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EPA Library Public Access Procedures	
EPA Classification No.: CIO 2170-P-12.1	CIO Approval Date: 12/28/2016
CIO Transmittal No.: 17-005j	Review Date: 12/28/2019

*Issued by the EPA Chief Information Officer,  
Pursuant to Delegation 1-19, dated 07/07/2005*

## **EPA LIBRARY PUBLIC ACCESS PROCEDURES**

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### **1. PURPOSE**

To establish Agency-wide procedures for the EPA National Library Network libraries to facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information.

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### **2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY**

The procedures apply to the EPA National Library Network and all EPA organizations that provide library services either onsite or through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with another Network library. They provide baseline operational standards for all Network libraries. Individual libraries may develop local procedures to supplement the Network procedures.

The procedures do not address information requests made under the Freedom of Information Act, otherwise known as FOIA requests.

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### **3. AUDIENCE**

The audience for the procedures includes Assistant, Deputy Assistant and Associate Administrators; Regional, Deputy, and Assistant Regional Administrators; Senior Information Officials, Information Management Officers, Federal Library Managers, Contract Library Managers and EPA staff.

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### **4. BACKGROUND**

From the beginning, the mission of EPA's libraries has been to improve access to information for EPA decision making and environmental awareness and to provide the public access to Agency information. EPA's website is the primary conduit for public access to information, including general information, program actions and activities, regulations, data, science and educational materials. Access to EPA publications is required by federal law, regulation or policy through channels such as the Government Publishing Office (GPO) and the National Technical Information Service (NTIS).

The EPA National Library Network libraries also play a pivotal role in responding to public inquiries. The libraries developed and provide tools such as the EPA National Library Catalog to assist the public in locating information, manage collections such as print and electronic document repositories, and provide expert assistance in organizing information for efficient retrieval, regardless of format. These procedures address how the EPA libraries facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information.

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### **5. AUTHORITY**

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Agency Delegation 1-19 GENERAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND MISCELLANEOUS, Paragraph 2(b) ([http://intranet.epa.gov/oei/imitpolicy/qic/documents/delegation\\_1-19\\_revised070705.pdf](http://intranet.epa.gov/oei/imitpolicy/qic/documents/delegation_1-19_revised070705.pdf)).

Information Directive: CIO 2170.3 EPA National Library Network (<http://www.epa.gov/irmpoli8>).

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## 6. PROCEDURES

### 6.1 Principles of Non-Discrimination

- 6.1.1 The EPA cannot and does not tolerate discrimination based on race; color; religion; sex, including pregnancy, sex stereotyping, gender identity or gender expression; national origin; sexual orientation; physical or mental disability; age; protected genetic information; status as a parent or marital status; political affiliation; or retaliation based on previous EEO activity.
- 6.1.2 EPA libraries accommodate persons with special needs in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended.
- 6.1.3 EPA libraries provide appropriate access for people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), to the extent resources allow.

### 6.2 EPA Library Collection Management Activities

- 6.2.1 EPA libraries facilitate public access to EPA documents and environmental information through the following activities within their scope and capability:
    - 6.2.1.1 Information selection and acquisition.
      - 6.2.1.1.1 EPA libraries select and acquire materials that reflect the range of Agency activities, including basic and applied sciences, environmental law and regulations, policy and planning, administration, management and information technology.
      - 6.2.1.1.2 EPA libraries identify and catalog electronic EPA publications and other online materials that meet the criteria for inclusion in the library's collection, regardless of whether or not they are held onsite in a print format.
    - 6.2.1.2 Information management and organization.
      - 6.2.1.2.1 EPA libraries ensure that applicable EPA documents, regardless of their format, are assigned and organized by EPA publication numbers.
      - 6.2.1.2.2 EPA libraries ensure access to EPA documents and Agency information released to the public in both physical and electronic formats, whenever possible.
    - 6.2.1.3 Information retention and archiving.
      - 6.2.1.3.1 As appropriate, EPA libraries ensure that EPA documents in their collections are included in the Agency's digital archive of environmental publications, the National Environmental Publications Internet Site (NEPIS), the database behind the
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National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP) website. See the Digitization Processes for EPA Libraries procedure for further details.

