



Supreme Court Law Library

An Excellent Adventure: A Research Journey into Our Depository History

New Mexico Supreme Court Law Library: Stephanie Wilson, State Law Librarian • Cassandra Wenzel, Law Librarian • Amy Schaefer, Law Librarian • Kendra Patlak, Reference Attorney
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Introduction

New Mexico's Supreme Court Law Library has been a federal depository library since at least the 1800s. We have been trying to pinpoint the exact year and have found evidence of our depository status dating back to February 1887. Although we remain uncertain as to exactly when we became a depository, the search has been rewarding in and of itself. Here, we describe the process we used to research our depository origins.



A view of our Government Documents collection

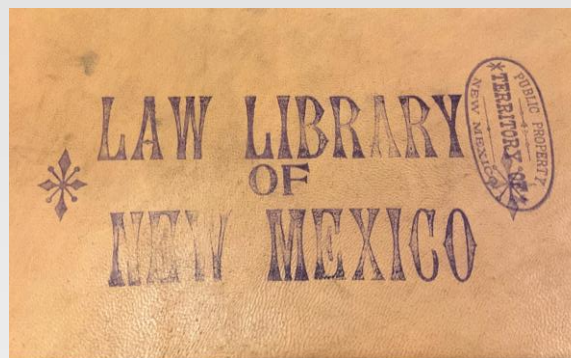
NEW MEXICO Delegate				
DESIGNATED DEPOSITORY LIBRARY (Allotment: One)				
Name.	Location.	Designator.	Date of designation.	List No.
1. UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO LIBRARY.	ALBUQUERQUE, BERNALILLO COUNTY.	HON. T. B. CATRON.	Mar. 14, 1896	352
<i>Other allotments.</i>				
Territorial Library.....	Santa Fe, Santa Fe County.	By law.....		350
General Library of New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts.	Agricultural College, Dona Ana County.	do.....		351

The Territorial Library in the Official List of Depository Libraries (1909)

Our Research Process

Research Phase 1: Our research into our depository history began when the Government Publishing Office asked whether we still wanted to receive “by law” copies of the Statutes at Large. To learn more about “by law” depositories, we searched for the relevant U.S. Code section regarding the Statutes at Large: 44 U.S.C. § 728. From its history note, we found the Statutes at Large section on “by law” depositories: 28 Stat. 615 (1895). From this section, we learned how “by law” depositories gained status under the Federal Depository Library Program.

Research Phase 2: We started with a few quick Google searches using several keyword variations. One of the results sent us to a history page on GPO.gov, which led us to a helpful resource: R.W. Kerr, History of the Government Printing Office (1881). In it, we found a few early depository history documents from 1857 to 1859 that potentially, but inconclusively, referenced the Supreme Court Law Library, then the Territorial Library. We found other historical documents through GovInfo.



A Territorial Library property stamp

Research Phase 3: We moved on to searching HeinOnline for relevant keywords. Here, we found the earliest clear evidence of our depository status: House of Representatives Executive Document No. 176 (Feb. 17, 1887). This document indicated that we received “public documents.” This is the earliest document that we’ve been able to find so far, but the journey continues.

Takeaways

- Search multiple databases and use a variety of keywords.
- Print resources, or digital versions of print resources, can be very useful.
- One line of research can lead to an entirely unexpected, new one.
- Sometimes you won’t find a definitive answer—and that’s okay!