

Ramsey County Law Library Collection Development Policy

2022

I. Introduction

A. Mission of the Ramsey County Law Library

The mission of the Ramsey County Law Library is to provide the best legal information services to its patrons, using print and online material, in the most cost-effective manner. Legal information is a basic component of access to justice.

B. Purpose of the Collection Development Policy

This policy is intended to serve as a guide to the acquisition and retention of materials as well as the development of the Ramsey County Law Library collection. The law library's acquisition policy is based upon the needs of the law library and the needs of the public, private bar, courts, and county.

The Ramsey County Law Library is constantly growing and changing in response to public needs and to new information technologies. The collection development policy must be a "living document" that grows and changes to meet the needs of the law library and its users. The Ramsey County Law Library Director (hereinafter "Director") will continuously review and propose revisions to the policy as needed to respond to new resources, technologies, and patron demands. The policy and its proposed revisions are subject to the approval of the Ramsey County Law Library Board of Trustees.

II. Collection Development Principles

A. Responsibility for Selection

The Director is responsible for review and selection of materials for purchase. The Director will abide by the criteria stated in these guidelines. All purchases must be in the best interest of the Ramsey County Law Library and subject to the discretionary review of the Ramsey County Law Library Board of Trustees. The Director will solicit and welcome suggestions and recommendations from staff, the public, and the legal community for the acquisition and retention of materials.

B. Selection Criteria for Law Library Materials

The Director will use the following criteria to select items to add to the library collection.

1. Potential use by the bench, bar, county government, and community
2. Significance of the subject matter (Minnesota priority)
3. Resources for self-represented litigants including Limited English Proficiency (LEP) materials
4. State and federal district court practitioner related subject matter
5. Relevance to the collection
6. Currency and permanent value
7. Reputation of the author
8. Reputation of the publisher or producer
9. Appearance of the title in review sources
10. Availability of alternative formats (e.g., Internet or electronic sources)
11. Price
12. Format and technical support
13. Physical quality
14. Duplication
15. Maintenance

C. The Law Library's Relationship to the Bench and Bar

The Ramsey County Law Library is a county entity that provides the largest possible legal research collection for its users. As a full-service legal research facility, the law library recognizes a responsibility to the bench and bar of the county. Materials relating to trial court practice and to solo and small law firm management are priorities in selection. Attorneys and judges are encouraged to use the collection and facilities of the law library.

D. The Law Library's Relationship to the General Public

The law library partners with others in the legal community to strengthen access to justice for non-attorney users. The library provides print and online self-help materials that facilitate access to the courts and to general legal information. Self-help services for the general public include the provision of physical space, equipment, resources, referrals, and brief advice clinics staffed by pro bono volunteers.

E. The Law Library's Relationship to Other Minnesota Law Libraries

The law library catalogs the materials in its collection by contracting for services at the Minnesota State Law Library. The law library participates in an online union catalog that lists the holdings of the state law library and many other Minnesota county law libraries. If an item is not in the Ramsey County Law Library collection, the library will refer users to external libraries; in the case of the Minnesota State Law Library, staff at the Ramsey County Law Library can courier materials from the state law library location to the Ramsey County Law Library.

F. Current Materials v. Retrospective Materials

The law library will purchase current materials to develop two core areas: current materials for ongoing collections already in the library and new titles for areas that are new or developing interests. Current materials will have priority over historic and retrospective materials. However, the library will purchase retrospective materials to replace older volumes missing from essential core collections.

G. Non-print Media

The library collection includes materials in many media formats. Formats available at present include traditional books and periodicals, computer databases, microfiche, videotape, audiotape, compact disc, and DVDs. The law library acquires materials for the most effective, efficient access of information by its patrons, and while cost efficiencies may impact a choice of format, it is not the only consideration that applies in selection. The library considers the preferences of its users when deciding which format to purchase for the library. The Director also considers ease of use, accessibility, and technological lifespan.

1. Microfiche

The library has a large collection of microfiche consisting of primary Minnesota materials, attorney general opinions, and law journals. The only microfiche that is currently updated is for the Minnesota appellate court briefs. The collection goes back to 1983. Currently, this is the only format available for a comprehensive collection of Minnesota briefs. The library has a microfiche reader for those who wish to view any of the materials on microfiche.

2. Audio and Video Cassettes, CDs and DVDs

The law library owns a collection of videocassettes, audiotapes, CDs, and DVDs. They are maintained for their content related to trial skills and practice tips. These formats have much lesser importance, and only DVDs are considered for future acquisition.