- 6.2.1.3.2 EPA libraries ensure that EPA documents related to environmental mission activities are retained in hard-copy form in repository libraries as appropriate. See the EPA Repository Library Management Procedures for further details.

### 6.3 Physical Access to EPA Libraries

- 6.3.1 EPA libraries provide access for public visitors at least twenty-four hours per week over at least four days on a walk-in basis or by appointment during core business hours.
  - 6.3.1.1 Core business hours are defined as 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. local time, with appropriate time included for lunch break for those libraries staffed by a solo librarian.
  - 6.3.1.2 The mechanism for public access to the library and its resources may vary to some extent, depending on local facilities and security requirements of individual sites. Some libraries may be open for walk-in public access while some may require access by appointment.
- 6.3.2 All EPA libraries provide current hours of access, contact information and other access considerations on Web pages maintained by the EPA National Library Network. EPA libraries inform the Network of changes to this information to ensure timely updates.

### 6.4 Mechanisms for Information Access

Information access falls into two major categories: unassisted access through epa.gov Web pages and the Frequent Questions database; and assisted access through in-person visits to a library or remote inquiries mediated by library staff.

The following guidelines assist EPA libraries in determining appropriate levels of access:

#### 6.4.1 Unassisted Access

This category includes any Agency materials available online, accessible to anyone with computer access. EPA librarians support the development of websites and systems to assist users in locating information on their own. The Network provides access to library resources and Agency information through the following Internet-based sites and systems:

- 6.4.1.1 EPA National Library Network website (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries>), which points users to a consistent set of links of national scope.
  - 6.4.1.2 Individual EPA library Web pages (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries/libraries>), which include uniformly-organized information about points of contact, hours of operation and borrowing policies, with both national and location-specific links.
  - 6.4.1.3 EPA National Library Catalog (<http://www.epa.gov/libraries/catalog>), a publicly-accessible catalog of EPA library collections representing items that have been selected, acquired and organized by EPA libraries.
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6.4.1.4 NSCEP website (<http://www.epa.gov/nscep>), the Agency's digital repository of full-text EPA publications, freely available for downloading and ordering in hard-copy formats when available.

6.4.1.5 Frequent Questions (<https://publicaccess.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/sections/202345347>), a knowledgebase and self-service reference system with commonly requested information about EPA issues.

6.4.1.6 EPA librarian-supported Web pages, including the EPA Browse Topics and other Agency top-level navigation and sidebar pages.

6.4.1.7 Other websites identified or developed to enhance and cross-reference the core websites, above.

#### 6.4.2 Assisted Access

This category includes mechanisms through which library staff interacts with the public to facilitate access to Agency information.

##### 6.4.2.1 In-person visits.

All EPA libraries provide access to public visitors, either on a walk-in basis or by appointment.

6.4.2.1.1 In addition to their library Web pages, EPA libraries post hours, contact information and other access considerations at the library's entrance, in the building lobby or other locations as deemed appropriate. Any restrictions are clearly stated on signage or communicated when an appointment to visit the library is made.

6.4.2.1.2 Access to materials and equipment within the library may include:

6.4.2.1.2.1 Offsite Consequences Analysis (OCA) Reading Room.

6.4.2.1.2.2 Other reading room(s) designated by the library for reviewing materials.

6.4.2.1.2.3 Library physical collections (e.g., books, reports, microforms, journals, maps, audio-visual materials and equipment).

6.4.2.1.2.4 Library electronic collections, as appropriate and allowable under license agreements (e.g., databases, CD-ROMs).

6.4.2.1.2.5 Computers designated for use by the public that restrict access to Local Area Network (LAN) drives and/or certain websites for security and/or licensing reasons.

6.4.2.1.2.6 Photocopy machines with clear policies on copying limits and copyright notices prominently displayed.

6.4.2.1.2.7 Microformat reader-printers and other specialized equipment with clear policies on printing limits, if applicable.

