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Acquisitions guidelines

The Swiss National Library collects and archives Helvetica, which comprises all printed and digital publications connected to Switzerland. The establishment and expansion of these collections are among the National Library's main tasks. The library works with acquisitions guidelines to proceed efficiently with this work. The guidelines were updated in 2024 for the National Library's General Collection and for the Swiss Literary Archives. The acquisitions guidelines define the National Library's acquisition strategy and strengthen its role as Switzerland's national memory.

The National Library's acquisitions guidelines set clear criteria for the inclusion of publications, archives and estates and thus enable consistent acquisition decisions. The new guidelines specify the main collection areas, provide transparency and ensure the long-term relevance of the holdings for research and society.

The General Collection is the most extensive section with 3.2 million physical and slightly over 0.5 million digital publications and is the National Library's core holding. It grows annually by about 60,000 printed and 40,000 digital publications on average. The acquisitions guidelines for the General Collection follow several principles: the focus is on publications, which came out after 1848, collecting just one media form per work plus a selective and representative digital collection.

The Swiss Literary Archives document Switzerland's literary work. They include literary holdings from Switzerland's four languages and cultures with a focus on 20th and 21st century literature. The Swiss Literary Archives will focus in future on estates and archives of authors from the 1950s and 1960s. They are the next decades, which are yet to be properly represented in the Literary Archives. Another focus area is exile and migration literature after 1945.