Mary & Jeff Bell library has been a depository for federal documents since 1976, serving both campus users and community users of the 27th Congressional District. We receive approximately 47% of all publications distributed by the Federal Depository Library Program. Historically, most government information was distributed in print or on microform. While there is still a lot of information published in those media, now there is also a great deal available online.

Bell Library is also a depository for the Texas State Publications Depository Program. These documents are published by all state agencies and sent to the depository libraries. All state depository libraries receive the same number of publications. Interested parties may review the library's policies concerning government documents here.

FAQ

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What are government documents?
"Government documents" is the generic term for information distributed by the federal and state governments via their respective official depository programs. In particular, the federal government publishes and distributes information on virtually all areas of American life, including education, health, security, and science. The federal government also publishes information about its own undertakings so that American citizens can inform themselves about what actions the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government take. Examples include current and proposed laws (ex: the PATRIOT Act), current and proposed regulations (ex: those governing what businesses may and may not do), and decisions made in federal courts (the circuit courts and the Supreme Court). Government information is available in multiple formats: traditional print documents, microfilm and microfiche, CD-ROMs and DVDs, and online.

How do I find government documents?
Reference assistance is available from the Government Documents staff and from staff members working the Reference Desk. You can contact the Reference by phone at 361-825-2609.

Most federal documents published in 1976 or afterwards, as well as Texas state documents published after 2001, are accessible in the library's online catalog, Portal. Please contact the Reference Desk for assistance.

Another option is the U.S. government's online catalog. This catalog has many government documents online. A 'Title keyword' search plus the first few words of the title you are looking for may return the document you want, full-text (usually as a PDF).

How do I find CD-ROMs or DVDs?
The government issues some publications and data on CD-ROMs or DVDs. If a CD-ROM or DVD is needed, patrons should, when possible, contact Government Documents staff before coming to the library. If a CD-ROM cannot be immediately loaded, special arrangements will be made.
**How do I check out a government document?**
Most print government documents may be checked out at the Circulation Desk. Campus users (students, faculty, and staff) may check out most print government documents. Undergraduate loan periods are 3 weeks; graduates, faculty, and staff loan periods are 6 weeks. Items may be renewed. Please see Circulation Policies for more details.

**How do I make copies?**
Copiers are available for copying print items ($0.08/page), and each microform reader has its own printer ($0.10/page).

**How do I get a government document the library does not own?**
Campus users (students, faculty, and staff) may request items that Bell Library does not own via InterLibrary Loan. Other Library users are referred to their local public libraries for interlibrary loan services. Note: Bell Library replies to all InterLibrary Loan requests for government documents unless the materials do not circulate (ex. reference materials) or cannot be photocopied or scanned.

**Are there other depository libraries nearby?**
Yes, there are several options.

- Texas A&M-Kingsville (federal and state)
- University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (federal and state)
- University of Texas - Pan American in Edinburg (federal and state)
- Corpus Christi Public Library (state only)

**Bell Library Government Documents Policies**

- Government Documents Collection Development Policy [PDF]
- Internet Use/Access to Electronic Government

Please send comments or suggestions about this page to Edward.Kownslar at Edward.Kownslar@tamucc.edu, 361-825-2677, Government Documents Librarian.

- Government Document Staff
- Government Document Hours