

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Government Publications - United States

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

The Library collects publications intended for general distribution issued by federal, state, county, city, and tribal governments. This material may be issued by any branch of the government or by state supported universities and in any subject area. United States government material is collected in all available and appropriate formats according to the strategic goals of the Library and depending on the needs of Congress, the Executive Branch, Supreme Court, and the Library's other user communities.

In addition to this document, the relevant subject area Collections Policy Statement should be consulted for additional guidance when a government publication's subject matter and form is indistinguishable from its commercial counterpart, e.g. educational materials on personal finance, health or safety.

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 stands alone in the breadth and depth of its United States federal and state government publications housed in the general and specialized collections. No other library attempts to collect on a similar scale for these government entities. The Library's collections of U.S. government publications date back to the founding of the republic. Many of these publications have limited distributions, and the Library may hold the only copies available. This is due in part to the Library's legal right to receive federal government publications under Title 44 of the *United States Code*. Since the states in our federal system have many autonomous powers, the federal and state collections complement each other.

The Library collects county, city, and tribal publications on a selective basis, relying on state and local repositories for complete collections. The Library further relies on commercially produced collections, indexes, and datasets of publications from these government entities. The local collections provide an added comparative dimension to the United States government resources when combined with the federal and state materials and the thousands of secondary resources.

The Library has a short history (since 2000) of collecting official publications directly from tribal governments, and they are collected very selectively. However the Library has long collected commercial and other privately published compilations of basic Native American administrative and legal materials as well as those produced by agencies of the United States government.

Electronic resources published by federal, state, and local agencies provide additional scope to the U.S. government collections. Subscribed web-based products also lend added value to the collections by providing indexing, key-word searching, and immediate access to full text. The general collections are strengthened by special U.S. government collections in the various custodial divisions.

IV. Collecting Policy

The Library collects government publications in all formats, including print, microform, and cartographic, graphic, video, audio, online and tangible electronic media. This includes collection of U.S. government web sites. The Library also links to open access web-based government publications for current research. More than one format of a given publication may be collected if each provides distinct benefits or added value to the user.

Since United States government publications are collected in all subject areas, specific subject area and format Collections Policy Statements should be consulted for additional collecting guidance. More specialized information based upon level of government follows below.

Federal

The Library maintains comprehensive collections of the official publications of the United States Government. The Library acquires for addition to the classified collections copies of substantive publications, monographic and serial in the most appropriate formats, for reference and archival purposes.

The Library collects the web sites of Legislative Branch agencies, U.S. House and Senate Offices and committees, and U.S. national election campaigns comprehensively. The Library collects other U.S. government agency web sites selectively, primarily as part of theme- or event-based projects, as

part of its web archiving program. Nothing precludes providing separate access to specific publications or other materials included within archived web sites already acquired upon proper recommendation and justification.

The Library does not acquire or retain in the permanent collections the following types of materials: drawings and specifications of individual patents; blank forms; press releases other than those of the White House and Department of State; internal agency issuances of the executive departments, independent agencies, the legislative branch, and the judiciary, other than their principal regulations and issuances having extra-agency significance; other agency records; announcements of meetings and programs; ephemeral tourist literature; reprints of no bibliographic significance; and such other categories of limited usefulness and frequent revision as may be identified and defined from time to time.

The Library also does not acquire or retain in the permanent collections government materials related solely to technical agriculture or clinical medicine, because they are more appropriate for the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine. See the Collections Policy Statements on [Agriculture](#) and [Medicine](#).

None of the above precludes the acquisition of other materials to meet the needs of Congress or the general public or for temporary service use. Special collections may also contain materials that would not be added to the general collections.

State

The Library acquires for purposes of building and maintaining a research level collection publications issued by the states, the District of Columbia, the territories, and inter-state agencies of the United States in appropriate formats. The Library collects in all formats, based on availability and recommendation of the format that best serves the needs of Congress, other government agencies, and the scholarly community.

