Research Guide to League of Nations Documents and Publications

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this guide

This is an outline of League of Nations documentation. It describes the organizations of the League of Nations, sources of its publications and documents, and bibliographies of League materials. Researchers familiar with United Nations documentation and publications may find their knowledge to be of use, as the UN continues certain practices established by the League. Researchers interested in League documents concerning a specific event or subject should consult the bibliographies listed in this guide. Researchers may use the OCLC number in WorldCat to obtain a list of libraries that own the bibliography, use the bibliographies to identify documents, and ask for a librarian's help in locating the documents. A reference librarian can help provide access to the bibliographies.

Brief Description of the League

The victorious Allied Powers of World War I established the League of Nations. The League's charter, known as the Covenant, was approved as part of the Treaty of Versailles at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The mission, as stated in the Covenant, was "to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security." U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 for his leadership in creating the League. Despite Wilson's efforts, the U.S. Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles.

The Treaty entered into force on January 10, 1920. The original signatories of the Covenant were Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, the British Empire, Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, India, China, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hejaz, Honduras, Italy, Japan, Liberia, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serb-Croat-Sloven State, Siam, Czechoslovakia, and Uruguay.

The League was ineffective in stopping the military aggression that led to World War II. It ceased its work during the war and dissolved on April 18, 1946. The United Nations assumed its assets and carries on much of its work. The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva provides a history of the League of Nations on its web site, at http://www.unog.ch/library/archives/lon/ovrvfset.html. The Yale Law School Avalon Project provides access to the text of the Treaty of Versailles at http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/menu.htm. Biographical information about Woodrow Wilson is available on the web site of The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at http://wwics.si.edu/Wilson~1.htm.

ORGANIZATIONS OF THE LEAGUE:
THE PRINCIPAL ORGANS AND COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS AND CONFERENCES

There are three categories of League of Nations organizations: autonomous bodies, the principal organs, and committees, commissions and conferences.

Autonomous bodies were those connected with the League, for example, the International Labour Organization and the Permanent Court of International Justice. The documents of these bodies are discussed in Aufricht's *Guide to League of Nations Publications*.

The principal organs and the technical organizations made up the League proper. The Economic and Financial Organisation and the Health Organisation are examples of technical organizations. The principal organs were the Assembly, Council and Secretariat. The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council were created as deliberative bodies similar to the League's Assembly and Council. The UN Secretariat continues a function of international civil service.

The **Assembly** was the annual conference of League member states. The Proceedings of the Assembly appeared as a separate publication for the first three sessions, the first of which was held in Paris on January 16, 1920. Thereafter, until 1938, they were issued as a Special Supplement to the *Official Journal*. Resolutions passed in the Plenary Sessions were also published in Special Supplements. These supplements were numbered consecutively over the years.

The **Council's** main function was to settle international disputes. The numbers of permanent and non-permanent members varied. Council meetings were held in ordinary session four times a year and as often as needed in extraordinary sessions. 107 public sessions were held between 1920 and

1939. From 1922 on, the minutes appeared in the *Official Journal.* Records for meetings held before 1922 were published separately. The resolutions can only be found in the minutes of the meetings. Aufricht's *Guide* lists Assembly and Council meeting records.

The **Secretariat** carried out the day-to-day work of the League, under the direction of the Secretary-General. The three Secretaries-General were Sir Eric Drummond, 1919-1933; Joseph Avenol, 1933-1940; and Sean Lester, 1940-1946. The Secretary-General wrote annual reports on the work of the League. These are listed in Aufricht's *Guide.*

Committees, commissions, and conferences received mandates from the League. Examples include the Opium Advisory Committee, the European Union Commission, the Office of the High Commissioner in Danzig and the Permanent Mandates Commission. Committee documents may not have been printed. The League ceased to print the minutes of most committees after 1931. If a committee submitted reports to the Assembly or Council, these reports were printed as Assembly or Council documents. Conference documents received a number using a scheme peculiar to the conference itself, and only received a formal League document number if they were submitted to the Assembly or the Council. The preliminary documents and the proceedings of conferences were often issued in collected form as League documents. Aufricht's *Guide* lists, by topic, the final acts and related documents from many conferences.

