U.S. National Library of Medicine
National Center for Biotechnology Information

Information for Authors and Publishers

Updated: September 29, 2022.

Bookshelf provides free access to the full text of books and documents in the biomedical and life sciences as well as health care at the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), National Library of Medicine (NLM). The collection is referred to as the NLM Literature Archive. Content in Bookshelf is made available by participating authors, editors, funders, sponsors, and publishers. Through integration with other NCBI databases, such as PubMed, Gene, Genetic Testing Registry, and PubChem, Bookshelf provides reference information for biological data and facilitates its discovery.

This page describes how content is selected for Bookshelf and how to apply.

Selection of Titles for Bookshelf

Participation in Bookshelf is open to any English-language work that is in scope for and meets NLM's standards for the archive. A work must qualify on two levels, both the Scientific quality of the title, and the Technical quality of its digital files.

Proposed full-text book and document titles are reviewed by the National Library of Medicine for inclusion in the NLM collection. To be considered for Bookshelf, a work must fall within the scope of core biomedical subjects as defined in the Collection Development Guidelines of the National Library of Medicine.

Consideration for participation in Bookshelf is given to varied types of peer-reviewed, full-text content. The following format and literature types are within scope for Bookshelf:

- Monographs;
- Collected Works;
- Government Publications;
- Handbooks and Manuals;
- Reference works, e.g., Dictionaries and Encyclopedias;
- Standards and Guidelines;
- Statistical Works;
- Technical Reports;
- Textbooks;
- Web Content;
- and selected other types of Grey Literature.

Works consisting entirely of original research articles, theses, and dissertations, are not acceptable. It is important that the Bookshelf collection reflects the kinds of content available in the wider book and reference literature, as far as is possible. Proposed content may be written for scientists, health professionals, educators and students, or consumers.

Supplementary materials and data sets are only accepted in association with the complete full-text.

Except in rare cases when proposed content meets NLM's self-published or independently sponsored works criteria, proposed content must be accepted for publication by a credible publisher or content provider. All new content providers and sponsors are reviewed by the National Library of Medicine to ensure they meet scientific and scholarly communications standards.

In cases where a content provider is regularly producing related materials of the same type, NLM may choose to evaluate this content as a collection, rather than independently evaluating each item as a monograph or other type of content. This arrangement will allow future materials in the collection to be included in Bookshelf without further applications or scientific quality review. Bookshelf decides to evaluate content as a collection when:

- Enough content in the collection has been published to evaluate the consistency of quality.
- The peer review process and other editorial policies and processes are the same across the entire collection.
- The material is published consistently and at regular intervals.
- All materials in the collection have the same intended purpose and audience.
- The structure, formatting, and layout remains consistent across editions/issues, with only minor changes.

In such cases, NLM expects publishers to have at least a two-year history of quality scholarly publishing in the life sciences. NLM may consider an application from a publisher that has been publishing scholarly content for less than two years if there is evidence that the management and individuals responsible for editorial quality and operations have adequate experience in comparable positions at other organizations.

The Application Process

Authors, editors, funders, sponsors or publishers may put forward titles for review. Authors and editors who would like their books to be included on the Bookshelf should first agree on the application with the book publisher or with the copyright holder.

To begin the application process, download and complete the application for single titles or the application spreadsheet for multiple titles. Send an email to bookshelf@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov and attach the completed application. If you have not archived content in Bookshelf previously, you will also need to complete the publisher information sheet.

In addition to the application, Bookshelf requests the applicant to provide the following:

1. A PDF version of the content or URL where the content may be accessed.
2. An abstract or blurb about the content
3. Brief biographies or CVs of authors or editors.
   Note: In the case of content in which chapters are contributed by different authors, the biography of the editors is sufficient

If a proposed title is deemed to be within scope for the NLM Collection, then its scientific merit is the primary consideration in selection for publication and indexing in Bookshelf. A scientific evaluator will review the content.

When the content evaluation is completed, Bookshelf will inform the applicant whether or not the book meets the scientific quality standard. For books which qualify on this basis, the process will continue as follows:

- Bookshelf will request the applicant to submit full-text XML files (including abstract), images (including cover image), and all supplementary materials such as video, audio, or data files, and a PDF version of the book if available.

- Bookshelf will evaluate the digital files to assess the technical quality, including that all required files have been supplied and are correctly named, the XML validates according to a mutually-agreed DTD, and the online organization of the content, as generated from the XML and associated files, is an accurate and complete rendering of the content.
- If errors or anomalies are found in the data, Bookshelf will request the applicant to correct the data and resubmit. If the data fails to meet the technical quality standards, the book can be rejected.
- Bookshelf reevaluates corrected data. If it is found to be satisfactory, the book can be included in Bookshelf.

If a book is rejected, there is no appeal process; applicants may resubmit the book after a 24 month period.

Ongoing participation in Bookshelf requires a content provider to continue to meet NLM's scientific and technical quality standards for Bookshelf and the NLM collection over time. Bookshelf may choose to reevaulate content if these standards are not met.

Participation Agreement

A participation agreement must be signed by NLM and the copyright holder of the book before Bookshelf begins the production process and releases the book on the Bookshelf website. Once the full text of the book has been made freely available on the Bookshelf website, per the terms of the agreement, Bookshelf does not support removal of the content nor any post-publication embargoes. Bookshelf provides free access to the full text of all content in its archive regardless of participation in the NLM LitArch Open Access Subset.

NLM LitArch Open Access Subset

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Books and PubMed Central International (PMCI)

Bookshelf shares content with Europe PMC. For more information, see PMC International.

Bookshelf Citations in PubMed

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