

Government Information Finding Guide



Reference Division
Watson Memorial Library
Northwestern State University
Natchitoches LA 71497

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Watson Library is a 35 percent selective depository for federal government documents. Government Documents are published and distributed by the Government Printing Office. Documents printed through GPO are not all government information, but rather that which is distributed by governmental agencies via GPO. Primary areas of collection include Business, Health, Education, Agriculture, and Military History. Government Information at Watson library is available to users in many formats including paper, microfiche, compact disk, and Internet.

Locating Government Documents 1976 – Present

All government documents received from 1976 to the present are listed in the library's online catalog. Since the online lists books and government documents in the same index, it is possible to find both when doing a keyword search. Government documents are recognizable in the catalog by their location of GOVDOC.

Government documents in all formats are indexed in the online catalog, but remember our catalog only represents items selected by Watson library – not the entire gamut of government information. Documents in paper and microfiche are located in the Government Documents Reading Room on the first floor of the library. For documents on compact disc or floppy, ask at the Reference Desk. URLs for Internet documents are provided in the online catalog.

Government documents in paper are available for checkout to all users at the circulation desk. Microfiche may be copied in the Media Center on the second floor, and compact disks may be copied in the Reference room. Documents available through the web may be printed out at a unified workstation.

Locating Government Documents Pre 1976

Watson Library owns several titles that index government documents published prior to 1976. These and other similar indices are located in the Reference Room.

[Checklist of United States Public Documents 1789 – 1909 – Z1223 A113 Ref.](#)

[Cumulative Subject Index to the Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications 1895-1899 – Z1223 A1 K36 Ref](#)

[Cumulative Subject Index to the Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications 1900-1971 – Z1223 A18 Ref](#)

[Cumulative Title Index to United States Public Documents 1789-1976 – J83 L47 Ref.](#)

[Descriptive Catalog of the Government Publications 1774 – 1881 – Z1223 A 1885 Ref.](#)

Government Documents on the Internet

The Internet is an excellent source for government information. Many agencies have their own web pages containing information supplemental to that in their printed documents, and many documents that are released as digital publications and not distributed through the Federal Depository Library system. These are good places to start:

FDLP Desktop - http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/
Government Printing Office - <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>
Library of Congress – <http://www.loc.gov>
National Agriculture Library - <http://www.nal.usda.gov/>
National Library of Medicine - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>

Early in 2006, the Government Printing Office introduced their new online catalog for government documents. This catalog includes bibliographic information for documents distributed in both tangible and electronic formats. The catalog allows users to find documents and then link to local libraries for further service.

Catalog of U.S. Government Publications - <http://catalog.gpo.gov/>

Some search engines and other sites provide good ways to search for government information on the Internet:

Ben's Guide to Government for Kids - <http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>
FedStats - <http://www.fedstats.gov/>
Fedworld - <http://www.fedworld.gov/>
FirstGov – <http://www.firstgov.gov>
Google U.S. Government Search - <http://www.google.com/ig/usgov>
Students.gov - <http://www.students.gov/>

Other government web pages of note include -

American Memory - <http://memory.loc.gov/>
National Endowment for the Arts - <http://www.nea.gov/>
Small Business Administration - <http://www.sba.gov/>
Smithsonian Institution - <http://www.si.edu/>
Thomas Legislative Information – <http://thomas.loc.gov>
U.S. Department of Agriculture - <http://www.usda.gov/>
U.S. Department of Education - <http://www.ed.gov/>
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - <http://www.hhs.gov/>
U.S. Department of the Interior - <http://www.doi.gov/>
U.S. Department of Justice - <http://www.usdoj.gov/>
U.S. House of Representatives – <http://www.house.gov/>
U.S. Senate - <http://www.senate.gov/>

A special computer is available in the Reference room for accessing electronic government information. This resource is available to all users and no appointment is necessary. For mediated searching or in-depth reference assistance, contact the Reference desk at 318 357-4574 or reference@nsula.edu.