TYPES OF LEAGUE RESOURCES: ARCHIVES, DOCUMENTS, AND SALES PUBLICATIONS

Archives are the records of individuals, institutions, and governments. They are produced as a result of the work of a person or group, and may include any of the written or media formats in which people record information. The Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva is the repository of the League of Nations Archives. Examples of the League archives are the personnel files of League employees and the papers of Secretaries-General Sir Eric Drummond and Joseph Avenol. In 1999, the Library published *Guide to the Archives of the League of Nations, 1919-1946* (OCLC 43853567). *Frequently Asked Questions About the League of Nations Archives* is available on the Archives' web site, http://www.unog.ch/library/archives/faq.htm

Documents were circulated to members of the League and depository libraries. Documents were distributed by one of the principal organs or were issued by committees or conferences. The fundamental difference between documents and sales publications is in their distribution. The content of a document may be more administrative or procedural than that of a sales publication. An example of a document is

the Organisation for Communications and Transit's *Juridical and Administrative Systems in Force on the Frontier Sections of Railway Lines and at Junction Stations.* This document was assigned the official number C.144.M.75.1935.VIII.

Sales publications were sold to the public to provide information about the work of the League, and to provide access to research in which the public would have interest. It is more likely that a library collection has sales publications than documents. Two examples of sales publications are the books *The Course and Phases of the World Economic Depression* (1931.II.A.21) and *The Population of the Soviet Union: History and Prospects* (1946.II.A.3). Some publications were distributed first as documents, and then published for sale when the League determined that the information had a wider audience. Materials published as both documents and sales publications received both document and sales publication symbols. An example of a work issued as both a document and a sales publication is that which was previously mentioned, *Juridical and Administrative Systems in Force on the Frontier Sections of Railway Lines and at Junction Stations.* This document was assigned the symbol 1935.VII.2 when it was published for public sale. Both the official document number and the sales number are printed on the title page. The major serial publications of the League, such as the *Statistical Yearbook*, were considered sales publications.

DOCUMENT AND PUBLICATION SYMBOLS

The Secretariat assigned symbols to League documents and publications. The earliest documents and periodicals, such as the *Official Journal* and *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, were never assigned a symbol. Researchers use the symbols to identify items and find them in a library collection. This is a summary of League symbols. The bibliographies referenced in this guide provide detailed descriptions.

For the most part, the League used three symbol schemes: official number (tables 1, 2, 3 and 6), committee or conference number (table 4), and sales number (tables 5 and 6).

TABLE 1. OFFICIAL NUMBER ON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED UP TO NOVEMBER 1919	
symbol elements	2 digit number/number/number. **For example, 19/4/3**
1st element	last two digits of the year the document was produced
2nd element	number representing the type of document and its source
3rd element	serial number issued to document
distribution	documents that were distributed to members of the Council and/or the Assembly
location of symbol on documents	upper-right corner of title page
an example	The third numbered document issued by the Council in 1919 was 19/4/3. Documents issued by the Council were labeled -/4/-.
variations of the system	Early numbering schemes were arbitrary. This table represents only one of a few schemes, which are too knotty to describe here. Researchers may wish to consult Reno's explanation on page xvi of his guide.

TABLE 2. OFFICIAL NUMBER ON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED NOVEMBER 1919 - APRIL 1921	
symbol elements	2 digit number/number/number. **For example, 20/4/3**
1st element	last two digits of the year the document was produced
2nd element	number indicating the document's source or the members to whom the document was distributed
3rd element	serial number issued to document
distribution	documents that were distributed to members of the Council and/or the Assembly
location of symbol on documents	upper-right corner of title page
an example	The third document distributed to Council members in 1920 was 20/4/3. The -/4/- indicated that the document was a Council document.
variations of the system	Numbers and letters represented subject matters or issuing agencies. They were often used to identify items issued by sub-committees. A fourth numerical element identified revisions or complementary documents. For example, Document 20/4/3 was a cover letter from the Secretary-General to the Council, in which he explained that he was transmitting a memo. The memo he transmitted was assigned the number 20/4/3/1. A capital letter added to a symbol indicated an appendix to the original document. For example, The first appendix to document number 20/4/25 was 20/4/25/A, the second appendix was 20/4/25/B.
exceptions to the rules	Certain bodies already in existence adopted a simpler form of numbering, an identifying letter or letters and a consecutively issued item number. The Ghebalis produced a list of these exceptions.

