

# ILAB Missing Books Register: Specific Guidance for Booksellers

## What is the Missing Books Register and who can report to it?

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.

## How much does the use of the Missing Books Register cost?

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:** Details of how this 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, a prior owner's bookplate, any special identifying marks your business

uses, a special binding, damage in a particular place within the book etc. Entering your catalogue description would be very helpful. Please take the time to supply as many details as possible. Remember we need these details to help someone who is not familiar with your copy to identify it easily.

- ILAB is able to record information which will not be publicly available, but we will readily answer questions about copies which seem similar – or any other question you may have pertaining to the Missing Books Register.

#### **A) Images:**

- Images are particularly valuable. Please do bear in mind that the more copy-specific information you can give us, the more efficient the Missing Books Register will be. Images can be taken from a website entry or a previous catalogue production.

#### **B) Contact information:**

When reporting an item as missing or stolen please provide ILAB with a full set of contact details and preferably a second contact in your business. ILAB will contact you at regular intervals to ask you to confirm whether the item/s you reported are still missing. We also strongly welcome any further details that you may have regarding the incident, or the item reported. Please immediately add any new information to your report. Remember sometimes it is the smallest detail that can make a very significant difference to your chances of having the item found.

It is very important to keep your contact details on your Missing Books Register account up to date. Without correct details we may not be able to get in touch with you to notify you of any news we might receive about your missing item or items. Please edit the contact details in your account without delay if any changes occur within your company.

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

**Do not delay reporting!** ILAB advises booksellers, institutions, and collectors to report stolen or missing items and as soon as a theft or loss is noticed. Many stolen items are sold within hours or days of having been stolen. Speed is vital!

ILAB will verify the reported information without delay and publish the missing

item on the website. Only timely action can prevent everyone dealing with rare books and associated material from handling stolen or illegitimate items. Speed will also assist law enforcement agencies in their work.

### **Who to contact in an emergency - no time to follow the reporting process?**

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

Please follow this link to contact a national antiquarian booksellers' association:

<https://ilab.org/page/associations>

Or contact the ILAB Secretariat via email: [secretariat@ilab.org](mailto:secretariat@ilab.org)

### **How to respond if concerned about the safety at your premises?**

The Missing Books Register can record items and incidents without displaying all information publicly. This process has been put in place to protect booksellers when under the imminent threat of a robbery or during an ongoing investigation by law enforcement. If you are concerned about your safety, please contact ILAB and to report the item; state very clearly if you want to remain anonymous. No information is disseminated through an automatic system, all information is checked and verified by a member of staff at ILAB in agreement with the bookseller.

### **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 finalized, the missing item(s) will be published on the website, visible under "Latest Database Entries" and available by searching the database.
- **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.

- **News:** The Missing Books Register contains a news section and can draw additional attention to an incident by publishing an article in the Missing Books Register News section which is also displayed on the ILAB website.

### **Should the Missing Books Register be used for provenance checks before purchasing an item?**

ILAB advises and encourages all booksellers to actively use the site and the database. However, please read the Missing Books Register legal disclaimer. It is important that all booksellers understand that the Missing Books Register cannot provide a comprehensive list of all books that are missing at any time. However, consulting the Missing Books Register is an important step in due diligence and may help a bookseller avoid buying an item with legal title that is unclear.

### **Conclusion**

The Missing Book Register is a collaborative endeavour, and a work in progress. Any suggestions for its improvement will always be welcomed by our editorial team. Please contact us at [secretariat@ilab.org](mailto:secretariat@ilab.org).

Neither this guidance document nor the Missing Books Register website can give guidance on ownership or legal matters.