Quick Facts

Covers the history of Africa and its diverse peoples over a span of nearly 400 years
More than 1,300 books, pamphlets, almanacs, broadsides and ephemera, both from and about this continent
Expertly compiled by the curators of the extraordinary Afro-Americana Imprints collection

“… offers new and exciting opportunities for uncovering the lives of Africans during the early era of European exploration and colonization.”
— Krystal Appiah, Curator of African American History, Library Company of Philadelphia

Overview

Created from the renowned holdings of the Library Company of Philadelphia, African History and Culture, 1540-1921, is the most important and comprehensive collection of its kind. More than 1,300 fully cataloged and searchable books, pamphlets, almanacs, broadsides and ephemera cover the history, peoples, and social and economic development of the African continent from the 16th century to the early 20th century. All areas of Africa and important adjacent regions are covered.

New research and teaching opportunities
Major subject areas covered include Africana Studies, Atlantic Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, Economic Studies, Slavery and Diaspora Studies. Based on the Library Company collection that itself was an ambitious attempt to gather all printed information about this area and its history, works of all kinds are included: historical narratives, social histories, maps, navigational logs, military reports, government documents, demographic studies, anthropological studies, natural histories, personal memoirs and much more. Many seminal items published prior to 1800 are included, but the majority of these 1,300-plus works imprints were published in the 19th century.

The places of publication of include primarily England and the United States, though there are works published in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Haiti, India, Ireland, Italy, Liberia, Mauritius, Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and other locations. Most of the works were published in the English language.

About the Library Company of Philadelphia
The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, the Library Company is America’s oldest cultural institution.

A Readex Africana Studies Collection
In addition to African History and Culture, 1540-1921, students and scholars of Africana Studies will be interested in African Newspapers, 1800-1922. African History and Culture, 1540-1921, is also is fully integrated into America’s Historical Imprints for seamless searching with Caribbean History and Culture, 1535-1920; Black Authors, 1556-1922; Early American Imprints, 1639-1819; and other related collections.

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