TABLE 3. OFFICIAL NUMBER ON DOCUMENTS PRODUCED FROM 1921 – 1947	
symbol elements	letter.number.year. **For example, A.2.1923**
1st element	A letter designating distribution A = Assembly; C = Council; CL = circular letters addressed to member states or groups M = members of the League who were not members of the Council CM = documents addressed to the Council and distributed to members of the League who were not members of the Council
2nd element	document identification number, issued consecutively, each year began at 1
3rd element	year
distribution	documents that were distributed to members of the Council and/or the Assembly
location of symbol on documents	upper-right corner of title page
an example	The 34th document distributed to the Assembly in 1926 was assigned the number A.34.1926.
variations of the system	Roman numerals were added to denote the section of the Secretariat drafting the document. These numerals were subject-based and followed those used for the sales category system. Please refer to Table 6. CM class documents received two document numbers that were used in one symbol. For example, the report *How to Make the League of Nations Known and to Develop the Spirit of International Co-operation* received the symbol C.515.M.197.1927.XII. In 1927, it was both the 515th item distributed to Council members and the 197th item distributed to members of the League who were not members of the Council. The Roman numeral indicated that the content concerned intellectual cooperation.

TABLE 4. COMMITTEE OR CONFERENCE NUMBER	
symbol elements	letters.number. **For example, C.I.C.I.141**
letters	abbreviations of a committee or conference name, usually in French
number	number, issued consecutively
distribution	documents that were distributed to members of a League committee or to delegates of a conference
location of symbol on documents	upper-right corner of the title page, either alone or in combination with an official number
an example	C.I.C.I. was the abbreviation of Comité International de Coopération Intellectuelle (International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation). The example in Table 3, *How to Make the League of Nations Known*, originally appeared as C.I.C.I.141.
variations of the system	If committee documents were sent to the Assembly or the Council, they received a second document number. Assembly or Council documents are more available than committee or conference documents. If a document was given two numbers, it may be easier to find using the official number rather than a committee or conference number.

TABLE 5. SALES NUMBER, 1926 – 1946	
symbol elements	year.Roman numeral.number. **For example, 1940.VII.1**
1st element	year of publication
2nd element	Roman numeral for subject category (Please refer to Table 6. This is the precursor to the UN sales category system.)
3rd element	Arabic numeral, identified publications within a subject category began each year with 1
distribution	publications sold to the public
location of symbol on documents	often printed in a box with the heading "Series of League of Nations Publications" on the lower right hand corner title page or, on the verso of the title page in books published by the World Peace Foundation
an example	The publication *High Commissioner of the League of Nations at Danzig (Carl Burckhart).* Report Dated March 19, 1940. C.42.M.38.1940.VII received the sales number 1940.VII.1

TABLE 6. ROMAN NUMERALS USED IN OFFICIAL AND SALES NUMBERS	
Roman numeral	Name of section of League Secretariat, and subject category
I.A	Administrative Commission
I.B	Protection of Minorities
II	Economic and Financial Section
III	Health
IV	Social Questions (for example, the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and the Protection of Children)
V	Legal Section
VI.A	Mandates
VI.B	Slavery
VII	Political Section
VIII	Communications and Transit
IX	Disarmament
X	Financial Administration of the League
XI	Traffic in Opium and Other Dangerous Drugs (documents were prepared by Social Questions, but assigned the category of XI)
XII.A	Intellectual Cooperation
XII.B	International Bureaus
XIII	Refugees
examples	**official number** (1921-1947). for example, **C.658(1).M.269(1).1931.IX** **sales number**. for example, **1932.IX.17** These are the official and sales numbers assigned to a work in Category IX, *General Convention to Improve the Means of Preventing War.* In 1931 this document was the 658th item distributed to Council members and the 269th item distributed to members of the League who were not members of the Council. It was published for sale to the public in 1932.

