

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Newspapers - United States

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I. Scope

The Library of Congress maintains one of the largest collections of United States newspapers in the country, spanning the colonial era to the present day. The collection comprises titles representing the diversity of the American people through broad geographic representation, language, and formats. The United States newspaper collection includes titles published in all states and territories from 1704 to present. Holdings include newspapers published in a variety of formats, including, but not limited to, issues printed on rag and pulp paper retained as bound volumes or portfolio collections; microfilm; current issues on newsprint; born-digital newspaper ePrints, news-based websites and digitized content in commercial online databases, from cooperative conversion programs, and from Library-produced content. The Library acquires digitized newspapers, born digital newspapers, and web harvested newspapers using the same collecting guidelines as those of other formats.

For purposes of this statement, a newspaper is identified as a serial publication which is mainly designed to be a primary source of written information on current events that are local, national, or international in scope. Newspapers contain a broad range of news on all subjects and activities; they are not limited to any specific subject matter. They are intended either for the general public or for a particular ethnic, cultural, or national group. (Note that the last paragraph of this section refers to some categories of newspaper content that are covered by other Collections Policy Statements.) Historically, the format is also defined by physical and information presentation characteristics.

Print newspapers usually lack a cover, include a masthead or banner, and are normally larger than 12 x 17 inches (297 mm x 490 mm). Individual issues appear chronologically or numerically, usually at least once a week. These physical and content characteristics define elements which distinguish newspapers from other serial publications that report general news (e.g., periodicals, journals, newsletters, etc.). Born digital newspapers which lack the physical properties of the print newspapers are identified by their breadth of coverage, the geographic boundaries of their primary local audience, and their inclusion of local news. Some born-digital newspapers are supplemented by occasional print issues.

Newspapers published outside the United States are addressed in the [Collections Policy Statement for](#)

[Newspapers – Non-U.S.](#) Newspapers published to serve a particular ethnic or cultural group within the United States are addressed in the [Collections Policy Statement for Ethnic Materials](#). For periodicals in newspaper format that serve a particular industry (e.g., *Advertising Age*, *Hollywood Reporter*), association (e.g., *India-West*), or subject (e.g., *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Coin World*) refer to the appropriate [subject Collections Policy Statement](#).

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

General

The Library's collection of newspapers published in the United States is notable for its historic breadth of coverage, size, and diverse viewpoints. Each state, region, and United States territory is represented, which makes research by broad geographic areas and/or chronological time periods possible. Patrons access the collection onsite in the Newspaper and Current Periodical Reading Room, through the Library's website, or through restricted online systems in specific reading rooms, as appropriate to the format and copyright status; electronic resources are available to authorized users of the Library's network; newspapers on microfilm are available to remote researchers through interlibrary loan.

Notable special collections of United States newspapers include:

1. Collection of original eighteenth century United States newspapers on paper and microfilm
2. Historic Events Newspaper Collection of original United States and foreign newspapers covering notable events in United States and world history from 1801 to the present, including a special collection of September 11, 2001, newspapers
3. German and Japanese Prisoner of War camp newspapers
4. Japanese-American internment camp newspapers

In addition, the Library's collection of digitized content of United States newspapers is anchored by the

Chronicling America collection of the National Digital Newspaper Program (see next subsection). The Library also purchases digital content from commercial vendors providing access to a substantial number of current and historical United States newspapers. The Library has an extensive collection of newspaper histories and indexes that support the physical and digital collections.

National Digital Newspaper Collection: *Chronicling America*

The National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress, is a long-term effort to develop an Internet-based, searchable database of U.S. newspapers with descriptive information and select digitization of historic pages by state institutions to be acquired by the Library as part of the *Chronicling America* digital collection (ISSN 2475-2703). Under the NDNP, this collection has grown to include thousands of titles and millions of newspaper pages, comprising selected digitized content published from the colonial period to 1963. Its content contributes to the diversity and richness of the newspaper collection and follows the overall Library intent to document the cultural output of the United States.

IV. Collecting Policy

General, Including Transition to Digital

The Library is not comprehensive in its collecting of United States newspapers. Instead it seeks representative coverage of newspaper publishing in each state and territory to reflect the news and reading habits of the public over time and to support the information needs of Congress and researchers. The Library relies on state libraries and other local and regional repositories to acquire and preserve local newspapers and make them available for research. In the past, the United States Newspaper Program (1982-2011), a coordinated effort funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and coordinated by the Library, was a national effort to identify, catalog, and selectively preserve on microfilm newspapers published in the United States and its territories. The bibliographic and holdings data from the Program are freely available through the Library's website as the [Directory of US Newspapers in American Libraries collection](#) and support the [Chronicling America collection](#), among others.

With some exceptions as noted in the specific collecting guidelines, the Library acquires newspapers for the permanent collections in microfilm or digital formats. For many decades, microfilm was the Library's preferred long-term preservation and access medium for newspapers that had been reformatted from their original paper format. However, increasingly fewer U.S. newspapers are routinely made available in that format.

