

University of Minnesota Law Library

Collection Development Policy for Electronic Resources

February 2001; Revised December 2002; September 2004

I. Purpose

The Law Library owns and provides access to materials in a variety of electronic formats, including Internet resources, online fee or subscription based electronic resources, and offline electronic resources (e.g. CD-ROM products). The challenges in providing access to these resources warrant a separate collection development policy focusing on these materials. This policy provides guidelines for the selection, acquisition and provision of access to these resources.

II. Internet Resources

This section of the electronic resources collection development policy will guide the selection of Internet resources (both unrestricted/free and fee/subscription based resources). The Internet has become an increasingly important legal research tool. In some cases it is the primary or even sole medium of publication for producers and disseminators of legal information such as governmental bodies, law schools, law firms, bar associations, and commercial publishers.

The Library recognizes that the careful selection of Internet resources and the availability of these resources through the Library's catalog (MNCAT) and the Library's web page can greatly facilitate the use of these resources by the library's users. Through these efforts the library is able to promote awareness and use of significant sites and also provide value-added access that is not often provided by other finding tools such as web search engines and mega-index sites.

A. Selection

Selection of resources that are to be cataloged or added to a bibliographic record in MNCAT is primarily the responsibility of the individual selectors, who actively assess new electronic resources in their assigned subject/jurisdictional areas. Acquisitions staff alert selectors when they receive notice that a print publication in the library's collection is accessible in electronic form via the Internet. Catalogers also frequently encounter information about electronic formats that duplicate or supplement works in hand. The Law School faculty and students and other library users may offer additional suggestions to the appropriate selectors.

Selection of Internet resources is based on the same general criteria that are applied to all other formats included in the collection. In addition, selectors should consider applicable criteria from the list below:

- The relationship that the resource may have to other resources in the library's collection
- The improvement or enhancement that the resource will give to existing print materials

- The authenticity of the resource: Responsibility for the resource should be clearly identified; integrity of original sources should be reasonably maintained
- The currency and relevancy of the resource's information, if deemed necessary for subject matter
- Credible institutional support that ensures the long term reliability of the resource (especially when considering web sites). May include: declarations of institutional support on the web resource with clear linkage to sponsors and/or creators; copyright notice by institution; institutional seal; established history of site/project.
- The user-friendliness of the resource in terms of interface design and functionality, e.g. searching, printing and downloading features
- The compatibility of the resource with existing hardware about to be purchased or already in the Law School and Law Library
- Any additional software requirements (for the network and/or individual PCs)
- Availability of access/authentication via IP address (to provide access from multiple public and networked PCs in the Law Library)
- The necessary amount of staff time to provide access, maintenance, training, and assistance
- The availability and adequacy of technical and customer support including documentation and phone support service
- The availability of vendor supplied on-site training and/or training materials
- Accessibility of the resource under present copyright laws and licensing agreements

If the selection of a fee based or subscription Internet resource duplicates an existing print resource in the Library's collection, the following criteria should also be considered:

- Whether a cost benefit for purchasing multiple formats exists
- The desirability of multiple formats to meet the different needs of library patrons
- The feasibility of canceling the print subscription and relying on the electronic version

A resource should not necessarily be excluded from consideration because it does not meet all of the applicable criteria. However, selectors should attempt to select resources that adequately meet as many of the selection criteria as is possible. When available, reviews of Internet resources and/or messages from relevant electronic discussion lists should be consulted prior to their selection. For fee based resources, selectors should also attempt to obtain a trial access period or demonstration of the product from the vendor.

If a resource does not meet enough of the applicable criteria for selection as a cataloged resource, it may still be placed on the Law Library's web page if it is determined to be useful to the Law Library's patrons.

Selectors will consult with the reference staff and the Associate Director for Collection Development when selecting fee or subscription based resources. In addition, the Associate Director for Information Technology Services shall be consulted regarding network and PC hardware and software compatibility issues and other computer services support issues.