H. Online and Computerized Resources

The law library subscribes to Westlaw, PACER, and the LexisNexis Digital Library.

The library's Westlaw subscription provides a very robust collection of primary and secondary resources and practice and analytical materials in many subject areas. PACER provides access to federal court dockets and case information. Both PACER and Westlaw must be used inside the library and are available at no cost on the library's public workstations. The LexisNexis Digital library provides free, remote access to e-Book resources so that authorized users can use resources outside of the library.

Many valuable print resources are duplicated in electronic format in the library collection. Criteria for choosing electronic resources include user need, ease of access, comprehensiveness, and cost. Cost and access issues may preempt user need in deciding whether or not the library acquires materials in electronic format.

I. Duplication and Multiple Copies

The library purchases multiple copies of heavily used materials such as MN CLE Deskbooks and Minnesota practitioner materials. Duplicate copies of items are purchased if experience demonstrates that there is high user demand for an item.

J. Gifts and Donations

The library director may accept gifts without conditions from the donor. Gifts may be used in any appropriate way for the support of the law library. The law library's collection development policy fully applies to gifts and donations. The library director will not assign a monetary value or appraise donated materials. Written acknowledgment is provided to the donor.

1. Library Judicial Portrait Collection—the library has a separate portrait accessions policy that was approved by the law library board. All judicial portraits are gifts to the library.

K. Weeding the Collection

The law library will weed materials that need to be removed or withdrawn. These include outdated, worn, or damaged materials. Weeding determinations are based upon the following factors:

1. Potential use by the bench, bar, and community

2. Significance of the subject matter
3. Availability of other materials on the subject
4. Relevance to the collection
5. Current and permanent value (especially for MN primary legal resources)
6. Outdatedness of material versus archival importance of material, especially for Minnesota resources (see #5 above)
7. Physical quality
8. Duplication
9. Available space
10. Circulation record

L. Electronic Resources versus Print Resources

The law library has successfully implemented a program that utilizes electronic legal information resources. On-site access to online legal research services expands availability of important primary and secondary resources. Online access also connects users to materials that are not otherwise available in print. For users who prefer to research from home or office, remote online options for accessing the library's resources are a desirable expansion of the collection beyond the library's physical boundaries. Online subscriptions can be costly, however, and their benefits must be carefully considered.

With regard to print materials, the library is committed to providing a core print collection as well as comprehensive print collections in a variety of important subject areas. For some individuals, print resources are easier to use; many legal materials are not available in electronic format. Where electronic alternatives exist, print also serves as a backup for essential materials when electronic access is temporarily disrupted. Once purchased, print items are retained as an archive for future use. In some cases, the print materials are a more cost-effective alternative to electronic research.

III. Policies for Specific Types of Resources

A. Legal Treatises

The law library will acquire and maintain a comprehensive collection of Minnesota treatises. The library will acquire and maintain a basic collection of general, multi-jurisdictional, federal substantive treatises covering all legal subject areas. Redundancy of coverage will be permitted if warranted by demand, especially in the areas of civil, criminal, evidentiary, and municipal law.

B. Practice Materials

The law library will maintain core practice materials, including general, federal, and multi-jurisdictional Minnesota materials. The library also maintains a standing order for all CLEs published by the Minnesota State Bar Association. Practice materials for trial preparation are essential resources for Ramsey County Law Library clientele, and the library places a high priority on the selection of these materials.

C. Practitioner Treatises, Hornbooks, Nutshells

The library selects a variety of subject overviews as introductory materials on a variety of legal topics. The library does not acquire casebooks.

D. Directories

The law library keeps listings of Minnesota and federal government entities.

E. Citators

The library's case and statute citator service is via Westlaw's *Keycite*.

F. Digests

The library maintains digests for the state of Minnesota, including *Dunnell Minnesota Digest* and *West's Minnesota Digest*. The library has older editions of the *Bankruptcy Digest*, the *Federal Practice Digest*, and the *Decennial Digests*.

G. Legal Encyclopedias

The library owns both sets of the national legal encyclopedias. However, *AmJur* is updated while *C.J.S* is not. The library also has *Dunnell Minnesota Digest* with content resembling that which is often found in state legal encyclopedias.

H. Restatements, Uniform Laws, and Model Acts

The library maintains a comprehensive print and online collection of classic Restatements as well as newer *Principles of the Law* titles and the unnumbered Restatements on very specialized topics. The library has print and electronic versions of *Uniform Laws Annotated*.