The Library retains all administrative reports (including decisions and regulations), planning and policy statements, statistical reports, and other substantive publications of state and inter-state offices and agencies, such as publications issued by state executive, constitutional, legislative, judicial, quasi-judicial, and state-supported bodies.

The following are not added to the Library's collections: state legislative bills; blank forms; press releases; announcements of meetings and programs; reprints of no significance; minor educational materials issued by state institutions, such as athletic schedules, posters, and folders announcing particular university courses and extension programs; works in the fields of technical agriculture and clinical medicine more appropriately collected by the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine, as defined in those Collections Policy Statements; agency internal records; and publications of limited usefulness identified in the selection process.

None of the above precludes the acquisition of other materials to meet the needs of Congress or the general public or for temporary service use. Special collections may also contain materials that would not be added to the general collections.

County

The Library of Congress selectively acquires publications from counties. County publications are

collected from major population centers, counties having regional or national influence, those that are important for demographic, socioeconomic, or political reasons, or those that provide a local perspective on issues which are of national importance and of particular interest to Congress. Publications are acquired in all appropriate formats based on availability.

County publications acquired include consolidated or collected annual or biennial reports, the latest revision of county charters, codes of ordinances, administrative codes, codes of the major regulatory commissions, reports of the county courts, and opinions of county attorneys or legal counsel, as available. If consolidated or collected annual or biennial reports are unavailable, separate reports are acquired from the county departments.

The Library does not acquire or retain in the permanent collections the following types of county materials: blank forms, press releases, internal agency issuances other than regulations and issuances having extra-agency significance, announcements of meetings and programs, ephemeral tourist literature, reprints of no bibliographic significance, and such other categories of limited usefulness and frequent revision as may be identified and defined from time to time. This does not preclude acquisition of materials of these categories when recommended to meet the needs of Congress or for temporary use.

City

The Library selectively acquires official publications from cities. City publications are collected from major population centers; those that have regional or national influence; are important for demographic, socioeconomic, or political reasons; or contain important information on current events or provide a local perspective on issues which are of national importance and of particular interest to Congress. Publications are acquired in all appropriate formats, based on availability and proper recommendation

The Library acquires for its permanent collections from those selected cities consolidated or collected annual or biennial reports, the latest revision of the local charters, codes of ordinances, administrative codes, codes of the major regulatory commissions, and opinions of the city attorney or legal counsel. If consolidated or collected annual and biennial reports are unavailable, separate reports are acquired from the city departments and city council. The Library collects in all formats, based on availability and recommendation. The Library also acquires and collects commercial compilations of municipal publications, including microform and electronic full-text collections.

The Library does not acquire or retain in the permanent collections the following types of city materials: blank forms, press releases, internal agency issuances other than regulations and issuances having extra-agency significance, announcements of meetings and programs, ephemeral tourist literature, agency records, reprints of no bibliographic significance, and such other categories of limited usefulness and frequent revision as may be identified and defined from time to time. This does not preclude acquisition of materials from these categories when recommended to meet the needs of Congress or for temporary use.

Tribal

The Library selectively acquires and retains tribal government publications. Native American and Alaska Native governments are recognized by the United States federal government as "domestic dependent nations," and the United States recognizes a government-to-government relationship with them. Under federal law, tribal governments retain certain governmental and jurisdictional powers in

their territories. This statement refers to official tribal publications from Native American tribal governments that are officially recognized by the United States government. The list of federally recognized tribal governments is maintained by the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs and periodically published in the *Federal Register*.

For selected American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments, materials collected include, as available, codes, laws, administrative reports (including decisions and regulations), statistical reports, planning and policy statements, and other substantive publications of tribal and intertribal offices and agencies, such as publications issued by tribal executive, constitutional, legislative, judicial, quasi-judicial, and tribally supported bodies. Among the intertribal agencies covered are intertribal appeals courts. Materials are collected in English and Native American languages. Materials are collected in the most appropriate formats based on availability.

