess of 50,000 volumes on the history and culture of France, the French and all other French-speaking areas including Belgium, Switzerland, Canada and former colonies in Africa, Asia, the West Indies and the Pacific. Whilst its presence is mainly seen in Literature, History and Topography, there are also large representations in Biography and Art as well as a substantial number of works in Philosophy and Religion and across the wide range of shelfmarks that comprise the Science & Miscellaneous collection.

Many French works across the collection have been translated into English and these are usually bought to increase access to works amongst the readership. Almost every shelfmark in the Library's collections with the exception of specific language collections will have a number of works in French as a matter of course although it is not possible to continue this practice nowadays.

The principle since 1840 has always been to acquire major and many minor works by significant authors to a greater degree as primary material in the Literature collections, as well as works by a great many major French writers on their subjects across the other areas of the collections. The Library has also tried to acquire key reference and standard works across the spectrum of French output but again, within the constraints of the collecting policy and the budget.

The London Library continues to devote a part of its foreign collections budget to the acquisition of French monographs, focusing mainly on fiction, history and art history including catalogues of major exhibitions. Suggestions are always welcome within the constraints of the collecting policy and the budget.

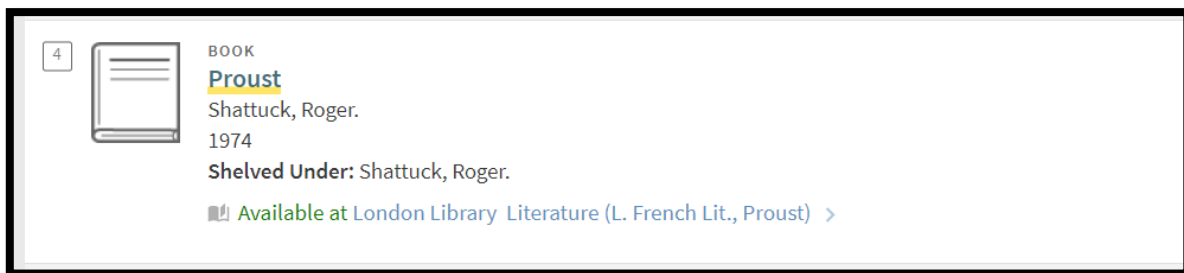
The aim of this guide is to highlight some of the key areas of the collection that may be of interest to you, but it is always worth looking on Catalyst to get an idea of the breadth of the subject.



Understanding shelfmarks

The collection is divided into broad subject areas (History, Literature, Topography, for example) and then into smaller areas, arranged alphabetically. Within each section, books are generally arranged by author name but edited titles are filed under the book title instead. Check the Catalyst record for the 'shelved under' information.

In order to make the most effective use of space, the collection is also shelved by size. Check the end of shelf marks for the notations 4to (quarto), Folio and Folio Extra Large that may indicate a different place to look for the books. In general, larger volumes are shelved in the same room as the smaller.



Above is an example of a book record from the catalogue. Here you can see that the book is shelved under the author's name and that it is available (i.e. on the shelf) at in the literature section (L.), in the sub-section for French Literature and then the Proust section of that sub-section. Within the section of each author, titles are shelved in the following order:

1. Works – by date
2. Selections – three or more works bound together, shelved by title
3. Single works – shelved by title
4. Attributed works
5. Critical works

Books may be requested and put aside for ready for collection, but we would always encourage members to browse the shelves for themselves and discover the books they did not know they needed. Items from the Library's Special Collections that cannot be borrowed, can be consulted in the Library under supervised conditions with 72 hours' notice.

Literature

The Literature collections comprise fiction, poetry, plays, essays, literary criticism and comment and anthologies as well as a small historical collection of works translated into European languages other than English. There are well over 30,000 works in the French literature shelfmarks. The emphasis in the

literature collection is, as elsewhere, on primary texts with critical works and commentaries acquired to a lesser degree.

French literature is the largest collection of French language works in the Library. Major authors' works of essays, poetry, drama, journalistic writings are to be found here as well as works of criticism and commentary. Multiple editions of texts may be found where there is commentary and textual amendments or revisions. Most *Oeuvres complètes* are to be found here where they will include a writer's output across a number of genres (poetry, drama, journalism etc.). The French form known as *Cahiers* are also to be found in the literature collection.

