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*Issued by the EPA Chief Information Officer,
Pursuant to Delegation 1-19, dated 07/07/2005*

EPA LIBRARY PUBLIC ACCESS PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish Agency-wide procedures by which libraries in the EPA Library National Network facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information. These procedures do not cover information requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, otherwise known as FOIA requests.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

These procedures apply to the EPA National Library Network and all EPA organizations that provide library services either onsite or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with another Network library. They provide baseline operational standards for all Network libraries. Individual libraries may develop local procedures to supplement the Network procedures.

3. AUDIENCE

The audience for these procedures includes Assistant Administrators, Deputy Assistant Administrators, Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators, Assistant Regional Administrators, Associate Administrators, Senior Information Officials, Information Management Officers, Federal Library Managers, Contract Library Managers, and EPA staff.

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. EPA's website is the primary conduit for public access to its information, including general information, program actions and activities, regulations, data, science, and educational materials. Access to EPA publications is also required by federal law, regulation, or policy through channels such as the Government Printing Office (GPO) and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS). However, the libraries of the EPA National Library Network also play a pivotal role in responding to public inquiries by developing tools such as the Online Library System (OLS) to assist the public in locating information, by managing collections such as print and electronic document repositories, and by providing expert assistance in organizing information for efficient retrieval, regardless of format. These procedures address ways in which EPA libraries will continue to facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information.

5. AUTHORITY

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

6. PROCEDURES

6.1 Principles of Non-Discrimination

- 6.1.1 EPA libraries will respond to information requests without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.
- 6.1.2 EPA libraries will accommodate persons with special needs in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended.
- 6.1.3 EPA libraries will provide appropriate access for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), to the extent resources allow.

6.2 EPA Library Collection Management Activities

- 6.2.1 EPA libraries will facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information through the following activities within their scope and capability:
 - 6.2.1.1 Information selection and acquisition.
 - 6.2.1.1.1 EPA libraries will select and acquire materials that reflect the range of Agency activities, including basic and applied sciences, environmental law and regulations, policy and planning, administration, management, and information technology.
 - 6.2.1.1.2 EPA libraries should strive to identify and catalog electronic EPA publications and other online materials that meet the criteria for inclusion in the library's collection, regardless of whether or not they are held onsite in a print format.
 - 6.2.1.2 Information management and organization.
 - 6.2.1.2.1 EPA libraries will work to ensure that applicable EPA documents, regardless of their format, are assigned and organized by EPA publication numbers.
 - 6.2.1.2.2 EPA libraries will work to ensure access to EPA documents and Agency information released to the public in both physical and electronic formats, whenever possible.
 - 6.2.1.3 Information retention and archiving.
 - 6.2.1.3.1 As appropriate, EPA libraries will ensure that EPA documents in their collections are included in the Agency's digital archive of environmental publications, the National Environmental Publications Internet Site (NEPIS), the database behind the National Service Center for Environmental Publication (NSCEP) website. See the Digitization Processes for EPA Libraries procedure for further details.
 - 6.2.1.3.2 EPA libraries will ensure that EPA documents related to environmental mission activities are retained in hard-copy form in repository libraries as appropriate. See the EPA Repository Library Management Procedures for further details.
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6.3 Physical Access to EPA Libraries

- 6.3.1 EPA libraries will provide access for public visitors at least twenty-four hours per week over at least four days on a walk-in basis or by appointment during core business hours.
 - 6.3.1.1 Core business hours are defined as 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. local time.
 - 6.3.1.2 The mechanism for public access to the library and its resources may vary to some extent, depending on local facilities and security requirements of individual sites. Some libraries may be open for walk-in public access while some may require access by appointment.
- 6.3.2 All EPA libraries will provide current hours of access, contact information, and other access considerations on Web pages maintained by the EPA National Library Network. EPA libraries will notify the Network of changes to this information to ensure timely updates.

6.4 Mechanisms for Information Access

Information access falls into two major categories: unassisted access through epa.gov Web pages and the Frequent Questions database; and assisted access through in-person visits to a library or remote inquiries mediated by library staff.