In 2018, the Copyright Office implemented a change to deposit requirements for the group registration of newspapers. Whereas previously microfilm was required, the new requirement was that digital files – or ePrints – be deposited. This deposit option was subsequently made available upon formal request for newspapers demanded under mandatory deposit provisions of the law.

The Library's *Digital Collections Strategy* for fiscal years 2022–2026 includes a goal of transitioning to “e-preferred” collecting. This means that the Library will in most cases prefer to acquire a digital version of a work when the content is available in both digital and analog (physical) formats. This applies to

newspapers.

It is likely that a full transition to e-preferred collecting will take several years. In the meantime, some newspapers will continue to be acquired in microfilm.

Reformatted newspapers that are acquired, whether microfilm or digital, should conform to guidance and standards that the Library follows.

1. For microfilm, the preference is silver-gelatin-on-polyester-base 35mm roll microfilm. When available, microfilm that has been processed with a polysulfiding treatment, such as IPI Silverlock (tm) or its equivalent, is preferred.
2. For digital formats, guidance can be found in the Library's [Recommended Formats Statement](#) and from the [Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative](#).

Specific

The Library acquires and permanently retains current United States newspapers that are:

1. national in scope and coverage
2. reflective of regional views and coverage. The Library will acquire more than one paper published in the same city if each otherwise meets criteria for retention as described in this statement.
3. in the top 100 papers, by circulation
4. from a state or United States territorial capital
5. of recognized journalistic quality, including those known for exceptional coverage of specific subjects
6. of recognized importance for their political, ethnic, or cultural perspectives

For retrospective acquisitions, the Library will also consider the following criteria:

1. research value
2. importance of political parties or social conditions represented by the newspaper
3. cost of acquisition and preservation

In the case of pre-1827 newspapers, the Library aspires to collect comprehensively to best document the development of the United States and the emergence of the American press.

A number of factors, including but not limited to publication year, Copyright law, and born digital status, impact the format in which the Library collects newspapers.

1. For pre-1827 newspapers, the preferred archival format is original ink-print in order to document the events of colonial and early republic eras and the variability of the physical newspaper format during this time.
2. Newspapers published prior to 1870 on "rag" paper are retained in original ink-print format if they have high artifactual value.
3. As noted above, the Copyright Office requires newspaper publishers to submit ePrints, PDF files of newspaper issues, as copies of record supporting group registration, rather than microfilm. Where selected by the Library, digital copies are transferred to the Library's permanent collections. See: Copyright Circular 62A, [Group Registration of Newspapers](#).

4. The Library also acquires reformatted newspaper content as a result of cooperative reformatting projects, such as via repository accessioning following National Digital Newspaper Program guidelines, via online databases, or through purchase or donation.
5. The Library also acquires born digital or web-based newspapers.

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, open digital content, web archiving, and data sets, see the following Supplementary Guidelines: <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/opencontent.pdf>, <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.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, 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 or is applying through Copyright Group Registration of Newspapers deposit, as described below. For materials not available to the Library through copyright deposit, or other non-purchase means, the Library acquires materials through purchase.

Copyright deposit, purchase, and gifts are the primary means by which the Library builds its collection of United States newspapers.

When possible, the Library acquires selected newspapers published or distributed in the United States via copyright, either through group registration (as specified in Copyright Circular 62A, [Group Registration of Newspapers](#)) or mandatory deposit (as specified in Copyright Circular 7D, [Mandatory Deposit of Copies or Phonorecords for the Library of Congress](#)). Note that recent changes to Group Registration affect the newspaper formats the Library collects; refer to the Collecting Policy section for guidance on formats.

Some newspaper content is only available by purchase or gift, such as retrospective material in ink-print, microfilm, or digital formats as available and cost-effective. Digital newspapers are acquired via purchase of perpetual access to online databases and/or file transfer, repository accessioning following National Digital Newspaper Program guidelines, and gift.

The Library may also acquire digitized content through digital reformatting of ink-print newspapers for preservation or by digitizing master negative microfilm owned without restrictions by the Library. Born digital and web-based newspapers are acquired via electronic deposit, purchase, gift, or web harvesting as archiving technology and access policies allow. (Regarding web harvesting: to date, Library of Congress web harvesting projects have been predominantly thematic in approach including archiving newspaper-based websites addressing such themes on a representative basis.) In addition, the Library selectively archives born-digital news websites with no physical distribution or where physical publishing frequency has been reduced in favor of more frequent online dissemination.

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>. It should be noted that these collecting levels are aspirational in nature. That is, they are goals for guiding the Library's collecting policies. Changing resources in, for example, budgets or human capital, may require adjustments in collection building, especially at the comprehensive level (level 5).

Newspapers	Collecting Guidelines	Collecting Levels
Current newspapers	Selectively	4
Post-1826 newspapers	Selectively; originals occasionally selected for artifactual value, particularly for the Civil War era	4
Pre-1827 newspapers	Comprehensively with ink-print the preferred format	5
Historic events newspapers	Selectively with ink-print the preferred format, representing artifactual value (to provide support for interpretive programs)	4
Digital historic, public domain newspapers	Selectively following NDNP and Library of Congress digital scanning guidelines	4
Digital only newspapers	Selectively	4

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