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# The Growth and Development of the Federal Depository Library Program in Oregon

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The Federal Depository Library Program, which is now over 100 years old, is going through revolutionary changes as it prepares to enter the 21st century. As the Government Printing Office tries to shift from a paper past to an electronic future, it has encountered many bumps in the road. Oregon libraries and librarians have been active participants in the federal depository program since its very beginning. As a documents librarian in Oregon for 29 years and the regional depository librarian since 1972, I feel qualified to look at and comment on the growth and development of Oregon federal depositories and the librarians who have worked very hard to ensure access to government information. These librarians have in many cases been unheralded during their documents careers.

Oregon libraries have been a part of the Federal Depository Library Program since before the General Printing Act of 1895, which established the current depository program. The University of Oregon is the second oldest depository on the West Coast, having joined the program in July 1883. The Oregon State Library became a depository in the 1890s (exact date unknown), Multnomah County Library in 1884, Pacific University in 1897, and Oregon State University, Reed College, and Pacific University in the early 1900s. These were the only Oregon depositories until the 1950s, when Southern and Eastern Oregon State colleges became representative-designated depositories. In 1962 the Depository Library Program under Title 44, USC, was revised, and the current system of selective and regional depositories was developed. The number of depositories allocated to each state was also increased. In the 1960s a number of Oregon libraries took advantage of the broadened law and became depositories. These included the libraries at Lewis and Clark College, Linfield College, Western Oregon State College, Portland State College, Willamette University, and the Bonneville Power Administration.

An additional revision to Title 44 in 1972 added law libraries: the University of Oregon Law Library,

Willamette University Law Library, Northwestern School of Law Library, and the Oregon Supreme Court. In the 1980s came the newest depositories for Oregon, thanks to several senatorially designated depositories which generously changed their status from representative designations so that Blue Mountain Community College, Central Oregon Community College, and the Oregon Institute of Technology libraries could become depositories although there had been no representative vacancies in their districts. There is still one representative vacancy left in the 4th Congressional District.

For 10 years after the 1962 changes in Title 44 allowing for a regional depository, no library in Oregon would take on the responsibility. The logical choices, the large older depositories at the Oregon State Library, Multnomah County Library, and the University of Oregon wanted neither the requirement to keep everything forever nor the additional administrative responsibilities required of a regional. In 1972, Portland State University Library was designated the regional depository by Sen. Bob Packwood. Since that time Portland State has added thousands of documents to its collection, provided guidance to selectives, written discard policies, and assumed numerous other responsibilities as required by Title 44. It has done all this work with a staff of one librarian, one library technician and three or four students - no easy task, I assure you.

Until the mid-70s, Oregon depositories pretty much did things independently. They may have called each other periodically or met informally at OLA, but there is no indication of any formal cooperative efforts among the depositories. That began to change in the 1970s, partly because documents librarians became more professionally active and formed the Government Documents Roundtable (GODORT) within ALA, and partly because Oregon finally had a regional depository that reached out to the selectives. In 1975, the Portland State University Library, funded by an LSCA grant, held its first workshop for documents librarians and others in Oregon. Wellington Lewis, superintendent of documents, was the featured speaker. His topic was "Improvements in the Depository System and Better Bibliographic Control of Government Documents." The same speech could be given today! Other speakers included Philip Lothyan, chief archivist at the National Archives branch in Seattle; James Weiss, director of the Center for Population Research at PSU; and Kay Grasing, director of readers' services at the Oregon State Library. In the afternoon, a panel discussion was held to discuss documents policies and procedures, discard policies, and communication. As I look back over the file I still have on this workshop, I note that Craig Smith and Marjorie Napper of the Oregon State Library are the only two people attending the meeting who are still working with documents in Oregon besides me! Since that time, many programs and committee meetings have been held, and many wonderful people have worked with documents here in Oregon.