##### 6.4.2.2 Reference and research services.

All EPA libraries provide core reference and research services to the public to facilitate public access to Agency information. See the EPA Library Reference and Research Services Procedures for further information.

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6.4.2.2.1 Public reference services may include:

6.4.2.2.1.1 Reference on EPA topics using free sources of information. Fee-based sources must be used in accordance with license agreements.

6.4.2.2.1.2 Instruction and information on the library and its resources, including the use of the EPA National Library Catalog, CD-ROMs or other library media.

6.4.2.2.1.3 Referral to other EPA information sources.

6.4.2.2.1.3.1 EPA library staff refer media inquiries to the local media officer in accordance with Agency policy and local procedures.

6.4.2.2.1.3.2 EPA library staff refer inquiries requiring an interpretation of EPA regulations to appropriate staff experts.

6.4.2.2.1.3.3 Toll-free numbers are be provided as points of contact when available.

6.4.2.2.1.4 Information on how to order and/or access EPA publications through the Agency's publication center, NSCEP.

6.4.2.2.1.5 Individual public tours as time permits. Group tours for the public are normally arranged in advance in accordance with local policies and procedures.

6.4.2.3 Mechanisms for public reference services include:

6.4.2.3.1 Telephone, fax, postal mail, email or referral

6.4.2.3.1.1 In addition to their library Web pages, EPA libraries may also list telephone number, fax number and mailing address in the local telephone book, or through other appropriate means.

6.4.2.3.1.2 All EPA libraries use a standard voicemail greeting for the main library telephone number that conveys hours of operation and other appropriate information to callers (e.g., expected response time).

6.4.2.3.2 E-mail

6.4.2.3.2.1 Every EPA library maintains a group e-mail box as its primary point of contact rather than a personal e-mail address.

6.4.2.3.2.2 Every EPA library establishes local triage procedures for answering and forwarding queries from their group e-mail box. Depending on local resources and formal arrangements with other libraries, it may be appropriate to forward certain questions to a lead

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service center or to the Agency's public access mailbox for Frequent Questions.

6.4.2.3.3 Other mechanisms for responding to public inquiries:

6.4.2.3.3.1 Hotlines

6.4.2.3.3.1.1 Hotlines are sometimes operated within the library as a first point of contact for incoming public inquiries; other libraries provide similar functions as part of their normal procedures. EPA libraries managing hotlines or similar functions answer and/or transfer calls with accuracy.

6.4.2.3.3.1.2 Statistics for services rendered through hotlines, public information centers or other similar services are not included as part of EPA library reference and research services statistics, which are reported to the Network on a monthly basis.

6.4.2.3.3.2 Virtual reference systems/knowledge bases

6.4.2.3.3.2.1 National or regional virtual reference systems/knowledge bases may include the option for users to follow up with EPA library staff if the self-service options do not answer their questions.

6.4.2.3.3.2.2 Ask a Question (<https://publicaccess.zendesk.com>) is an online reference and referral service for requested information about EPA issues that is open to the public. Statistics for this service are collected and reported to the Network.

6.4.2.4 Interlibrary loan (ILL)/document delivery services

EPA libraries participate in an international cooperative borrowing and lending system, commonly referred to as ILL. This allows EPA libraries to loan materials to other libraries and their patrons, especially in cases where walk-in access is inconvenient.

6.4.2.4.1 EPA libraries use OCLC systems as the primary mechanism for managing ILL requests. EPA libraries also accept requests from other libraries through a variety of alternate mechanisms, such as approved American Library Association (ALA) forms and/or DOCLINE, the National Library of Medicine's automated interlibrary loan request routing and referral system.

6.4.2.4.2 EPA libraries provide public access to their materials through ILL services. Members of the public must request EPA library

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materials through their local public, academic or special library. See the EPA Library Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery Procedures for further information.

