
Oberlin College Library - Guide Series

Art Library Special Collections

The Special Collections of the Art Library contain over 1,150 volumes. The collection is composed of rare and valuable books and artists' books. Two notable collections of rare books on architecture are contained in Special Collections.

The Jefferson Collection was formed as a result of the efforts of Clarence Ward, Museum Director and Art Department chairman from 1917 to 1948. In 1943, the bicentennial of Thomas Jefferson's birth, he planned a room as a memorial to Jefferson and as a study room devoted to American architecture. Clarence Ward collected for the library contemporary copies of the books on architecture in Jefferson's private library. Of the sixty-one titles known to be in Jefferson's library, the Art Library owns all but seven or eight. Among the titles in the collection are those by Leone Battista Alberti, Andrea Palladio, Vincenzo Scamozzi, Giacomo da Vignola, and Vitruvius.

The Artz Collection is a recent gift of 141 volumes given by the late Professor Emeritus Frederick B. Artz (d. 1983). The collection contains books on architecture and gardening dating from the 16th through the 19th centuries. In addition to books by the authors cited above, the collection includes titles by Ferdinando Galli da Bibiena, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, and Sir John Soane.

Use of Special Collections

Special Collections books are available for special research projects when the use of later editions is not suitable. The books may be used by appointment Monday-Friday 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Evening and weekend appointments are also possible.

Volumes do not circulate, and must be read behind the Circulation Desk. Patrons should wash their hands before handling the books and take notes only in pencil. Patrons may not wear jackets or have access to bags (including purses, brief cases, backpacks etc.). No personal notebooks may be used; we supply loose paper for taking notes. Supplemental materials (e.g., other books) may be used only with prior permission. Care should be taken to turn pages from the middle. Some books may require the use of gloves and supports. Books should be opened carefully from the middle if they are tightly bound.

Photocopying Special Collections books may be allowed with the permission of the Art Library Staff. Decisions are made on a title by title basis.