Following the works of each individual author you will find literary criticism and commentary on them and their works in either French or English, with occasional titles in other European languages. Biographical works regarding these authors are shelved in the Biography collection.

Individual plays or volumes of poetry are not generally acquired for the foreign language collections, but collections or collected works such as the *Pléiade* series will be acquired as appropriate.

French fiction has its own shelfmark and includes all authors writing in French as their primary language. This includes works from French Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, North Africa and other French speaking nations as well as translations into French from works originally in e.g. Arabic or Vietnamese. Works translated into English will be found in the main Fiction collection in the Library.

There is also a small number of additional shelfmarks in the Literature collection to cover various aspects of the Library's French literary holdings. These include collections for Provençal, which covers works in Provençal, Occitane and Oc and has some crossover with the Troubadours collection, and there are separate collections for the history of Belgian, Canadian and Swiss literature.



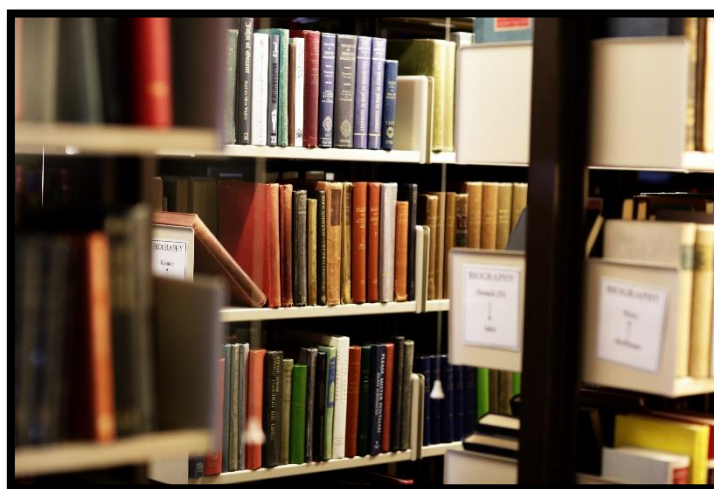
History

Within the Library's History collections works are not subdivided by language, so relevant books in all languages will be found in the main sequence under the appropriate subject shelfmark. The Library has a rich collection of history in the French language collected in some depth since the Library began and key titles are still acquired.

French history is generally covered in two or three major shelfmarks H. France, H. France, Social and H. French Revolutions. There are many older works from the 18th and 19th centuries, often with more recent works on the same period revealing different views and new developments in historiography. There are in addition more than thirty smaller shelfmarks covering a great variety of subjects and events in French history. These include individual collections for kings and for some royal consorts as well as various members of the Bonaparte family that are pertinent to any interest in French history; they contain significant collections of biographical material and histories of the country in the period of their reigns.

All the French colonies of the time have a discrete joint collection as well as a number of separate collections for Algeria, Morocco, Congo and Indo-China.

Beyond France and its colonies, there are separate shelfmarks for Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Monaco, with some individual shelfmarks for Belgian monarchs. The Belgian colonies are covered in the collection for the Congo but may also be picked up in more general works about Africa or its regions. There are around 15,000 works held in the specific French, Belgian, Swiss etc. history shelfmarks with a great many more in French on the history shelves but not pertaining to French history per se. French-Canadian history is held as part of the main collection for the history of Canada.



Biography

The Library's collections are particularly rich in biographical material; the collection comprises both autobiography and biography and includes journal/diaries, letters/correspondence and highly illustrated

photographic works. There are a great many volumes of *Correspondance* in the *Pléiades* series with many collections and selections in both English and French. There are also a number of 18th and 19th century multi-volume works here, many of which have not been reprinted since. Subjects include artists, politicians, philosophers, literary authors, historical figures, scientists, composers, etc. and any notable – and possible notorious - individuals in French, Belgian, Swiss life and in their colonies.

Art

Art is divided into over 40 sub-collections all of which contain some works in French. Major and many minor French exhibition catalogues have always been acquired. Many works are of a large quarto format suitable to books in this subject. Works about major and many minor painters, sculptors, architects as well as other craftsmen have always been sought, as well as works in all the other Art shelfmarks that include architecture, painting and sculpture from the medieval to modern period, pottery (porcelain and ceramics), clocks, bronzes, cave painting, furniture, drawing, engraving, illuminated manuscripts, stained glass etc. There is no specific division by country or language in the Art collection so works in French are to be found alongside works in a great many other languages.

