

Reading Public Library

Government Documents Collection Development Policy

Reviewed and Approved 11/20/2023

The Reading Public Library has been a selective depository in conjunction with the Federal Depository Library Program since 1901. Its role is to actively collect publications created by the United States government and make them available to all citizens, both to keep them informed of contemporary federal proceedings, as well as to provide a historical archive of the same.

A selective depository maintains the option to choose which federal publications are sent to it by the Government Printing Office (the publishing body of the United States). The library ensures online access to patrons wishing to utilize the Internet for connecting to government publications without condition.

Documents are selected by the government documents librarian according to needs evidenced by the public. Particular strengths in the existing collection include documents covering agriculture, commerce, the military, health, and national security. All documents have records entered into the library's catalog, thereby making them easily searchable by the public. A majority of the federal documents are available for patrons to check out on a valid library card.

Many federal publications are also added to the Main Library's circulating non-fiction collection as well as the reference collection (which is non-circulating). Several agencies routinely publish monographs of interest—such as the Library of Congress, the Department of State, and various Congressional committees—which make their way to the non-fiction stacks. Statistical compendia, government directories, and departmental yearbooks are examples of federal documents, published annually, which are regularly added to the reference collection.

The majority of the documents (both federal and state) are stored in the basement level of the Main Library building. A portion of the publications are available in Spanish. Any tangible document requested by a patron which is not available in our collection or in an online format is available through interlibrary loan service from the State Library of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg (our regional library, which collects every publication from the Government Printing Office and holds them in perpetuity).

All federal documents remain property of the United States government. Weeding guidelines are followed as dictated by the official Instructions to Depository Libraries. A document is evaluated according to its usefulness (has it been checked out of the library?), relevance (is it outdated?), condition (is it damaged?), and uniqueness (is it duplicated, whether in the same format or in a different format?) A publication must have been retained for at least five (5) years before being a candidate for withdrawal. A list of weeded titles is sent to the documents librarian at the State Library of Pennsylvania; they are made available for claiming by other depositories in the Commonwealth, then across the country. After a prescribed period of time, unclaimed titles may be discarded by the depository library.

The Reading Public Library is a depository for Pennsylvania state documents.

They are handled in the same fashion as federal publications, with many State documents being added to the non-fiction and reference collections every year.

The Reading Public Library also endeavors to collect and retain significant documents and reports issued by the City of Reading. Archived City documents are stored in the storage space located on the fourth floor non-fiction stacks.

Policy History

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