In This Issue

DttP

Documents to the People

Fall 2022 | Volume 50, No. 3 | ISSN 2688-125X

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DttP: Documents to the People (ISSN: 2688-125X) is published quarterly in spring, summer, fall, and winter by the American Library Association (ALA), 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601. It is the official publication of ALA's Government Documents Round Table (GODORT).

DttP features articles on local, state, national, and international government information and government activities of GODORT. The opinions expressed by its contributors are their own and do not necessarily represent those of GODORT.

Distribution Manager: ALA Subscription Department, 225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1300, Chicago, IL 60601; 1-800-545-2433, press 5; fax: (312) 280-1538; subscriptions@ala.org

Subscriptions: *DttP* is accessible to ALA/GODORT members on a per volume (annual) basis. For subscriptions, prepayment is required in the amount of $35 in North America, $45 elsewhere. Checks or money orders should be made payable to "ALA/GODORT" and sent to the Distribution Manager.

Contributions: Articles, news items, letters, and other information intended for publication in *DttP* should be submitted to the Lead Editor. All submitted material is subject to editorial review. Please see the website for additional information: https://journals.ala.org/index.php/dttp/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope.

Indexing: Indexed in Library Literature 19, no. 1 (1991) and selectively in PAIS 33, no 1 (2005). Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (2004). Full text also available in HeinOnline 1, no.1 (1972).

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Fall 2022 | Volume 50, No. 3 | ISSN 2688-125X

Columns

Features

'Round the Table

About the Cover: Shilling, Fred. Justice Stephen G. Breyer (Retired) administers the Judicial Oath to Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson in the West Conference Room, Supreme Court Building. Dr. Patrick Jackson holds the Bible. 2022. Digital photograph. Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States, https://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/press/oath/oath_Jackson.aspx.

Editor's Corner

Jennifer Castle

While you're reading the fall issue, I'm actually writing this editorial in June, and it's been H-O-T here in Nashville, elsewhere throughout the country, and the world. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the average global land and ocean surface temperature from January to May was 1.53 degrees F (0.85 of a degree C) above the twentieth century average of 55.5 degrees F (13.1 degrees C), ranking as the sixth-warmest January–May period in the global climate record.[1] Stay hydrated, folks!

Much has happened since the last publication: More innocent lives have been lost to gun violence in places like Buffalo, New York, Uvalde, Texas, and Highland Park, Illinois, just to name a mere few; the Supreme Court of the United States struck down a concealed-carry law in New York; and in a historic decision, overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and a subsequent verdict, *Planned Parenthood of Southern Pa. v. Casey* (1992), which found the Constitution protected the right to seek previability abortion, effectively ending 50 years of federal abortion rights.[2]

While I believe this was a bad decision and fear for the women who will suffer or die without access to necessary medical care, there is precedence for the Supreme Court to overturn controversial laws. At the time of this writing, the Library of Congress has estimated 232 instances since 1810 where the court overruled its own precedents, so let's look at few of them.[3]

1. *West Coast Hotel Company v. Parrish* (1937). In a 5-4 decision, the Hughes court invalidated *Adkins v. Children's Hosp. of D.C.* from the preceding year, stating the establishment of minimum wages for women was constitutional.[4]
2. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). The Warren Court unanimously decided a "separate but equal" policy of educational facilities for people of color, consistent with *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), violated the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.[4]
3. *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961) overruled *Wolf v. Colorado* (1949). The Warren court said in a 6-3 decision that evidence gathered by law enforcement through searches and seizures, which violated the Fourth Amendment, could not be presented in a state court.[5]
4. *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966). In a 5-4 opinion, the Warren court determined police violated Ernesto Miranda's rights by not informing him he could remain silent and request for an attorney during questionings. The ruling nullifies two 1958 rulings: *Crooker v. California* and *Cicenia v. Lagay*.[6]
5. *Atkins v. Virginia* (2002). The Rehnquist Court held that executions of intellectually challenged criminals were "cruel and unusual punishments" barred by the Eighth Amendment. The decision overturned *Penry v. Lynaugh* (1989).[7]
6. *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). In a 6-3 opinion, the Roberts Court cited the Due Process Clause and canceled a Texas law making it a crime for two persons of the same sex to engage in sexual contact. The decision overturns *Bowers v. Hardwick* (1986).[8]
7. *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). The Roberts Court, in a 5-4 ruling, determined the 14th Amendment's Due Process Clause guaranteed the right to marry as a fundamental liberty that applied to couples regardless of their sex. The decision countermanded *Baker v. Nelson* (1972).[9]

As worrisome as the recent rulings on concealed weapons and abortion are for many people, the Supreme Court has a clear history of revisiting decisions and overturning them when a stronger case is presented. The seven cases listed above have become key rulings in US legal history, shaping the law across the country. Bear in mind that the same could very well happen with gun laws, abortion and other controversial issues facing our society today.

