

Government Publications - Foreign

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I. Scope

For purposes of this statement, government publications include all those issued under authority of any legislative body, executive or judicial department, ministry, bureau, agency, independent office, court, commission, or officer of any government.

In some countries governmental agencies may issue a variety of cultural and scientific publications which in other countries would be published commercially. These are judged on their own merits, and in light of other acquisitions policies.

The Library of Congress acquires materials to support the research needs of Congress, the judiciary, other federal agencies, and the scholarly community. Government publications are issued in all subject areas and in all formats. They span the Library's classification schedule and are found throughout the general and special collections.

II. Research strengths

Major research strengths of the Library's foreign government collections are their size and breadth, offering research level national collections of government materials from around the world in a single institution. The Law Library has one of the best comparative law collections in the world, including governmental legal documents dating from the earliest days of lawmaking. Various collections overviews cite the extensive back runs of government documents from Australia and New Zealand, the noteworthy collections of Canadian legal materials and government documents, and the significant strengths of the Korean collection of government publications. The Library's Luso-Hispanic collections of official gazettes, debates of parliamentary bodies, and other official publications of national agencies and selected state and provincial imprints, are unsurpassed. Many of the official Luso-Hispanic publications were not collected or preserved in the countries of origin themselves because of wars, civil unrest or economic difficulties. Middle Eastern government documents, such as official gazettes, elections, regulations, censuses, reports, and statistics, published by the colonial powers and subsequently by the independent Middle Eastern states,

are noteworthy. Similarly singled out is an impressive collection of African government documents, including government publications issued by colonial governments and subsequently by the independent African states. This is simply a sampling of the important foreign government collections at the Library; for more information, consult the relevant collections overviews (<http://www.loc.gov/staff/colldev/cpc/colloversviews/index.html>).

The strength of the tangible collections is enhanced by electronic resources. Freely available online indexing and sometimes text of current foreign government publications through country internet web pages have improved access to the materials. Also strengthening access are subscribed electronic resources, specialized databases and files, and Library of Congress web archiving.

III. General collecting policy

The Library acquires government documents from all regions, countries, and parts of the world in all languages, and in all available and appropriate formats. Because government publications can relate to any subject, individual subject and format collections policies should be consulted for added guidance.

Publications excluded by other Collections Policy Statements, or which are of transitory value, are not added to the permanent collections, but may be retained for temporary use by the appropriate Library units. Examples of such materials are press releases, daily weather maps, tourist brochures, and individual speeches. If a periodical is selected solely for its current reference value and will not be archived, strong consideration should be given to linking to or leasing an online electronic version, if available. Government publications which are not selected for the permanent collections because of their ephemeral nature, but which may have research value in association with other ephemera, may be retained for possible reformatting and/or collection level cataloging. Examples of such materials include pamphlets reflecting current affairs and political and social problems.

Monographs and serials in the field of technical agriculture, which are excluded by the Collections Policy Statement on agriculture, are more appropriate for the National Agricultural Library. Serials and monographs relating to clinical medicine, which are excluded by the Collections Policy Statement on medicine, are more appropriate for the National Library of Medicine.

None of the above precludes the acquisition of other materials to meet the needs of Congress or the general public or for temporary use. Special collections may also contain materials that would not be added to the general collections. Specific collecting policies for the various levels of government are outlined below.

IV. Best editions and preferred formats

In general, foreign government publications are not subject to the U.S. Copyright Law and deposit requirements. However, in so far as possible, the Library acquires materials conforming to the Copyright Office Best Edition statement for selected formats as published. For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, please 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, please see: <http://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs>.

For information regarding electronic resources and web archiving, see the following supplementary guidelines: <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf> and <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.pdf>.

It is the policy of the Law Library to collect all legal information in the format declared official by the issuing body of the material.

V. Specific collecting policy

National Level

For purposes of maintaining a research level collection, the Library of Congress attempts to acquire government publications at the national level from all countries of the world. Those publications considered to be of lasting research value are added to the Library's permanent collections and include, but are not limited to, codes, gazettes, and other statutory and regulatory materials, legislative and judicial publications, administrative reports, and publications containing statistical, demographic, socio-economic, election, and scientific data.

Major subdivisions

The Library acquires publications of provinces, states, and regions in countries where such subdivisions have a high degree of autonomy and issue publications containing a substantial amount of information which is not available in publications at the national level. The publications to be acquired include official gazettes, election data and other substantial legal, regulatory and judicial publications required by the Law Library, legislative material, statistics (including census publications), major administrative reports, and scientific data. Other publications of governments at the provincial or regional level may be acquired selectively based on their subject content, research value, and the needs of Congress. The Law Library may elect to provide to acquisitions staff a list of major states or provinces from which materials are important for the legal mission of the Library.

Because of their proximity to the United States, the Library makes an effort to acquire all substantial publications of the provinces of Canada and the states of Mexico. In recognition of the extreme difficulties which the Library experiences in obtaining publications from countries where government information is restricted or not easily available, a more expansive approach to the acquisition of government publications below the national level from such countries is followed as described in the Collections Policy Statement for Countries and Regions with Acquisitions Challenges. It is understood that a high degree of judgment will be exercised in making selections for the permanent collections from among the materials acquired.

None of the foregoing precludes the acquisition of individual publications outside the scope of this statement when such publications are recommended and contain information which is not likely to be available elsewhere.

Municipal governments

In general, the Library limits its major acquisitions efforts to official publications of the capital cities. The official publications of one or more other important cities in addition to the capital may be regularly acquired if the city plays an important national or regional role and publishes information not available elsewhere. Types of foreign municipal publications acquired include city planning, statistics, and other subjects of interest to the Library or required by the Law Library. Additional municipal publications may be acquired on a title-by-title basis, and are selected for their content and research value to the Library.

VI. Acquisition sources: current and future

The major sources of foreign government publications for the Library's collections are international exchange agreements, gifts, and the Library's overseas offices. Materials are purchased if not available through exchange or gift.

If the Library keeps print copies of serials on a current issues only basis and receives publisher bound volumes for the Library's permanent collections, as with some sets of parliamentary papers, serious consideration should be given to replacing the temporary print copies with online electronic access. In fact, many countries no longer furnish paper copies to the Library by exchange or gift once the publications are available online.

Because of the proliferation of electronic government publications, the Library will need to obtain and archive such publications from the levels of foreign governments defined elsewhere in this Collections Policy Statement. This is especially true in the case of official gazettes. The Library has developed several collections of harvested foreign websites that include government materials, for example the East European Government Ministries Web Archive Collection, the African Government Web Archive, and the International Tribunals Web Archive Collection. There will be less need to obtain and archive foreign government documents for countries that have free and full-text electronic access to their documents on stable platforms. The Library of Congress will want to link and provide access to these resources in the appropriate catalog.

The Library of Congress should also seek to establish cooperative agreements with other libraries in the United States concerning a division of responsibility for collecting government publications at and below the national level in all appropriate formats, including cooperative microfilming, digitizing, and harvesting.

Since so much material, both domestic and foreign, is freely available online, the Library needs to explore how exchange arrangements might be broadened to include electronic content for archiving at the Library.

VII. Collecting levels

Foreign government publications may deal with any subject and are found throughout the Library's classification schedule. Guidelines in collection policies for particular subjects and formats should be consulted in many cases.

Level of Government	Collecting Level
National governments	4
States and provinces	4, selectively overall, but at research level for those collected
States and provinces - Canada and Mexico	4
National capital cities	4
Cities other than national cities	4 or 3, research or instructional level as required by needs of Congress and other Library constituencies

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