

---

Volume 4  
Number 2  
*Government Information: Past, Present and  
Future (Summer 1998)*

---

July 2014

## Government documents cataloging in Oregon: the State of the State

Dena Holiman Hutto  
*Reed College*

### Recommended Citation

Hutto, D. H. (2014). Government documents cataloging in Oregon: the State of the State. *OLA Quarterly*, 4(2), 7-10+. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1481>

© 2014 by the author(s).

*OLA Quarterly* is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

---

# Government Documents Cataloging in Oregon: the State of the State

by Dena Holiman Hutto  
Documents/Social Sciences Librarian  
Reed College

---

**W**hy is finding government documents so difficult? Is it that figuring out how the government works is so hard? That government agencies insist on publishing their documents in nearly incomprehensible series? Or that there are just too many colons and slashes in those superintendent of documents call numbers?

All of these are genuine problems for librarians as well as patrons who are looking for government information. But one of the most daunting problems of all is that for decades, government documents were not included in that critical tool for any information search: the library catalog. As a result, librarians may have overlooked these important primary resources, and generations of patrons probably never suspected the existence of a government documents collection in their own college or academic library.

This unfortunate state of affairs began to change in 1976, the year the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) began to use OCLC and MARC cataloging to create entries for its Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (MoCat). Before 1976, only a small amount of cataloging copy was available for U.S. Government documents, mostly created by the Library of Congress. The task of creating original cataloging for the steady flow of federal depository materials was more than most libraries could undertake. Instead, libraries usually opted to maintain separate shelflists for their documents collections.

When GPO cataloging became available in 1976, a new world of bibliographic access options opened for depository libraries. The task of cataloging became one of searching and editing OCLC copy, a faster job than original cataloging and one that could be delegated to cataloging support staff rather than professional catalogers. In the 1980s, at about the same time that many large libraries were switching from card catalogs to online library systems, GPO made its cataloging available on MARC bibliographic tapes. This made it possible for libraries to load gov-

ernment documents records for publications distributed since 1976 directly into their online catalogs.

Questions about the quality of GPO cataloging and the timeliness and usefulness of GPO MARC record tapes have been resolved only through the efforts of a generation of documents and cataloging librarians [1]. Thanks to their work, quality GPO copy is now available from all of the major bibliographic networks: OCLC, RLIN, and WLN. In addition, at least three library vendors offer products that enable libraries to buy GPO records for the U.S. documents that they collect and load them directly into their online library systems with minimal intervention by cataloging staff [2]. An added benefit of GPO cataloging is that many libraries, with their U.S. collections under some degree of bibliographic control, have been able to turn cataloging efforts toward other large uncataloged collections, such as documents of state governments and international organizations.

## HOW CATALOGING HELPS

GPO cataloging has not been a magic bullet for the problem of bibliographic access for government documents. For example, the library catalog cannot help anyone to discover the text of a particular executive order or regulation. These types of documents are published in the Federal Register, a daily publication represented by a single serial record in library catalogs, with no access to its contents. However, it is possible to find any number of separately issued U.S. Government publications, such as transcripts of congressional hearings and most reports of executive agencies. Even in the case of the Federal Register and other serial government documents, cataloging makes it far easier for both librarians and patrons to find out whether their own library has a publication, and if so, where in the library it is located. The experience of depository libraries with cataloged documents collections has shown that public use of government publications increases dramatically when documents are cataloged.

Documents cataloging also plays an essential role in resource sharing between depository libraries, enabling nondepository libraries to take full advantage of documents collections in their area. When documents collections are cataloged, librarians can use online catalogs of individual libraries and online union catalogs to determine which libraries in a particular city or state have a title or a collection of interest.