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From the Chair

The Next 50: A GODORT for All

Kian Flynn

I am writing this column, my first as GODORT chair, only a few weeks removed from attending the 2022 ALA Annual Conference in Washington DC, the first in-person ALA conference in over two years. As I reflect on my experience at the conference, I feel incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to attend informative and timely GODORT programs and reconnect with so many wonderful colleagues at our in-person social events, especially after years of virtual meetings.

After a weekend spent absorbing the terrific presentations from the distinguished faculty in our juried program, "Social Justice & the Kerner Report: the Consequences of Inaction," which provided a stark reminder of the impact that government information can have and the importance of free and public access to it, and toasting to our 50th Anniversary at our annual Awards ceremony, which celebrated our history and welcomed new members to join us in writing the next 50 years of it, I left one Washington for the other Washington recharged and with renewed momentum and excitement for the year ahead.

In particular, I'm excited to build upon these themes that our Round Table addressed at the conference and through our other programming in the past few years.

Advocacy

While in DC it was hard to escape the monumental government documents that were being created just down the street from the convention center at all three branches of the US federal government: a landmark bipartisan gun safety bill, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, signed into law by President Biden, the explosive hearings of the US House Select Committee on the January 6th Attack at the US Capitol, and the 6-3 Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and its 50 years of precedent protecting Americans' reproductive rights.

These events, in conjunction with the acute pressures libraries and library workers are facing across the country from efforts to regulate library content and ban books, underscored the important role that GODORT can play in connecting library workers across the association with the skills and resources to effectively advocate for their libraries with their elected representatives. The GODORT Chair's program at the conference, "Beyond the Vote: Lessons in Civic Engagement and Advocacy," was a great start, and I look forward to seeing GODORT continue to pursue this important work in the year ahead.

Community

The COVID-19 pandemic and the physical and social isolation it wrought has had a permanent impact on how each of us works and lives, and it will have a permanent impact on how and why we conduct our work and activities as a Round Table. One takeaway from this time has been the enduring importance and value of building community and our networks, and as a Round Table we can continue to be a welcoming space where library workers can find that community virtually and in-person.

I encourage everyone to join us for our bimonthly Friday Chats (schedule on our website) to stay connected with colleagues interested in government information. And as we move into a time that allows for more in-person events, GODORT will provide those opportunities as well in accordance with public health guidance. ALA Annual was a reminder that there are some key benefits of in-person connection that are hard to replicate in online settings.

Sustainability

We have all been through a very hard two years in our professional and personal lives, and as I reached out to our membership to recruit volunteers for our GODORT committees for this coming year, it became clear that many were feeling stretched thin at their jobs and without the bandwidth to take on leadership roles in our Round Table. In the year ahead, it will be a top priority to continue to provide our membership with professional development opportunities and support the meaningful work of GODORT without contributing further to the burnout that is inflicting our profession.

The past year has provided ample opportunity to reflect on the highlights and history of GODORT's first 50 years and how different GODORT's next 50 years may look. As we transition back to more in-person events, I look forward to welcoming new GODORT members to our Round Table and working with each of you to write this first chapter of our next 50 years.

Kian Flynn (flynnk7@uw.edu), Geography & Global Studies Librarian, University of Washington

Documents Without Borders

Who Sets the Standard?

Dorianne Shaffer

The world is no stranger to tragedies. But acts of terror, natural disasters, and massive infrastructure failures occur with enough frequency that major events often dominate global news reports. For my inaugural "Documents without Borders" column, which examines the intersection of international and US domestic government documents, I want to look at how we work to prevent some of these tragedies through regulatory safety standards.

Technical standards are documents that outline specifications for a wide variety of products, often focusing on things like materials, processes, and safety. Standards are taken up by a number of governmental and nongovernmental organizations including the US Department of Energy,[1] American Petroleum Institute,[2] and the International Standards Organization (ISO).[3] Standards are often set by industry but are frequently codified by governments when they relate to the safety. For example, the US has heavily regulated vehicles through National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.[4] These standards are put in place to prevent tragedies like vehicle crashes, building collapses, and nuclear meltdowns.

In the United States, standards are often set by voluntary consensus, meaning they are "adopted by voluntary consensus standards bodies through the use of a development process characterized by openness, balance, due process, consensus, and the right to appeals."[5] The US Office of Management and Budget requires that federal agencies use voluntary consensus standards over government-unique standards in the course of their regulatory duties.[6] This allows industry possess a large say in the standardization of their own products, increasing standard conformity and likelihood for self-regulation.

