What Are Government Documents?

- Information created, collected, processed, or disseminated by or for the United States federal government.
- Examples include: Congressional hearings, legislation, regulations, tax forms, treaties, census data, technical reports, maps, statistics, and reports from federal agencies.

How Do I Find Government Information?

WORLDCAT UMD

Use WorldCat UMD (lib.umd.edu), to find government documents from the 1990's to the present, as well as some older government documents. To search only for U.S. Government Information collection: Conduct your search. On the results page, look at the left-hand sidebar. Under Refine Your Search, choose “United States” as your author.

CATALOG OF U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Use the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (http://catalog.gpo.gov/F) to find government documents from 1976 to the present. Look for the SuDoc number to find the document in McKeldin Library, or click the link (if available).

INDEXES & GUIDES

Use indexes and guides to locate items on a specific topic. See the U.S. Government Information, Maps & GIS Services web site for a list of guides: www.lib.umd.edu/gov-info-gis.

RESEARCH PORT

Access Research Port from the Libraries’ home page (www.lib.umd.edu) by clicking on the Find Databases tab and clicking the Research Port icon in the bottom right corner of the search box. Select Government Documents from the databases by subject category tab and choose databases from that list (e.g., LexisNexis Congressional, ERIC). Remote access to Research Port is limited to UM students, faculty, and staff. Signing in requires use of your UM Directory ID and password.

WEB

Use web sites like USA.gov (www.usa.gov) to find recent government information. More government resources: www.lib.umd.edu/gov-info-gis

Finding Congressional Hearings

1. Use the library catalog to identify the hearing’s call number—it will begin with Y4—and the Congress in which it took place. Hearing dates indicate the Congress. Use the charts posted in the Y4 area on the 4th floor to convert dates to congresses.

   Examples:
   - 1887-1889 = 50th Congress
   - 2005-2006 = 109th Congress

2. Locate the appropriate Congress (e.g., 109th Congress) within the Y4 area of the SuDoc stacks.

3. Within the appropriate Congress, search for the hearing by call number.
SuDoc Call Numbers

- Government documents use a unique call number system called the Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) system. In the WorldCat UMD, the SuDoc number will be listed next to the material's status:

  SuDoc call numbers always contain a colon.

- In the SuDoc system, government publications are grouped together by issuing agency rather than subject, so all publications from a particular government department or agency are shelved together.

Locating a Document by SuDoc Call Number:

SuDoc call numbers are arranged alphabetically starting with letters at the left. These letters signify the Issuing Agency (i.e: the Commerce Department):

A
AE
D

The next number is read as a whole number and arranged numerically. This number signifies the Subagency (i.e: the Census Bureau):

E 1.
E 75.
E 101.
ED 21.

The number between the period and the colon is a whole number—not a decimal—and is arranged numerically. This number signifies the series title of the item (i.e: Current Population Reports)

HE 20. 2:
HE 20. 45:

Numbers without slashes come before numbers with slashes. This portion of the call number signifies a document title (i.e: Poverty in the U.S.):

C 51. 11: EN 8/995
C 51. 11: 23
C 51. 11/8: 995-96

If there are letters and numbers, letters always come before numbers:

HE 20. 50/A:
HE 20. 50/2:

Years are often abbreviated to two or three digits. If you see what may be an abbreviated year, convert it to four digits and treat it as a whole number.

C 3.233/11:980
J 32.8:Si8/992
S 1.1:01/v.5

(“980” corresponds to “1980”)
(“992” corresponds to “1992”)
(“01” corresponds to “2001”)

Common SuDocs:
A Agriculture Dep’t.
C Commerce Dep’t.
C 3 Census Bureau
D Defense Dep’t.
E Energy Dep’t.
ED Education Dep’t.
EP Environmental Protection Agency
GA Gov’t Accountability Office
GS General Services Admin.
HE Health & Human Services.
HE 20 Food & Drug Administration
HS Homeland Security Dep’t.
I Interior Dep’t.
I 19 U.S. Geological Survey
J Justice Dep’t.
JU Judiciary
L Labor Dep’t.
LC Library of Congress
NAS NASA
PrEx Executive Office of the President
S State Dep’t.
SI Smithsonian Institution
T Treasury Dep’t.
T 22 Internal Revenue Service
TD Transportation Dep’t.
VA Veterans’ Affairs Dep’t.
X Congress
Y Congress
Y 4 Congress (hearings)

Need help?

Visit: McKeldin’s 1st floor Information Desk
Call: 301-405-9075
E-mail: govdocs@umd.edu