

Collection Development Policy

Mennonite Historical Library
Goshen College
2026

The Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) is one of the most comprehensive collections in the world related to the Radical Reformation, Anabaptists, Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and other Plain groups. Founded in 1906 and developed in earnest starting in 1924, this special collection today is part of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College (GC). This document outlines collection development strategy for the MHL and is connected to other applicable policies and procedures.

Shared vision and mission of the Mennonite Historical Library and the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism

Vision: To enrich Anabaptist scholarship and communities through global connection and storytelling.

Mission: To connect all interested users—from local community members to international scholars—with the resources of Goshen College and the Mennonite Historical Library in the pursuit of equitable and accessible source preservation, research, and publication that engages global Anabaptism.

Collections

Several collections fall under the scope and/or administration of the MHL:

- **Mennonite Historical Library:** 90,000 volume collection of published materials including books, periodicals, religious education curriculum, audio-visual materials, and maps related to the Radical Reformation, Anabaptists, Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, and other Plain groups. The library serves as the depository for Herald Press / Menno Media and CMU Press. Highlights of the collection include:
 - Bibles, hymnals, and devotional literature from the earliest Anabaptist to today. This includes the 1564 (first extant) edition of the Ausbund and nine original complete Zurich (Froschauer) Bibles.
 - Denominational and congregational histories, directories, and cookbooks.
 - Magazines and journals produced by and for Anabaptists.
 - Genealogy materials with a special emphasis on Amish and Mennonite families coming from Switzerland, South Germany and Alsace.
 - Fiction and poetry by and about Anabaptists groups.
 - Goshen College published materials. This includes materials published by Goshen College (e.g. Academic catalogs, The Bulletin magazine, The Goshen College Record newspaper, Pinchpenny Press publications) as well as materials by Goshen College employees.

- Growth of materials capturing the history and thought of Anabaptists outside of Europe and North America
- **Mennonite-Amish Museum Collection:** 3,700 item collection of artifacts and visual arts including quilts, clothing, and furniture. The volunteer-run Mennonite-Amish Museum Committee sponsors one to two exhibits annually in the Good Library Gallery.
- **Goshen College Archives:** Goshen College institutional and faculty records, including the personal papers of Harold S. Bender and Guy F. Hershberger. This collection was under the oversight of the Mennonite Church USA Archives until March 2017.
- **Jesse D. Hartzler Music Collection of American Tune Books and Hymnals:** 2,800 tunebooks and hymnals primarily from the American nineteenth-century. The chronological scope of the collection supports the study of the evolution of American religious music from the 1760s to the 1920s. Owned by the Harold and Wilma Good Library and stored in the MHL rare book room.

Key collection development practices

Our goal is to collect comprehensively, but that does not mean all items are equally relevant to the MHL's collection. The highest priority for the MHL is to collect significant published works written about, by, or for groups of primary interest. Other collection categories are more flexible and dependent on the discernment of the Head Librarian, as well as available funds.

- To collect comprehensively, but not exhaustively.
 - Parameters set to Anabaptist/Mennonite groups of primary and secondary/incidental interest (see details below).
 - All significant published works written about primary groups and all works specifically by or for primary groups are collected.
 - Select works published by members of primary groups on topics not related to the group are collected.
 - Select popular fiction works written about or by primary groups are collected.
 - Select significant works written about secondary groups are collected.
 - Select contextual works on theology, social/political contexts, genealogy, regional history, and maps/atlas are collected.
 - All editions of significant published works are collected, but not all printings.
- To collect published resources.
 - Archival/manuscript (unpublished) materials are not actively sought out, except materials related to Goshen College for the GC Archives. Donations are accepted within limited parameters. The Mennonite Church USA Archives intentionally complements the MHL in collecting such items, with many donations transferred there. These materials include congregational meeting minutes, baptismal/marriage records, bulletins, and membership rolls.

- Artifacts are collected by donation only and within limited parameters.
- To collect in a way which serves first and foremost the Anabaptist/Mennonite research interests of the students and faculty of Goshen College and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS).
 - For works collected selectively, priority goes to the research interests of the GC and AMBS community.
 - This may include contextual materials as deemed appropriate (e.g. works about, by, or for GC and AMBS).
- To collect works permanently. No items will be accepted on deposit.

Groups of primary interest (in descending order of collecting priority)

- North America congregations and conferences / denominational institutions which identify as Mennonite. These include but are not limited to:
 - Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada and its preceding and proceeding denominations
 - Mennonite Brethren
 - Old Order Mennonites and other theologically conservative groups (e.g. Church of God in Christ, Mennonite)
 - Unaffiliated Mennonite congregations
- North America congregations and conferences / denominational institutions which identify primarily as Anabaptist. These include but are not limited to:
 - Brethren in Christ
 - Rosedale Network of Churches
- Non-North American congregations and conferences / denominational institutions which identify as Mennonite and/or Anabaptist as determined by Mennonite World Conference statistics.
- Traditional Anabaptist-related groups without denominational institutions of higher education (e.g. Amish, Hutterites, etc.)