I. Journals and Periodicals

The library subscribes to law reviews for the three (previously four) local law schools. In 2021, only two law school journals were still available in print: *Constitutional Commentary* (U of M) and *Minnesota Law Review* (U of M). The library also purchases a variety of other legal journals and bar association publications, especially those published in Minnesota. These materials are bound for permanent retention by the library.

J. Newspapers

The library subscribes to legal newspapers: *Minnesota Lawyer*; *Finance & Commerce's St Paul Legal Ledger*; and the *National Law Journal*. The library also subscribes to general newspapers: *Star Tribune*, the *Pioneer Press*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

K. Periodical Indexes

The library no longer updates print periodical indexes. Westlaw provides online access to journals, law reviews, and periodical titles; the *Minnesota Legal Periodical Index* is available online through the Minnesota State Law Library.

L. Loose-leaf Services

The library acquires and maintains many loose-leaf services that provide coverage unique to the collection or that provide necessary materials more currently and easily than is otherwise available. Loose-leaf subscriptions are reviewed annually. For any loose-leaf legal services that pertain to Minnesota legal issues, the library subscribes to keep at least one copy of each title.

M. Dictionaries

The library collects the latest edition of *Black's Law Dictionary* for the reference collection and keeps several prior editions. The library also has English language and medical dictionaries. A limited collection of foreign language dictionaries and abbreviation dictionaries are included in the reference collection.

IV. Collection Development by Subject

The subject areas of the collection address the needs of law library patrons. As new subject areas develop, resources will be added based upon patron need. Subject materials in high

demand include family law, legal practice, criminal law, evidence, property, landlord/tenant, insurance, estate planning, and probate law. Regarding Minnesota specific titles, the law library strives to acquire all authoritative materials, including those that are online only. For Minnesota materials formerly in print and now only available online, the library will assess the need to acquire a print copy through available printing services such as FedEx Office.

V. Collection Development by Jurisdiction

- A. Federal**—the law library collects the constitution, code, session laws, statutes, court rules and decisions, regulations, and selected treatises. Court decisions are maintained online; a collection of print volumes of *Federal Reporter* is also kept in the library.
- B. Minnesota**—the library collects the constitution, code, sessions laws, statutes, court decisions and court rules, regulations, attorney general opinions, and many treatises. The library’s legislative history room contains all Minnesota codes and session laws; it contains court rules pamphlets back to 1985.
- C. Local Ordinances**—The library contains the Minneapolis ordinances and the St. Paul ordinances both in print and online.
- D. Other**—Wisconsin—the library maintains core resources for Wisconsin including *Wisconsin Practice* and CLE materials. The library maintains limited resources for North and South Dakota.
- E.** The library doesn’t collect foreign legal materials.

VI. Resources for Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs)

Library resources to help self-represented litigants include online and print resources. The library uses technology tools provided by the state court and legal aid organizations to assist SRLs. These include online instructions, fillable court forms, legal form compilers, and templates.

The library selects print titles from reputable publishers such as Nolo Press. These titles cover a broad range of topics and are written in easy-to-understand language. A number of Minnesota agencies provide booklets on Minnesota legal topics, and the library acquires many of these titles, some of which are offered as free handouts.

The library also attempts to acquire legal materials in various foreign languages for non-English speakers.

VII. Resources to Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

To foster an increased awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the law library selects titles related to anti-bias education.

In May 2021, the council of ABA's Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar approved a change to ABA Standard 303. Standard 303 requires training and education on bias, cross cultural competency, and racism. The revision will go before the ABA House of Delegates in 2022 for final approval. The law library purchases current materials related to DEI to sustain and enhance the education efforts begun in law schools to train lawyers about their special obligations to their clients and society.

The law library selects a limited number of books related to DEI each year; titles that are selected offer authoritative, well-acclaimed coverage of racial equality and race theory.

This policy was approved by the Ramsey County Law Library Board of Trustees on December 16, 2021

The American Association of Law Libraries publishes standards for county law libraries. The standards include content for a county law library collection; the materials recommended in Section VII. of the standards are listed here:

<https://www.aallnet.org/about-us/what-we-do/policies/public-policies/county-public-law-library-standards/>

Comments: "The materials listed above are recommended as the basis for a strong county law library collection. The list may be used as a checklist for collection evaluation purposes but should not be used to limit the scope or growth of a collection that meets or exceeds the materials."