In January 1998, the Documents Interest Group of Oregon (DIGOR) held a discussion session titled "The State of Documents Cataloging in Oregon." Librarians and paraprofessional staff of 14 of the 20 U.S. depository libraries in Oregon discussed how they catalog government publications, which cataloging resources they use, and in which resource-sharing library consortia they participate. The group also discussed common cataloging problems and shared solutions and future plans. This article, which

Table 1:  
Cataloging  
Systems of  
U.S. Depository  
Libraries  
in Oregon

Library	Catalog System	Bibliographic Utility	Consortia
Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton	Dynix	OCLC	
Bonneville Power Administration, Portland	Horizon	OCLC	
Central Oregon Community College, Bend	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	
Eastern Oregon University, La Grande	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis
Lewis and Clark College & Northwestern School of Law, Portland	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis PORTALS
Linfield College, McMinnville	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis PORTALS
Multnomah County Library, Portland	Dynix	OCLC	PORTALS
Oregon Institute of Technology, Klamath Falls	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis
Oregon State Library, Salem	Data Research Associates	OCLC	
Oregon State University, Corvallis	GEAC	OCLC	
Oregon Supreme Court, Salem	None	OCLC	
Pacific University, Forest Grove	Dynix	OCLC	
Portland State University, Portland (Regional Depository)	SIRSI	OCLC WLN	PORTALS
University of Oregon & University of Oregon Law Library, Eugene	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis
Reed College, Portland	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis PORTALS
Western Oregon University, Monmouth	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis
Willamette University & Willamette College of Law, Salem	Innovative Interfaces, Inc.	OCLC	Orbis

is based on that meeting and on subsequent telephone conversations, examines how cataloging of government documents has improved public access to documents collections and resource sharing between libraries in our state.

#### OREGON'S CATALOGING INFRASTRUCTURE

The federal depository libraries in Oregon enjoy a high level of library automation, which provides the building blocks for a sound system of bibliographic control and sharing of government information resources in the state. Only one U.S. depository library in Oregon lacks an online library catalog (See Table 1). The resources of the other depository collections may be readily accessed onsite or from remote locations, as long as libraries provide documents cataloging. All depository libraries use OCLC as their bibliographic utility for cataloging and/or interlibrary loan. If all libraries chose to catalog their collections using the OCLC union catalog or to set their libraries holdings, that database could serve as a single source for documents resource sharing in Oregon.

The last column in Table 1 shows less consensus among depository libraries in their choice of consortia. There is no single access point to the cataloged resources of depository libraries in the state, although several depositories participate in one or both of the state's two innovative cooperative initiatives: PORTALS and Orbis. Since membership in PORTALS is limited to the Portland metropolitan area and membership in Orbis is limited to four-year and graduate-level institutions, neither of these consortia seem suited to providing a single gateway to the catalogs of Oregon depository libraries. However, they do provide two important ways of searching for documents in the state and perhaps are examples of how such a gateway might be constructed for a future initiative.

All depositories in the Portland area participate in PORTALS, a citywide library consortium that enables patrons of each library to borrow from any other member library with a single ID. Shared databases include the FirstSearch version of MoCat and access

to each member library's catalog from the organization's Web site. This initiative promotes both bibliographic and physical access to all depository collections in the metropolitan area.

Orbis, a consortium of ten colleges and universities in Oregon and two in Washington, provides its members with an online union catalog. Patrons may search the catalogs of all member institutions simultaneously. In the spring of 1997, Orbis introduced its automated borrowing service, which enables patrons at any Orbis site to place online requests for monographs and nonperiodical serial volumes at other sites. The consortium and its members use the Innovative Interfaces, Inc., (III) online library system. All

Orbis libraries have at least some of their documents collections represented in the database, making those publications that have been cataloged available for automated borrowing. Unfortunately, participation in the Orbis union catalog is currently limited to libraries using III for their local library systems. Two of the state's major depository libraries, Portland State University and Oregon State University, use other library systems [3].

#### WHO CATALOGS WHAT—AND HOW?

Table 1 reveals a glowing portrait of the potential for bibliographic control of government documents in Oregon. How close are we to reaching that potential? That depends on the extent to which each

