I. General Purpose

This policy defines the purpose of the reference collection and describes the desired scope of the collection.

The Reference Collection Development Policy Statement and its selection criteria are primarily intended to be used by librarians as a planning and working tool to ensure consistent and balanced growth and maintenance of the Reference Collection. This document can also be used to aid in communication with the students, faculty, and staff of the Iowa State University community. Where the Reference Collection is named in this policy that includes both print and electronic resources.

The primary purpose of the Reference Collection of the Parks Library is to support study, research, and instruction in all subject areas taught at ISU. The collection serves the reference needs of a broad spectrum of users which includes the Iowa State University community, and patrons not affiliated in any way with the University. It brings together a variety of reference materials, in both print and online formats, which are most often needed by both librarians and patrons. Since researchers represent a wide variety of demands, resources not specifically related to the curriculum are also provided.

The Reference Collection Development policy is designed to:

- Clarify responsibility for building and maintaining the Reference Collection.
- Set parameters for the scope of the Reference Collection.

II. General Collection Guidelines

Circulation

With the exception of volumes at the Research Help Desk, print materials in the Reference Collection circulate for 1 week and are not eligible for renewal. These materials are eligible to be sent out on Interlibrary Loan (but in-library use only).

Research Help Desk titles and Standards Center materials are non-circulating.

Electronic Products

Electronic products are an increasingly predominant format in the Reference Collection. Librarians place a higher priority on purchasing resources in electronic form, where coverage and cost are not an impediment. The University Library enters into license agreements with vendors for various electronic products. Stipulations of these agreements may include one or

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more of the following: limits on the number of simultaneous users, limits on methods of access, limits on categories of users entitled to use a product, restrictions on the uses of data or information retrieved from a resource. The Library is contractually bound to uphold the terms of license agreements for electronic products. The University Library does not knowingly allow products to be used for purposes which violate the intent of license agreements. The University Library reserves the right to refuse access to an electronic product if, in its judgment, the product will be used in a manner or for a purpose which jeopardizes the Library's license agreement with a vendor.

We strive to acquire electronic resources that are accessible for persons with disabilities and all our communities. Toward this end, we make accessibility inquiries and testing a standard part of the selection to acquisition process. We make informed and intentional decisions, as well as communicate with vendors the ongoing need for products that are accessible to people with disabilities and all our users.

**Selection of Resources**
The development and management of the Reference Collection is the joint responsibility of the Head of the Research Services Department, Reference Collection maintenance staff and Research Services librarians. All members of the department are expected to participate by recommending materials to be acquired, evaluating current reference resources for withdrawal from the collection and/or replacement, and performing other collection development functions as needed.

Suggestions for the Ready Reference Collection (at the Parks Library Main Desk) are made by all staff members who work at the desk. (See Ready Reference section later in this document).

**Physical Maintenance of the Reference Collection**
The Reference Collection maintenance staff is responsible for the processing of all materials and resources in the collection. This staff handles the newly received materials, identifies and prepares materials for transfer, withdrawal and bindery. Specific guidelines and procedures are contained in the unit’s handbook for reference maintenance. The staff of this unit consults with the Research Services Department Head concerning non-routine matters and to make decisions as needed. Subject librarians are responsible for ongoing weeding of outdated materials.

**III. Specific Collection Guidelines**

**Non-Subject Parameters**

**Chronological**: In general, the most current materials available in a subject area are selected for the collection. Retrospective materials may be selected and/or retained as needed to serve our user population. The aim, however, is to acquire and retain works which are currently the most authoritative in their fields. Superseded or out-of-date editions will be transferred to the General Collection, Storage, or withdrawn.
Geographical: Selection of materials is not geographically but topically based, in that all areas relevant to the University's learning and research are considered for inclusion in the collection. Special emphasis is on Iowa-related documents, where such emphasis is warranted (e.g., Iowa agriculture, Iowa businesses).

Online Access: Many Reference resources are available online. Availability of quality, free online information is considered when choosing reference materials. There may be cases where multiple modes of access to a resource are desirable. In general, there should be no duplication of print and electronic resources; print materials entirely duplicated in electronic form should be moved or withdrawn from the collection unless they are ISU-related or of local interest.

Linguistic: to a great extent, the collection is in English and Western European languages, but there are no language restrictions and the emphasis is on appropriate material in any language which supports the subjects and languages taught at the University and meets patrons' needs.

Treatment of subject: Scholarly and authoritatively informational works, appropriate for use at undergraduate, graduate, and research levels, are selected. Popular treatments may be selectively acquired to serve patrons’ needs. The library does not normally include consumer-oriented publications in the Reference Collection. Examples of these publications include: travel guides, genealogy resources, test preparation guides, hobby guides (coins, stamps, antiques, etc.), auto mechanics manuals, and personal finance.

Types of materials
Note: A title is not automatically included in Reference simply because it fits one of these categories.

Abbreviations and Acronyms
Most abbreviations and acronyms can be readily found via the Internet so these types of materials are excluded from Reference purchases.

Almanacs, Annuals and Yearbooks
The latest editions of selected almanacs from the United States and internationally are included in the Reference Collection.

Atlases
Atlases in the Reference Collection are acquired to provide patrons with general atlases that cover the United States and/or the world. Oversized atlases that cannot be shelved in the Reference Collection stacks reside in the Media Center.

Bibliographies
The Reference Collection includes only bibliographies that are of a broad reference nature. Bibliographies with a narrow scope, such as single author or subject bibliographies, are ordinarily not housed in the Reference Collection.
**Biographical Materials**
Biographical materials include indexes to biographies, retrospective dictionaries, encyclopedias, and a small selection of "who's who" types of materials. The vast majority are available through biographical databases.

