

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Dissertations and Theses

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I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement covers theses and dissertations produced by students at accredited educational institutions in the United States and non-U.S. countries. For the purpose of this document, a theses or dissertation is defined as a long essay on a particular subject written by a single author and submitted to satisfy an institution's degree requirements.

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 Library of Congress is the only library which strives to hold copies of all U.S. doctoral dissertations. This collection of over 2.25 million titles on microfilm or microfiche are in a format long accepted as

suitable for long-term preservation. In addition to its extensive microform holdings, the Library provides electronic access via the subscription database *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*. This database indexes U.S. doctoral dissertations, non-U.S. dissertations, and selected theses below the doctoral level from 1861 to the present. The database supports indexing for all the dissertations in its collection; however, full-text is only available for dissertations added since the 1990s, with additional retrospective dissertations added on an ongoing basis.

IV. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress collects and maintains an extensive collection of doctoral dissertations accepted by universities in the United States.

Current non-U.S. dissertations are generally not acquired except on a highly selective basis, with special consideration given to the fields of library science, music, and the history, government, and literature of the United States.

Dissertations issued as commercial publications are considered for acquisition on their own merits, based on their research value.

Master's and bachelor's theses accepted by universities in the United States are not acquired except in those instances in which a particular thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge, or uniquely serves to interpret Library collections.

The document types below are typically not collected by the Library:

Dissertations and theses in the fields of clinical medicine and technical agriculture

Non-U.S. master's and bachelor's theses

Domestic and non-U.S. theses completed as part of compulsory or secondary education

Dissertation or thesis works for which the output is not a single published work, such as an MFA creative expression or a hybrid dissertation comprised of a collection of previously published works

Essays, research papers, independent study projects, and other written documents submitted as part of classroom or coursework requirements, at any level.

Microforms are preferred to other forms of publication. When microform is not available, other formats, including print and electronic files, may be accepted. In addition to *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*, the Library provides access to additional dissertations through other subscription and open access databases.

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. Acquisition Sources

Whenever possible the Library attempts to acquire materials through non-purchase means, such as copyright, exchange, gift, or the Cataloging in Publication program. 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 utilizes 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 outside the United States.

Current: The Library holds an extensive collection of U.S. doctoral dissertations in microform dating back to the mid-1930s. Prior to that time, the dissertations were collected in bound volumes. The Library acquires microform dissertations through copyright deposit from ProQuest, as the majority of U.S. dissertations have been deposited with the company since 1933. Beginning in 1999, the Library has provided on-campus access to the subscription database *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*.

Future: The acquisition of U.S. doctoral dissertations is regularly reviewed to assure that the Library's collection policy is up-to-date regarding evolving technologies and the factors necessary to assure the permanence and growth of this unique collection. The Library's subscription to the *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global* database will continue to provide enhanced search capabilities and, as available, full-text for most dissertations accepted since 1997. It should be noted that increasingly, U.S. universities are not requiring their students to deposit their dissertations with *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*. Instead a copy is deposited in the school's institutional repository and made freely available on the internet after a two to five year embargo. In order to maintain an extensive collection, the Library will seek to provide access to open source dissertations and acquire dissertations through other sources.

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>.

The doctoral dissertations collection spans all classes, excluding the fields of clinical medicine and technical agriculture. For all others, the Library aspires to collect domestic dissertations at level 5. Non-U.S. doctoral dissertations are generally out of scope except on a highly selective basis, with special consideration given to the fields of library science, music, and the history, government, and literature of the United States. The Library collects domestic master's and bachelor's theses very selectively, limiting collection to theses that make an original contribution to knowledge or uniquely serve to interpret Library of Congress collections – Level 1.

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