



AALL Definitions of Inventory Categories

Authentication

When AALL's state volunteers answered this question for AALL's "[State-By-State Report on Authentication of Online Legal Resources](#)," they used the following definition by the Government Printing Office:

An authentic text is one whose content has been verified by a government entity to be complete and unaltered when compared to the version approved or published by the content originator. Typically, an authentic text will bear a certificate or mark that conveys information as to its certification, the process associated with ensuring that the text is complete and unaltered when compared with that of the content originator. An authentic text is able to be authenticated, which means that the particular text in question can be validated, ensuring that it is what it claims to be.

Copyright

Federal law grants the creator of an original work a copyright which allows exclusive rights to the work for a limited amount of time. Works by the United States government are ineligible for copyright protection under Section 105 of the Copyright Act. Copyright protection of works of state governments is governed by state law. If copyrighted, state legal materials will often feature a copyright notice, such as the copyright symbol (©) and the year of first publication.

See the AALL Copyright Committee and AALL Digital Access to Legal Information Committee Joint Subcommittee on State Copyright Issues [Definition and Guidance for Evaluating Copyright Status of Online State Primary Legal Material](#).

Official Status

When AALL's state volunteers answered this question for AALL's "[State-By-State Report on Authentication of Online Legal Resources](#)," they used the following definition drawn from the latest editions of *Black's Law Dictionary* and *Fundamentals of Legal Research*:

An *official* version of regulatory materials, statutes, session laws, or court opinions is one that has been governmentally mandated or approved by statute or rule. It might be produced by the government, but does not have to be.

Permanent Public Access

AALL's "[State-By-State Report on Permanent Public Access to Electronic Government Information](#)" defines permanent public access as "the process by which applicable government information is preserved for current, continuous and future public access."

Primary Law and Secondary Sources

Primary law is the text of the law itself-the authorized statement of the law formulated by governmental institutions. It includes federal and state statutes, local laws (including charters and ordinances), federal and state constitutions, federal and state administrative agency regulations and decisions, federal and state judicial opinions, and rules of court.

Secondary sources explain or comment on primary law, and are used to analyze, locate, or update primary law. Secondary sources can be published or created by governmental entities or private entities. Examples of secondary sources published by governmental entities include legislative histories, reports, and other publications that do not embody the law itself. Examples of secondary sources published by private entities include treatises, journal articles, restatements of law, blogs on legal topics, and forms.

Universal Citation

Universal citation is a system of citation that permits reference to legal or law-related information in any medium, print or electronic, without requiring reference to proprietary products of any particular publisher. Universal citation is designed to maximize access to the law by enabling researchers to overcome bibliographic, technological, and format-driven barriers to access.