There are hundreds of standard setting bodies across the world, and nation states all maintain the right to regulate industry within their borders and recognize standards that will provide for the safeguarding of consumers, the environment, national security, and personal safety. However, having a multitude of standards creates obstacles for trade, negatively impacting the ability of standards set at the state level to provide for desired safeguards. The World Trade Organization administered the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade recognizes the impacts of excessive local standards and directs signatories to use international standards whenever possible, increasing conformity, transparency, and consensus.[7] Over 200 standards-setting bodies, like the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), apply the code outlined in the agreement. ANSI and other organizations work to increase collaboration, consensus, and compliance within industry, and ensure compatibility of products and parts manufactured in across the world. Still, national organizations and states work to have their own standards elevated to international acceptance. ANSI boasts the frequent use of American National Standards as a basis for International Standards Organization and other international standards.[8]

While there are many international safety standards, most enforceable regulation is done at the domestic level, and standards often vary slightly from nation to nation even for the same product. This can become a murky area considering our dependence on global trade. Components for the same complex piece of equipment or infrastructure can be sourced from well over dozen different nations. When parts are made to be compatible with one country's standards, they may not function properly with parts made to a different country's specified standards.[9] This can cause elevated safety concerns and contribute to the tragedies they were initially meant to prevent.

In May of 2021, a Mexico City train derailed after the collapse of an elevated overpass, killing over twenty people and injuring nearly eighty.[10] The disaster horrified many across the world and became a watershed moment for politics in Mexico City. The train was relatively new, having been completed with much pomp and celebration in 2012. However, it was plagued by shutdowns and accidents stemming from rushed and shoddy construction pushed to be completed before city elections.

In large scale disasters like this, there are often a number of small mistakes that cumulatively lead to a massive failure. Engineers who investigated the accident point to poor technique and failure to follow international and national safety standards as primary causes. In one documented case, to save time wheels and trains made to meet European standards were used instead while the tracks were made with American standards.[11] This led to a constant shaking and vibration as the trains were too small for the tracks and suffered extensive extra wear. While the incompatible standards were only one of the flaws that contributed to the issue, they were a significant marker of the train's flaws.

Questions about a failure to comply with safety standards landed Boeing at the center of a large scandal and multiple investigations after its 737 Max aircraft was involved in two fatal accidents—the Lion Air Flight 610 in 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in 2019.[12] The plane was subsequently grounded in many nations, including the United States.

Passenger aircraft like the 737 MAX operate in many nations, cross international boundaries, and are heavily regulated by multiple organizations and government agencies. When they crash, the casualties include victims from across the world—victims in the Ethiopian Airlines crash were from thirty-five different nations.[13] In these cases, it is near impossible to examine the implications in one nation alone.

The primary cause of both 737 Max crashes involved faulty flight control software that caused the aircraft to nosedive shortly after taking off, but investigations into Boeing have found more extensive problems. A Summary of the FAA's Review of the Boeing 737 MAX released in November of 2020 outlined intensive international collaborative investigations, shared numerous safety issues with the aircraft, and plans for a return to service.[14] The report's executive summary explicitly states, "The FAA's intent is to assure the global community that the 737 MAX is safe to operate and meets FAA certification standards." The need for this appeal stems from the fact that much international aviation standards are not enforceable—including Standards and Recommended Practices from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations specialized agency.[15]

In the end, most international oversight bows to state sovereignty. While organizations like the ICAO can do great work to foster collaboration and agreement on aviation standards that impact many nations, their recommendations are just that, and must be taken up legally by individual states and their civil aviation authorities.[16] In the event that these standards are not followed, the ICAO may assist member states in setting up condemnations, investigations, and new agreements, but that is the extent of their enforcement ability. While this approach protects sovereignty that most states would never give up, it leaves international agencies with little redress, even during emergencies. In the case of the Boeing 737 MAX, the aircraft was grounded by individual states who led both independent and collaborative investigations like the Joint Authorities Technical Review headed by the FAA.[17]

It is vital that officials, industry leaders, and engineers understand what technical safety standards are legally mandated, which ones are needed for industry certification and recognition, which are recommended by international agencies, and most importantly—how they differ. Even engineers working on purely civil infrastructure projects like the Mexico City train must be aware of these intricate and sometimes small differences. This can be challenging in the face of political or corporate pressure to complete projects faster and under budget. No matter the pressure, international documents that specify technical safety standards must be consulted in order to prevent catastrophes like those outlined in the column. "Who sets the standards?" is a question that cannot be left unanswered.

