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Societies and Associations

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I. Scope

The Library of Congress acquires reports, monographs, and serials of U.S., foreign, and international societies and associations whose activities are at the national level and are of general interest and importance. These include political, cultural, philanthropic, professional, scientific, business, labor, religious, ethnic, fraternal and secret societies, and associations. The Library retains most university, college, and local high school alumni directories. Elements of this policy statement had their roots in a desire to acquire not only the official utterances of the major political parties of the U.S., but also to collect the publications of nascent and dissident political movements within the country.

Publications of these societies and associations may fall into many different LC classes and subject areas.

II. Research Strengths

The Library's focus under this Collections Policy Statement is to acquire publications produced by major societies or associations, particularly if they are national in scope. Such publications are usually of high quality, more often than not constitute official communications, and in many instances are the major vehicle for dissemination of this type of information. This is especially true in the areas of science, technology, and business, all major collecting strengths at the Library of Congress. The Library also has a long tradition of collecting the publications of major and minor societies and associations such as the John Birch Society, and the Trilateral Commission, as well as dissident groups such as the Symbionese Liberation Army, and the Weather Underground. The Law Library collects all material published by the American Bar Association in silver microfiche and paper.

When selecting serials and monographs for the collections, the presence of information indicating that the work in hand is for a major society or association publication, gives credence toward a decision to acquire.

The Manuscripts Collections Policy Statement has a statement about what records are collected for organizations.

III. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress acquires reports, monographs, and serials of U.S., foreign, and international societies and associations whose activities are at the national level and are of general interest and importance.

The Library does not acquire the publications of societies and associations at the state, regional, or local levels, except for: substantial directories, periodicals, biographies and local histories, and the publications of those lacking a national organization, which are acquired at the regional, state, or other next highest level.

The Library collects on a limited basis newsletters of societies and associations, especially if the information contained within them is of no long term research value, and they are largely personality driven.

Publications of foreign societies and associations below the national level are acquired only if they contain substantial information of research value and are of a professional nature, and emanate from official bodies dealing with economics, politics, education, the sciences, and law.

The current publications of propagandist, religious, benevolent, philanthropic, fraternal and veterans' societies and associations of national scope are acquired on a selective basis. The publications of trade associations, publishers and auction catalogs are acquired on a selective basis.

See also the Collections Policy Statement on Economics and Business for information on commercial firms. See the Collections Policy Statement on Education for additional information about alumni directories.

IV. Acquisition Sources: Current and Future

In acquiring library materials as described above, the collections of other U.S. institutions will be taken into consideration. If other institutions or associations are known to collect such material at a comprehensive level, the Library will collect materials on a selective basis. Materials are acquired through Copyright and purchase.

V. Collecting Levels

Publications of United States and international societies and associations are acquired at Level 5. Foreign societies and associations are acquired at Level 4.

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