LEAGUE DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS IN PRINT AND MICROFILM

Print

The World Peace Foundation (http://www.worldpeacefoundation.org) was the authorized sales agent of League publications for the United States from 1920 to 1936. The Foundation offered a global subscription service, through which American libraries acquired League documents. The Foundation bound documents together by year and by sales category, and supplied title pages to the collected volumes. Libraries that received documents through the World Peace Foundation may have shelved them in order by sales category. The Foundation published catalogs of League documents for research and bibliographic control, some of which are listed in the bibliography of this guide.

From 1929-1939 the Royal Institute of International Affairs (http://www.riia.org/) included the text of many League documents in its annual series *Documents on International Affairs* (OCLC 1566847).

Microfilm

In 1973, Research Publications, Inc. produced a microfilm collection titled *League of Nations Documents and Publications, 1919-1946.* The collection, 555 reels of microfilm, contains more than 25,000 documents and the most important serial publications of the League. The printed guide to the microfilm, edited by Reno, is described in the bibliography of this guide. The Robarts Library at the University of Toronto provides a description of the collection on its web site
http://www.library.utoronto.ca/robarts/microtext/collection/pages/leagueo2.html

Researchers interested in using the microfilm collection should consult the Reno guide and ask for the help of a reference librarian. The microfilm collection's OCLC number is 4172871. The Center for Research Libraries http://wwwcrl.uchicago.edu/index.html owns the collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aufricht, Hans. *Guide to League of Nations Publications: A Bibliographical Survey of the Work of the League, 1920-1947*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951. Reprint New York: AMS Press, 1966.

- OCLC 556203 and 389535 (AMS Press 1966)
- explanations of the League and its documents
- lists of documents, with annotations, organized by subject, authoring agency, and chronology

Birchfield, Mary Eva. *Consolidated Catalog of League of Nations Publications Offered for Sale*. Dobbs Ferry: Oceana, 1976.

- OCLC 1502508
- consolidates the League's *Catalog of Sales Publications, 1930-1935*, its annual supplements, and Carroll's *Key*
- covers only League sales publications
- indexes documents by official number, sales number, and alphabetically by title and subject
- series are covered in detail

Carroll, Marie J. *Key to League of Nations Documents Placed on Public Sale, 1920-1929.* Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1929. With Supplements covering the years 1930, 1931, 1932-33, 1934-36.

- OCLC 22557410
- covers sales publications and documents made available to the public
- lists documents with reference to meetings and conferences, by year and by subject category
- lists documents issued by subsidiary bodies, and items published as special supplements to the *Official Journal*, that are not listed elsewhere

Ghebali, Victor-Yves and Catherine. *A Repertoire of League Serial Documents, 1919-1947/ Repertoire des Séries de Documents de la Société des Nations 1919-1947.* 2 Vols. Dobbs Ferry: Oceana, 1973.

- OCLC 740888

- complements, rather than duplicates, existing guides

- includes items found in Carroll and Aufricht, but not in Reno

- lists serial publications in thematic order, then in Document Series Number order

- documents that were not issued a symbol are included

Reno, Edward A. *League of Nations Documents, 1919-1946. A Descriptive Guide and Key to the Microfilm Collection*. 3 Vols. New Haven, Research Publications, 1973-75.

- OCLC 590017

- descriptive guide and reel index to microfilm collection

- lists documents by subject category, then by year, and then by document number

- includes "Consolidated Number Index," a chronological and sequential list of documents by document number

- If a researcher has only the sales number or title of a document, her or she must consult Aufricht to get the document number.

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http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govpub/collections/league/