

# LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

## General Works

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### I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement covers materials in Class A, with the exception of "periodicals of general content" (those classed in AP) which are covered in a separate Collections Policy Statement. General Works includes materials in the following subclasses of A:

AC	Collections, Series, Collected Works
AE	Encyclopedias
AG	Dictionaries and other general reference works
AI	Indexes
AM	Museums. Collectors and collecting
AS	Academies and learned societies
AY	Yearbooks, Almanacs, Directories
AZ	History of scholarship and learning

Only books, periodicals, and materials in other formats of a multi-disciplinary nature are in class A. Items relating to a specific discipline are classed with other material in that subject. Thus a dictionary of computer terms is classed with other computer books in class Q; an encyclopedia of American history in class E.

### 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 strength of the Library's collections lies in its breadth and depth. Although many libraries acquire current publications in this class as reference works, especially encyclopedias, almanacs, yearbooks, and dictionaries, few, if any libraries, have such broad universal coverage. The Library retains most superseded reference works, creating a unique historical collection. What sets the Library apart in the area of reference works is the sheer size of the superseded reference collection, the quality of the material, and the length of time— over 200 years - that the Library has been collecting this material. As such, this material forms a running history of reference sources throughout the decades. Examples include: Encyclopedias and dictionaries in over 75 languages and dating back to 1491; *Encyclopaedia Britannica* sets back to 1778; *Encyclopedia Americana* published in one volume back to 1902; almanacs back to 1647 or earlier; an almanac in Latin published in 1488; and Boston ephemeris attributed to Cotton Mather from 1683. With an increasing number of titles shifting to online-only versions, the goal of creating a growing historical collection of superseded reference works may become more difficult.

Electronic versions of collections, encyclopedias, dictionaries, indexes, yearbooks and other general works provide a service to researchers and enhance and complement the print collections. Some works are accessed through subscription services (e.g., Oxford Reference Online Premium) while others are owned by the Library (e.g. Gale Virtual Reference Library). The Electronic Resources Online Catalog guides the researcher to the full text of individual works and groups of works within the electronic resources collection.

### **IV. Collecting Policy**

The Library acquires general works published in the United States at Level 5. Such works published outside the U.S. are acquired at Level 4. An exception is made for new editions of major universal encyclopedias, which the Library attempts to acquire at Level 5. Universal encyclopedias, published outside the U.S., typically appear once every few decades. They are important to Library because they provide basic knowledge in another language with detailed entries on subjects as they relate to the country of publication. They are often tools for presenting a particular worldview by a country or regime. Non-U.S. encyclopedias for juveniles are collected selectively. While general works may be acquired in a variety of formats, following the Copyright Best Editions statement, whenever possible the print edition is preferred due the stability of the informational content

With an increasing number of titles shifting to online-only versions, the goal of maintaining an historic reference collection will become increasingly challenging. National bibliographies are an example of a vulnerable category for which the content is increasingly unavailable in print. Recommending Officers (RO) cannot assume that titles published electronically/online will maintain access to superseded

content found in prior editions. Publishers of reference works who dynamically update the content of their publications represent a benefit to the Library in meeting the informational needs of current users. However, these resources do not support the Library's collecting goal of maintaining a historical collection of reference works. ROs should be attentive to the benefits and limitations of the publishing format and the Library's access entitlements as it relates to their intention for recommending a general work.

In the case of general works, the electronic resources collection is comprised mostly of subscription editions rather than purchased editions. These works are acquired due to the high immediacy of informational needs by Reference Librarians and/or to improve the onsite researcher's experience. The Library may cease its subscription to any of these titles at any time or lose access if the publisher decides to cease supporting the resource. When available, electronic reference editions should be purchased to ensure long-term stable access to the title. For guidance on evaluating the suitability of an electronic resource for purchase, see the [\*Supplementary Guidelines for Electronic Resources\*](#). Special consideration should be given on how the vendor ensures the Library will have perpetual access to a purchase resource, transferring the digital files to the Library's servers is an option.

For electronic materials freely available on the Internet, web archiving is the recommended method of acquisition, with frequency of capture sufficient to capture major content revisions. See the [\*Supplementary Guidelines for Web Archiving\*](#) for guidance on archiving freely available general works on the Internet.

## **V. Best Editions and Preferred Formats**

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, 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 and web archiving, see the following Supplementary Guidelines: <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf> and <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/opencontent.pdf>, and <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/datasets.pdf>.

## **VI. Acquisitions Methods**

Whenever possible the Library attempts to acquire materials through non-purchase means, such as copyright, exchange or gift. The Library of Congress collections are heavily dependent upon materials received through the copyright deposit provisions of U.S. copyright law ([17 USC section 407](#) & [17 USC section 408](#)). For copyright demand, the U.S. regulations allow for the Library to receive analog and some digital materials. When items are offered in both formats the Library's default is normally the Best Edition print version, unless the publisher has arranged a special relief agreement with the Copyright Office. For materials not available to the Library through copyright deposit or other non-purchase means, the Library acquires materials through purchase. Purchase is used predominately for Non-U.S. publications that are not widely available within the United States. The Library uses an array of traditional methods of library acquisition (firm orders, subscriptions, and approval plans) with

vendors located in different areas of the world. In addition, the Library uses its six Overseas Operations Offices to broaden its acquisitions opportunities.

## **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.

For explanation of the Collecting Levels used by the Library, see

<https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/cpc.html>

LC Classification	Subject	U.S. Levels	Non-U.S. Levels	Comments
AC	Collections, series, collected works	5	4	
AG	Dictionaries and other reference works	5	4	
AI	Indexes	5	4	The Library selectively collects indexes to local newspapers and periodicals not held by the Library. These are chosen for their potential genealogical or historical research value.
AM	Museums. Collectors and collecting	5	4	

LC Classification	Subject	U.S. Levels	Non-U.S. Levels	Comments
AS	Academies and Learned Societies	5	4	The Library collects substantial publications, including annual reports and/or membership lists, of all but local organizations in the U.S. Outside the U.S. the Library collects only from national or prominent organizations. Conference proceedings are kept, but the programs of conference and annual meetings and not are not kept.
AY	Yearbooks, Almanacs, Directories	5	4	The Library collects substantial publications of all but local organizations in the U.S. Outside the U.S., the Library collects only from national or prominent organizations.
AZ	History of Scholarship And Learning	5	4	The Library collects substantial publications of all but local organizations in the U.S. Outside the U.S., the Library collects only from national or prominent organizations.
AE	Encyclopedias	5	4	The Library seeks to collect all editions of major Non-U.S. universal encyclopedias; other types are collected selectively. All U.S. published encyclopedias are collected.

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