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Government Publications - United States

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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 depending upon the needs of Congress, the Executive Branch, Supreme Court, and the Library's other user communities.

II. 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*. (See Section V.)

The Library collects county, city, and tribal publications on a selective basis, relying on state and local repositories for complete collections, as well as on commercial collections. Nevertheless, 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 general and legal materials as well as those produced by agencies of the United States government.

The general collections are strengthened by several special federal government collections, such as those mentioned in the following paragraphs.

The Serial and Government Publications Division is a selective United States federal depository library. Depository libraries receive materials free of charge in exchange for making them accessible to the public. The depository set, received directly from the Government Printing Office, is housed in the division, which maintains a temporary ten-year federal government collection. For the researcher, the collection permits easy access to a range of government publications in one location with access to Library reference specialists. Publications are received in all formats. When the set is weeded, individual items are forwarded to the general and special collections to fill gaps. Tangible electronic formats (CD-ROMS, floppy disks) in the depository set are kept permanently.

Under inter-agency agreement with the United States Government Printing Office, the Library acquires and retains in the Serial and Government Publications Division an archival silver-halide microfiche set of U.S. government publications from 1977 forward. This collection is used to produce service copies for exchange, sale, or for replacement of Library microforms.

By law, the Library of Congress is the permanent depository for Federal Advisory Committee publications. These materials, comprising primarily charters, annual reports, and minutes of public meetings, are maintained in the Serial and Government Publications Division.

The Law Library's Records and Briefs collection is made up of the briefs and transcripts of records (or joint appendices) submitted in cases on the docket of certain federal courts. The Library retains the records and briefs of the United States Supreme Court, the inferior federal circuit courts of appeal and the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. The Law Library is one of twelve depositories for printed United States Supreme Court Records and Briefs.

Electronic resources provide additional scope to the collections. The Library's *Thomas* database tracks the work of the Congress and includes full text of Congressional materials since 1995 and bill summary and status of legislation information since 1973. *GPOAccess*, a free internet resource from the Government Printing Office, provides indexing of government publications from July 1976 in its online *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, along with full text of numerous important federal serial publications. Many subscribed web-based products, such as the *American State Papers, 1789-1838*, *CQ.com*, *Declassified Documents Catalog*, *GalleryWatch*, *Hein Online*, *Index to Current Urban Documents*, *Leadership Library*, *LexisNexis Congressional*, and *U.S. Congressional Serial Set, 1817-1945*, provide added value to the collections by providing indexing and immediate access to full text.

III. General Collecting Policy

The Library collects government publications in all formats, including print, microforms, and cartographic, graphic, video, audio, and tangible electronic media. The Library has collected U.S. government agency web-sites very selectively as part of a limited number of thematic projects. To date, the Library has not collected individual official government electronic publications in the sense of archiving them. The Library links to open access web-based government publications.

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

In choosing the best edition of a government publication, the Library follows the criteria for each format selected as published in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Appendix B to Part 202: "Best

Edition" of Published Copyrighted Works for the Collections of the Library of Congress. United States federal government publications themselves are not subject to copyright.

IV. Specific Collecting Policy

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, for reference and archival purposes.

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 Libraries of Agriculture and Medicine. See the Collections Policy Statements on Agriculture and Medicine.

None of the above precludes the acquisition of copies upon appropriate recommendation 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, possessions, trusteeships, and inter-state agencies of the United States.

The Library retains all administrative reports (including decisions and regulations), statistical reports, planning and policy statements, 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, and minor educational materials issued by state institutions, such as athletic schedules, posters, and folders announcing particular courses and extension programs; works in the fields of clinical medicine and technical agriculture more appropriately collected by the National Libraries of Medicine and Agriculture, as defined in those Collections Policy Statements; agency records; and publications of limited usefulness identified in the selection process.

The Library retains individual publications outside the scope of this statement when such publications contain important information of particular interest to Congress and not available elsewhere or for temporary use.

County

The Library of Congress acquires publications from select 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.

County publications acquired include consolidated or collected annual or biennial reports, the latest revision of the county charter, code of ordinances, administrative code, 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 appropriately recommended to meet the needs of Congress or for temporary use.

City

The Library acquires official publications from select 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.

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, code of ordinances, administrative code, 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 also acquires and collects commercial microform or electronic full-text collections of municipal publications, such as the full-text library which accompanies the *Index to Current Urban Documents*.

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 appropriately 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 American Native 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 to be covered are the increasing number of intertribal appeals courts. Materials are collected in English and Native American languages.

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 materials appropriately recommended to meet the needs of Congress or for temporary use. Other tribal publications are collected under the Collections Policy Statement on Ethnic Publications.

V. Acquisition sources: current and future

United States government publications are acquired through various means. The United States Code, Title 44, Section 1718, mandates the deposit 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 agreements. This means of receipt is being diminished as the Government Printing Office reduces the amount of tangible materials it makes available to depositories. 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 agreements with all of the states where 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. These materials are usually acquired with limited expense to the Library. However, some state, city, and tribal legal materials required by the Law Library incur shipping costs.

The Government Printing 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 Government Printing 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. In the future, the Library will have to acquire and archive open source web-based government publications, and in some instances whole web sites. Cooperative agreements with the Government Printing 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, municipal 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 government information will be free of charge online, the Library will incur costs in “collecting,” in the sense of archiving, to ensure Congress and the nation have future access to documents.

VI. Collecting levels

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.

Collecting Levels:

Class/Subclass	Description	Collecting Level
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 those jurisdictions selected
K	Constitutional, legislative, and judicial publications, and administrative regulations and decisions fall in parts of class 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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