

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

International Organizations

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I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement pertains to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which are international, regional, or multinational in scope. For purposes of this statement, intergovernmental organizations are those organizations to which governments belong and to which they send official representatives. Governments usually join an intergovernmental organization by agreement or treaty.

For related collections policies, consult the Collections Policy Statements on [Law](#) and on [Government Publications--Non-U.S.](#) The collecting policies for international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are private, non-profit bodies, are contained in the Collections Policy Statement on [Societies and Associations](#).

Documents and publications of intergovernmental organizations are collected in all formats, and may cover all subjects. Therefore, they may be found throughout the Library's general and special collections.

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 scope, size, and historical depth of the collections of intergovernmental organizations at the Library of Congress constitute major research strengths. Coupled with the strong collections of United States and non-U.S. government documents and the wealth of secondary research materials, the publications of international organizations offer a strong basis for the study of international relations, international law, and the history and development of the organizations themselves. As international organizations may publish on any topic, the collections facilitate many additional types of comparative or multinational studies, including studies in economics, health, human rights, science, technology, and the environment. Most Library divisions have some collections published by an intergovernmental organization. The Law Library holds strong collections of materials produced by international organizations, such as treaties and regulations adopted by treaty, and the publications of intergovernmental judicial bodies, such as the International Court of Justice, and the Court of Justice of the European Union. Geography and Map Division has substantial numbers of maps and atlases from bodies such as the United Nations. The Serial and Government Publications Division holds a comprehensive set of United Nations working documents, 1945 to date, in multiple formats. The Technical Reports Section in the Science, Technology and Business Division has standards and reports published by intergovernmental organizations.

Supplementing the print collections are free and subscribed electronic databases made available both by the organizations themselves and by commercial vendors. For example, the United Nations makes working documents and treaties freely available online through its Official Document System (ODS) and the United Nations Treaty Database, respectively. The ODS extends back to 1993 comprehensively and the UN is adding retrospective years continually. The UN iLibrary makes hundreds of sales publications available as an annual subscription, although national libraries, including the Library of Congress, receive it free. The Readex Corporation offers a subscription to AccessUN, which indexes UN documents back to 1945, and Hein Online includes the United Nations Law Library. The OECD iLibrary, from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, has made its sales publications widely available online through subscription. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) makes hundreds of statistics available free online through its FAOStat. Other organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and the Organization of American States offer freely available indexes and full text documents on their Internet pages. The European Union is very generous in its offering of free databases and full text in resources such as EUR-Lex and the European Union Open Data Portal. These databases serve as examples of the many electronic resources complementing the tangible collections.

IV. Collecting Policy

A. General Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress attempts to acquire publications of intergovernmental agencies at the research level or above if the United States is a member state. If the United States is not a member, the Library collects at the instructional level or higher, depending on the importance to Congress and the scholarly community. For example, the United States is not a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), but the importance of world oil supplies suggests that the Library make an effort to collect substantial OPEC publications.

Types of materials acquired to document the history and the work of the organization itself include charters and founding documents, rules of procedure, annual reports of the organization and its important sub-bodies, summaries or complete records of meetings, resolutions and decisions, official records, bibliographies, and histories. In addition substantive publications are acquired that provide international legal, regulatory, standard-setting, statistical, economic, and scientific information. If the organization distributes its working documentation, the Library attempts to collect this documentation if it is heavily cited in scholarly or legal literature, as is that of the United Nations. In such cases, the Library may keep the documentation in a collected alpha-numerical set, as recommended by the organization, with collection level cataloging. This is the case with the collection of United Nations working documents. The Library also has historical working document sets from such agencies as the League of Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the Organization of American States; and the World Health Organization.

The Library does not collect publications covering clinical medicine or technical agriculture in accordance with the Collections Policy Statements on [Medicine](#) and [Agriculture](#). In general, the Library does not collect documentation intended solely for internal administrative use or ephemeral literature, such as informational brochures, and press releases. Training materials produced by the organizations are collected sparingly. This does not preclude collection of such publications when properly recommended to meet the needs of Congress or the Library's other user communities, or for temporary use. If the Library acquires materials solely for temporary use and does not intend to add them to the permanent collections, strong consideration will be given to acquiring available online editions, particularly if they are open access. Because an intergovernmental organization may publish on any topic, subject Collections Policy Statements should also be consulted in some instances. Legal materials from intergovernmental organizations should be collected in the formats recommended by the Law Library.

This Collections Policy Statement pertains primarily to currently received materials, but also can include retrospective sets, which become available to the Library in any format.

Specific collecting policies are identified below for a few representative intergovernmental organizations of wide membership, as well as for two regional organizations of special importance to the United States.

B. Specific Collecting Policy

United Nations (UN)

The Library of Congress attempts to acquire United Nations materials at a comprehensive level. The Library acquires for its permanent collections substantive publications, monographic or serial, issued in the English language, issued in multi-lingual form, or issued only in a language other than English.

United Nations *Official Records* of various bodies, such as those of the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, and Disarmament Commission, are retained in print format, insofar as they are issued in that format, and are added to the permanent collections. UN working documents are acquired in print or online form for temporary service use, but are added to the permanent collections in microform.

Publications of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean are acquired in Spanish, and also in English as available. Publications of the Economic Commission for Africa are acquired in French or English as available.

