

Assessing the General Collections of the Library of Congress

Collection Development Office

Michael Matos
Senior Collections Development Analyst

Stephanie Smith
Collections Development Analyst



The Library's Mission ...

Engage, inspire, and inform Congress
and the American people with a
**universal and enduring source of
knowledge and creativity.**

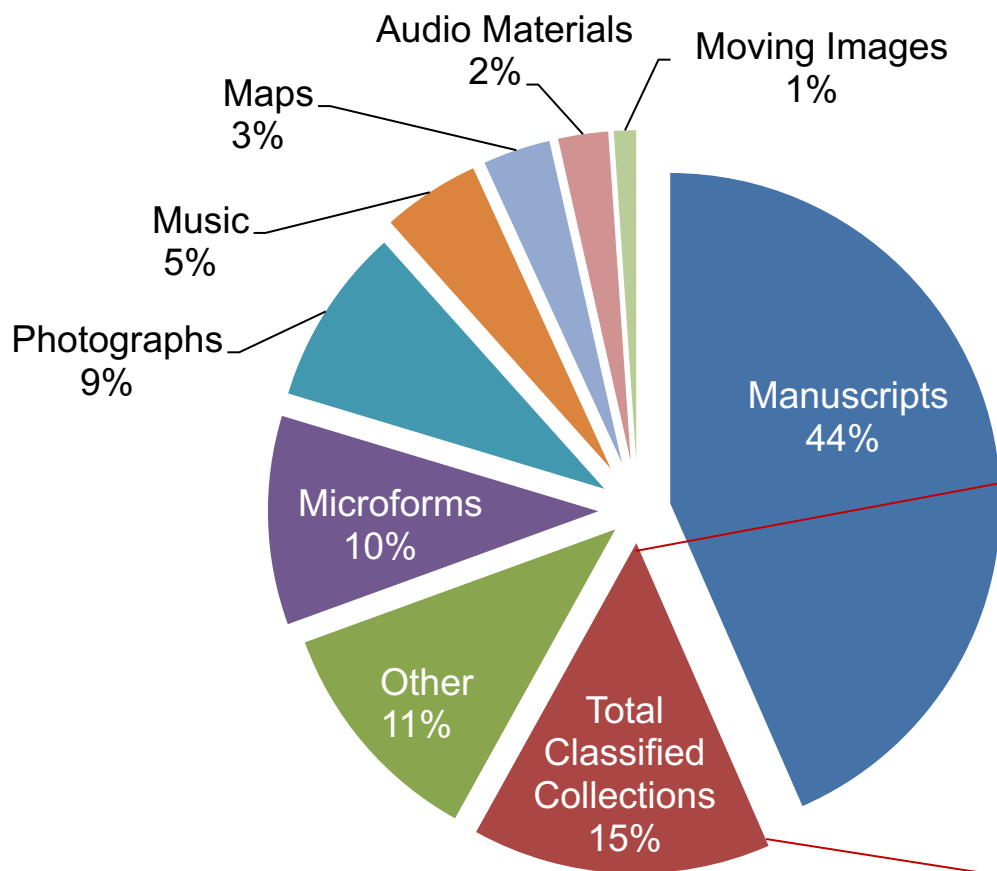
Canons of Selection (1940)

- The Library should possess all books and other library materials **necessary to the Congress** and the various officers of the Federal Government to perform their duties;
- The Library should possess all books and other materials (whether in original form or copy) which record the **life and achievement of the American people**; and
- The Library should possess in some useful form, the records of other societies, past and present, and should accumulate, in original or in copy, **full and representative collections of the written records of those societies and peoples** whose experience is of most immediate concern to the people of the United States.

Collection Development at LC

- The Library of Congress does not follow the same collecting mandate used at academic or other research libraries. It seeks to create a national collection that is an expansive historical record of U.S. publishing and creative output, in general.
- In the subject areas it collects, LC has sought to be inclusive of a variety of viewpoints, experiences and authorship, including non-mainstream, extremist and fringe works, which are often self-published or not widely distributed.
- For Copyright deposit, the Library does not seek out or accept a copy of everything published in United States. There is a selection process.

