
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Ethnic Materials – United States

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I. Scope

The Library recognizes that society in the United States is ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse and ever-evolving; as are the disciplines devoted to ethnic studies. Therefore, the Library's collection policies seek to be correspondingly inclusive in scope. For the purpose of this statement, ethnic and racial groups are considered to be groups of persons sharing a common ancestry, national origin, language, or culture. Examples of the groups covered by this document:

- 1. Ethnic and racial groups maintaining a distinct identity
- 2. Indigenous groups
- 3. Cultural heritage groups
- 4. Refugees, immigrants, migrants, and diasporic groups
- 5. Multiethnic groups and biracial/multiracial individuals

This policy is intended to include library materials in any language or format collected by the Library, including electronic. The guidance provided in the various format Collections Policy Statements and Supplementary Guidelines should be followed.

While this Collections Policy Statement is limited to materials produced in the United States, it is important to note that the Library selectively collects similar materials from other countries. For policy guidance on acquiring foreign ethnic materials, consult the following related Collections Policy Statements: [Local History](#), [Genealogy](#), [Folklore and Folklife](#), [Religion](#), [Countries and Regions with](#)

[Acquisitions Challenges](#); and the [Supplementary Guidelines for Independently Published and Self-Published Textual Materials](#).

II. Research strengths

The Library of Congress seeks to expand and strengthen its exceptional collections of ethnic materials, especially seeking out materials produced by ethnic groups themselves. These highly varied materials include, but are not limited to, letters, diaries, books, newspapers, community publications, self-published materials, prints, photographs, audiovisual materials, ephemera, and general, historical, and theoretical works by and about ethnic groups, as well as said works in the field of ethnic studies and its subfields. A great variety of languages, geographical areas, and categories of publications are represented in the collections. Recent decades have seen dramatic growth in ethnic publications, but the Library's retrospective collections are also extensive and rich, ranging from newsletters and family or local histories to scholarly conference proceedings and dissertations, as well as born digital materials.

Examples from the Library's collections include: strong holdings of Middle Eastern American communities' serials, representing varied languages and religions; the Asian American Pacific Islander collection of materials relating to authors, artists, social workers, and activists; the audio archive [Spotlight on U.S. Hispanic Writers](#), which features emerging and established American poets and prose writers of Hispanic descent; over 10,000 original wax-cylinder field recordings of Native American songs and stories recorded between 1890 and 1910; and some 80,000 items documenting the [NAACP's legal program](#) through the mid-1960s and its coordinated response against legal segregation and racial discrimination pursued on the local level as well as in state, federal and supreme courts. The [African American Perspectives: Pamphlets from the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection, 1818-1907](#), includes more than 800 unique and rare titles documenting political activism on all levels; annual reports of local and state charitable, educational, and political organizations; and college catalogs and graduation orations, etc. facilitating and supporting the research of current scholars.

III. Collecting policy

The overall context for this policy is the Library's position as the *de facto* national library of the United States. A major goal of the Library's overall collecting program is to acquire materials that in the aggregate provide a record of the life and achievement of the people of the United States. In line with that goal, the Library will acquire materials created by, for, and about ethnic groups living in the United States and its territories. The Library seeks to obtain for its permanent collections materials that document the history, experiences, and contributions of ethnic groups in the United States and its territories, from the earliest time to the present. Emphasis will be placed on materials of national, regional, or state-wide interest. Materials that are primarily local in scope are generally collected in a targeted manner, particularly when state and local institutions and ethnic organizations are not collecting such materials. Examples of local materials to be generally excluded are: newsletters and other publications of fraternal groups, social clubs, churches, temples, etc.; local history materials excluded by the Collections Policy Statement for [Local History](#); and other serials and monographs addressed to a local audience.

IV. Acquisition sources

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. Materials not available to the Library through copyright deposit, or other non-purchase means, are acquired through purchase.

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>.

VI. Collecting levels

A. Materials concerning ethnic groups in the United States: Collecting level 5.

This includes:

1. Directories, bibliographies, statistics, and genealogies.
2. Works on ethnicity in general, immigration in all its aspects, citizenship, and related topics.
3. Works by ethnic organizations of national scope; ethnic newspapers, magazines, proceedings, reports and yearbooks of national circulation.
4. Works on the history, political, economic and social status, traditional culture, influence on and contribution to U.S. society of the various ethnic groups.

- B. Materials of regional or state scope, or specialized materials of a local scope, concerning ethnic groups in the United States: Collecting level 4 (research level).

The following groups of materials will be collected in a targeted manner:

1. Publications relating to local groups, organizations, or committees. Emphasis is placed on local materials that have regional, national, or international significance, e.g., from localities having a heavy concentration of a given ethnic group; or on materials that have state significance that are not being collected by local and state institutions.

The following groups of materials will be collected selectively:

1. Non-book materials illustrative of the history, experience, and contributions of ethnic groups. The guidance provided in the various format Collections Policy Statements and Supplementary Guidelines should be followed.

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