Groups of secondary or incidental interest (in descending order of collecting priority)

- North America congregations and conferences / denominational institutions which identify in part or secondarily as Anabaptists or as peace churches. (e.g. Church of the Brethren, Quakers/Society of Friends)
- 16th-century groups with some affinity to Anabaptists (e.g., Schwenckfeldians)
- Non-Mennonite denominations with some Anabaptist-Mennonite roots (e.g. Missionary Church)

Format considerations

The policy applies to published material of all formats, including print and born digital materials, microforms, audio-visual materials, and still/non-moving images. Specific format chosen will be determined by the content's sustainability and accessibility, as well as its content's priority within the key collection development practices. For

example, if a book is available in both print and electronic format, the format that provides the best long term sustainability and accessibility will be selected.

- **Monographic works (books)** are the *highest collecting priority* of the collection.
- **Serial publications (journals, magazines, etc.)** are collected based on issuing body, content and affordability.
- **Audio-visual materials (DVDs, CDs., videos, tapes, etc.)** are collected selectively with emphasis on formally-produced and edited content and/or content that is best presented in audio-visual form.
- **Maps** are collected selectively based on significance of map content.
- **Microform (microfilm and microfiche)** are collected sparingly, often for older, rare works where digital access is unavailable or financially unattainable. This is an increasingly rare format as digital access expands.
- **Still/non-moving images (engravings, photographs, etc.)** are collected sparingly with emphasis on content best represented visually (e.g. historical depictions of costume).
- **Realia (museum artifacts, etc.)** are collected selectively using separate designated funds with an emphasis on donated items or purchases.
- **Goshen College unpublished student papers** are collected from History and Peace, Justice, and Conflict Studies senior seminar students and the Peace Oratory contest. Papers from other majors with material related to Anabaptist/Mennonite groups will also be collected.
- **Other categories** *We routinely collect unsolicited ephemeral print material* filed in the Vertical File.

Digital format considerations

Adopted from the Library of Congress Digital Collections Strategy Overview 2022-2026

- The library seeks to develop one interdependent collection that contains both its traditional physical holdings and materials in digital formats, and the collection development policy applies to all of that material irrespective of format.
- The library will ensure that the rights of those holding intellectual property will be respected.
- Appropriate methods will be put in place to ensure that rights-restricted digital content remains secure.
- In acquiring new content, every effort will be made to adhere to the collection development policy's format considerations, since acquiring in those formats maximizes the content's sustainability and accessibility into the future.
- When desired content is available in both digital and tangible formats, the library will apply various considerations (overall costs, preservation requirements, access restrictions, user needs, etc.) to determine which format – or formats – is preferable at the time of acquisition. The library prioritizes tangible formats and in most cases will purchase the content through that format.
- In acquiring new digital content, the widest patron access is the preference; however, limited access, embargo periods, and dark archive storage are appropriate in some cases.

- For electronic resource acquisitions that require payment, it is necessary to purchase and own the content permanently rather than to license access via a subscription.

Genre considerations

- **Translations:** Our goal is to represent *core works in any language* into which they have been translated; for works originally written in a language other than English we seek an English translation (if available) alongside the work in the original language as well.
- **Cookbooks** are collected selectively, often as accepted donations
- **Popular fiction featuring Anabaptist-Mennonites** are collected selectively and only a single edition.
- **Contextual material:** Contingent on the availability of funds, MHL *selectively collects* contextual material on themes or individuals of special relevance to Anabaptist-Mennonite thought. Works which offer insight into the social, economic, and political context of the Anabaptist movement in general or specific historic or contemporary Mennonite communities, including local and regional histories, also fall into this category. Most contextual material selected will be in the *English language*. MHL will *attempt to avoid duplication* of contextual material already available in the general library collections at GC or AMBS.

Donations

- The MHL accepts all materials related to Anabaptist/Mennonite groups of primary and secondary/incidental interest, including items related to said groups that would otherwise not fit within the policy guidelines (e.g. additional printings of works we already own).
- When a donated item comes in which the library already has, the library will first seek to send the item to another Anabaptist/Mennonite library. If the item is already owned by said libraries, the item will be sold with proceeds going to the MHL's acquisition funds.
- The purpose of collecting is to make materials available, and as such the library is conservative about accepting materials with long-term restrictions.
- When receiving materials with connections to specific communities, the library will work to ensure that those materials remain or continue to be connected with and accessible to their communities of origin. For example, the MHL's partnership with the Lehrerleut Hutterian Brethren Church's codices provides guidelines on storage, safekeeping, and access. In some circumstances, materials may be transferred to a repository within a community of origin.