

[American Philosophical Society Library](#)

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An eminent scholarly organization of international reputation, the American Philosophical Society promotes useful knowledge in the sciences and humanities through excellence in scholarly research, professional meetings, publications, library resources, and community outreach. This country's first learned society, the APS has played an important role in American cultural and intellectual life for over 250 years. The Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, published since 1771, is the oldest scholarly publication in the United States.

The American Philosophical Society Library houses hundreds of collections of personal papers and archival materials, including the papers of Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin, Charles Willson Peale, and Franz Boas. The collections range from the mid-18th century to the present, with an emphasis on documenting anthropology and its subfields (ethnology, biological anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology), the mathematical and physical sciences, the earth sciences, and the life sciences (evolutionary theory, genetics, eugenics, biochemistry, molecular biology, paleontology). The collections also contain a large number of striking [graphics materials](#).

General information about the manuscript collections at the APS is available through the major national bibliographic compilations, including NUCMC and NIDS, through OCLC's [WorldCat](#) database, and through many published bibliographies. The Library has also consistently supported and contributed to projects to publish the papers of people represented in its collections, including Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Darwin.

The Library also includes an extensive printed materials collection centering on the history, research interests, and activities of members of the American Philosophical Society. Although it is not primarily dedicated to rare books, through over two hundred and fifty years of intensive collecting, the library has acquired a number of rare and hard to find materials, and is today one of the nation's great collections for study of the history of science and technology during the past three centuries.

The Library houses nearly 275,000 volumes, ranging from scarce scholarly and scientific periodicals to works on electricity, the production of sugar, the history and languages of Native Americans, "pseudoscience," exploration of the west and the arctic, and, of course, works by A.P.S. members such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, John and William Bartram, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Darwin, and Franz Boas.

A growing number of digital objects are also available, consisting primarily of digitized materials from manuscripts collections, but also some from published works. Please visit the [Digital Collections](#) for a complete listing.

Various authors have created detailed subject guides to collections at the APS. These guides can be seen on the [Bibliography Page](#). To see all guides that have been converted to on-line use, see [our Guides Page](#).

The current and most comprehensive guide to the APS collections is our [Online Collection Search](#), which includes fully searchable descriptions of every APS manuscript collection, book, pamphlet and microfilm reel. [Browsable lists of collections by creator and title](#) also are available.

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