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Not Just in English Anymore

COVID-19 Speaks Multiple Languages

Jane Canfield

The past two years have been frustrating and difficult in the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sources of misinformation have been rampant. For those of us who are native speakers of English, accurate and reliable COVID-19 information is abundant and easily accessible. Now, imagine you speak another language and only know some basic English. Your need for information is important for your ability to work, to keep your children safe, and to understand what is happening with COVID-19. Those of us who work in the information world can help our patrons by providing access to current and reliable COVID-19 facts in other languages.

The Centers for Disease Control (https://www.cdc.gov/) is the main provider of COVID-19 health information in the United States. The CDC has specific websites for Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese (https://wwwn.cdc.gov/pubs/other-languages?Sort=Lang%253A%253Aas). The Spanish CDC COVID-19 webpage provides information on vaccines, general COVID-19 information including on all variants, quarantine guidelines, work and school guidelines, and access to specific community levels of COVID-19 (https://espanol.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html). Medline Plus offers practical advice including managing COVID-19 symptoms, caring for children if family members have COVID-19, interpreting regulatory language, and food safety with COVID-19. Medline provides information in multiple languages, including Spanish, Khmer, Arabic, Farsi, Ukrainian, and Haitian Creole, among others (https://medlineplus.gov/languages/covid19coronavirusdisease2019.html).

USA.gov also provides significant information in English and in Spanish (https://www.usa.gov/espanol). The USA.gov webpage on COVID-19 contains information on vaccines and general COVID information and provides links to information on unemployment, COVID information for businesses, and how to avoid scams and frauds related to COVID (https://www.usa.gov/espanol/covid-vacunas-sintomas-pruebas?_gl=1*r3ldba*_ga*MTkyOTIzOTI2NS4xNTk2NzQzMjg2*_ga_GXFTMLX26S*MTY1NzExMzM0Mi40LjEuMTY1NzExMzQ0Ni4w). The Federal Drug Administration is another source of COVID information in multiple languages (https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/multilingual-covid-19-resources). The FDA provides a social media kit on vaccine myths in six languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration offers COVID-19 information in Spanish for the emergency treatment and management of COVID in the workplace (https://www.osha.gov/publications/bytopic/covid-19-healthcare-emergency-temporary-standard). A somewhat surprising source of COVID Information is the Small Business Administration, which provides information in approximately 30 languages to help small business owners with COVID recovery (https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/covid-19-relief-options/covid-19-recovery-information-other-languages).

In addition to federal level resources, there are also COVID-19 resources in other languages available from local and state level agencies. The City of Boston has COVID information in a variety of languages including Greek and Albanian (https://www.boston.gov/departments/language-and-communications-access/covid-19-resources-other-languages). The state of Vermont has excellent resources including information on COVID variants, stress management, and testing information in numerous languages (https://www.healthvermont.gov/media/translation/covid-19-translations).

These are just a few of the many COVID resources that we can provide for our patrons in other languages. Please take a few minutes to view these resources and look for others. Then, reach out with compassion to your patrons who speak other languages and offer these resources.

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Stop the Presses!

Let's Begin Conversion to the New Depository Library System

Jack Sulzer

Editor's note: To celebrate GODORT's 50th anniversary, DttP is taking a look at articles previously published that still have relevance to today. This article originally appeared in vol. 15, number 2 in June 1987, which is available online at https://purl.stanford.edu/vg239vx4512.

By 1997, the last working photo-offset printing press owned by the Government Printing Office will be dismantled for shipment to the Smithsonian Institute. The presses will be sold one by one over the years because less and less government information will be published in printed form. The specialized printing jobs still remaining will be contracted out.

The libraries in the depository system will not have space problems or large processing backlogs because they will no longer have to handle the large doses of paper produces by the presses. They will still have the problem of finding the right information for the right user.

The information available in the depository libraries will not depend upon a publication date. The latest population, vital, business, and economic statistics; historical and "real time" national weather data; legislative bill status and votes; and changes to legislation and administrative regulations will be available without being delayed by the vagaries of printing schedules and the US Postal Service.

Users of government information in business, industry, and academia will have their own computerized access directly into government data files through personal or institutional accounts and passwords, and through subscriptions to commercial online files of government information.

Depository libraries will be doing much less clerical and much more analytical processing of information. They will be working hard to coordinate and facilitate the use of the mass of government data available to the public through a wide selection of government and commercial automated sources. In addition, they will be busy providing services to a wide range of users; those who do not have the means or knowledge to access government data bases themselves, those doing comprehensive research requiring the use of many different types of data, and those needing occasional access to data not in the systems the commonly use.