## 6.5 Standards for Customer Service and Timeliness

6.5.1 EPA libraries adhere to the Agency's Customer Service and Public Access Standards when responding to patrons. These standards apply to requests for general information from the public, but do not apply where legal requirements take precedence, such as FOIA inquiries. Individual library Statements of Work include language to address standards for customer service and timeliness.

### 6.5.1.1 Standard response times include:

6.5.1.1.1 Responding to all phone calls by the end of the next business day.

6.5.1.1.2 Responding to correspondence within 10 business days.

6.5.2 EPA libraries establish and follow local guidelines for responding to patrons.

## 6.6 Reporting and Statistics

6.6.1 EPA libraries maintain and report statistics for core library services areas, including walk-in traffic, reference and research services, and interlibrary loan/document delivery. Statistics for these functions are maintained and reported whether performed onsite or offsite, as required by the EPA Library Usage Statistics Procedures and the respective Statements of Work (SOW).

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## 7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

EPA National Library Network. EPA Library Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery Procedures, CIO 2170-P-11.1 (<http://www.epa.gov/irmpoli8>)

EPA Office of Environmental Information. CIO 2171-S-01. Customer Service and Public Access Standards, dated 01/24/2008 (<http://intranet.epa.gov/oei/imitpolicy/qic/ciopolicy/2171-s-01.pdf>).

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Government Libraries Section and the Government Information and Official Publications Section. Guidelines for Libraries of Government Departments (IFLA Professional Reports, No. 106), dated 2008 (<http://archive.ifla.org/VII/s4/pubs/Profrep106.pdf>).

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## 8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Agency has the overall responsibility for the governance and coordination of the EPA National Library Network, including establishing policy and supporting procedures, standards, and guidance to ensure the effective oversight of the EPA National Library Network.
  - B. Assistant Administrators and Regional Administrators with EPA National Library Network libraries are responsible for the management of their individual libraries, ensure compliance with Agency-wide policies, procedures, standards and guidance relating to the Library Network and ensure
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their individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission.

- C. The National Library Program Manager has the day-to-day responsibility to provide assistance and guidance to offices in the operation of the EPA National Library Network and to ensure that the individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission. The National Library Program Manager resides in the Office of Environmental Information.
- D. Federal Library Managers have first-line responsibility for operation of physical Network libraries and provision of library services and to ensure that their individual libraries provide efficient and cost-effective access to information and data necessary to carry out EPA's mission.

## 9. DEFINITIONS

**Access:** The ability of members of the public to obtain information from a government agency. All public libraries and most academic libraries in the United States are open to the general public, but access to certain areas such as closed stacks, rare books and special collections may be restricted. In a more general sense, the right or opportunity to use a resource that may not be openly and freely available to everyone. In computing, the privilege of using a computer system or online resource, usually controlled by the issuance of access codes to authorized users or, more broadly, the ability of a user to reach data stored on a computer or computer system.

**Acquisitions:** The process of selecting, ordering and receiving materials for a library or collections by purchase, exchange or gift. The process may include budgeting and negotiating with outside agencies, such as publishers, dealers and vendors, to obtain resources to meet the needs of the institution's clientele in the most economical and expeditious manner.

**Archiving:** Placing documents in storage, usually to preserve them as a historical or informational, legal or evidential record, permanently or for a finite or indefinite period of time. Can refer to physical or electronic storage.

**Catalog:** A comprehensive inventory of the books, periodicals, maps and other materials in a given library collection, arranged in systematic order to facilitate retrieval (usually alphabetically by author, title, and/or subject). In most modern libraries, the card catalog has been converted to machine-readable bibliographic records and is available online. The catalog for the EPA National Library Network is the EPA National Library Catalog.

**Database:** A large, regularly updated file of digitized information (bibliographic records, abstracts, full-text documents, directory entries, images, statistics, etc.) related to a specific subject or field, consisting of records of uniform format organized for ease and speed of search and retrieval and managed with the aid of database management system (DBMS) software. Content is usually created by the database producer. In the case of commercial databases, the content may be leased to one or more database vendors (Dialog, EBSCO, OCLC, etc.) that provide electronic access to the data after it has been converted to machine-readable form, usually online via the Internet, using proprietary search software. Most databases used in libraries are catalogs, periodical indexes, abstracting



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services and full-text reference resources leased annually under licensing agreements that limit access to registered borrowers and library staff.

