

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS COLLECTIONS POLICY STATEMENTS

Telephone and City Directories

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I. Scope

This Collections Policy Statement deals with telephone and city directories, which are valuable tools for research in many subject areas - local history, genealogy, social and economic history, technology, etc. The materials covered by this statement include both current (current year or most recent) and non-current (prior to current year) telephone directories and city directories (also including crisscross and street directories). The Library of Congress acquires telephone and city directories from both the United States and non-U.S. countries in a variety of formats: paper, microfiche, microfilm, and digital. Telephone and city directories are not cataloged and are not included in the Library's classified collections.

Telephone directories are most often published by telephone companies and consist of white pages containing residential and business listings and yellow pages, a subject-oriented listing of businesses. City directories often provide additional information about individuals such as place of employment and name of spouse. The entries are arranged alphabetically by last name and also by address and telephone number. City directories are compiled through door-to-door surveys and are published at irregular intervals. City directories are no longer published for many major U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C., New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Reverse telephone directories (often called street address or crisscross directories) are usually published annually for major metropolitan areas. Listings are based on telephone directories and are arranged both by address and telephone number. There is no listing by name.

For guidance on the collecting of professional, trade, or membership directories of businesses, societies or associations, see the [*Economics and Business*](#) 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

The Library of Congress has one of the most comprehensive collections of telephone and city directories from the United States and other countries. The Library purchases content accessible through Gale Directory Library, which includes telephone and address directory listings for associations, private and public companies, consultants, research centers, publishers, publication and broadcast media, and government agencies. The collections are available on microfiche, microfilm, print, and digitally. A large self-service collection of U.S. city directories is available on microfilm in the Microfilm Reading Room. More than 1,200 U.S. cities and towns are represented in the collection and this number continues to increase. The years of coverage are primarily 1861 through 1960. Pre-1860 U.S. city directories are also available on microfiche and a guide to the collection is available at the Main Reading Room reference desk. Additional U.S. city and telephone guides for our collections are available at <https://guides.loc.gov/local-history-genealogy-research-guides/state#s-lib-ctab-28391897-3>

LC's subscription to Ancestry Library Edition allows "keyword" searching for U.S. and foreign telephone books and city directories.

The holdings vary considerably country by country; holdings are strongest for localities in Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Western Europe where there is a tradition of publishing such directories.

IV. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress acquires telephone and city directories from both the United States and non-U.S. countries. When available, the Library acquires print directories through copyright deposit and international exchange agreements. Digitized copies of historical city directories are acquired following guidance from this document and the [Electronic Resources](#) Supplementary Guidelines. Internet-only directories are within scope for acquisition, but technical and other challenges limit the Library's ability to acquire them, at this time.

V. Acquisition Sources

Directories deposited with the U.S. Copyright Office continue to be the principal source for U.S. acquisitions in all formats. Non-U.S. directories are acquired through purchase. The transition of many telephone and city directories to digital-only and the decline of landline phone service present challenges for the Library in continuing to collect these materials.

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. 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.

VI. Best Editions and Preferred Formats

For guidance regarding best editions for material acquired via the Copyright Office, see: <https://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: <https://www.loc.gov/preservation/resources/rfs>.

For information regarding electronic resources, open digital content, web archiving, and data sets, see the following Supplementary Guidelines: <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/electronicresources.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/opencontent.pdf>, <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/webarchive.pdf>, and <https://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/datasets.pdf>.

VII. Collecting Levels

(Current directories are defined as the current year or the most recently published. Not all directories are published annually. Non-current are directories published prior to the current year or the most recently published.)

A. Telephone Directories: United States

1. Current: The Library acquires current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 5. Current telephone directories are part of the Main Reading Room reference collection. Searchable U.S. directories are also available over the Internet.
2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Collecting Level 5.

B. Telephone Directories: Foreign Countries

1. Current: The Library acquires foreign telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 4.
2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current telephone directories (white and yellow pages) at Level 4. The holdings vary considerably from country to country depending on publishing and availability of the directories.

C. City Directories: United States

1. Current: The Library collects city directories (including crisscross or street address directories) at Level 5. They are part of the Main Reading Room reference collection.

2. Non-Current: The Library collects non-current city directories (including crisscross or street address directories) at Level 5.

D. City Directories: Foreign Countries

1. Current: The Library collects foreign city directories at Level 4.

2. Non-Current: On a general world-wide basis, the Library collects foreign city directories at Level 4

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