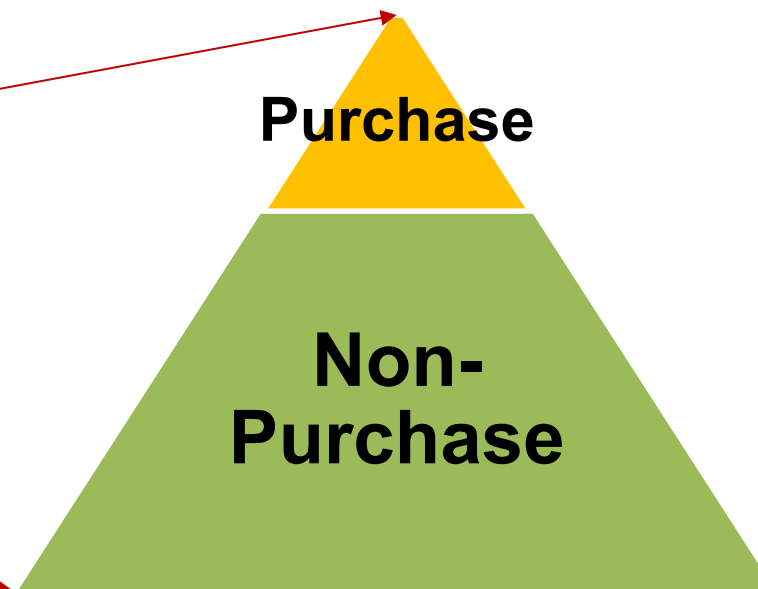
The Library's Collections and the Assessment



**Physical Collections (items) as
of September 30, 2019**

Approximately 23 million books, bound serials and other materials classified under the LC Classification System

- Western language monographs and serials, including non-Roman scripts like Greek and Cyrillic languages.
- All publications not assigned to a custodial division.



General Collections

Assessment Project Scope and Goals

Scope

- This project will focus on the Library's approximately 23 million books, bound serials and other materials classified under the LC's General Collections.
- It is both a retrospective analysis and examination of the current inflow of materials through purchase and non-purchase means.
- This is not a physical inventory; we are not verifying holdings.

Goals

- Allow the Library to assess its effectiveness in meeting its collecting mandate.
- Provide action steps to address any issues identified through the assessments.
- Build a data gathering process to support on-going and future assessment.

Assessment Structure

The LC Classification structure is the overarching framework for the analysis.

Work is being staged using the scope of the Library's 70+ Collections Policy Statements (CPS).

The subject-specific Collections Policy Statements present the Library's collecting levels broken down by facets of the LC Classification System.

The CPS serves as the unifying collection development document across all modes of acquisition.



Current State of the Project

Started with the Fine and Decorative Arts

In-depth analysis of bibliographic information

- Assessing the collections in terms of authorship and of publishing on the subnational level, e.g. cities represented, number of publishers, languages, etc.
- Benchmarking of LC's holdings to other institutions.

In-depth analysis of collection material inflow

Ramping up the assessment work to the other CPS documents

- United States History
- Political Science
- Naval Science
- Military Science
- Education

Initial Outcomes and Issues

Missing or problematic data; no way to fully automate

Decades of changing cataloging standards translate into problems when trying to look holistically at the collection.

Understanding authorship and publishers

We need the involvement of subject matter experts and regional specialists to provide context to the range of authors and publishers represented in the collection. Varying availability of diversity-related external resources among subject areas means that SMEs are key to gathering the characteristics that would be of interest for assessment work.

Self-publishing gap

The Library collects self-published works very selectively. As such most of this publishing output is missing from the Library's collection.

Project: Next Steps

Sharing initial findings with the relevant subject area librarians and area studies representatives.

The initial findings have revealed some small anomalies. We will seek SME input to determine if they warrant further analysis.

Developing assessment options using external sources.

The assessment up until now has been wrangling LC data, but moving forward we would want to map our holdings information against lists, such as independent publishers, thematic lists featuring authors/works, etc.

Building datasets (planned)

The hope is to produce a series of public datasets comprised of LC General Collections holdings that include normalization of fields such as publisher and place of publication.

Thank You!

Library of Congress
Collection Development Office
cdo@loc.gov