Budges for depository libraries will be used for purchasing computer hardware, and the gateway and user friendly software produced by private publishers necessary to access and manipulate the government data. Additionally, money will be spent on duplicating the information for special uses and providing hard copy for individual users.

Instead of subsidizing the depository library program by giving it printed material "free," the federal government will provide it with standard computer equipment, or the money to purchase it, and free access to its data files. This will be supported with funds gained from the paid accounts of independent to commercial publishers, and the discontinuation of large scale government printing operations.

Additional subsidies will be forthcoming in kind from commercial vendors. Special discounts will be set up for depository libraries and special agreements will be made to produce specific data files that would be less profitable on the open information market.

The archival function of depositories will persist. Larger, or regional depositories and state data centers with computation facilities will store backfiles of government documentation on tape, magnetic disks, and optical disks. Smaller, selective depositories will act as government information centers or "switching" stations, transferring off-line data to the user from its point of storage.

Pie in the sky? It's not an outlandish prediction. The printed word will always exist in some form because it fills particular needs. But, I do think that in less than ten years the bulk of the government information we will be dealing with will not be arriving in our libraries on neatly printed paper or on 4x6 inch pieces of plastic.

This is no great revelation. We are constantly talking about it. But, government documents librarians seem to be more than a little frightened by having to handle government information in non-traditional media. Why is that? Is it not likely to continue to be the same huge, wildly diverse, inconsistent mass of data that we have always handled with considerable effect if not always with outstanding efficiency? Of course it is, even under future presidents who may do everything they can to control the flow of information. However, the tools with which we do our jobs will change radically. And our knowledge of and capability with those new tools will determine whether or not we are still working in 1997. And that, perhaps, is what frightens us into ignoring the reality around us and holding tightly to the status quo of press and print.

In addition, there are a number of things we seem to be unwilling to admit to ourselves. They are not necessarily frightening in and of themselves, but are, in fact, frightening because we have been able to ignore them for so long and can no longer do so. The first is that the Depository Library System, as it currently exists, will not survive the next decade. Management problems aside, information demands of the next few years will cause it to be ineffective for the users of government information. The second is that the means by which information is currently transferred and preserved itself is transient. Crumbling yellow paper and fading pieces of microfiche show us that the information they contain can be as fleeting as it is when represented by a bunch of electrons lined up in a microcircuit. Third, is that government information costs us a lot of money. Depository libraries pay heavily for the conveyance of that information to the user and our present budgetary mentality does not account for this. Fourth, privatization is not the bugbear of the late twentieth century. All kinds of government services are privatized from communications to trash collection. A close look at the resources in our libraries shows that government information is no exception. And finally, who is that class of "information poor" that we worry about increasing? Has our paper-based system of information distribution been so effective that we do not have a very large number of them with us already? Preserving a paper system of information dissemination is unlikely to keep their lot from getting worse.

Now is the time when we must begin, as government documents librarians, to admit these things and dissociate ourselves from print to become 'government information' librarians.

The Morton/Dylan Philosophy and Government Momentum

I agree with Bruce and Bob, "The Times They are A-Changing." As Mr. Morton pointed out in his article published in the June 1986, issue of *DttP*, due to the costs of producing, managing and disseminating information, and the opportunity that technology offers, the federal government will be establishing new "ground rules" for developing its information by-products as a national resource and for distributing the use of that resource.[1] The work is already well under way. Both executive and legislative branches of the government have been busy over the past couple of years examining the problems of information management. We are all familiar by now, or at least we all should be, with the activities of the Office of Management and Budge and the Joint Committee on Printing. However, publication of circulars A-76 and A-130, efforts to privatize NTIS, and studying the means for providing federal publications to depositories in electronic format, only happens to be the three issues in the limelight.

Action is taking place throughout the federal government, among most executive agencies, in Congress, and indeed, among the state governments and private groups as well. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the current moment toward a "new age" for information.

About the same time the JCP was conducting its study of electronic means for providing government information, J.F. Coates, Inc., was working on a report under contract for the Federal Government Information and Technology Project of the Office of Technology Assessment. In June 1985, Coates presented its report entitled *Scenarios of Five Federal Agencies (1991–1995) As Shaped by Information Technology*.[2] The study hypothesized that the 101st Congress would pass legislation establishing a Joint Committee on Information Technology and Government, and enact a citizens security law in 1990. The Census Bureau, NOAA, the IRS, the EPA, and the Social Security Administration cooperated on the study to assess the impact of the hypothetical legislation and information technology on their collection, storage, handling, access, and dissemination of information. Procurement, contracting, and purchasing were key issues considered in the report. Coates advised the OTA and Congress to press ahead with implementation of plans for use of new information technology and adapt the structure of government as need be.