Library	Current U.S. Documents	U.S. Documents Retro. Conversion	Vendor/Utility
Blue Mountain Community College	Selectively catalog one-third of titles since 1996	No plans	OCLC
Bonneville Power Administration	Since early 1990s; selective titles prior to early 1990s	Selective conversion performed	OCLC
Central Oregon Community College	Since 1980s	Collection cataloged	OCLC
Eastern Oregon University	Since 1994	Selective conversion performed	Marcive
Lewis and Clark College	Since 1996. Some serials cataloged prior to 1996	No plans	Marcive
Linfield College	Since 1996	80% completed	OCLC
Multnomah County Library	Since 1994	No plans	Marcive & OCLC
Oregon Institute of Technology	Selected titles cataloged since 1982	No plans	OCLC
Oregon State Library	Since 1993	No plans	Bernan/Marcive
Oregon State University	From 1976- present. Serials, maps, some LC-classed titles not yet cataloged	Marcive retro. clean-up still in progress. Serials, maps, some LC-classed titles not converted	Marcive
Pacific University	Selected titles cataloged	Considering Marcive	Considering Marcive
Portland State University	Since 1997	Retro. project for 1976-1996 in progress	Marcive
Reed College	Since 1998	Marcive retro. project for 1976-1997 planned for 1999	Marcive
Southern Oregon University	Selected titles since 1980s	No plans	OCLC
University of Oregon	Since 1996; serials cataloged since early 1990s	Planning Marcive project	Marcive
Western Oregon University	Selected titles cataloged	No plans	Marcive
Willamette University	Since 1996	Selective conversion performed	OCLC

Table 2:  
Current  
Cataloging  
Activity by  
U.S. Depository  
Libraries  
in Oregon

library has actually cataloged its documents collections. Table 2 shows current cataloging activity by 17 U.S. depository libraries.

Some early leaders in the cataloging of U.S. documents in Oregon were Southern Oregon University, Oregon Institute of Technology, Central Oregon Community College, and Oregon State Library. All of these libraries began cataloging some or all U.S. documents in the 1980s. Many of Oregon's smaller depository libraries now catalog some or all of their U.S. documents using OCLC. An added resource sharing benefit of this approach is that those libraries' document holdings are included in the OCLC online union catalog and are more readily accessible to libraries depending on OCLC for reference and interlibrary loan.

Twelve libraries, or 80 percent of U.S. depositories in Oregon, catalog all currently received U.S. depository documents. Some of the first in this group were Oregon State University and Eastern Oregon University (using the Marcive GPO record service), and Oregon State Library (which began using a combination of the Bernan shelldlist record service and Marcive's GPO record service in 1993). Several more libraries have subscribed to the Marcive GPO record

Table 3:  
Non-U.S.  
Documents  
Collections  
in Oregon

Library	Documents Collections	Collections Cataloged
Eastern Oregon University	Oregon documents	Current and some retro.
Linfield College	Oregon documents	Entire collection cataloged
Multnomah County Library	Oregon documents	Entire collection cataloged
Oregon Institute of Technology	Oregon documents	Since 1994
Oregon State Library	Oregon documents	Since 1979
Oregon State University	Oregon documents	Since 1994; retro. project planned
Portland State University	Minimal collections of Oregon documents, United Nations; significant local documents	Not cataloged
Reed College	Some Oregon documents; United Nations to 1991	Not cataloged; Oregon retro. planned
Southern Oregon University	Oregon and local documents	Cataloged
Western Oregon University	Oregon documents	Entire collection cataloged
University of Oregon	Oregon documents, European Union and Canadian depository; United Nations and local	Oregon documents since 1996; EU and Canadian since 1997; retro.planned

and shipping list services, including Oregon's regional depository, Portland State University, in 1997.

Retrospective conversion of U.S. documents collections can be a daunting task, particularly for the large depository libraries. GPO cataloging records from 1976 to date are available from vendors such as Marcive and Autographics, but a library using these services must still interpret paper shelldlist and item profile records for a library's preautomation years and perform database cleanup after the record load. Oregon State University is in the database cleanup stage of its Marcive retrospective conversion project, with serials and maps still to be converted. Portland State University, with the help of a Department of Education Title II-C grant to PORTALS, is working on a Marcive retrospective conversion project at this writing. Several other depository libraries report that they are selectively converting records to their online catalogs using OCLC.

Table 3 shows some of the non-U.S. documents collections in Oregon and their current state of bibliographic control. Our state hero in the area of non-U.S. documents is the Oregon State Library, which began cataloging Oregon state documents on OCLC in 1979. At the January 1998 DIGOR discussion, representatives of many libraries stated that the Oregon State Library's efforts made it possible for them to provide full cataloging of Oregon documents in their own collections. Multnomah County Library, Linfield College, Southern Oregon University, and Western Oregon University all reported that their Oregon state documents are fully cataloged. Several other libraries' Oregon documents collections have been cataloged since the mid- to late 1990s.