The following guidelines should assist EPA libraries in determining appropriate levels of access:

6.4.1 Unassisted Access

This category includes any Agency materials available online, accessible to anyone with computer access. EPA librarians will support the development of websites and systems to assist users in locating information on their own. The Network provides access to library resources and Agency information through the following Internet-based sites and systems:

- 6.4.1.1 EPA National Library Network website (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries>), which points users to a consistent set of links of national scope.
- 6.4.1.2 Individual EPA library Web pages (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries/libraries.htm>), which include uniformly-organized information about points of contact, hours of operation, and borrowing policies, with both national and location-specific links.
- 6.4.1.3 Online Library System (OLS) (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries/ols.htm>), a publicly-accessible catalog of EPA library collections representing items that have been selected, acquired, and organized by EPA libraries.
- 6.4.1.4 NSCEP website (<http://www.epa.gov/nscep>), the Agency's digital archive of full-text EPA publications, freely available for downloading and ordering in hard-copy formats when available.
- 6.4.1.5 Frequent Questions (<http://publicaccess.custhelp.com>), a knowledgebase and self-service reference system with commonly requested information about EPA issues.
- 6.4.1.6 EPA librarian-supported Web pages, including the EPA Browse Topics and other Agency top-level navigation and sidebar pages.
- 6.4.1.7 Other websites identified or developed to enhance and cross-reference the core websites, above.

6.4.2 Assisted Access

This category includes mechanisms through which library staff interact with the public to facilitate access to Agency information.

6.4.2.1 In-person visits.

All EPA libraries provide access to public visitors, either on a walk-in basis or by appointment.

6.4.2.1.1 In addition to their library Web pages, EPA libraries should post hours, contact information, and other access considerations at the library's entrance, in the building lobby, or other locations as deemed appropriate. Any restrictions should be clearly stated on signage or communicated when an appointment to visit the library is made.

6.4.2.1.2 Access to materials and equipment within the library may include:

6.4.2.1.2.1 Offsite Consequences Analysis (OCA) Reading Room.

6.4.2.1.2.2 Other reading room(s) designated by the library for reviewing materials.

6.4.2.1.2.3 Library physical collections (e.g., books, reports, microforms, journals, maps, audio-visual materials).

6.4.2.1.2.4 Library electronic collections, as appropriate and allowable under license agreements (e.g., databases, CD-ROMs).

6.4.2.1.2.5 Computers designated for use by the public, which may limit access to certain websites or Local Area Network (LAN) drives for security and licensing reasons.

6.4.2.1.2.6 Photocopy machines with clear policies on copying limits and copyright notices prominently displayed.

6.4.2.1.2.7 Microfiche reader-printers and other specialized equipment with clear policies on printing limits, if applicable.

6.4.2.2 Reference and research services.

All EPA libraries provide core reference and research services to the public to facilitate public access to Agency information. See the EPA Library Reference and Research Services Procedures for further information.

6.4.2.2.1 Public reference services may include:

6.4.2.2.1.1 Reference on EPA topics using free sources of information. Fee-based sources must be used in accordance with license agreements.

6.4.2.2.1.2 Instruction and information on the library and its resources, including the use of the Online Library System (OLS) and CD-ROMs or other library media.

6.4.2.2.1.3 Referral to other EPA information sources.

6.4.2.2.1.3.1 EPA library staff should refer media inquiries to the local media officer in accordance with Agency policy and local procedures.

6.4.2.2.1.3.2 EPA library staff should refer inquiries requiring an interpretation of EPA regulations to appropriate staff experts.

6.4.2.2.1.3.3 Toll-free numbers will be provided as points of contact when available.

6.4.2.2.1.4 Information on how to order and/or access EPA publications through the Agency's publication center, NSCEP.

6.4.2.2.1.5 Individual public tours as time permits. Group tours for the public are normally arranged in advance in accordance with local policies and procedures.

6.4.2.3 Mechanisms for public reference services include:

6.4.2.3.1 Telephone, fax, postal mail

6.4.2.3.1.1 In addition to their library Web pages, EPA libraries may also list telephone and fax numbers and mailing address in the local telephone book, or through other appropriate means.

6.4.2.3.1.2 All EPA libraries should have a standard voicemail greeting for the main library telephone number that conveys hours of operation and other appropriate information to callers (e.g., expected response time).

6.4.2.3.2 E-mail

6.4.2.3.2.1 Every EPA library should maintain a group e-mail box as its primary point of contact rather than a personal e-mail address.

