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Dissertations and Theses

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I. Scope

The Library of Congress acquires for its permanent collections all doctoral dissertations accepted by universities in the United States, with the two exceptions noted below, Microfiche is the preferred format.

II. Research Strengths

The Library of Congress is the only library which strives to hold copies of all U.S. doctoral dissertations. This collection of over 1.75 million titles on microfilm or microfiche are in a format long accepted as suitable for long term preservation. In addition to its comprehensive holdings, the Library provides electronic access via ProQuest *Digital Dissertations*.

For more information, see the related Microformat Collections Overview.

III. Collecting Policy

The Library of Congress collects and maintains a comprehensive collection of doctoral dissertations accepted by universities in the United States. Exceptions include those in the fields of clinical medicine and technical agriculture which are transferred to the National Library of Medicine and the National Agricultural Library, respectively.

Current foreign dissertations are acquired on a highly selective basis, with special consideration given to the fields of law, library science, music, and the history, government, and literature of the United States. Foreign dissertations which may provide unique information on other countries are considered for acquisition. Those which are issued as commercial publications are considered for acquisition on their own merits, based on their research value. Foreign dissertations in the fields of clinical medicine and technical agriculture are transferred to the National Library of Medicine and the National Agricultural Library, respectively. All others not accepted for the collections of the Library of Congress are forwarded to the Center for Research Libraries.

Theses below the doctoral level are not acquired except in those instances in which a particular thesis

makes an original contribution to knowledge. Microforms are preferred to other forms of publication.

The Copyright Best Edition statement provides the current decision on the selected format for works existing in more than one medium.

IV. Acquisitions Sources: Current and Future

Current: The Library holds a comprehensive collection of U.S. doctoral dissertations in microformat dating back to the mid 1930s. Prior to that time the dissertations were collected in bound volumes. Beginning in 1999, the Library has provided access to the ProQuest *Digital Dissertations* database which includes the U.S. doctoral dissertations, foreign dissertations and selected theses below the doctoral level. The database supports indexing for all the dissertations in its collection; however, full-text is only available for those beginning in the 1990s.

Future: The acquisition of the microfiche edition of U.S. doctoral dissertations is regularly reviewed to assure that the Library's collection policy is up-to-date regarding evolving technologies and the factors necessary to assure the permanence of this unique collection. The Library's subscription to the ProQuest *Digital Dissertations* database will continue to provide enhanced search capabilities as well as access to the 24-page preview feature and, as available, full-text to most dissertations accepted since 1997 (ProQuest is digitizing the collection in reverse chronological order of those received prior to 1997). Researchers occasionally bring to our attention dissertations accepted post 1997 that are not available in the database; there may be a variety of causes; one that ProQuest has acknowledged is that of students who refuse to allow online access to the text of their dissertation.

V. Collecting Levels

The dissertations collection spans all classes; the collection is at Level 5.

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