



Library
Collection's charter
Documentary policy
Update 2021

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Objective of a collections charter. Missions of the IFAO library

A documentary charter, or collections charter, is a document explaining the library's documentary policy for responsible ministries and the public.

The IFAO Library is a French research library located in Cairo whose mission is to meet the documentation needs of researchers working on the history of Egypt from prehistory to the 1960s. It is part of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI).

As such, it manages collections of prehistory, Egyptology, papyrology, Greek and Roman history, ancient East, Coptic studies, Arabic studies and contemporary Egyptian history from 1798 onwards. It must also meet the needs of researchers in related disciplines, such as archaeology, philology, numismatics, archaeometry, ceramics, social ethnology or art history.

Target audiences

The library serves on a free base three kind of audiences depending on their access to documentation:

- IFAO researchers (between 40 and 42 in number) have direct 24/7 access to the collections and are allowed to work on the documents in their offices within the institute. They almost all hold a doctorate and are composed of the Director of IFAO, the Director of Studies, the six scientific members, research engineers, archaeologists, Egyptian associate researchers and Egyptian scientific collaborators, doctoral and post-doctoral fellows with long-term grants (from 6 to 12 months) and doctoral contracts, of all nationalities, and researchers on secondment or contract and/or in responsibility for services;
- External researchers acceding the space 24/7: with the authorisation of the direction and of all nationalities, they have free access to the documentation within the library. Former scientific members have permanent access. Members of IFAO missions (archaeological sites in particular) and those associated with research programmes have an automatic access as do beneficiaries of an IFAO doctoral or post-doctoral fellowship and a MESRI doctoral contract with the IFAO. The vast majority are doctors or doctoral students, but there are also a number of master's students. Approximately 160 access cards are issued per year;
- Users of the reading room (92% of which are Egyptians), open from Sunday to Thursday, from 9:00 to 17:30, welcome other researchers (partly composed of inspectors from the Ministry of Antiquities or Egyptian museum curators), starting from Tamhidi (year of preparation for the master's degree in the Egyptian course) on proof and a letter from their institution, regarding the limited number of places available (26). Excluding the reference works in the reading room, they have indirect access to the collections. There are about 500 registered readers, 3000 visits and 15,000 communications of document per year.

Apart from the library staff (holders and service providers), other staff within IFAO are users of the library for professional reasons, mainly the archives and collections department and the publishing house.

The library has first to meet the requirements of the institute and its researchers.

Documentary environment and acquisition limits

The IFAO Library is the reference library in Cairo and Egypt on the history of Egypt, from prehistory to the 1960s.

It does not take into account in its acquisition policy the existence of other research libraries in Cairo for certain disciplines, such as the Deutsches Archeologisches Institut in Kairo (DAIK), the Nederlands-Vlaams Instituut in Cairo (NVIC), the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) or the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology (PCMA), to mention only the most important ones in terms of number of documents.

These centres are less well equipped in the disciplines concerned and offer more limited reception capacities (in terms of number of seats and/or opening hours), although free of charge. Nevertheless, the IFAO library has a policy of exchanging publications with them.

Concerning Coptic studies, researchers find additional documentation at the Coptic Archaeology Society, the Coptic Institute or the Coptic Cultural Centre.

As for Arabic studies, IFAO acquires few documents in Islamology, a speciality of the Dominican Institute of Oriental Studies (IDEO), which offers free access to its 30-seat library, and in contemporary studies (from the 1960s), economics, law and politics are the fields of predilection of the Centre for Economic, Judicial and Social Study and Documentation (Cedej). To a lesser extent, ARCE and NVIC also have books on Arabic studies, more in a linguistic perspective to support learners, a mission that is not the responsibility of IFAO.

In addition, access to high-level foreign university libraries, if they meet the documentation needs of researchers in the fields mentioned (American University in Cairo, German, British or French universities), is not free and often prohibitive for Egyptian users, unless they are registered at the university. Egyptian universities can offer a good complement in general history, Egyptology and archaeology in Cairo or elsewhere in Egypt, especially tourism faculties.

