

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Genealogy

(Class CR, CS, Z688.G3, Z5301-Z5319, Z6374.B5 as appropriate)

Contents

- I. Scope
- II. Diverse and Inclusive Collecting Statement
- III. Research Strengths
- IV. Collecting Policy
- V. Best Editions and Preferred Formats
- VI. Acquisition Sources
- VII. Collecting Levels

I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement covers compiled family histories from around the world; royalty, nobility, and peerage information; and personal and family names by country and nationality. These materials fall within the subclasses CR (Heraldry) and CS (Genealogy), and select ranges covering books and subject bibliographies in the Z subclass.

Although frequently associated with genealogy, works in the field of local history are treated in detail in a separate [Local History Collections Policy Statement](#). See also the Supplementary Guidelines for [Microforms](#) and [Electronic Resources](#), and the Collections Policy Statements for [Manuscripts](#); [Folklore and Folklife](#); [Geography and Cartography](#); [Newspapers – Non-U.S.](#); [Newspapers – United States](#); [Photography](#); [Religion](#); and [United States History](#). This document does not cover census, land, naturalization, or military service records, which are in the custody of the National Archives.

II. Diverse and Inclusive Collecting Statement

As the nation's de facto national library, the Library of Congress strives to build an expansive, yet selective, collection that records the creativity of the United States and is reflective of the nation's diversity and complexity. The Library's mandate is to have collections that are inclusive and representative of a diversity of creators and ideas. A priority includes acquiring material of underrepresented perspectives and voices in the Library's collections to ensure diverse authorship, points of view, cultural identities, and other historical or cultural factors. The Library also seeks to build a research collection that comprises a globally representative sample of international materials that are diverse in voice and perspective, relative to their places of origin, further supporting the Library's mission to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for Congress and future generations.

Diverse collecting is mentioned within many of the Library's Collections Policy Statements. In addition, the Library has adopted several specific collection policies in an effort to ensure it is building an inclusive

and representative collection. For more information, see the Library's Collections Policy Statements on [Ethnic Materials](#), [LGBTQIA+ Studies](#), [Women's and Gender Studies](#), [Independently Published and Self-Published Textual Materials](#), and [Countries and Regions with Acquisitions Challenges](#).

III. Research Strengths

The Library of Congress has one of the world's major collections of U.S. and non-U.S. genealogical publications. The Library's genealogy collection began as early as 1815 when Thomas Jefferson's library was purchased. The Jefferson Library included the *Domesday Book*, Sir William Dugdale's *The Baronetage of England*, and *Peerage of Ireland*. Because many genealogies are self-published and have been given to the Library for many generations from around the world, the Library's collection now contains more than 70,000 compiled genealogies.

The collection is strongest in United States publications, emphasizing American genealogy, with compiled family histories comprising the majority of works cataloged. The Library also collects non-U.S. genealogies, and researchers doing non-U.S. research will find strong collections for Western Europe, especially the United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany.

The Library of Congress offers electronic resources including online subscription databases of newspapers, journals, books, magazines, manuals, and other materials relevant to genealogical research. Databases, including the library editions of *Ancestry*, *HeritageQuest Online*, *Accessible Archives*, *American Ancestors*, *FindMyPast*, *MyHeritage*, and *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*, provide enhanced accessibility to the Library's collections and to those of other institutions. These electronic resources supplement the Library's extensive print holdings, such as unpublished census, vital records, and military records, that the Library would not otherwise have available. The History and Genealogy Section of the Researcher and Reference Services Division also houses an uncataloged collection of pedigree charts and unpublished genealogical material relating to families and geographic areas.

Although not belonging to the genealogical collections proper, as outlined in Class CS, other resources valuable for genealogical research are found in the Library's extensive collection of city and telephone directories. City Directories of the United States, in the Microform and Electronic Resources Center, is a microform collection of directories from selected cities and towns, dating from the colonial period to as recently as 1960. This ongoing project uses the Library's directory collection as its core. These microforms are supplemented by the Library's extensive collection of unclassified city directories in paper. See also the [Telephone and City Directories Collections Policy Statement](#).

Below are examples of just a few of many significant resources available to genealogists that are found in the Library's collections:

- The Charles Edward Banks Manuscript Collection, housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division, comprises 54 uncataloged volumes relating to early Pilgrim families in Massachusetts. The collection is also available on microfilm in the Microform and Electronic Resources Center.

- Land ownership maps, housed in the Geography and Map Division, form a collection of 1500 U.S. county maps dating from the early nineteenth century that are both unique and useful to genealogists.
- The Hamburg Passenger Lists, located in the Manuscript Division, contain sixty-six reels of microfilm listing passengers embarking for America from the port of Hamburg during the period 1850-1873.
- The Library's extensive collection of local newspapers, including the [Chronicling America website](#) of the National Digital Newspaper Program.

IV. Collecting Policy

The Library collects genealogies and genealogical research materials at the collecting intensity levels indicated in the Collecting levels section below, regardless of language or field whether in traditional print or other media, including electronic forms, as practical and technical circumstances permit. Both monographs and serials, including self-published materials, are sought. The Library is not an archive or repository for unpublished or primary source county, state, or church records. However, the Library does collect such records if they appear in published format as indexes, abstracts or transcriptions of those records.

The Library acquires substantial subject bibliographies and other reference works on genealogy, and collects extensively the journals and major indexing and abstracting services in the field. Substantial is defined as information that is of significant research value that presents new information, research, and analysis.

Print genealogy publications have traditionally been based on a large amount self-published or vanity press material. Increasingly, this content is also published in digital formats. Often, since genealogical research is family or family line specific, the material is unique.

