

For **Waste Management**, 2008

**Editorial**  
**The World's Great Solid Waste Management Libraries**

Solid waste knowledge is hard won and too easily lost. A large amount of that knowledge resides in each of our small offices. Many of us use photocopies of photocopies of reports from the 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s, which may contain important data on topics like the performance of trommels for processing finished compost, or historic data on leachate quality, or economy-of-scale factors for incinerators. More and more, new professionals in the solid waste field do not know of these key documents and so are prone to wasting time and money pursuing information once known but now hidden. Scientific communities protect knowledge through publishing in journals, and this journal does its part by dramatically increasing the amount of archival quality research in solid waste for the world. Electronic access to journals is now excellent in many countries, and many government research publications are also published on-line and are only a Google away. Unfortunately, much of the pre-1990s solid waste literature is in what one might call the 'grey literature', and beyond the reach of the Internet. Perhaps your shelves are like mine and have a number of paper publications you would not dare put out for recycling because of the difficulty in ever getting a copy again. I am thinking of conference proceedings, research reports, in-house guidance and design documents, training materials, draft reports that were never finalised, and workshop summaries.

The *Handbook of Solid Waste Properties* (Cal Recovery, 1993) is an excellent example of what can be done to compile difficult-to-access information in a useable form for everyone. If anyone wanted to develop a similar volume on another topic, it would require access to the grey literature and the grey-haired-- a daunting task. But do not despair: there are some marvellous collections of hard-to-find solid waste literature in the world, and I feel fortunate to have visited a few of the best. In the spirit of helping us all as a solid waste research community, I want to give you an introduction to the five best solid waste libraries I have seen. I hope you will arrange to visit one of these if you are writing a book or PhD thesis, or developing a patent, or have a spare day nearby, or just want a deeper appreciation for what has gone on before you. If it means you become a member of another organisation or make new friends at the same time, all the better. I hope to hear from readers with their own candidates for the best solid waste libraries.

***Chartered Institute of Wastes Management (CIWM), Northampton, U.K.***

Good library with many U.K. and E.U. reports. Well organised. Over 8,000 items in the collection. A search function for the collection is provided at:

<http://www.ciwm.org.uk/pm/106>.

Getting there: Central UK location with good train services in all directions. Short walk from the train station.

Size: Medium

Access: Open to all, but an appointment is needed.

Contact: [technical@ciwm.co.uk](mailto:technical@ciwm.co.uk)

***University of Northampton, U.K.***

Incorporating the U.K. Waste Management Information Bureau, the collection consists of roughly 17,000 records, including hard-to-find reports, conference papers, patents, and selected journal articles. Also an excellent collection of books on all facets of solid waste (including economics, policy, sociology). Collection searchable via <http://library.northampton.ac.uk>.

Getting there: Only a bus ride away from CIWM offices, so visit both on one trip!

Size: Large

Access: With permission of librarian.

Contact: [Helena.West@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Helena.West@northampton.ac.uk)

***Solid Waste Association of North America, Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.***

Extensive collection of older reports and conference papers, but will require patient manual searching because of shift in emphasis to an electronic library.

Getting there: Easy access from Washington DC via Metro (Silver Spring station).

Size: Large

Access: Need to be a member of the Association, and to arrange a visit in advance.

Contact: [bdieleman@swana.org](mailto:bdieleman@swana.org)

***Cal Recovery Inc., Concord, California, U.S.A.***

Extensive collection of reports, conference proceedings. Many hard to find items from the 60s and 70s. Excellent collection on solid waste in developing countries, composting, and materials recovery facilities.

Getting there: Take a taxi from the Concord BART station, or hire a car and drive.

Size: Medium

Access: Prior arrangements required.

Contact: Linda Eggerth ([leggerth@calrecovery.com](mailto:leggerth@calrecovery.com))

***County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, Whittier, California, U.S.A.***

Extensive set of in-house publications, many difficult to find elsewhere, but very useful in design (The Districts were the first to develop landfill gas systems and many other innovative landfill concepts). Mix of solid waste and wastewater documents can make searching difficult.

Getting there: Best to rent a car from LAX. A 40-minute drive if not rush hour.

Size: Medium

Access and contact: Need to make an appointment. Either call or write the Technical Library staff of the Districts (contact details at [www.lacsd.org](http://www.lacsd.org)).

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