

[← Collections Policy Statement Index](#)

Telephone and City Directories

Contents

- I. Scope
- II. Research strengths
- III. Collecting Policy
- IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future
- V. Collecting levels

I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement deals with telephone and city directories, which are valuable tools for research in many subject areas - local history, genealogy, social and economic history, technology, etc. The materials covered by this statement include both current (current year or most recent) and non-current (prior to current year) telephone directories and city directories (also including crisscross and street directories). The Library of Congress acquires telephone and city directories from both the United States and foreign countries in a variety of formats: paper, microfiche, microfilm, and electronic. Telephone and City Directories are not cataloged and are not in the classified collections.

Telephone directories are most often published by telephone companies and consist of white pages containing residential and business listings and yellow pages, a subject oriented listing of businesses. City directories often provide additional information about individuals such as place of employment and name of spouse. The entries are arranged alphabetically by last name and also by address and telephone number. City directories are compiled through door-to-door surveys and are published at irregular intervals. City directories are no longer published for many major U.S. cities including Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Reverse telephone directories (often called street address or criss-cross directories) are usually published annually for major metropolitan areas. Listings are based on telephone directories and are arranged both by address and telephone number. There is no listing by name.

For the Library's policy on collecting specialized directories, please consult specific collection development policy statements such as the Economics and Business Collections Policy Statement for business directories.

II. Research Strengths

The Library of Congress has one of the world's finest collections of telephone and city directories from the United States and other countries.

III. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress acquires telephone and city directories from both the United States and foreign countries. Where appropriate, the Library acquires directories through copyright deposit (see “‘Best Edition’ of Published Copyrighted Works for the Collections of the Library of Congress”). When dual formats are published for directories, the Library acquires both the print and the electronic versions.

IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future

Directories deposited with the U.S. Copyright Office continue to be the principle source for U.S. acquisitions in all formats. In addition, the Library receives *City Directories of the United States* on microfilm from a commercial publisher. By agreement, the Library sends to the microform publisher directories in hard copy. These directories are filmed and both the microfilm and original directories are returned to the Library. Foreign directories are purchased.

An alternative to searching current telephone directories is provided by numerous online databases searchable over the internet such as *Anywho.com* or *Switchboard.com* for the U.S. A site called *Infobel.com* provides links to many online foreign directories. If telephone directory white pages are only published online, the Library will need to capture these sites.

V. Collecting Levels

(Current directories are defined as the current year or the most recently published. Not all directories are published annually. Non-current are directories published prior to the current year or the most recently published.)

A. Telephone Directories: United States

1. Current: The Library acquires current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 5. Current telephone directories are part of the Main Reading Room reference collection. Searchable U.S. directories are also available over the Internet.

2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Collecting Level 5.

B. Telephone Directories: Foreign Countries

1. Current: The Library acquires foreign telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 4. The Library attempts to acquire current telephone directories from major population, economic, and political centers. Many are part of the Main Reading Room reference collection; others are in the appropriate area studies reading rooms. Searchable telephone directories for many foreign countries are also available online over the Internet through *Infobel.com*, among other services.

2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 4. The holdings vary considerably from country to country depending on publishing and availability of the directories.

C. City Directories: United States

1. Current: The Library collects city directories (including criss-cross or street address directories) at Level 5. They are part of the Main Reading Room reference collection.

2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current city directories (including criss-cross or street address directories) at Level 5.

D. City Directories: Foreign Countries

1. Current: The Library collects foreign city directories at Level 4.

2. Non-Current: On a general world-wide basis, the Library collects foreign city directories at Level 4. The holdings vary considerably country by country; holdings are strongest for localities in Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and western Europe where there is a tradition of publishing such directories.

Revised by the Humanities and Social Sciences Division, November 2008.