6.4.2.3.2.2 Every EPA library should establish local triage procedures for answering and forwarding queries from their group e-mail box. Depending on local resources and formal arrangements with other libraries, it may be appropriate to forward certain questions to a lead service center or to the Agency's public access mailbox for Frequent Questions.

6.4.2.3.3 Other mechanisms for responding to public inquiries:

6.4.2.3.3.1 Hotlines

6.4.2.3.3.1.1 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. EPA libraries managing hotlines or similar functions should strive to answer and/or transfer calls with accuracy.

6.4.2.3.3.1.2 Statistics for services rendered through hotlines, public information centers or other similar services are not included as part of EPA library reference and research services statistics, which are reported to the Network on a monthly basis.

6.4.2.3.3.2 Virtual reference systems/knowledgebases

6.4.2.3.3.2.1 National or regional virtual reference systems/knowledgebases may include the option for users to follow up with EPA library staff if the self-service options do not answer their questions.

6.4.2.3.3.2.2 Public access reference via the Frequent Questions knowledgebase is not counted as part of EPA library reference and research services statistics.

6.4.2.3.3.2.3 Network statistics are reported for chat reference and Submit a Question reference via the Ask a Librarian reference service.

6.4.2.4 Interlibrary loan (ILL)/document delivery services

EPA libraries participate in an international cooperative borrowing and lending system, commonly referred to as ILL. This allows EPA libraries to loan materials to other libraries and their patrons, especially in cases where walk-in access is inconvenient.

6.4.2.4.1 EPA libraries will use OCLC systems as the primary mechanism for managing ILL requests. EPA libraries should also accept requests from other libraries through a variety of alternate mechanisms, such as approved ALA forms and/or DOCLINE.

6.4.2.4.2 EPA libraries provide public access to their materials through ILL services. Members of the public must request EPA library materials through their local public, academic, or special library. See the EPA Library Interlibrary

Loan/Document Delivery Procedures for further information.

6.5 Standards for Customer Service and Timeliness

6.5.1 EPA libraries will adhere to the Agency's Customer Service and Public Access Standards when responding to patrons. These standards apply to requests for general information from the public, but do not apply where legal requirements take precedence, such as FOIA inquiries. Individual library Statements of Work should include language to address standards for customer service and timeliness.

6.5.1.1 Standard response times include:

6.5.1.1.1 Responding to all phone calls by the end of the next business day.

6.5.1.1.2 Responding to correspondence within 10 business days.

6.5.2 EPA libraries will establish and follow local guidelines for responding to patrons.

6.6 Reporting and Statistics

6.6.1 EPA libraries will maintain and report statistics for core library services areas, including walk-in traffic, reference and research services, and interlibrary loan/document delivery. Statistics for these functions will be maintained and reported whether performed onsite or offsite, as required by the EPA Library Usage Statistics Procedures and the respective Statements of Work (SOW).

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

EPA. Customer Service Public Access Standards, updated 10/13/2010 (<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/feedback/standards.htm>).

EPA National Library Network. EPA Library Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery Procedures, dated 10/20/2010 (http://intranet.epa.gov/librarynetwork/moving_forward.html).

EPA Office of Environmental Information. CIO 2171-S-01. Customer Service and Public Access Standards, dated 01/24/2008 (<http://intranet.epa.gov/oei/imitpolicy/qic/ciopolicy/2171-s-01.pdf>).

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Government Libraries Section and the Government Information and Official Publications Section. Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments (IFLA Professional Reports, No. 106), dated 2008 (<http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s4/pubs/Profrep106.pdf>).

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information: The Assistant Administrator, OEI, as the CIO for the Agency, has the overall responsibility for the governance and coordination of the EPA National Library Network, including establishing policy and supporting procedures, standards, and guidance to ensure the effective oversight of the EPA National Library Network.

Assistant Administrators and Regional Administrators: Assistant Administrators and Regional Administrators with libraries within the EPA National Library Network have the overall responsibility for the overall management of their individual libraries, for compliance with Agency-wide policies, procedures, standards and guidance relating to the Library Network and to ensure that their individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission.

National Library Program Manager: The National Library Program Manager has the day-to-day responsibility to provide assistance and guidance to offices in the operation of the EPA National Library Network and to ensure that the individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission. The National Library Program Manager resides in OEI's Office of Information Analysis and Access.

