

# EPA LIBRARY NETWORK PROCEDURE:

## Public Access

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### 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish Agency-wide procedures by which libraries in the EPA Library Network improve public access to EPA documents and environmental information.

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### 2 SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

These procedures apply to all Program and Regional Offices that provide library services within the EPA Library Network.

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### 3 AUDIENCE

The audience for this interim policy includes Assistant Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators, Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators, Assistant Regional Administrators, Associate Administrators, Senior Information Officials, Information Management Officers, Library Managers, and EPA staff.

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### 4 BACKGROUND

Since their inception, the mission of EPA's libraries has been to improve access to information for EPA decision making and environmental awareness. A parallel component has been to provide access for the public to Agency information. Despite a reduced emphasis on physical access and an increased emphasis on electronic resources, the dual mission remains. This document addresses ways in which member EPA libraries might continue to provide and increase public access using newer technologies.

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### 5 AUTHORITY

Agency Delegation 1-19 GENERAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND MISCELLANEOUS, Paragraph 2(b).

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### 6 PROCEDURES

All EPA libraries must enable public access to Agency information through the following avenues within their capability: selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, and providing access to and services for EPA information.

The EPA Library Network will ensure that any member of the general public has access to EPA documents and information released to the public in either physical and/or electronic formats. As much as possible, this information should be "easy to find and use, verifiably authentic, preserved for future access and use, and fully functional to all without charge" (Jacobs, p. 15). The primary approach is to "teach library users how to access the information independently and remotely, and provide personal assistance when needed by users" (Guidelines, p. 21).

Access falls into two major categories: unassisted access through the internet, email, and Q&A database; and assisted access mediated by library staff through in-person visits to a library, phone, fax, mail, hotline or email inquiries.

Available public access choices from a member library shall be based on its capacity to provide them. The following criteria are meant to assist member locations in determining what level of access is appropriate to offer.

## 6.1 Unassisted Access

Included in this category would be any Agency material posted to the internet which is available to anyone who has computer access. The library network should actively develop websites which would enable users to locate desired information on their own. Among the core websites are:

- 6.1.1 EPA Library Network website includes links to each member's website and a set group of national links;
- 6.1.2 Member EPA Library websites provide uniform information about contact, hours of operation, borrowing policy with national links and specific links to Region/Division;
- 6.1.3 Online Library System (OLS) a searchable catalog of EPA library holdings of books, EPA reports and journals which represents items that have been selected, acquired and organized by its member libraries;
- 6.1.4 National Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP) database of preserved EPA publications available free;
  - 6.1.4.1 Searchable by report number or title or word
  - 6.1.4.2 Request a print copy or download a PDF version online
- 6.1.5 Frequent Questions (Q&A database) a knowledge database/self service system with commonly requested information about EPA issues;
- 6.1.6 EPA librarian supported web pages, including the EPA Browse Topics and other top level navigation and sidebar pages;
- 6.1.7 Other websites identified or developed to enhance these. To be most effective, there will be redundant cross-referencing of the above sites as recommended in the library template for national links and regional/lab/specialty information. Individual library members are encouraged to post additional links to location-specific information which they feel would enhance public access for their constituents.

## 6.2 Assisted Access

Included in this category is human intervention in the form of library staff interacting with the public to provide avenues of access to Agency information. Among the potential options are:

- 6.2.1 In-person visits
  - 6.2.1.1 Posted hours the library is open to the public, and whether accessible by appointment or drop in, shall be provided on the library's website and posted other places such as outside the library, in the lobby, etc. Any restrictions will be clearly stated in advance or when the appointment is made. ADA access should not be an issue
  - 6.2.1.2 Access to materials and equipment within the library may include:
    - 6.2.1.2.1 Offsite Consequences Analysis (OCA) Reading Room;
    - 6.2.1.2.2 Items for public review;
    - 6.2.1.2.3 Monographs, reports, microform, journals, indexes, databases, maps;
    - 6.2.1.2.4 Audio-visual materials;
    - 6.2.1.2.5 Computers designated for use by the public may have software that limits access to certain websites or LAN drives for security reasons;
    - 6.2.1.2.6 Photocopy machines available with clear policies on how much may be copied and by whom.
  - 6.2.1.3 Services to the public may include:

- 6.2.1.3.1 on-site ready reference;
  - 6.2.1.3.2 assistance in using the available resources;
  - 6.2.1.3.3 referrals to other EPA and government agency information sources;
  - 6.2.1.3.4 information on how to obtain EPA publications;
  - 6.2.1.3.5 limited microfiche printing, and limited photocopying.
- 6.2.2 Phone, fax, postal mail
- 6.2.2.1 A library's contact information (phone, fax and address) posted to the website, listed in the local phone book, or announced through any other appropriate means. Referral to a hotline, other agency, EPA staff expert or any of the unassisted internet resources might be the outcome of these inquiries;
  - 6.2.2.2 Voicemail is included with phone and should have a standard greeting indicating who has been reached and what type of response might be expected;
  - 6.2.2.3 Toll free numbers might be provided.
- 6.2.3 Hotlines:
- 6.2.3.1 Hotlines are sometimes operated within the library as a first point of contact for incoming public inquiries; other libraries provide similar functions as part of their normal procedures. Many people outside the Agency call to confirm mailing information, phone numbers or to speak with personnel or to pose a question. It is generally the duty of the Hotline to answer and transfer calls with accuracy.
- 6.2.4 Email:
- 6.2.4.1 Email addresses to contact the library provide a potential source for the public to seek and obtain Agency and related information from those libraries equipped to provide this service. The email addresses may be a group box or an individual responsible for responding. Answers, links to documents, etc., may comprise the response.
- 6.2.5 Web-based reference systems:
- 6.2.5.1 National or regional web-based systems which include an option to ask a question which will be answered by library staff if the FAQ associated database doesn't help them.
- 6.2.6 Interlibrary Loan (ILL):
- 6.2.6.1 EPA Libraries participate in a national cooperative system, commonly referred to as ILL, which makes loaning documents to other libraries and their patrons possible. This activity helps the public to obtain EPA materials, on loan, to which they would otherwise not have access.

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## 7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

James A. Jacobs, James R. Jacobs, and Shinjoung Yeo, "Government Information in the Digital Age: The Once and Future Federal Depository Library Program" (2005). *Journal of Academic Librarianship*. 31 (3), pp. 198-208. doi:10.1016/j.acalib.2005.02.006. Postprint available free at: <http://repositories.cdlib.org/postprints/657>

Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments, Prepared for and Approved by The International Federation of Library Associations Government Libraries Section Government

Information and Official Publications Section Library and Research Services for Parliament  
Section, August, 2007

US EPA Library Network Libraries and Repositories May 2007, Specifications for Library Web  
Pages with a Physical Space:

[http://intranet.epa.gov/site/test/natlibra\\_model\\_pages/regional\\_library\\_template.html](http://intranet.epa.gov/site/test/natlibra_model_pages/regional_library_template.html)

US EPA Library Network Libraries and Repositories May 2007, Specifications for Libraries  
without Physical Space, example Region 5:

[http://intranet.epa.gov/site/test/natlibra\\_model\\_pages/R5.html](http://intranet.epa.gov/site/test/natlibra_model_pages/R5.html)

US EPA Library Network Interlibrary Loan Procedures (when finalized)

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## 8 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information -The AA/OEI has the overall responsibility for the management of the EPA Library Network, including setting policy and supporting procedures, standards, and guidance to ensure the effective oversight of the EPA Library Network.

Assistant Administrators and Regional Administrators – AAs and RAs with libraries within the EPA Library Network have the management responsibility of their individual libraries and ensure compliance with Agency-wide policies, procedures, standards, and guidance relating to the Library Network.

National Library Program Manager – The Library Program Manager resides in OEI's Office of Information Analysis and Access and has the day-to-day responsibility to provide assistance and guidance to offices in the operation of the EPA Library Network.

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## 9 DEFINITIONS

**Access:** The right of entry to a library or its collections. All public libraries and most academic libraries in the United States are open to the general public, but access to certain areas such as closed stacks, rare books, and special collections may be restricted. In a more general sense, the right or opportunity to use a resource that may not be openly and freely available to everyone. In computing, the privilege of using a computer system or online resource, usually controlled by the issuance of access codes to authorized users. In a more general sense, the ability of a user to reach data stored on a computer or computer system.