The Library also collects current works on genealogy that exist only in electronic format. These include, but are not limited to, substantial genealogies and family histories published on web portals including family websites, blogs, serials and databases published only in electronic form, and other such resources, all of which are increasingly integral to genealogical research. As collections are digitized and new forms of genealogical digital research are developed and offered online by public libraries and university libraries, historical societies, family associations, lineage societies, and other genealogical institutions, collection development increasingly involves locating and evaluating these electronic resources for possible linking to the material from the Library's online catalog or website. New forms of communication such as blogs, podcasts, online videos, and forms unique to new technologies, will be evaluated for incorporation into the Library's genealogy digital collections.

V. Best Editions and Preferred Formats

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office,

see: <http://copyright.gov/circs/circ07b.pdf>.

For guidance regarding recommended formats for material acquired via all other means; e.g., purchase, exchange, gift and transfer, see: <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs>.

For information regarding electronic resources, open digital content, web archiving, and data sets, see the following Supplementary Guidelines: <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/opencontent.pdf>, <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.pdf>, and <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/datasets.pdf>.

VI. Acquisition Sources

Patterns of publication and distribution, for both mainstream and self-published works, are significant factors in attempting to build collections that support genealogical research by United States citizens whose ancestry or personal origins are from around the world. Because of the ephemeral nature of many self-published compiled genealogies, and because genealogies are the top priority for acquisitions in this field, special efforts are required to identify and obtain this information. See also the [*Independently Published and Self-Published Textual Materials Supplementary Guidelines*](#).

Whenever possible the Library attempts to acquire materials through non-purchase means, such as copyright, exchange, the Cataloging in Publication program, or gift. A large proportion of the print genealogies and family histories are donated. The Library of Congress collections are heavily dependent upon materials received through the copyright deposit provisions of U.S. copyright law ([17 USC section 407](#) & [17 USC section 408](#)). For copyright demand, the U.S. regulations allow for the Library to receive analog and some digital materials. When items are offered in both formats the Library's default is normally the Best Edition print version, unless the publisher has arranged a special relief agreement with the Copyright Office. For materials not available to the Library through copyright deposit, or other non-purchase means, the Library acquires materials through purchase. Purchase is used predominately for non-U.S. publications that are not widely available within the United States, and for ephemeral or grey literature published by local historical and genealogical societies or genealogies and family histories which are only available for sale. The Library utilizes an array of traditional methods of library acquisition (firm orders, subscriptions, and approval plans) with vendors located in different areas of the world. In addition, the Library uses its six Overseas Operations Offices to broaden its acquisitions opportunities outside the United States. Library of Congress approval plans instruct vendors to select or list works on family history and genealogy.

Not all materials deposited with the U.S. Copyright Office are added to the Library's General Collections. Works which the registrant indicates are unpublished must be held by the Copyright Office. The Library may identify unpublished works held by the Copyright Office as appropriate for inclusion in its collections. (See [37 C.F.R. §201.23: Transfer of Unpublished Copyright Deposits to the Library of Congress](#).) The cost of reproducing copies of unpublished genealogies selected from copyright deposits must be borne by the Library of Congress. Non-U.S. publications, electronic resources, and materials not available through donation or copyright deposit are purchased using appropriated funds or gift and trust funds.

Unpublished gift materials are reviewed on a case by case basis; materials of an ephemeral nature, brochures and pamphlets, are generally added to the Local History and Genealogy Vertical File in the Main Reading Room. Family history newsletters are typically filed in the Local History and Genealogy Vertical File in the Main Reading Room until the Recommending Officer decides whether they should be sent forward for cataloging. As genealogical materials are increasingly published online, the Library’s Web Archiving program will be instrumental in building a robust collection.

VII. Collecting Levels

Meeting the Library’s Diverse and Inclusive Collecting Statement (see Section II) and the collecting levels outlined below requires continual evaluation of the publishing landscape, sources of expression, current events, and socio-cultural trends to thus maintain effective collecting policies and acquisitions methods. Changes in publishing or in the creation of materials covered by this policy statement may necessitate collecting efforts not explicitly referenced here. Such efforts will be handled on a case-by-case basis while the Library evaluates the need for policy statement updates.

For explanation of the Collecting Levels used by the Library, see <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/cpc.html>.

The Library's collection of genealogies and related materials in the CS classification is broadly representative of published literature in this field, and attempts to encompass all significant publications including those that are self-published in all applicable languages. Older material is retained for historical research.

The Library of Congress extensively collects published genealogical material, including self-published works that are related to the United States and its possessions including all ethnic groups. Collecting Level 5.

The Library collects genealogical material for neighboring nations, and those countries and areas from which large and/or long-standing cultural and ethnic communities in the United States derive. Collecting Level 4.

The Library collects genealogical bibliographies, Z688.G3, Z5301-Z5319, and Z6374.B5. Collecting Level 5.

LC Classification	Subject	Collecting Levels	
		U.S.	Non-U.S.
CR1-6305	Heraldry	4	4
CS9-54	Genealogy Handbooks	5	4
CS55-61	Categorized Genealogy Lists	5	4

LC Classification	Subject	Collecting Levels	
		U.S.	Non-U.S.
CS69 +	Collective family histories covering more than one country which include the United States	5	4
CS71.A-Z	United States individual family histories	5	n/a
CS80-2209	Genealogies by region or country (not including the United States)	n/a	4
Z688.G3	Genealogy Special Collections	5	4
Z5051-7999 Z5301-5319 Z6374.B5	Any Subject Bibliography on Genealogy	5	4

Revised September 2019. Updated by the Collection Development Office April 2022.