Federal Library Managers: The Federal Library Managers have first-line responsibility for operation of physical Network libraries and provision of library services and to ensure that their individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission.

9. DEFINITIONS

Access: The ability of members of the public to obtain information from a government agency. 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 or, more broadly, the ability of a user to reach data stored on a computer or computer system.

Acquisitions: The process of selecting, ordering, and receiving materials for library or collections by purchase, exchange, or gift. The process may include budgeting and negotiating with outside agencies, such as publishers, dealers, and vendors, to obtain resources to meet the needs of the institution's clientele in the most economical and expeditious manner.

Archiving: Placing documents in storage, usually to preserve them as a historical or informational, legal, or evidential record, permanently or for a finite or indefinite period of time. Can refer to physical or electronic storage.

Catalog: A comprehensive inventory of the books, periodicals, maps, and other materials in a given library collection, arranged in systematic order to facilitate retrieval (usually alphabetically by author, title, and/or subject). In most modern libraries, the card catalog has been converted to machine-readable bibliographic records and is available online. The catalog for the EPA National Library Network is the Online Library System (OLS).

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 usually 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.

EPA Document/Publication: An official EPA publication in any format, with a special alpha-numeric identifier known as an EPA publication number.

EPA National Library Network: A national network composed of EPA libraries and repositories located in the Agency's Headquarters, Regional and Field Offices, Research Centers, and specialized laboratories, as well as Web-based access to electronic collections. Network libraries are defined as those libraries with an official membership presence in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) system. Centralized network coordination comes from the Agency's Office of Environmental Information. Individual EPA libraries are administered by a range of offices in conjunction with contract staff.

EPA Publication Number: An alphanumeric number assigned to official EPA publications. It groups publications by the Office or Division that publishes the work, the type of publication (report, fact sheet, CD-ROM, etc.), the year of publication, and by the order in which it fell in that year's publications for the Office or Division responsible. The EPA publication number is included in a searchable field in the cataloging record.

Equipment: The federal government defines equipment as an item of non-expendable, tangible personal property, having a useful life of more than one year and a unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or greater.

ILL: See Interlibrary Loan.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL): The process by which a library requests materials from, or supplies materials to, another library. This service is provided upon request of a library user for materials not available in the local library.

Materials: Items within the library collection that may include books, journals, reports, miscellaneous publications, microform, multimedia, and other physical objects. Generally, library materials do not include official records, but convenience copies of records may be included.

Microfiche: A small card-shaped sheet of photographic film designed for storing miniaturized text and/or microimages arranged sequentially in a two-dimensional grid.

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 to some extent.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): A memorandum signed by more than one agency or organization that promises cooperation or coordination on a specific issue, project, or agenda.

MOU: See Memorandum of Understanding.

National Environmental Publications Internet Site (NEPIS): EPA's electronic publications database behind the National Service Center for Environmental Publication (NSCEP) website. NEPIS

was launched in 1997 and in January 2007 was integrated under the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP). In 2010 the NEPIS term was phased out of public branding for NSCEP and retained for internal use only.

National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP): Based in Cincinnati, NSCEP maintains and distributes EPA publications in hardcopy, CD-ROM and other multi-media formats. The NSCEP website also serves as a repository for and online gateway to free, electronic copies of EPA publications.

National Technical Information Service (NTIS): NTIS serves as a central information dissemination resource for U.S. Federal Government technical reports and other government-funded scientific, technical, engineering, and business related information. NTIS' basic authority to operate a permanent clearinghouse of scientific and technical information is codified as chapter 23 of Title 15 of the United States Code (15 U.S.C. 1151-1157).

NEPIS: See National Environmental Publications Internet Site.

NSCEP: See National Service Center for Environmental Publications.

NTIS: See National Technical Information Service.

OCA Reading Room: See Offsite Consequence Analysis Reading Room.

OCLC: See Online Computer Library Center.

Offsite Consequence Analysis (OCA) Reading Room: A legally-mandated (PL 106-40) reading room that provides access to Offsite Consequence Analysis (OCA) information, primarily risk management plans submitted to EPA by chemical facilities as required by the Clean Air Act. Access to an OCA Reading Room may vary in terms of walk-in or appointment-only policies.

OLS: See Online Library System.