**Database:** A large, regularly updated file of digitized information (bibliographic records, abstracts, full-text documents, directory entries, images, statistics, etc.) related to a specific subject or field, consisting of records of uniform format organized for ease and speed of search and retrieval and managed with the aid of database management system (DBMS) software. Content is created by the database producer. In the case of commercial databases, the content may be leased to one or more database vendors (Dialog, EBSCO, OCLC, etc.) that provide electronic access to the data after it has been converted to machine-readable form, usually online via the Internet, using proprietary search software. Most databases used in libraries are catalogs, periodical indexes, abstracting services, and full-text reference resources leased annually under licensing agreements that limit access to registered borrowers and library staff.

**Indexes:** Refers to an open-end finding guide to the literature of an academic field or discipline. Indexes of this kind are usually available via the Internet and are searchable by a variety of access points including, but not limited to, author, subject, keyword, journal title and publication date.

**Interlibrary Loan (ILL):** When a book or other item needed by a registered borrower is checked out, unavailable for some other reason, or not owned by the library, a patron may request that

it be borrowed from another library by submitting an interlibrary loan request form at a service desk, or electronically via the library's Web site. Some libraries also accept ILL requests via e-mail or by telephone, usually under exceptional circumstances. Materials borrowed on interlibrary loan may usually be renewed on or before the due date. Interlibrary loan is a form of resource sharing that depends on the maintenance of union catalogs. The largest interlibrary loan network in the world is maintained by OCLC, which uses the *WorldCat* database as its union catalog.

**Microfiche:** A small card-shaped sheet of photographic film designed for storing miniaturized text and/or microimages arranged sequentially in a two-dimensional grid. Microfiche is available in color or black and white (negative or positive). Various formats exist, but ISO recommends 75 x 125 mm (48 frames in four rows of 12) or 105 x 148 mm (60 frames in five rows of 12). Although each sheet usually includes a title and/or index number in a heading across the top that can be read without magnification, the text itself can be read and copied only with the aid of a microform reader-printer machine. User resistance can be mitigated by keeping equipment in good repair and providing point-of-use assistance. The sheets of film may be enclosed in microfiche envelopes to prevent abrasion. Abbreviated *fiche*. See also microfilm or microform.

**Microfilm:** The use of 16mm or 35mm photographic film to store miniaturized text and/or microimages in a linear array consisting of a single row (*cine* format) or double row of frames that can be magnified and reproduced only with the aid of specially designed equipment. Microfilm is available in color or black and white (negative or positive) and is used (1) in continuous rolls mounted on open spools or in enclosed cartridges and (2) in unitized format in jackets or aperture cards. Stored under suitable environmental conditions, its longevity can be measured in centuries. For this reason, it is used for the preservation of paper documents at risk of deterioration. In many libraries, newspaper and periodical back files are routinely converted to microfilm to save space. Microfilm is the most common form of substitution. Microform reader-printer machines are available in libraries with microfilm holdings for viewing and making hard copies. User resistance can be mitigated by keeping equipment in good repair and by providing point-of-use assistance. See also microfiche.

**Microform:** A generic term for a highly reduced photographic copy of text and/or images stored on a translucent medium (microfiche or microfilm) or on an opaque medium such as card stock (microopaque or aperture card). Microforms can be original editions or reproductions. Reader-printer machines are required to view and make hard copies. Digital storage media such as magnetic tape and disk, CD-ROM, etc., are superseding microforms in information storage and retrieval, but the transformation is far from complete.

**Preserved:** To prolong the existence of library and archival materials by maintaining them in a condition suitable for use, either in their original format or in a form more durable, through retention under proper environmental conditions or actions taken after a book or collection has been damaged to prevent further deterioration.

**Ready Reference:** A reference question that can be answered by a reference librarian in ten minutes or less by providing a fact or piece of information found in a single source. However, upon further inquiry, what at first appeared to be a simple query may turn out to be an opening gambit in a more extensive search, once the nature of the information need is fully understood.

**Verifiably Authentic:** The truth or accuracy of any fact or statement has been determined by consulting a source of authoritative information.

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## 10 WAIVERS

Waivers to this procedure must be approved by the Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information/Chief Information Officer. Waiver requests must be submitted in writing by the requesting office's Senior Information Official (SIO).

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**11 RELATED POLICIES, STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE**

CIO Policy 2106.0 INTERIM POLICY – EPA LIBRARY NETWORK dated XXXX

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**12 MATERIAL SUPERCEDED**

This interim policy supersedes the EPA Library Systems Manual 2130 dated January 1977.

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**13 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

None

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