**Career Materials**
Emphasis is placed on materials concerning employment opportunities for ISU students and some general employment related materials such as career encyclopedias and basic resume writing tools. Books about specific individual careers (e.g., careers for microbiologists; how to be a stock broker) are housed in the General Collection rather than in Reference. To ensure currency of information, the titles should be no more than five years old.

**College and University Information**
Emphasis is on general guides to post-secondary educational institutions, programs and scholarships. In addition, information about educational opportunities supplementary to education at ISU such as internships and study abroad is included.

**Concordances**
Only concordances to Shakespeare, and to significant sacred works related to selected world religions will be included in the Reference Collection.

**Dictionaries and Thesauri, Language**
The objective is to acquire the most scholarly and authoritative dictionaries available, where the content does not overlap with what is freely available online. Juvenile, concise, and pocket dictionaries are generally excluded.

**English language dictionaries**: An extensive collection of general, etymological, and specialized dictionaries of dialects, slang, and synonyms are purchased for the Library collections; however, only a small collection of them will be kept in Reference. The remainder are housed in the General Collection.

**Foreign language dictionaries**: For those languages taught or widely spoken at the University or in which there is significant scholarly research, a small, select collection of general, polyglot and etymological dictionaries is maintained in the Reference Collection. Specialized books, or those on less-requested languages, are housed in the General Collection.

**Dictionaries, Specialized**
Subject-specific dictionaries are collected if they reflect the programs of the University. Highly specialized dictionaries are housed in the General Collection.

**Directories**
Latest editions of a few general, broad-based directories not available on the Internet are in the Reference Collection. City directories are available for Ames and Des Moines only.
Telephone Directories: The Parks Library Main Desk has print copies of a few current Iowa phone directories such as Ames and Des Moines. We do not attempt to collect more directories due to cost and because of the availability of such information on the Internet.

Encyclopedias
Encyclopedias are very selectively purchased for the Reference Collection. Wikipedia has replaced the need for many general encyclopedias.

Geographical Sources
A limited number of basic materials including gazetteers are acquired. These include some electronic products which can be used with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. The Media Center also holds some general geographic sources. Specialized and oversized materials are housed in the Media Center.

Handbooks and Manuals
Heavily used/cited subject-specific handbooks and manuals are appropriate for the Reference Collection.

Indexes and Other Bibliographic Databases
A vast array of indexes are available in a variety of formats to support the curriculum and research needs of the University. Database renewals are based on usage data, price increases, and whether or not the information is duplicated elsewhere.

Legal Materials
Current editions of basic legal reference sources, such as compilations of laws, rules and regulations, encyclopedias and digests, are an integral part of the Reference Collection. Since ISU does not have a law school, specialized legal materials are generally not acquired unless they are integral to the ISU curriculum (e.g., books about the Farm Bill, hot topic legislation such as No Child Left Behind or Right to be Forgotten, and basic patent resource guides).

Medical Materials
A limited number of basic, current general medical reference works such as encyclopedias and medical information finding aids are part of the Reference Collection. More subject-specific titles can be found in the General Collection or the Veterinary Medical Library.

Ready Reference
The Ready Reference collection is a specialized subset of the print Reference Collection, located at the Parks Library Main Desk. It is used to answer quick, factual queries. This collection is not intended to satisfy answers to queries of an in-depth nature. Because of the limited space allocated to the Ready Reference Collection, it should only include heavy use, quick fact and short answer materials.

Religious Materials
The Reference Collection includes a small selection of English translations of significant sacred
works related to selected major world religions.

**Standards**
Major sets of industry standards from U.S. government agencies, national standards organizations and professional societies are a vital part of the Reference Collection. The Library has a subscription to ASTM standards via the *ASTM Compass*. Standards from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) are purchased through a large (but not comprehensive) standing order.

The ISU Library Standards Collection is a historical collection with superseded standards retained indefinitely as well as the most current standards. The Standards Center collection is housed in two sequences. The primary sequence is the ANSI filing cabinets where the standards are arranged by their ANSI standard numbers. The second area is the book shelves next to the cabinets where the larger standards (i.e. hard bound or glued binding) are kept in LC call number order. Older and less-frequently used standards collections from smaller organizations are housed in the General Collection.

**Statistical Information**
The Reference Collection includes selected current sources of national, international, state and broad specialized subject area statistics, and major sources of historical statistics.

**Style Manuals**
The Ready Reference Collection includes one copy of each of the major style manuals. As feasible, these manuals or examples of them will also be made available online.

**Subject and Course Guides**
These online guides are an important part of the Reference Collection. Librarians can refer patrons to them for research help, tutorials on various subjects and resources, and guidelines for practice. Librarians can also use the guides to assist researchers, especially to help locate resources outside librarian areas of expertise.

**Theses and Dissertations**
Major indexes for locating theses and dissertations are available in electronic format.

**IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION, UPDATING AND WEEDING**

Given the nature of reference materials, it is vital that the Reference Collection be constantly maintained and updated. This maintenance involves both identifying new resources and the removal of those that are no longer appropriate for providing reference service. As new information becomes available, it often replaces, supersedes or contradicts information that existed previously. When new editions of print materials are received, older editions are removed from the Reference Collection. They may be sent to the General Collection or Storage, if they have historical value, otherwise they will be withdrawn.

V. Creation Date
April, 1998

VI. Revision History
Revised: November 2000, November 2009, August 2014, July 2019