

About the Maine Public Documents Collection

- 1) **What are the Public Documents?** *The Public Documents contain various papers published by order of the Legislature. These may include bills and amendments, committee reports, rules of the Maine House of Representatives and the Maine Senate, addresses by the Governor, and annual reports of various officers and agencies. In the beginning the collection contained a greater variety of materials; later on, the Public Documents mainly consisted of annual and special reports.*
- 2) **When did the Public Documents begin?** *Since its origins in 1820, the Legislature had ordered various documents to be printed, although much of the work was actually done with manuscript copies. In January 1833, the Legislature passed a "Resolve for the preservation of the documents printed by order of the Legislature" (Chapter 1). The Clerk of the House of Representatives was directed to retain twenty copies of every document printed by order of either branch of the Legislature "and at the end of each session cause the same to be bound for the use of the Legislature of this State." The first set of these bound public documents appeared in 1833. Each set is essentially a bound collection of pamphlets that had been printed for the use of the Legislature.*
- 3) **How are the earlier volumes arranged?** *The arrangement has varied over time. The earlier sets generally open with the rules of the chambers for that session and the address of the Governor on taking office. The reports of other officers may be placed in this section as well. The front part is followed by numbered documents of the House and Senate. Sometimes the documents are numbered in a single sequence, sometimes separately for House and Senate. The numbered documents may include reports as well as bills, amendments, and communications.*
- 4) **How are the later volumes different?** *In the late 1860s, the bills and amendments began to be published separately, leaving the annual reports in the Public Documents. At that time, the set shifted from its original title "Documents Printed by Order of the Legislature of the State of Maine" to its later title "Public Documents of Maine: Being the Annual Reports of Various Public Officers and Institutions" to reflect the change in focus.*
- 5) **How do I find stuff in there?** *That can be tricky. Not every set has every document. Sometimes a report was listed in the table of contents but not published. Other times, especially in the early years, there were not enough copies saved to fill every set. A list of years covered by the Public Documents collection will be found [here](#). Clicking on a year will take you to the contents list for that year. All of the available documents will be linked from that list. Additional years will be added as they are scanned.*
- 6) **What if I have further questions?** *Contact the Law and Legislative Reference Library via their "[Ask A Law Librarian](#)" web form.*