B. Provision of Access

The Library will maximize access to Internet resources through a variety of means including:

- The timely provision, maintenance, preparation, and loading of necessary software and hardware by the Law School's Law Information Technology Services (LITS) staff
- MNCAT catalog records that include descriptive and subject cataloging, a hypertext link to connect to the resource from the web version of MNCAT, and the URL of the resource
- Prompt updating of information, including periodic verification of URL links found on the Library's web pages and in MNCAT records
- Access to selected resources through the Law Library web page
- announcements/articles on new resources in the Law Library newsletter, Bibliotechnia, and on the Law Library web page
- appropriate staff and user support and training for in-building use

C. Deselection

Periodic examination of Internet resources, particularly those that are non-fee based, is required due to the dynamic nature of such resources. These guidelines should provide some suggestions for when to deselect a resource:

- an Internet resource is no longer available or maintained
- the currency and reliability of the resource's information has lost its value
- the design and utility of the resource do not remain fresh and beneficial to users

III. CD-ROM Materials

This section of the electronic resources collection development policy will guide the selection of CD-ROM materials. These materials are acquired by the Library through a variety of sources and means including: direct purchase or license agreement with a commercial vendor/publisher, as accompanying material to print titles, through government depository programs, and donations.

A. CD-ROM Workstation

The Law Library does not maintain a CD-ROM network. A collection of "stand-alone" CD-ROM titles is maintained in the Law Library Reference Office. Access to these titles is available through a PC workstation in the Reference Office. Print materials with accompanying CD-ROMs are shelved together in the appropriate location.

B. Selection of CD-ROMs

Selection of CD-ROM materials is primarily the responsibility of the individual selectors, as these resources fall into their regular subject areas of selecting responsibility. The Law School faculty and students and other library users may offer suggestions for materials to the appropriate selectors. Selection of stand-alone CD-ROM materials will be based on the same general criteria that are applied to all other formats included in the collection. In addition, the following criteria shall also apply:

- the improvement or enhancement that the resource will give to existing print materials
- the currency of the resource's information, if deemed necessary for subject matter
- the user-friendliness of the resource in terms of interface design and functionality e.g. searching, printing and downloading features
- the compatibility of the resource with existing hardware and software about to be purchased or already installed on PC workstations in the Reference Office

- any additional software requirements
- the necessary amount of staff time to provide access, training, and assistance
- the availability and adequacy of technical and customer support, including documentation and phone support service the availability of vendor supplied on-site training and/or training materials
- the long-term viability of the product in the CD-ROM format
- the long-term viability of resources for preservation purposes
- the long-term usability of a resource's data (10 years or more)
- the broad accessibility of the resource under present copyright laws and licensing agreements
- the replacement policy of the publisher in the event of damage or theft

D. Duplication

If the selection of a CD-ROM title duplicates an existing print resource in the Library's collection the following criteria should also be considered:

- whether a cost benefit for purchasing multiple formats exists
- the desirability of multiple formats meet the different needs of library patrons
- the feasibility of canceling the print subscription and relying on the electronic version

E. Provision of Access

The Library will maximize access to its CD-ROM materials through a variety of means including:

- the timely provision, maintenance, preparation, and loading of necessary network and individual PC software and hardware by the Law School's Law Information Technology Services (LITS) staff
- MNCAT catalog records that include descriptive and subject cataloging
- prompt processing and loading of updates and replacements
- announcements/articles on new CD-ROM titles in the Law Library newsletter, Bibliotechnia, and on the Law Library web page when appropriate
- appropriate staff and user support and training for in-building use

F. Deselection

Periodic examination of CD-ROM resources, particularly those that require on-going subscriptions or fees is required due to the dynamic nature of electronic publication. These guidelines should provide some suggestions for when to deselect a resource:

- a CD-ROM product is no longer available or maintained
- the currency and reliability of the resource's information has lost its value
- an Internet site or resource offers more comprehensive coverage or other advantages.

IV. Funding

In consultation with the Law Library Director and reference staff, the Associate Director for Collection Development will determine the source fund for acquisition of electronic resources. Generally, when subject funds are to be used, the subject content of the resource will determine the individual fund.

V. Licensing

Selectors shall inform the Associate Director for Collection Development of electronic resources requiring a licensing agreement prior to the selection and acquisition of that resource. The Associate Director for Collection Development will negotiate all licensing agreements. The Library will comply with all applicable vendor licensing agreements.

VI. Policy Review

Because of the complex and dynamic nature of providing access to electronic resources, the Associate Director for Collection Development and other librarians will need to review this policy regularly.