**DOCLINE:** The National Library of Medicine's automated interlibrary loan (ILL) request routing and referral system. The purpose of DOCLINE is to provide improved document delivery service among member libraries by linking journal holdings to efficiently route requests to potential lending libraries on behalf of the borrower.

**EPA Document/Publication:** An official EPA publication in any format, that has or should be assigned a special alpha-numeric identifier known as an EPA publication number.

**EPA National Library Catalog:** The online catalog for the EPA National Library Network, which provides bibliographical records for the items residing in EPA libraries and links to documents on environmental topics on the Internet. The Catalog allows searches by author, title, subject heading, any standard numbers that are assigned to the work, classification number and keywords present in the record.

**EPA National Library Network:** A national network composed of EPA libraries and repositories located in the Agency's Headquarters, Regional and Field Offices, Research Centers and specialized laboratories, as well as Web-based access to electronic collections. Network libraries are defined as those libraries with an official membership presence in OCLC. Centralized Network coordination comes from the Agency's Office of Environmental Information. Individual EPA libraries are administered by a range of offices in conjunction with contract staff.

**EPA Publication Number:** An alphanumeric number assigned to official EPA publications. It groups publications by the Office or Division that publishes the work, the type of publication (report, fact sheet, CD-ROM, etc.), the year of publication and by the order in which it fell in that year's publications for the Office or Division responsible. The EPA publication number is included in a searchable field in the cataloging record.

**Equipment:** The federal government defines equipment as an item of non-expendable, tangible personal property, having a useful life of more than one year and a unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or greater.

**ILL:** See Interlibrary Loan.

**Interlibrary Loan (ILL):** The process by which a library requests materials from, or supplies materials to, another library. This service is provided upon request of a library user for materials not available in the local library.

**Materials:** Items within the library collection that may include books, journals, reports, miscellaneous publications, microform, multimedia and other physical objects. Generally, library materials do not include official records, but convenience copies of records may be included.

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**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** A memorandum signed by more than one agency or organization that promises cooperation or coordination on a specific issue, project or agenda.

**Microform:** A generic term for a highly reduced photographic copy of text and/or images stored on a translucent medium (microfiche or microfilm) or on an opaque medium such as card stock (microopaque or aperture card). Microforms can be original editions or reproductions. Reader-printer machines are required to view and make hard copies. Digital storage media such as magnetic tape and disk, CD-ROM, etc., are superseding microforms in information storage and retrieval to some extent.

**MOU:** See Memorandum of Understanding.

**National Environmental Publications Internet Site (NEPIS):** EPA's electronic publications database behind the National Service Center for Environmental Publication (NSCEP) website. NEPIS was launched in 1997 and in January 2007 was integrated under the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP). In 2010 the NEPIS term was phased out of public branding for NSCEP and retained for internal use only.

**National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP):** Based in Cincinnati, NSCEP maintains and distributes EPA publications in hardcopy, CD-ROM and other multi-media formats. The NSCEP website also serves as a repository for and online gateway to free, electronic copies of EPA publications.

**National Technical Information Service (NTIS):** NTIS serves as a central information dissemination resource for U.S. Federal Government technical reports and other government-funded scientific, technical, engineering and business related information. NTIS' basic authority to operate a permanent clearinghouse of scientific and technical information is codified as chapter 23 of Title 15 of the United States Code (15 U.S.C. 1151-1157).

**NEPIS:** See National Environmental Publications Internet Site.

**NSCEP:** See National Service Center for Environmental Publications.

**NTIS:** See National Technical Information Service.

**OCA Reading Room:** See Offsite Consequence Analysis Reading Room.

**OCLC:** OCLC is a nonprofit, membership-based, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs. OCLC maintains the largest catalog and interlibrary loan network in the world, which assists librarians and the general public with locating, acquiring, cataloging, lending, borrowing and preserving library materials.

