



The Collection and Preservation Policy of the NLM

Updated: April 23, 2021.

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) was established "to assist the advancement of medical and related sciences and to aid the dissemination and exchange of scientific and other information important to the progress of medicine and to the public health..." (42 U.S.C. 286) Central to this mission is the development of a collection that supports contemporary biomedical and health care research and practice as well as future scholarship.

To this end, NLM attempts to aggregate and to maintain for permanent access library materials that:

- Record progress in research in biomedicine and the related areas of the life sciences,
- Document the practice and teaching of medicine broadly defined,
- Demonstrate how health services are organized, delivered and financed,
- Chronicle the development and implementation of policy that affects research and the delivery of health services, and
- Illustrate the public perception of medical practice and public health.

Board of Regents Policy

Building on the National Library of Medicine (NLM) congressional mandate, the NLM Board of Regents, an advisory body to the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) on matters affecting the Library, adopted a collection policy in June 1976. This policy was subsequently updated in 1983, 1992 and most recently in September 2019. The NLM Preservation Policy was adopted in 1986 by the NLM Board of Regents, to fulfill the mandate to maintain and preserve the biomedical literature. The NLM Preservation Policy is subsumed under this Collection Policy, which is established for the NLM pursuant to the authority contained in the National Library of Medicine Act of 1956. (P.L. 84-941).

The NLM Collection represents the intellectual content and diversity of the world's biomedical literature, data, and other research objects and information. Since NLM cannot presume to collect all materials and resources that have some relevance to the life sciences, NLM shall concentrate on collecting those materials pertaining to human health and health care practice in any format deemed appropriate to the fulfillment of its mission without being limited by present perceptions.

Coverage of authoritative, scientifically rigorous biomedical literature shall be comprehensive; coverage of other health and life sciences information may be more selective. In determining coverage, NLM will take into consideration its roles as the trusted library of record for biomedicine and health care, as the national resource for the provision of biomedical literature not otherwise readily available, and as the national bibliographic center for the health professions.

Recognizing the interconnected nature of the biomedical and scientific literature with data and other research objects in a digital landscape, NLM shall facilitate, where appropriate, broad access to and integration of materials in the Collection, consistent with relevant laws and policies. NLM shall promote access through its public resources and the efforts of the Network of the National Library of Medicine to drive scientific discovery and advance human health.

NLM shall ensure the preservation of its collected literature, research products and associated data. Means of preservation are according to industry best standards and guidelines and may include: (1) preservation of the analog original; (2) preservation of born digital materials; and 3) digital replication. NLM staff shall ensure the use of the most effective methods available and may participate in research, development, testing and evaluation of preservation technology. NLM should coordinate preservation efforts with national, research and biomedical libraries, and in partnership with other trusted organizations which advance research and scholarship.

To maintain the cultural context of the Collection, collection development criteria will be interpreted with flexibility in acquiring information relating to the history of medicine, and in documenting public perception of current medical practice and public health. Collection criteria will also be interpreted broadly to support NLM, National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other federal policies, initiatives and programs. The scope of the Collection may evolve as Library strategic priorities and resources change.

NLM recognizes the interdependence of NLM, the Library of Congress and the National Agricultural Library, and its collecting policies will reflect this relationship. While the libraries seek to minimize overlap, some duplication of collections among these national libraries is necessary for each to fulfill their stated mission. The libraries use a system of collecting levels developed by the research library community and intended primarily for the uniform evaluation of collections in research libraries.

This policy is prospective and thus does not require disposal of any materials previously acquired by NLM. NLM staff will regularly update the Guidelines for the NLM Collection, in consultation with the Director, subject matter experts, and the NLM Board of Regents.

Approved by the NLM Board of Regents, September 11, 2019