
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES

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Electronic Resources

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Preface: Given the rapid evolution of electronic resources, the Collections Policy Committee should review the following guidelines at least biennially to ensure that the Library's current and future research needs are met. This document is general by design so that it does not restrict the collecting of needed materials and to allow the Library to make these resources available as technology changes. It also does not address questions of levels of cataloging (LCR 411) or cataloging priority (LCR 411-2).

I. Introduction

Electronic resources form one of many formats that the Library collects to support its universal collections. The Recommending Officer responsible for the appropriate subject, language, geographic area, or format is responsible for recommending electronic resources. The increased production of and reliance on electronic resources demands sustained effort to identify and acquire them. It is the Library's policy with electronic resources, as with all others, to obtain them through copyright deposit unless they are not subject to deposit under sections 407 or 408 of the Copyright Law.

The Library is committed to preserving its electronic resources just as it is to ensuring permanent access to its collections in other formats. When the Library collects both electronic and analog versions of a resource, both versions are retained as permanent holdings of the Library. For both direct and remote access resources, the Library will endeavor to archive these resources following standard practices, guidelines and legal requirements. Furthermore, the Library will negotiate permission to archive electronic resources either upon collecting or for future archiving should the content provider no longer be able to provide access to the resource. For remote access resources, when permission to archive them is unattainable, the Library will only provide a link to the resource.

Examples of electronic resources include, but are not limited to: web sites, online databases, e-journals, e-books, electronic integrating resources, and physical carriers in all formats, whether free or fee-based, required to support research in the subject covered, and may be audio, visual, and/or text files.

II. Definitions

An "electronic resource" is defined as any work encoded and made available for access through the use of a computer. It includes electronic data available by (1) remote access and (2) direct access (fixed media). In other words: Remote access (electronic resources) refers to the use of electronic resources via computer networks. (AACR2, 2002 edition; glossary). Direct Access (electronic resources) refers to the use of electronic resources via carriers (e.g., discs/disks, cassettes, cartridges) designed to be inserted into a computerized device or its auxiliary equipment.

"Acquire" refers to any electronic resource, remote or direct access, which (1), the Library provides access to through official contractual, licensed, or other agreements (any of these electronic resources may or may not be owned by or housed at the Library) or (2), the Library receives through its acquisitions processes (e.g., purchase, gift, exchange, copyright deposit, ISSN requests, and transfer).

"Collect" refers to electronic resources owned by the Library and selected for the permanent collections. It may also include resources stored elsewhere for which the Library has permanent ownership rights.

"Link" refers to pointers from the Library's web resources or bibliographic records to remote access data.

"Archive" refers to that process of maintenance in a secure and permanent digital repository managed by the Library or for the benefit of the Library.

III. General Guidelines

The criteria used to evaluate the research value of electronic resources do not greatly differ from those used for other formats. However, particular emphasis should be placed on materials of contemporary interest which provide unique testimony of the social, cultural, and political issues under-represented in mainstream publishing.

The Library acquires electronic resources which rank high on the following list of criteria:

- usefulness in serving the current or future informational needs of Congress and researchers
- reputation of the information provider
- amount of unique information provided
- scholarly content
- content is available only in digital form
- at risk (possible accidental or deliberate removal of resource)
- fugitive resource (e.g., grey or underground literature)

IV. Specific Guidelines

Consider the following when making the decision to recommend or select electronic resources.

Content. The resource should meet its stated goals and present a platform of robust coverage of apparent research value.

Added Value. The ability to make the resource available campus wide and accessible for the Library's teleworking staff is a high priority.

Accessibility. Consider the following:

- server reliability
- if registration is required, it should be judged appropriate and be accompanied by a privacy notice
- provision of links to sources for the plug-in software should be provided, if needed

Design, User Interface and Navigability. Consider the following:

- organization and ease of navigation
- presence of search and help features, and site maps
- fully functioning design elements
- interactive features that facilitate use

Standards. Fee-based resources should conform to prevailing technical standards and computing equipment.

Permanent Retention. Electronic resources are part of the Library of Congress collections and subject to the same criteria for retention decisions as other media, based on the mission of the Library to satisfy the research needs of Congress and the research community. The commitment to provide permanent access to electronic resources of long term research value is made, when possible, at the time resources are acquired or created by the Library. This commitment extends to the retention of associated bibliographic, administrative and preservation metadata. Assured access will be achieved by the development of the Library's digital repository and through contractual arrangements with other trusted digital repositories.

Of high priority for retention:

- Electronic resources created by the Library, for which no other versions exist, such as American Memory, web archives, Portals to the World, etc.
- Electronic resources for which no other versions exist

- Electronic versions of print resources no longer collected by the Library
- Electronic equivalents with added value
- Material digitized by the Library
- Unique electronic resources acquired by the Library
- Computer programs. The Library will select a representative sample of software for its permanent collection to document the history and development of computing technology. In addition, the Library will obtain copies and permissions to archive software needed to utilize remote and direct resources.

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