Beyond Cairo, the Centre for Alexandrian Studies (CEAlex) in Alexandria and the Chicago House Library in Luxor offer researchers two excellent complementary documentary points, one on the history of Alexandria (especially since the CEAlex lends books, which the other research libraries mentioned do not do), the other on philology, archaeology and Egyptology. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina offers more general documentation, but with relatively wide reception hours (open daily).

Documentary responsibilities

The documentary policy is conducted under the scientific responsibility of the library curator.

Acquisitions are validated or not in committees organized by major discipline (for the different periods of Egyptian history), meeting up to four times a year. These committees are made up of IFAO's scientific members and the Director of Studies. Other researchers, particularly external researchers, may be called upon depending on the field. Decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis on a fixed list of suggestions gathered on a dedicated interface of the intranet, according to the scientific interest of the book, the price and the available budget, excluding Egyptology and papyrology, which require exhaustiveness. Works considered too expensive without being fundamental may be subject to a postponement of purchase in the year depending on budget consumption.

IFAO researchers are also asked to give their opinion annually on the renewal of journals' subscriptions.

Suggestions for acquisitions are open to all audiences. Librarians and researchers rely on the catalogues of specialised publishers, printed or online (Harrassowitz, Archaeopress, Brill, Brepols, etc.), on their newsletters, on the newsletters of associations, on announcements of new publications appearing on discussion lists (The Egyptologists' Electronic Forum, Auteurs Arabes, PAPY...) on the acquisitions of other specialized libraries (in particular the Egyptology Library of the Collège de France) and, more particularly for researchers, on bibliographical references found during their research or their participation in scientific events.

The IFAO library does not have a weeding policy.

Acquisition principles - document types

Paper documentation, electronic documentation

The library acquires printed collections, monographs (between 1500 and 2000 volumes per year) and research-level periodicals (about 300 live subscriptions) in a single copy, and also subscribes to three electronic resources (OEB, ISTEEX, Trismegistos¹) that it offers to consult on library workstations, and those of the IFAO in general. Local access to JSTOR's basic package is also guaranteed by a UNESCO programme since 2008. The library no longer acquires CDs or DVDs for a fee, but can still receive them as accompanying material.

The electronic resources are complemented by on-site access to resources acquired under national licence in France², and also remote access to databases whose access is guaranteed by the Egyptian government to users of

¹ Online Egyptological Bibliography. The ISTEEX platform, which became a paying platform in 2019, presents the electronic resources acquired under French national licence. Trismegistos, which became a paying platform in 2020, is an interdisciplinary database of epigraphic and papyrological resources.

²<https://www.licencesnationales.fr/liste-ressources/>

Egyptian nationality (Egyptian Knowledge Bank³), and, for IFAO researchers only, by the electronic resources of the Interuniversity Library of the Sorbonne, on agreement and in exchange for donations of IFAO publications. The library also has an intensive reporting policy on its local catalogue of freely accessible electronic resources (journals, monographs, databases, websites), including Open Access resources.

For the time being, in view of the limited editorial offer for institutions in electronic books in the preferred disciplines of IFAO⁴, the IFAO library acquires books in paper format rather than in electronic format.

The manuscripts were transferred to the archives and collections department in 2008.

Ex gratia acquisitions

60% of paper journals and between 15% and 30% of books are received free of charge through exchanges of publications with more than 150 correspondents around the world, a number that may change depending on the prospects and pace of publications. Exchanges are systematically favoured on acquisitions for a fee.

Other acquisitions of documents are made free of charge, such as one-off donations, massive donations or counterpart donations (authors donating to the IFAO library the publication produced thanks to the documents of the archives and collections department). Donations that do not fall within the library's documentary policy may be refused, and massive donations are subject to a convention and a donation charter⁵. The duplicates identified will be proposed as part of the exchange of publications.

