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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

A major research strength of the Library's foreign government collections is 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 government legal documents 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 are not available in the countries themselves because of wars and civil unrest. Near Eastern government documents, such as regulations, censuses, reports, and statistics, published by the colonial powers and subsequently by the independent Near Eastern states are noteworthy. Similarly singled out is an impressive collection of African government documents, also including government publications

issued by colonial governments and subsequently by the post-independence African states. This is simply a sampling of the important foreign government collections at the Library; for more information, consult the collections overviews under "Area Studies" and Law.

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, such as the traditional *PAIS*, *Constitutions of the World*, and the *Statesman's Yearbook*, as well as specialized databases and files, such as *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* (UK), *Russian Governmental Publications*, *Ukrainian Publications*, and *RDB: Rechtsdatenbank* (Austria) to name a few. The online *Global Legal Information Network (GLIN)*, of which the Law Library is a contributing member, provides searchable access to the laws, judicial decisions and legislative records from member countries. *Country Studies*, prepared by the Library's Federal Research Division, are available on the Library's world wide web site and offer history and background on a number of countries.

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.

Best edition: 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 in Title 37 of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 202, Appendix B. The Law Library is required to collect all legal information in the format declared official by the issuing body of the material. In the vast majority of countries in the world, the print version is still considered the official version. To date, only nine countries have declared the electronic version of their official gazette to be the official version.

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 filming 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 transferred to the National Agricultural Library. Serials relating to clinical medicine, which are excluded by the collection policy statement on medicine, are transferred to the National Library of Medicine or used for exchange; monographs are transferred to the National Library of Medicine.

Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs precludes selection of such government publications on a case-by-case basis when properly recommended in response to the needs of Congress and the scholarly community. Specific collecting policies for the various levels of government are outlined below.

IV. Specific Collecting Policy

National Level

For purposes of maintaining a research level collection, the Library of Congress gives high priority to the acquisition of 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, 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 and other substantial legal, regulatory, and judicial publications, which are 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 and research value and needs of the Congress. The Law Library provides 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 developing countries of the world, a more liberal approach to the acquisition of government publications below the national level is followed, as described in the Collections Policy Statement for Developing Countries. 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 appropriately 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 materials required by the Law Library, city planning, statistics, and other subjects of interest to the Library. The Law Library provides acquisitions personnel with a list of cities other than capital cities from which material is important for the legal mission of the 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.

In recognition of the extreme difficulties which the Library experiences in obtaining publications from developing countries of the world, a more liberal approach to the acquisition of city materials is followed, as described in the Collections Policy Statement for Developing Countries. It is understood that a high degree of judgment will be exercised in making selections for the permanent collections from among the materials acquired.

V. 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 receives print copies for temporary public service, and those print copies are replaced by a final cumulation for the permanent collections (the case 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 and as more foreign governments produce their official laws in electronic format only, the Library will need to harvest and archive these publications.

Because of the proliferation of electronic government publications, the Library will need to obtain and archive publications from many levels of foreign government. This is especially true in the case of official gazettes. At present, acquisitions units create records for many foreign government websites in a Library tracking system, so that the Library has current access only to a large number of foreign government publications.

The Library of Congress will 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 is also in the process of exploring how exchange arrangements might be broadened to include electronic content for archiving.

VI. Collecting Levels

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

Level of government	Definition	Collecting level	RLG Conspectus
National governments		Research level	4

States and provinces	Those with substantial autonomy that publish information not available at the national level	Selectively overall, but at research level for those from which collected	4
States and provinces - Canada and Mexico	North American neighbors Collect from all Canadian provinces and Mexican states	Research level	4
Cities	Capital cities	Research level	4
Other than capital cities	Those important nationally, regionally, or internationally and that publish information not elsewhere available	Research or instructional level as required by needs of Congress and other Library constituencies	4 or 3

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