From the Chair

Midwinter/LibLearnX Round Up

Robbie Sittel

In what is a new tradition, GODORT hosted a series of meetings the week of January 10 ahead of the ALA LibLearnX conference, ALA's new concept for the Midwinter Meeting. Hosting committee and interest group meetings outside of ALA's formal conference provides opportunities for members and prospective members to attend without the added burden of registration fees or travel expenses (when we travel again). This year 108 registered for our series of Midwinter meetings. Twenty-eight of our registrants indicated they are not GODORT members with a few noting they are new to government information and many more stating an affiliation with federal libraries. It was good to have so many people join us for our meetings and I hope our newcomers become regular attendees and participants, virtually and in-person.

The week's offerings included a GODORT 101 session, Friday Chat with SRRT Coordinator Sherre Harrington, and an FDLP Update from Superintendent of Documents Laurie Hall who was joined by Cindy Etkin, and Kate Pitcher. The Chairs from the following Committees also hosted meetings and provided updates on their work: Education, Publications, Cataloging, Legislation, Rare and Endangered Publications (REGP), Membership, Gov Info for Children (GIC), and the 50th Anniversary Coordinating. As GODORT Chair, I was able to attend most of the meetings and appreciated the opportunity for committee updates and discussions with colleagues.

My own highlights from the week include an informal discussion about succession planning and leadership transitions within our round table. I've been thinking since that meeting about ways we can better prepare our newly elected or appointed leaders for success. If folks have thoughts on their current or past experiences, I invite you to reach out so we can be more deliberate and thoughtful going forward. I was glad to sit in on the REGP meeting to learn more about their project aimed at determining at-risk government publications. The REGP discussion took a slight turn toward born-digital government information (thank you, James Jacobs) and also included a conversation on ways libraries might frame, or reframe, their tangible government information collections in a way that better illustrates their uniqueness and value to deans or other administrators. The Friday Chat with Social Responsibility Round Table (SRRT) Coordinator Sherre Harrington offered highlights of many SRRT initiatives and activities. She shared information about an upcoming homelessness summit and an afternoon of social justice, both of which may be of interest to GODORT members and may present opportunities for GODORT involvement. She also shared information about an SRRT travel grant, which is another idea GODORT might consider to help grow our membership and develop librarians' interest in government information. My final highlight of the week was the FDLP update, which left me saying yay for the end of microfiche and with a knot in my stomach over the prospect of an all-digital FDLP. I do not envy the work of the task force but am grateful to those that have agreed to serve. It is a strong group that I imagine will ask hard questions and push back on assumptions. These are not the only highlights of the week, just a few I thought to share.

As an ending note, I did participate in LibLearnX the week after the GODORT meetings, as an attendee and presenter. Aside from the absence of working committee meetings, LibLearnX didn't seem that different from other ALA conferences. I want to commend and thank the presenters who took the time to submit, plan, and execute the LibLearnX educational sessions. Every session that I attended was well worth the time and offered many takeaways I can use in my work. While it is nice to have the virtual format for greater inclusion in GODORT's activities, I do look forward to seeing many of you this summer in Washington, DC, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of GODORT.

Robbie Sittel (roberta.sittel@unt.edu), Department Head, Government Information Connection, University of North Texas