Acquisitions for valuable consideration

The acquisition budget, only from own resources, is divided between the major disciplines (prehistory-egyptology, Greco-Roman period, Coptic studies, Arab studies and contemporary Egypt) and the other ones. The IFAO library aims to be exhaustive in egyptology and papyrology, two fields that were labelled collections of excellence by MESRI in December 2017. The budget is distributed into the various disciplines according to a distribution key that can change from one year to the next, and during the year, depending on the nature and pace of publication (see annual acquisition plan, PAA), bearing in mind that sometimes a publication can be published up to three years after its publication is announced.

Languages of the documents

In fact, documents are acquired in all languages as soon as they correspond to the library's documentary policy. Arabic documents are mainly acquired at the Cairo Book Fair, which is held every year at the end of January. Documents in rarer languages (Bulgarian, Russian, Polish, Japanese, Chinese, Modern Hebrew, Modern Greek...) are mainly received free of charge.

Antiquarian and rare and old books' reserve

Although it has a stock of over 1200 rare, ancient and precious books, the library acquires only a small number of antiquarians, depending on the balance available at the end of the year. The books of the reserve, as well as some documents for copyright reasons, are not freely accessible, and consultation of a substitute document (facsimiles produced by the IFAO printing house or those digitised and accessible free of charge on the Internet) will be preferred to consultation of the original document, for reasons of preventive conservation.

Inventories and restocking / retrospective acquisitions and interlibrary loans

³<https://www.ekb.eg/>

⁴In the form of packages or by title accessible on a dedicated platform, with related copyrights and negotiable costs.

⁵<http://www.IFAO.egnet.net/bibliotheque/acces-bib/>

Partial inventories are organised every year and missing items are the subject of suggestions for acquisitions for restocking. In general, the acquisition of new publications is favoured over retrospective acquisitions, unless it has the scientific value necessary for the completeness of the collections or contributes to the development of new documentary segments relating to the evolution of the institution's research axes⁶, or to the emergence of new fields (for example, digital humanities).

It is true that the library acquires in documentary niches with low editorial circulation, whose rapidly out of print publications are then available on the second-hand market for often higher acquisition costs. In addition, some documents seem definitively unavailable while others within the collections are unica. This is why, in addition to its geographical location, the IFAO library offers interlibrary loan only by electronic means, then paper printing, in compliance with copyright (up to 10% of a monograph and one article per journal).

Highlighting of collections and documentary networks

The IFAO library has been cataloguing since 2013 in the French collective catalogue of higher education, SUDOC, managed by the Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education (ABES). Since 2014, it has received arrowed subsidies from MESRI to catalogue documents acquired after 7 years ("retroconversion"). At the end of 2020, about 25% of the documents were visible in SUDOC.

Since January 1, 2017, these documents have also been available in the international collective catalogue, Worldcat.

All library documents are available in the local catalogue, accessible from the Internet, with the exception of approximately 800 documents (out of a total of 94,000), which are currently being processed.

Since 2016, the library has also been involved in an international digitisation project under the leadership of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF): Bibliothèques d'Orient. The digitised works are visible and freely accessible in Gallica, the BnF's digital library, and are published in a dedicated portal. The project within IFAO concerns, on the one hand, the library which has chosen to digitise documents from the rare and old books' reserve, on the other hand, the publishing house which has chosen to focus on the IFAO's out of print publications and, finally, the archives and collections department which has focused mainly on a few IFAO archaeological sites (images, excavations' registers and note books) and on Arabic-language manuscripts. The programme, which is still ongoing, made it possible to consult 414 IFAO documents on Gallica at the end of 2020.

In December 2017, the library also joined the national shared conservation plan for antiquity journals, under the coordination of the Sorbonne Interuniversity Library, in order to be able to supplement its journals' collections in Egyptology and papyrology by donations from other partner institutions, and to ensure better visibility.

Finally, IFAO is part of the network of French Schools abroad (Ecoles françaises à l'étranger) with the French School of Athens, the French School of Rome, the Casa de Velázquez and the French School of the Far East. In this context, library curators organize annual meetings, promote library visits and exchange publications and information.

⁶http://www.IFAO.egnet.net/recherche/or2017/projet_scientifique/