On March 16 of this year Rep. George Brown did just that. The California Democrat introduced two bills; HR 1615, The Government Information Action of 1987; and HR 1616, The Contractually Obtained Federal Scientific and Technical Information Act of 1987. The former establishes an independent Government Information Agency and Joint Committee on Government Information to oversee it. The new agency would take over the functions of NTIS and would assume the responsibilities of all other federal agencies involved in the sale

and distribution of government information. Its job would be to collect information, maintain an electronic database, and make this information generally available. The latter bill sets requirements for federal contracts involving scientific and technical information, key among which is that contractors would be required to provide all information in electronic form.

Whether these particular bills pass or not, there is little doubt that we are moving toward similar changes in the federal information system. I am sure we can all name at least one pilot project which is going on right now for automating the records and work of at least one federal agency.

Nor is this just a federal phenomenon. State governments, in many cases harder pressed for case and other resources, are constantly eliminating printed publications in favor of data online. In addition, they have recognized that technology now offers them the ability to collage data for all levels of government and effectively organize and share information between governments. On May 27-29 this year, the US National Committee on CODATA, the Integrated Data Users Workshop, and the Center for Public Policy Research of the National Governors Association are holding a conference in Washington that will examine using information from multiple sources and the development of analytic tools for decision making in government, industry, and academia. They also plan to focus on the state of information management and on federal and state issues affecting the availability and compatibility of information.[3] Government agents, and those individuals involved with government work, are examining their technological options and getting ready to take advantage of what the advancements in technology have to offer.

The Electronic Depository System: New Age, Same Old Stuff

Indeed, it is not just coincidence that this activity in government has gained momentum at this time. If the hypothesis of Michael Koenig is correct, we just beginning the major stage of technological development in information handling.

Koenig postulates that we are about to enter a stage of development in automation in which the ability of computers to rapidly manipulate large amounts of data, and to cheaply store vast amounts of information, will be increasing at a rate that will be in close phase with new developments in the ability to transmit data quickly, efficiently, and at low cost over great distances.[4] This means that the various elements of the technology needed by government agencies to handle the problems of information gathering, analysis, and distribution are coming together—and that the foundation for a wholly electronic government information dissemination system is being laid.

Government agencies at all levels are planning now to embrace technology and to stop using printing presses as the chief means of storing and disseminating information. The press may not become entirely a relic for the Smithsonian, but technological advances will radically define its use and make its products very specialized. It behooves us government depository librarians to change our outlook, or we too will find our function specialized and out of the mainstream of government information.

But before we start gazing too far into the future and scaring ourselves to death, we should stop to think that maybe our fear, or our resistance to change is based on misconceptions about our current situation. I do not believe all that stuff I read in literature about libraries and librarians of the future, nor even everything I wrote at the beginning of this article. I think it is more wishful thinking or paranoia that rational thought. I believe that we will continue to do pretty much the things we are doing now, only with different tools. If we closely examine the depository library system as it exists, I think we may discover that an electronic alternative is not so alien or awesome.

First off, organizing and controlling government information and getting it to the right user is our job, has been, and will continue to be regardless of whether the GPO continues to exist, a super information agency is formed, or the medium in which the information is transferred is electronic or paper.

Another misconception under which we labor is that the printed information which we have is in permanent unalterable form. We argue that if most government information comes to us electronically, we will not be able to fulfill our role as preservers of our government's archives and guards against unethical officials who would change the historical record. In addition, since electronic impulses are intangible, we view them as consumable, and therefore, not as valuable as the hard goods like to put on the shelves.

We hold these truths to be self-evident while we watch our bound US Serial Set volumes turn to dust with no hope of preservation. We are forced to stand helplessly by while the government officers remind us that the materials we have are merely on loan to us and that certain publications are to be returned immediately. We continue to store masses of material and rage about our space problems while arguing against a medium that could shift entire document collections onto a few flat six or twelve inch disks.

Information in electronic form is merely the same information we have always dealt with, but in another medium. The difference is that it is easier to transfer, manipulate, and duplicate. Additionally, it can be stored compactly and unchanged for many years, and will probably be much easier and cheaper

to preserve and restore when the storage medium itself reaches the end of its life expectancy.

The next major misconception we have is that the government information we now collect and possess is free, and that if it is henceforth available only in electronic form, many depositories will not have the money and resources to continue acquiring and handling it.

We have always paid for it. We pay to receive it, to process it, to store it, to retrieve it for the user, to market it, and to preserve it. Given the mass of material even a rather selective depository deals with, it costs big money. We have been able to ignore the costs, however, because they do not show up as a line on the acquisitions budget. Perhaps we should be asking ourselves how much we are going to save if we can acquire government information in electronic form and do not have to pay so much for its storage and handling? That is what the government agencies are asking themselves. It may turn out that it is more expensive, but I do not think the difference will be great enough to support an argument against it.