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC): OCLC is a nonprofit, membership-based, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs. OCLC maintains the largest catalog and interlibrary loan network in the world, which assist librarians and the general public with locating, acquiring, cataloging, lending, borrowing and preserving library materials.

Online Library System (OLS): The online catalog for the EPA Library Network, which provides bibliographic records for the items residing in EPA libraries and links to documents on environmental topics on the Internet. OLS allows searches by author, title, subject heading, any standard numbers that are assigned to the work, classification number, and allows for keyword searching of the record.

Patrons: Anyone authorized to use the materials and services of the library. May include EPA staff, contractors and/or the public.

Physical Collection: The materials, whether books, maps, microforms, scrolls, CD-ROMs, DVDs or any other items that physically reside in a library or its storage space and are managed by one or more mechanisms of bibliographic control.

Preserve: 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.

Public Information Centers: Space where EPA Regions provide local public access to their documents. This sometimes occurs in the Regional library's reading room, but it can also happen in a custom space for that purpose. In some cases the public may be able to view Agency records at these locations.

Public Visitor: Person who is not employed by EPA but uses the library in person to obtain library services, to use materials in the physical collection or to access public EPA databases.

Reading Room: A space open to patrons, which provides seating and working areas for using library materials and library services. A library can exist without a reading room, in which case, in order for patrons to use its physical materials they must check them out of the library and use them in their office or other space outside the library. A reading room may serve more than just the library. Often reading rooms in EPA Regions are used as public information centers.

Reference: Services provided by library staff to meet the information needs of patrons (in person, by telephone, or electronically), including but not limited to answering questions, instructing users in the selection and use of appropriate tools and techniques for finding information, conducting searches on behalf of the patron, directing users to the location of library resources, assisting in the evaluation of information, referring patrons to resources outside the library when appropriate.

Repository Library: A central place where library collections are stored and made accessible. EPA repository libraries collect and preserve EPA documents and other materials deemed of value to the EPA National Library Network.

Services: Any service provided by the library. The most common services are answering questions and conducting research (known as reference), providing access to online databases, and interlibrary loan to retrieve materials from other libraries.

Signage: A collective term for all the static visual symbols and devices posted in a library to direct patrons to specific resources, services, and facilities, and to inform them of library hours, policies, programs, and events, including their size, design, and placement. Signs that are clear, concise, consistent, courteous, and appropriately placed can significantly reduce the number of directional questions received at the reference desk and make using the library less stressful, especially for inexperienced patrons. To comply with ADA requirements, many libraries in the United States have added Braille to signs posted within physical reach of users. In libraries that serve a significant number of non-English-speaking patrons, signs may be provided in more than one language. An effort is made in new construction and major renovations to avoid a piecemeal approach by

incorporating the style and placement of signs into the overall interior design.

SOW: See Statement of Work.

Stacks: The area of a library where the main body of the collection (usually books and periodicals) is stored when not in use, usually on rows of free-standing double-faced shelving. In some libraries, the stacks are closed to the public, but most libraries in the United States allow patrons to browse all or part of their primary collections in open stacks.

Statement of Work (SOW): A specific statement regarding the requirements needed in a service contract. The statement of work should include all aspects of job requirements, performance and assessment.

Walk-in Visitors: The number of persons who physically enter library facilities in a defined time period, regardless of reason. Library and building/maintenance staff are not included.

10. WAIVERS

Waivers to these procedures 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) through the Director of the Office of Environmental Information, Office of Information Analysis and Access (OIAA).

11. RELATED POLICIES, STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

The following related policies, standards, and guidance documents are available on the Office of Environmental Information Policy page (<http://epa.gov/irmpoli8/policies/index.html>):

CIO 2170.1-P-02. EPA Library Reference and Research Services Procedures

CIO 2170.1-P-03. EPA Library Repository Management Procedures

CIO 2170.1-P-04. EPA Library Usage Statistics Procedures

CIO 2170.1-P-05. Digitization Processes for EPA Libraries

CIO 2171.0. Information Access Policy

CIO 2171-P-01. Information Access Procedures

12. MATERIAL SUPERSEDED

These procedures supersede the EPA Library Systems Manual 2130, dated January 1977.

13. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information about these procedures, please contact the Policy and Program Management Branch of the Information Access Division in Office of Information Analysis and Access, Office of Environmental Information.



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