The work of Dr. Robert Feller (b. 1919) has helped to define the field of conservation science, contributing to our knowledge of varnishes, color, the damaging effects of light exposure, and polymer and paper degradation. He was named the first technical advisor for conservation and curatorial activities for the National Gallery of Art in 1950, and in 1976 he became the founding director of the Research Center on the Materials of the Artist and Conservator at Carnegie Mellon University. Publishing over 130 articles on these topics and more, Feller’s focus has always been on the practical application of scientific methods to the work of conservators, and included the testing and introduction of Acryloid B-72 to the field. He has been recognized with awards from numerous conservation and scientific organizations. The lifetime achievement award presented by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works is named for him, and he was its first recipient.

Dr. Feller is also a bibliophile. Over the course of more than 50 years he and his wife, Ruth M. Johnston Feller, built a private collection of over 2,500 books about the science and technology of color; the history and manufacture of paints, varnishes, and textiles; and painting, drawing, printmaking, and sculpture generally. Like the collectors themselves, this library focuses on the practical application of artistic techniques and materials used in various periods. Rather than treatises on aesthetic theory by the art world’s leading authorities, the Fellers collected trade literature and manuals by lesser known writers, who focused on practical matters like mixing pigments to obtain a particular effect or coating paintings with varnish to preserve them. In 2013 Feller donated this entire collection, along with ancillary material, to the National Gallery of Art Library in his name and the name of his late wife. Enhancing already strong holdings in these areas and including more than 200 rare volumes from the mid-seventeenth to early twentieth century, this gift makes the Gallery one of the major repositories for scholars researching these topics.

1 John Barrow, dates unknown, Dictionarium polygraphicum, or, The whole body of arts, regularly digested, London, 1758

2 Possibly by Carington Bowles, 1724–1793, The artist’s assistant in drawing, perspective, etching, engraving, metzotintoscraping, painting on glass, in crayons, in water-colours, and on silks and satins, London, 1786

3 Gerard de Lairesse, 1640–1711, Groot schilderboek, waar in de schilderkonst in al haar deelen grondig werd onderweez, ook door redeneeringen en printverbeeldingen verklaard, Amsterdam, 1714
Godfrey Smith, active 18th century, *The laboratory, or, School of arts*, London, 1770

Willem Goeree, 1635–1711, *Natuurlyk en schilderkonstig ontwerp der mensch-kunde*, Amsterdam, 1753

Friedrich Herzberg, dates unknown, *Anleitung zum gründlichen Unterricht in der Handzeichnungskunst für Anfänger*, Breslau, 1780

Richard Dagley, d. 1841, *Compendium of the theory and practice of drawing and painting*, London, 1818

David Cox, 1783–1859, *A series of progressive lessons intended to elucidate the art of landscape painting in water colours*, London, 1816

Richard Pettigrew Leitch, dates unknown, *Course of water-colour painting*, London and Paris, c. 1873


J. Bulkley, dates unknown, *A treatise on landscape painting in oil*, London, 1821


Abraham Bosse, 1602–1676, *Tractaet in wat manieren men op root koper snijden ofte etzen zal*, Amsterdam, 1662

Arend Fokke Simonsz, 1755–1812, *Volledige beschrijving van alle konsten, ambachten, handwerken, fabrieken, trafieken, derzelver werkhuizen, gereedschappen, enz.*, Dordrecht, 1796

Godefroy Engelmann, 1788–1839, *Traité de lithographie*, Mulhouse, c. 1839

P.J. Verly, dates unknown, *Verhandeling van de schilderkonst in miniatuur, om gemakkelijk te leeren schilderen zonder meester*, Utrecht, 1744


Paul Duménil, b. 1779, *Nouveau manuel complet de peinture d’histoire naturelle*, Paris, 1859

Arthur Seymour Jennings, b. 1860, *Paint & colour mixing: a practical handbook for painters, decorators, paint manufacturers, artists, and all who have to mix colours*, London and New York, 1921

Philip Miller, 1691–1771, *The method of cultivating madder: as it is now practised by the Dutch in Zeeland (where the best madder is produced)*, London, 1758

O. Piequet, dates unknown, *Chimie des teinturiers*, Paris, 1892

Percy Bean and William McLeary, dates unknown, *The chemistry and practice of finishing*, Manchester, 1912

H. Schmincke & Co., *Maltechnische Mitteilungen*, Düsseldorf, date unknown


Hesketh Hubbard, b. 1892, *[Notes]*, c. 1917

Robert L. Feller, *[Notes made in Florence after the flood]*, c. 1967

Philip Miller, 1691–1771, *The method of cultivating madder: as it is now practised by the Dutch in Zeeland (where the best madder is produced)*, London, 1758

O. Piequet, dates unknown, *Chimie des teinturiers*, Paris, 1892

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