As Oregon documents librarians began moving toward cooperative efforts in the late 1970s, several new documents librarians moved to Oregon who would become very active in documents librarianship and who were very instrumental in the formation of a documents interest group in 1980. Pam Horan, University of Portland, and Tom Stave, University of Oregon, helped me organize the first meeting of what would become the Documents Interest Group of Oregon (DIGOR). Pam Horan was elected the first president. I was the secretary. Phil Zorich and Tom Stave of the University of Oregon, Dick Myers of the Oregon State Library, and Bill Abrams of Portland State Library were the coordinators for federal, state, local and international documents, and Bill edited the newsletter, "The DocumentOr." Kappy Eaton, University of Oregon; Louise Gerity, Lewis and Clark College; and Alex Toth, Pacific University, drew up our constitution. Over the ensuing years, DIGOR has become the vehicle for Oregon documents librarians to work together promoting the use of documents, to provide a support group for each other, to improve documents procedures, and to serve as a lobbying group on the state and federal levels for improved access to government information. Other documents librarians involved in DIGOR from the beginning and still active in Oregon documents activities are Arlys Fones of Multnomah County Library and Deborah Hollens of Southern Oregon University.

In 1981-82 the Government Printing Office decided that it would be a good idea if all states' depositories developed state plans to help depositories deal with the rapid changes in the depository program. Through DIGOR, volunteers were recruited to work on various aspects of a state plan for federal depositories in Oregon. Arlys Fones, Candy Morgan of the Oregon State Library, Harbans Chona of OSU, Doreen Portal of Reed College, Tom Stave, and I worked on committees to draw up a plan. The plan was completed and agreed to by depository library directors in fall 1982. The state plan had five components:

1. Collection development, which included collection maintenance (who would keep what), discard procedures, and selective housing.
2. Service to the public, including interlibrary loan and reference service.
3. Administration of the plan.
4. Visits, training, and publicity.
5. Future plans.

A number of projects have been implemented under the state plan, including the drawing up of discard procedures, selective housing agreements, numerous workshops, encouragement for libraries to add documents serials holdings to ORULS, and the creation of several union lists of major retrospective reference tools.

Revisions to the state plan have been made several times since. The latest revision was made just this past fall, when it became possible for depositories to publish discard lists electronically over DIGOR's new listserv. Formal meetings of the advisory committee have become infrequent the last few years, due to the press of other responsibilities of nearly everyone involved, but the goals of the plan have been carried on through DIGOR.

DIGOR has had a longstanding tradition of holding workshops at OLA and other regional meetings, as well as sponsoring programs at regular DIGOR meetings held throughout the state on a quarterly basis. It has also co-sponsored workshops with the Washington state documents librarians. Here is a sampling of the workshops that DIGOR has put on over the last 18 years at OLA conferences:

1981—workshop on online databases emphasizing U. S. government documents.

1981—pre-conference workshop on census publications.

1982—joint workshop with WLA documents librarians on federal, state and international statistics.

1991—Pacific Rim Information.

1992—Owls, Power and Trees: Collecting Regional Information

1995—Sources of Local Area Data for Oregon

1996—Government Information in the Electronic Age, a panel discussion with a representative of the Government Printing Office

1997—Building a Virtual Depository Using Internet Sources of Government Information.

These workshops have always been well attended. The early workshops focused on paper publications, then the focus changed to commercial databases. Now the focus is on Internet sources of information. The most requested program topic is statistics, particularly census publications, for which there is a constant demand.

DIGOR members have lobbied at the federal and state levels for free access to government publications in all formats and have been quick to respond to requests from ALA and OLA to speak up to protect the public's right to know. Over the years, as many pressure groups have tried to change the depository program, Oregon documents librarians have risen to the occasion by deluging Congress and government agencies with letters either in support of or in protest against various proposals. Furthermore, in 1989-90, when a task force was formed by the

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## NOTES

1. For more information on GPO cataloging and the use of GPO tapes by depository libraries, see Myrtle Smith Bolner and Barbara Kile, "Documents to the People: Access Through the Automated Catalog," *Government Publications Review* 18, No. 1 (1991): 51-64.
2. GPO cataloging record services are offered by Marcive, Inc., San Antonio, TX; Autographics, Inc., Seattle, WA, in conjunction with Bernan, Inc., Lanham, MD; and by OCLC Govdoc, Dublin, OH.
3. In 1997, Oregon State University stated its intention to join Orbis. However, at this writing, it is not yet a participant in the Orbis union catalog.

