

Collection and Resources Development Policy

Australian Rare Books

The Australian Rare Books Collection forms one of the most complete collections of early and rare Australian imprints and works relating to Australia. Comprising some 35,000 volumes, the collection includes material from the 17th to the 21st centuries.

Collection overview

The Australian Rare Books Collection also includes three separately named collections – the Moir, Currie and Buesst collections:

- The Moir Collection was donated to the Library in the 1950s by J.K. Moir (1893–1958). The Collection of approximately 8000 books, 3200 pamphlets, numerous manuscripts, photographs and research files is particularly strong in the area of Australian popular literature.
- The Currie Collection was assembled by Victorian pastoralist John Lang Currie (1818–98) and acquired by the Library in 1937. It comprises some 800 volumes and is particularly strong in the area of 19th-century Australian travel and land exploration.
- The Buesst Collection was donated to the Library in 1974 by its then-owner Tristan Buesst (1894–1982). It comprises some 300 volumes of predominantly 19th-century publications in languages other than English relating to Australia.

Collection strengths

The collection comprises:

- works on 18th- and early 19th-century European voyages of exploration to Australia
- accounts of land explorations and the early European settlement of Australia and Victoria
- 19th-century pamphlets relating to Australia
- significant Australian literary works
- private press publications and artists' books.

In deciding whether material will be acquired or added to the Collection, various criteria are applied, including:

- books which are known to be scarce or which can reasonably be supposed to be scarce because of a significant limitation statement or some other factor
- association or presentation copies and books with notable provenances
- works with notable illustrations, plates, binding or some other distinguishing feature, such as fine productions and significant first editions
- books which support the Library's exhibitions, events and lifelong learning programs
- valuable works
- a formed collection or personal library put together by an influential collector or formed around particular collecting themes or topics that complement the Library's collecting strengths.