The Library does not acquire or retain in the permanent collections the following types of tribal materials: blank forms, press releases, internal agency issuances unless they have extra-agency significance, announcements of meetings and programs, ephemeral tourist literature, reprints of no bibliographic significance, and such other categories of limited usefulness and frequent revision as may be identified and defined from time to time. Nothing in this list precludes acquisition of other materials to meet the needs of Congress or for temporary use. Other tribal publications are collected under the Collections Policy Statement on [Ethnic Materials](#).

V. Best Editions and Preferred Formats

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, which may apply to state, county, city, and tribal publications, 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

United States government publications are acquired through various means. The *United States Code*, Title 44, Section 1718, mandates the deposit with the Library of Congress of up to 25 copies of all federal publications printed under the authority of law with limited exceptions. This is the primary means of acquisition of federal government publications at the Library and allows the Library to request and receive publications not routinely distributed to other libraries. In addition, both the Congressional Research Service and the Serial and Government Publications Division receive some publications under separate federal depository library agreements with the Government Publishing Office. Some of these materials are transferred to the permanent collections upon weeding. This means of acquisition is diminishing for tangible publications as the Government Publishing Office reduces the amount of tangible materials it makes available to depository libraries. Finally, federal agency libraries offer their materials to the Library when they weed or close.

Some state laws require individual states to deposit publications at the Library. There are long standing acquisitions agreements between the Library and all of the states where Library deposit is not required by state law. The Library's stature as the Congressional and the national library makes it possible to acquire publications at the city, county, and tribal levels, often with limited expense to the Library.

Some U.S. government materials are also acquired by gift, exchange, Copyright, and purchase.

The Government Publishing Office is increasingly offering publications electronically in addition to or instead of tangible formats. Many government agencies publish their materials only on their internet web pages, resulting in "born digital" publications. While the Government Publishing Office is committed to a program of archiving, authenticating, and providing permanent access to government materials which they publish or acquire, materials maintained on agency web sites routinely disappear, particularly with changes in administrations. The latter is equally true of state and local internet material. In the future, the Library will have to acquire and archive open source web-based government publications to which it wishes to ensure access. It will need to identify, select, and collect individual web-based publications, such as particular monographs or serials. The Library has already begun to harvest and store whole web sites at the federal level. Cooperative agreements with the Government Publishing Office, National Archives and Records Administration, other government agencies, and other libraries and institutions will be necessary to share the load of archiving and providing permanent access. The same is true of state, county, city and tribal publications. In the face of increased electronic-only content, the Library must promote and share the task of collecting, preserving and providing access to this great mass of material necessary for an informed citizenry. While access to most federal government information online will be free of acquisitions charges, the Library will incur costs in the process of "collecting." The cost, if any, of acquiring state, county, city, and tribal web-based publications or whole web sites will depend on copyright law, local law, and any agreements the Library reaches with state, local, and tribal agencies.

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.

The Library collects federal government publications at the comprehensive level. The Library collects official publications of the states at the research level.

The Library collects county, city, and Native American tribal official publications selectively. However, for those selected county and city governments from which it collects, the Library collects at the research level. The Library has only collected tribal publications since 2000, and collections are representative.

As government publications may be issued on any subject, from cookery to national defense, and in any format, individual subject and format Collections Policy Statements should be followed for additional information. Following is a table showing collecting levels for specific parts of J and K in addition to other parts of the LC classification tables.

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

LC Classification	Subject	Collecting Level (US only)
J80-82	President's messages and other executive papers	5
J83-(85)	United States administrative papers	5
JK1-(2525)	Political institutions and public administration-United States	5
J86-(98)	State executive papers	4
JK2403-2687	Political institutions and public administration-United States-state government	4
JK2701-9593	Political institutions and public administration-United States-individual states and territories	4
JS(3)-1583	Local government, municipal government	3 in general, 4 for jurisdictions selected
K	Constitutional, legislative, and judicial publications, and administrative regulations and decisions falling in parts of K	5 in general. See Law Collections Policy Statement for specific collecting levels
Other LC classifications	In general, comprehensive, but consult subject and format Collections Policy Statements for further guidance	5 in general

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