Topography, Travel & Archaeology

The Library's extensive topography collection covers a wide range and many works are of a large quarto format suitable to books of this nature, containing maps and other illustrative material. The collection includes works on the geography of France, Belgium, Switzerland and the French colonies in all their constituent parts, the history of individual countries, regions, cities and towns and occasionally individual buildings. It includes many accounts of travellers to these countries as well as broader collections covering the voyages of medieval explorers around the known and unknown world. There are particular strengths in 18th and 19th century editions, many containing maps and plans of cities. Some may now be part of the Special Collections in the Safe but all are available to consult in the Library on request. There are, in addition, guide-books to many countries, mostly published in the late 19th and early 20th century, which are kept in the separate Guide Books collection in the Issue Hall, and some atlases, statistical surveys and other official publications.

The archaeology of France from the prehistoric period through to the Roman Empire and onwards forms part of the Topography collection; there are also numerous works in French about the archaeology of many other regions, especially Egypt.

Periodicals

The Library subscribes to a small number of current titles both in French and English that are of interest for French studies. There are also many older titles that are either no longer subscribed or are defunct but that the Library retains in its collection. In addition, there are a number of other titles in French that pertain to a greater or lesser degree French studies as well as many more that are no longer subscribed to but still held.

Reference works, dictionaries & Philology

There is an extensive range of French dictionaries held in the Reading Room or Philology collections, including a number covering regional dialects and cognates such as English-Jersey, Français-Occitan, Anglo-Norman, 17th and 18th century French. Other reference-only works include several multi-volume encyclopedias. Please note that the Library only subscribes to online reference materials and resources in English.

The reference collection includes biographical dictionaries across all subjects, in both French and English with works such as the 14 volume *Dictionary of artists* by Bénézit and the ongoing *Dictionnaire de biographie française*.

The Philology collection contains a range of books about various aspects of the French language and its dialects and cognates including grammars, usage and history as well as broader works on Romance philology and Indo-European languages, but the Library does not acquire audio-visual or online material as teaching aids. Key writers here include Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure.

Cultural Aspects – ‘Science & Miscellaneous’

Cultural aspects of the countries covered by the core languages collected are often to be found in the Library’s rich Science & Miscellaneous collection. Subjects here include Capital & Labour, Education, Medicine, Music, Photography, Political Science, and Political Economy, in all languages, as well as smaller collections ranging from Advertising to Life-boats and Logic to Zoology. Social Science, Political Science and Political Economy have many works by French intellectuals and there are many more in Philosophy itself.

Religion

Works on the religion and theology of France, Belgium and Switzerland can be found in the Ecclesiastical History collections of these three cultures as well as throughout other shelfmarks in Religion depending on the aspect of the work. Various editions of the Bible in French are held with some older Bibles now lodged in the Safe. There are additional shelfmarks for specific events in French religious history such as ‘Action française’, Albigenses, Huguenots, Jansenists and Port Royal. Other shelfmarks that cover works in French include Miracles (for Lourdes), Pilgrimage (for Saint Jacques/Santiago de Compostela), Religion & Philosophy of Religion (picking up commentaries on Bèze, Derrida, Fenelon, Foucault etc.), Religious &

Theological Lit.,(for writers such as Jean Gerson, Teilhard de Chardin as well as earlier works in Latin by Abelard, Alcuin, Grosseteste etc.). There is also a separate collection for Jean Calvin which covers his works as well as biographies, commentaries and criticism.

Philosophy

The emphasis of the Library's Philosophy collection is on primary texts. There is no section on French philosophy *per se* nor on different aspects of philosophy, rather, all philosophy works are in one collection arranged by author with commentaries and critical works following sequentially. The works of French philosophers are also in English translation, and English-speaking authors write about French philosophy and French philosophers in English. Works by the major writers have been collected from the start and there are many 19th century and earlier editions possessed as well as a selection of later works in French and English.

Online Resources

The Library subscribes to a number of online resources some of which will be of use for readers and researchers in French studies. They are all available within the Library and members can also get access to them from home via the Library website. Archives of many French periodicals are accessible from the BNF's Gallica website.