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**Offsite Consequence Analysis (OCA) Reading Room:** A legally-mandated (Public Law 106-40) reading room that provides access to Offsite Consequence Analysis (OCA) information, primarily risk management plans submitted to EPA by chemical facilities as required by the Clean Air Act. Access to an OCA Reading Room may vary in terms of walk-in or appointment-only policies.

**Patrons:** Anyone authorized to use the materials and services of the library. May include EPA staff, contractors and/or the public.

**Physical Collection:** The materials, whether books, maps, microforms, scrolls, CD-ROMs, DVDs or any other items that physically reside in a library or its storage space and are managed by one or more mechanisms of bibliographic control.

**Public Information Centers:** Space where EPA Regions provide local public access to their documents. This sometimes occurs in the Regional library's reading room, but it can also happen in a custom space for that purpose. In some cases the public may be able to view Agency records at these locations.

**Public Visitor:** Person who is not employed by EPA but uses the library in person to obtain library services, to use materials in the physical collection or to access public EPA databases.

**Reading Room:** A space open to patrons, which provides seating and working areas for using library materials and library services. A library can exist without a reading room, in which case, in order for patrons to use its physical materials they must check them out of the library and use them in their office or other space outside the library. A reading room may serve more than just the library. Often reading rooms in EPA Regions are used as public information centers.

**Reference:** Services provided by library staff to meet the information needs of patrons (in person, by telephone, by mail or electronically), including but not limited to: answering questions; instructing users in the selection and use of appropriate tools and techniques for finding information; conducting searches on behalf of the patron; directing users to the location of library resources; assisting in the evaluation of information; and, when appropriate, referring patrons to resources outside the library.

**Repository Library:** A central place where library collections are stored and made accessible. EPA repository libraries collect and preserve EPA documents and other materials deemed of value to the EPA National Library Network.

**Signage:** A collective term for all the static visual symbols and devices posted in a library to direct patrons to specific resources, services and facilities, and to inform them of library hours, policies, programs and events, including their size, design and placement. Signs that are clear, concise, consistent, courteous and appropriately placed can significantly reduce the number of directional questions received at the reference desk and make using the library less stressful, especially for inexperienced patrons. To comply with ADA requirements, many libraries in the United States have added Braille to signs posted within physical reach of users. In libraries that serve a significant number of non-English-speaking patrons, signs may be provided in more than one language. An

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effort is made in new construction and major renovations to avoid a piecemeal approach by incorporating the style and placement of signs into the overall interior design.

**Walk-in Visitors:** The number of persons who physically enter library facilities in a defined time period, regardless of reason. Library and building/maintenance staff are not included.

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#### 10. WAIVERS

Waivers to these procedures must be approved by the Assistant Administrator for Environmental Information/Chief Information Officer. Waiver requests must be submitted in writing by the requesting office's Senior Information Official (SIO) through the Director of the Office of Enterprise Information Programs.

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#### 11. RELATED POLICIES, STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

The following related policies, standards and guidance documents are available on the Office of Environmental Information Policy page (<http://www.epa.gov/irmpoli8>):

CIO 2170-P-02.2 EPA Library Reference and Research Services Procedures

CIO 2170-P-03.2 EPA Library Repository Management Procedures

CIO 2170-P-04.2 EPA Library Usage Statistics Procedures

CIO 2170-P-05.2 Digitization Processes for EPA Libraries

CIO 2171.0. Information Access Policy, dated 01/24/2008.

CIO 2171-P-01. Information Access Procedures, dated 01/24/2008.

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#### 12. MATERIAL SUPERSEDED

These procedures supersede CIO 2170-P-12.0 EPA Library Public Access Procedures, dated March 2011.

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#### 13. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information about these procedures, please contact the EPA National Library Network Program Manager at [epalibrarynetwork@epa.gov](mailto:epalibrarynetwork@epa.gov).

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