The creation of the library is contemporary with that of the cesr in 1956. The development of the collection was the result of successive purchases and significant donations. At present, the library contains nearly fifty thousand works, over a hundred periodicals (subscriptions and series), the dissertations and thesis defended at the cesr, monographs on civil buildings realized by students of the history of art, a large collection of off-prints (articles offered to the library by lecturers and participants to international conferences at the cesr), microfiches, (a collection of some three hundred items devoted to the reformation), and microfilms (most of them in musicology). Also notable is a collection of older printed material from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (about three thousand volumes), an important photographic library dealing with French and European architecture (in the process of digitalization), and a specialized library of musicology: four thousand volumes and many hundreds of microfilms. The library has facilities for conducting research on-line on the works in the collections of the cesr and the University François Rabelais; a number of periodicals are also available on CD-ROM.

The cesr also houses a multi-media room. Ten computer positions are available to students. A building project is under consideration which would make it possible to expand the library, set up a station for the digitalization of documents, and increase multi-media space.