## Growth and Development

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Director at PSU to study whether or not it should remain the regional depository, documents librarians rallied and provided strong reasons for PSU to continue as the regional. I appreciated that support very much. In order to increase the base of support for these activities and to educate more people about the importance and usefulness of government publications, DIGOR last year voted to become a roundtable of the OLA. Members hope that this new formal affiliation will broaden DIGOR's membership base and be another step in spreading the word about the importance of government information.

Documents librarians have had to fight for years to keep the depository system afloat. There have been constant attempts from various groups inside and outside the government to break up the GPO, privatize it, move it to one or more other agencies, or to move or change the depository system. During these battles, various agencies have either refused to distribute publications or attempted to charge for publications in microform or electronic format. Both the GPO and federal depositories have had to work hard to maintain and increase the numbers of publications in the depository system.

During the 1990s the Internet revolution struck government agencies just like it struck everyone else. Congress thought that the Government Printing Office could be virtually eliminated by having agencies publish everything electronically. Little practical thought was given as to how much money it would cost to convert everything to electronic format and how such a move would be received on the public's end. Documents librarians have led the way in educating over-eager government officials to the fiscal and technical realities of relying solely on electronic access to government information. This battle has also been waged on the local level here in Oregon. The issue of electronic access is the most important issue facing documents librarians today. Ways must be found to ensure that government information is available promptly, easily, and permanently. Given the record of involvement Oregon depository librarians have shown in the past concerning access to government information, I have no doubt that they will continue to be involved in this issue in the future.

It has been a privilege to work with some fantastic librarians over the past 29 years in Oregon and the

Northwest. I feel that documents librarians are among the most underrecognized librarians of all. There are many unsung heroes in the documents world, and Oregon has had a number of them. I don't want to slight anyone, but among the people I have had the pleasure of working with over the years are Candy Morgan, Craig Smith, and Dick Myers of the Oregon State Library; Patrick Grace and Judy Cross of Oregon State University; Deb Hollens, Southern Oregon University; Roy Bennett, Western Oregon University; Arlys Fones, Multnomah County Library; Louise Gerity, Lewis and Clark College; Alex Toth, Pacific University; Karen Hadman, Bonneville Power Administration; Tom Stave, University of Oregon; and Oren Ogle, Portland State University. In addition, I have worked closely with librarians in Washington and Idaho, particularly Ann Bregent, the Washington State Library; Eleanor Chase, the University of Washington; and Lili Wai, the University of Idaho.

As access to government information is increasingly only available electronically, it becomes even more apparent that no one library can have everything available that patrons might need. It is especially obvious that the regional library cannot be all things to all people. A strong movement has begun to develop partnerships with government agencies to help spread the load among depositories, agencies, and the GPO. Because Oregon documents librarians have always worked cooperatively in this state and the Northwest, I have no doubt that they will soon be involved in some of the partnerships now being developed.

A new group of bright young documents librarians have now moved into the state who will, I am sure, carry on the tradition of those I have mentioned. Among these are Ted Smith, University of Oregon; Carrie Ottow, Oregon State University; Arlene Weible, Willamette University; and Dena Hutto, Reed College. I will match the work our documents librarians have done and are doing with that of any state in the country. Our librarians have the dedication and knowledge to ensure that Oregonians continue to have free and equal access to government information in whatever new formats are developed. The people of Oregon should be proud of what all these dedicated librarians have accomplished and are accomplishing. The depository library program in Oregon will be in good hands for some time to come. ☐