Converting to an electronic depository system will not be cheap. The corollary to the argument above is that when we talk about automation, we usually think about increase efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness. But, we always seem to labor under the illusion that it will also be cheaper. Cost effective, yes, cheap, no. We will need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for special equipment and training and for special tools and resources produced by commercial publishers from "free" taxpayer purchases government information—just exactly as we do now to support our system of print and microform. And no, not all depository libraries will be able to afford it and handle it in terms of staff and other resources.

The nearly 1,400 depository libraries spread across this country vary widely in size, selectivity, and service. Although we may only grudgingly acknowledge Messrs. Hernon and McClure, we have to admit that the individual depository user is unlikely to get the same level of service or even the same information from one depository to the next. This is not likely to change and it is not necessarily a bad thing, as I have implied, because each depository hopefully develops its collection and designs its service to meet the needs of its locality. However, it is important that we not hold up conversion to a system of electronic dissemination of information because some depository libraries are only capable of being distributions points for the output of government presses—and only desire to be such.

We should also try to put aside our misconceptions regarding the privatization of government information services and jerk our knees up every time we hear the word. I doubt that privatization will be the deficit buster the Grace Commission and the OMB seem to think it will be. I just cannot see a horde of private publishers in a "gold rush" to by and sell government information. Given the conditions in federal procurement and contracting, privatization is unlikely to be extraordinarily attractive to commercial producers. Besides, it has been going on a state level for years, with more beneficial effects than ill.

Furthermore, neither is it likely to be the scourge to the public interest that many librarians and other doomsayers seem to think. Indeed, it may be a key factor in making the transition to an electronic depository system possible and even bearable for us.

Many government services are privatized and most of them are performing better than government agencies could do themselves. In large part, handling information is one of those things. The best indexes, the best access, and, often, the best organization of government information is now provided by commercial vendors. In the future, private publishers are likely to be better at producing the special software needed to manipulate the government data in Washington, DC, from a PC in Jerwater, Pennsylvania.

But, I have to admit a prejudice. I am a little uncomfortable with the idea of the government controlling the collection, development, production, and delivery of electronic information from beginning to end.

Finally, a misconception related to privatization is that if we allow government information to become a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace, we will dislocate an entire class of library users who will become "information poor." I think this hypothesis has some substance, and it demands caution from us. However, if pressed, I think we would have difficulty identifying exactly who our users are, or, for that matter, those who do not use us, with enough specificity to reassure ourselves that a growing class of information poor does not currently exist. As for dislocating a group of our current users, I still wonder who would go, so long as depository libraries stayed in business, planned to commit some of their budgets to government information, and did not suddenly set up exorbitant user fees.

What we need is some very serious research in this are before we use it as an argument to defend the status quo. We cannot point the finger at government agencies—who are also trying to conserve budgets based on taxes—while not admitting that we are just not willing to spend our money on nontraditional library goods and services.

Of course these arguments are simplistic. They gloss over a very complex array of difficult issues. But my point is that by converting our thinking first, we can do a great deal to help

ourselves understand what we are facing in the conversion of the depository system.

Action Steps for Building a Non-Print Information System

All librarians are grappling with upsetting notions about the future and what technology is doing to the profession—not the least among these folks are documents librarians. But I believe that we can put aside our fear and speculation, ignoring the rosy rhetoric about the priesthood of information specialists and dire prognostications about the diaspora of documents librarians, if we remember one thing.

Of all the people who deal with the conveyance of government information, we are the only ones who provide that information in a neutral environment. With knowledge of, but without regard for the point of origin, the message, and the medium, we bring all kinds of government information to a point where it can be compiled and used in a situation without conditions. Nobody else does that. As long as we continue to do it, we will have our jobs, power, and influence, and no technological developments will be likely to change that.

Within that context, however, there are some other things we must do for the future. First, we should learn more about our users, those who are not our users, and ourselves; more about our technology and its potential; and learn to revisit our thinking about how library budgets should be spent. There is no question that we will need to make some very hard decisions about where the money will go, so we had better be prepared with the information we need to make those decisions, and, then, to defend them. I think that we will not only have to admit that we are paying a high price for government information, but also that we will have to account for that cost, spend more, and shift our dollars from buying paper to purchasing computer hardware, software, and access to electronic data so that we do not have to charge the user for it.

The second thing we should busy ourselves with is the developing solid relations with information specialists in all agencies and at all levels of government—not just the GPO—and with the members of the information industry. We should prepare ourselves to provide leadership and cooperation in a new information process rather than continue to involve ourselves only as advocates in a cause for an old system.

