

ILAB Missing Books Register: Specific Guidance for Institutions

What is the Missing Books Register?

The Missing Books Register is a website which records and stores information about missing and stolen books, manuscripts, maps, prints, ephemera, and other associated materials of value. We encourage any person or organisation missing such an item to record their loss on the Missing Books Register. The information about all items reported is made available without charge for anyone worldwide who wishes to consult it.

The Missing Books Register was created and is hosted by the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers (ILAB), to aid in the recovery of missing or stolen titles, and to discourage future thefts. ILAB takes a strong stance against theft, fraud, and forgeries. ILAB works closely with all its 22 member associations and their members as well as a network of libraries, archives, and law enforcement agencies.

Who can lodge a report on the Missing Books Database?

Any individual or organisation, involved in the storing, handling, collecting, and preserving of rare and valuable books and antiquarian material, is encouraged to report to the Missing Books Register as well as searching the site proactively.

How much does it cost to use the Missing Books Register?

The Missing Books Register is a service provided **entirely free of charge**. ILAB does not charge for the registering of accounts, the reporting of stolen or missing items, nor for searching the database.

What information should be reported to the Missing Books Register?

Please bear in mind that the more detail you can supply regarding a missing item, the greater the chance of having your item found and returned.

- **Bibliographical information:** Author/s, title, publishing details, date, size, binding etc.

- **Copy Specific information:** Giving full details of how your copy can be distinguished from another copy of the same book or item cannot be over emphasized. Examples of copy specific information could include, while not being limited to, your library's or institution's stamp, a prior owner's bookplate, a special binding, damage in a particular place within the book etc. Please take the time to supply as many details as possible. Even if you are not certain that your institution's stamp, or label were in the missing book it is still worth mentioning that it *might* have your institutions mark/s and providing an image of the possible stamps or labels.
- **Avoiding false positives when reporting:** ILAB is able to record information which will not be publicly available, and we will readily answer questions about similar sounding copies which appear on the market: however, the Missing Books Register will be much more useful if it contains as few "false positives" as possible, so that (for instance) a description which reads "*perforated library stamp to title-page, nineteenth-century armorial bookplate to front pastedown, shelf-label at foot of spine*" will be much more helpful than one reading "*usual library markings*".

Remember we need these details to help someone, who is not familiar with your copy, to identify it easily.

- **Images**, of course, are particularly valuable. Please bear in mind that the more copy specific information you can give us, the more efficient the Missing Books Register will be. Ideally attach a picture of the missing item but in any case, please make sure to attach an image of the library stamps or markings used by your institution whether or not they were in the missing material.
- **Contact information of the reporting institution:** Please provide ILAB with full contact details including a second contact within your institution. Items often remain in the database for a long time and job positions change. ILAB will contact your institution at regular intervals to find out whether a recovery has been made or if there are any further details now available on the incident. Remember! We rely on you to change the contact details in your account as soon as any change occurs within your institution.
- **Anonymity?** The more information we can supply on this public database, the better, but we realise that there may be legitimate reasons that your library or institution would prefer anonymity. When reporting a loss to the Missing Books Register you will be able to indicate whether you would like your reported items to appear anonymously or not.

Reminder! Copy specific information is vitally important: Please always remember the more detail you can supply regarding a missing item, the greater the chance of having your item found and returned. Anything that makes your copy individual is very important to report. This individuality could be a library stamp, a prior owner's bookplate, or something else, any small detail could be crucial.

When should an item be reported missing to the ILAB Missing Books Register?

ILAB advises institutions to report stolen or missing items immediately an item cannot be located. If the item is subsequently found, it is very simple to remove it from the Missing Books Register. There is a much greater chance of the missing book or other item being returned if a report is lodged without delay.

As soon as the report is entered into the Missing Books Register ILAB will verify the reported information and publish the missing item on the website. Additionally, ILAB will quickly send an email to our worldwide network of booksellers and others to let the large number of dealers on our mailing list to watch out for the missing item.

Do not delay reporting! ILAB advises libraries and institutions to report stolen or missing items as soon as a theft or loss is noticed. Many stolen items are sold within hours or days of having been stolen. Quick action is vital and may prevent a stolen item being sold.

What happens if an item appears missing after an inventory check, but the item might have been missing for some time?

Report the item! Even if time has passed, it is always worth reporting missing material.

Who to contact in an emergency?

Please contact the ILAB Secretariat or your national antiquarian booksellers' association if you have no resources or time to report the missing item(s) online. ILAB and/ or its member associations will assist promptly.

Please follow this link to view all national antiquarian booksellers' association who are a member of ILAB: <https://ilab.org/page/associations>
Or contact the ILAB Secretariat at: secretariat@ilab.org

Where does ILAB display the information? Who is informed after the reporting of a missing item?

- **Website listing:** ILAB will verify the information reported to the database without delay and once this vetting process is finalised, the missing item(s) will be published on the website, visible under “Latest Database Entries” and is also available by searching the database.
- **News:** The Missing Books Register includes a news section. This useful feature of the Missing Books Register site draws additional attention to incidents by publishing an article in the Missing Books Register News section. This news is also displayed on the ILAB website.
- **ILAB Security Mailing List to the full network of ILAB booksellers worldwide:** ILAB runs a mailing list and provides an immediate update to all ILAB booksellers via email.
- ILAB will contact the national antiquarian booksellers’ association in the respective country where the theft or loss has occurred, if this has not been done already by the reporting institution.

How can I help?

Please spread the word by telling your colleagues and other interested people about the Missing Books Register. ILAB can also provide a speaker for your professional conferences to talk about the Missing Books Register. Please contact the [ILAB Secretariat](#) for details.

Suggestions for Improvement?

The Missing Books Register is a collaborative endeavour, and a work in progress. Suggestions for its improvement will always be welcomed by our editorial team. Please contact us at secretariat@ilab.org.