United Nations Specialized Agencies and Related Bodies

The following United Nations specialized agencies are related to the U.N. by special agreement, but have their own membership, governing bodies, and publications and documents: International Labour Organization; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; World Health Organization; World Bank Group; International Monetary Fund; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Telecommunication Union; Universal Postal Union; World Meteorological Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; and World Tourism Organization.

In general, the Library of Congress collects the publications of these specialized agencies at the research level in the most appropriate formats. Publications dealing with technical agricultural and clinical medicine are not collected, as provided in the Collections Policy Statements on [Agriculture](#) and [Medicine](#). Loose-leaf publications from the organizations are collected only if a reading room agrees to take custodial responsibility for them and keep them up to date. However, successive complete revisions of important manuals and handbooks are kept. Materials acquired include those issued in English, issued in multi-lingual form, or issued only in a language other than English. As new UN specialized agencies and related bodies are created, they will be automatically collected at the same level under these policies.

European Union (EU)

The Library attempts to collect comprehensively from the European Union in all appropriate formats, including materials issued by the European Parliament, Council of the European Union, Commission of the Union, the Court of Justice, and the many sub-organs, institutions, and decentralized agencies which are part of the EU. Materials collected include parliamentary, legal, regulatory, statistical, social, economic, and statistical publications. Since the EU serves as a supra-regional governing body, the Library in general collects the types of publications it would from a non-U.S. government. The Library acquired publications of the various European economic communities which preceded the European Union, and may acquire retrospective materials from these bodies if they fill a significant research gap in the collections. The Library collects in English or multilingual form if available, otherwise in another EU official language.

Organization of American States (OAS)

The Library of Congress attempts to acquire for its permanent collections substantive publications of the Organization of American States issued in English, issued in multi-lingual form, or issued in Spanish. The OAS makes many of its publications available online.

Monographs and serials, such as annual reports, legal, regulatory, and statistical material, are acquired and retained in print format and added to the permanent collections. OAS working documents were at one time added to the permanent collections in microfiche. However, the Library currently relies on electronic resources for these documents.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The Library acquires print or online versions of substantive OECD monographs and serials issued in English, in multi-lingual form, or only in a non-English language. Materials collected include annual reports, yearbooks, regulatory, statistical, financial, and subject matter publications.

Other Intergovernmental Regional and Special Interest Organizations, Including Regional Development Banks

The Library collects publications and documents from regional and special interest intergovernmental organizations, including development banks. Examples of such organizations are: the African Union, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), African Development Bank, Caribbean Community, Council of Europe, Inter-Parliamentary Union, International Migration Organization (IOM), Nordic Council, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Pacific Community. This list is meant to be illustrative and not comprehensive.

If the United States is a member of the organization, the Library collects at the research level or higher, based on recommendation. Collection levels for publications from organizations to which the United States does not belong are based on the needs of Congress and the Library's other user communities and may change with world events.

The Library acquires and retains in the permanent collections from these organizations substantive monographic and serial titles, such as annual reports, yearbooks, legal, regulatory, financial, and statistical materials. It collects in English if available, in multi-lingual form, or in an official language of the organization if English is not available.

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 5

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

The Library acquires the publications of most international organizations through exchange, gift, or depository arrangements. Under a depository arrangement, a designated library receives publications regularly without charge, usually in return for making them available to the public. The organizations with which the Library has depository agreements include: the United Nations; European Union; Council of Europe; Food and Agriculture Organization; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Maritime Organization; International Labour Organization; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Organization of American States; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; World Bank; World Health Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; and World Trade Organization (formerly GATT Secretariat).

Organizations based in the United States, such as the World Bank, may submit their publications for registration with the United States Copyright Office. They may also use special Library services for publishers, such as Cataloging in Publication (CIP) or issuance of an international standard serial number (ISSN). These services result in receipts to the Library. If exchange, gift, depository arrangement, or other non-cost methods of acquisition are not available, the Library purchases materials. The Library acquires the publications of many intergovernmental organizations, particularly those headquartered in developing countries, through its Overseas Offices. Often these publications have very limited distribution outside the area.

In the past, the Library's acquisitions policies have focused on print and other tangible formats. Today, most international organizations have significantly reduced the number of documents and publications that they print, publishing them instead on their Internet sites. Working documents, which track programs and policies, tend to be made available free online. Print publications previously designated as publications for sale are now often offered through subscription databases instead of, or in addition to, tangible formats. Even if materials are printed, they may not be widely distributed. For example, the United Nations is restructuring its depository library program to feature more online delivery and significantly reducing print distribution to participating libraries. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development was a leader in developing a platform for online delivery of publications that it previously sold or distributed free of charge to depository libraries. The European Union has long made much of its published content available online. The Library may still acquire print publications as available and needed through exchange or gift arrangements and purchase. However, in the future, the Library will most likely acquire a substantial amount of publications from intergovernmental organizations in electronic format and will need to deal with archiving. If the Library acquires subscription online resources from these organizations, every effort should be made to negotiate permanent ownership of subscribed content. The Library is already harvesting and collecting the web sites of a few intergovernmental organizations, and this will need to increase in the future. The Library

may consider exploring the intent and reliability of organizations in archiving their own content and seek cooperative arrangements with other libraries to collect and archive online content.

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>.

Subject	U.S. Levels	Non-U.S. Levels
United Nations	5	4
European Union	4	4
United Nations specialized agencies	4	4
Other organizations of which the United States is a member	4	4
Regional and other organizations of which the United States is not a member. Collect selectively from these organizations to meet the needs of Congress and other Library constituencies	2 or higher	2 or higher

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