Only the University of Oregon and Portland State University reported substantial collections of international documents. At the University of Oregon, routine cataloging of these collections began in 1996-1997, and selective retrospective conversion is in the planning stages.

#### IMPROVING ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS COLLECTIONS IN OREGON

The January 1998 DIGOR meeting concluded with a discussion of how else depository libraries in Oregon can further improve access to their collections. Three ideas emerged from the discussion and merit further consideration.

The first is to ensure that libraries' government documents holdings are represented in the OCLC union catalog. Libraries using OCLC to catalog their documents collections are already represented in the database, but libraries electing to use Marcive or other vendors of GPO records need to make an extra effort to "set" their documents holdings in OCLC.

A practical and fairly economical way of providing government documents holdings information to

*See Government Documents page 22*

---

## Into the Next Century

*(continued from page 4)*

forth by GPO are similar to those of the IAWG, but there are also some significant differences.

Regardless of the prospects for Title 44 reform, it is noteworthy that critical reform affecting public access to government information has already been made with the passage of the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act (P.L. 103-40), which gave GPO statutory direction to disseminate and build electronic locator services for electronic government information products. GPO's current activities and future planning are based on the success of GPO Access.

---

## Government Documents

*(continued from page 10)*

libraries in Oregon would be a shared subscription to a Web-based database of GPO records. Both Autographics and Marcive offer such databases, which include records for U.S. depository documents from 1976 to date. A library holdings feature enables users to find out which depository libraries in the state select a particular document title. The holdings information in these databases is based on current item selection profiles rather than bibliographic records, so only the information for new and recent documents could be considered completely reliable.

Longtime DIGOR members recalled that the organization had surveyed Oregon depository libraries some years ago on their collection strengths and interests. An update to this survey could be used to construct a state conspectus for documents collections. Such a document would aid cooperative col-

---

## "Govdocs" to Cyberspace

*(continued from page 19)*

lection efforts and help both depository and nondepository staff make more effective government information referrals.

Several participants expressed concern about whether existing standards for cataloging electronic versions of publications are meeting the needs of government information users. When does a "version" warrant creation of a new bibliographic record? How should "holdings" for electronic publications be expressed in the catalog record? How do catalogers decide which URL (Universal Resource Locator) to include in the MARC 856 field for Internet linking? In this age of shared cataloging and shared union catalogs, it is important for us to reach consensus on these issues here in Oregon, as well as on national and international levels. ☐

range of information that was previously very difficult for them to acquire. Depository libraries likewise stand to benefit from easier access without having to process and catalog incoming print documents. They will have vital roles to play in serving as a resource for those less familiar with government information, in training others how to locate and interpret the data, in developing finding aids and other tools to enhance access to the online data, and in advocating for responsible approaches to ensure continuing access to the information. The realization of these benefits will occur only if we take care to resolve the remaining difficult issues in managing this important transition. ☐

### REFERENCES:

107 Stat. 112. Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993. Public Law 103-40.

### CONCLUSION

The public, depository libraries, and the government all benefit from the efficiencies afforded by a centralized indexing and distribution system, such as the FDLP, which ensure the wide availability of government information products in all formats and media at no charge to the user. This will continue to be true in the future, as the amount of electronic information products produced by government agencies grows. GPO will be working to develop and evolve its systems so that citizens are assured of having permanent access to federal government information even after the calendar flips to that magical year of 2000. ☐

Bush, V. As we may think. *Atlantic Monthly* 146(1): 101-108.

United States. Bureau of the Census, 1997. *Creating a Census for the 21st Century: The Plan for Census 2000*. U.S. GPO, Washington.

United States. Congress, 1992. Joint Hearing on H.R. 2772, the GPO Wide Information Network for Data online Act of 1991, and S. 2813, the GPO Gateway to Government Act of 1992. U.S. GPO, Washington.

United States. Congress, 1997. *The Government Printing Office and Executive Branch Information Dissemination: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight*. U.S. GPO, Washington.