We should recognize that even under the vagaries of the Reagan Administration with its attempts to slash government services in order to support its national defense psychosis, there exists in government a corps of dedicated public servants who share our views about the importance of government information and want to do their jobs as best they can. Likewise, there are many in the information industry who, believe it or not, are not avaricious profiteers and who are sincerely interested in developing better information products.

Third, and the final item, is that we should be working closely with the people in government and the information industry to develop standards for electronic information collection, dissemination, storage, and retrieval. In addition, if there is a cause that we should take up, it is to develop and pass legislation and regulations which will ensure the security of government information and the confidentiality of its use. We need to be cognizant of changes and new issues in computer law and to work with legislatures to establish legal codes for the collection and use of government data.

As well as being influential consumers, we have proven ourselves to be an effective lobbying group. We must recognize that we exercise some amount of power and influence. Libraries, and library networks and consortia, comprise the largest block of information consumers in the country. With little doubt, we are probably the most important information market there is. If we do not buy it, figuratively and literally, it does not sell. Besides, on questions of information handling and confidentiality, remember we are the only disinterested party with the answers.

With apologizes to Daniel Boorstin, I paraphrase his thought: "High-Tech" will not replace our habits. We will adapt technology to our purposes. So I urge you, all of my colleagues, to stop the presses and fear not.

Notes

1. Morton, Bruce, "The Waters Around Us Have Grown: The Government Information Environment and Agenda for the Late 1980's," *Documents to the People*, 14:2, June 1986, pp. 72-74.
2. US Congress, Office of Technology Project. *Scenarios of Five Federal Agencies (1991-95): As Shaped by Information Technology* by Henry H. Hitchcock et al. of J.F. Coates, Inc., Washington, DC (Contract No. 433-0125). 1985. (CIS/MF 86 J952-52).
3. "Piecing the Puzzle Together: A Conference On Integrating Data for Decision-making," *State Government Research Checklist,* 29:1, February 1987, p.1.
4. Koenig, Michael E.D., "Information Systems Technology: On Entering Stage III," *Library Journal,* February 1, 1987, pp. 49-54.

2022 GODORT ALA Annual Round Up

GODORT again hosted our committee and general membership meetings virtually. The ability to host these meetings virtually has been a boon to our round table. The virtual meetings provide an opportunity for participation by members and non-members who may not be able to attend ALA Annual and provides an opportunity to use GODORT's time at the in-person conference to host events and programs that will hopefully attract new members and highlight the importance of government information.

The week of virtual meetings evidenced the efforts of our committees over the past year. This year, many of our committees focused on refining and updating the GODORT LibGuides. From guides on Best Practices to the Federal Budgeting Process, GODORT is utilizing LibGuides to better inform our practices and share resources that are helpful to librarians and the general public.

GODORT marked the return to in-person conference with a handful successful events. We sponsored three successful sessions—Economic Data with the Census Bureau and OECD, Beyond the Vote: lessons in advocacy and civic engagement, and Social Justice & The Kerner Report: The Consequences of Inaction. These sessions were well attended and received positive feedback. Our Getting to Know GODORT (GODORT 101) session brought in 45 participants, including several first-time ALA conference attendees. Our social events were also a success. The OECD, World Bank, and IMF- sponsored happy hour allowed for meeting new colleagues and reconnecting with folks in person. Thank you to Iain Williamson with OECD for coordinating and hosting the happy hour. The 50th Anniversary Celebration and Awards Reception was a lovely event in a beautiful and historic space. Thank you to Susanne Caro and the 50th Anniversary committee for planning and hosting an event that brought together founding, long-time, and new members of GODORT. We even had a surprise visit from GPO Director Hugh Halpern.

I cannot thank the GODORT membership enough for electing me to serve as chair, especially during our anniversary year. It has been an honor to serve, and I am grateful for being part of such a vibrant, active group.

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

Government Documents Round Table 2022 Award Winners

Bernadine Abbott Hoduski Award

Blaine Redemer

The Bernadine Abbott Hoduski Founders Award recognizes documents librarians who may not be known at the national level but who have made significant contributions to the field of state, international, local, or federal documents. Blaine Redemer served as the Federal Regional Depository Librarian for the State of Illinois while simultaneously carrying out the responsibilities of managing the documents program for publications of the State of Illinois. Blaine weathered rough times when he was faced with continuing operations when the state of Illinois was without a budget for more than two years. Blaine also assisted in expanding the Electronic Documents of Illinois, which provides a means for state agencies to deposit born-digital materials and secures public access to these publications. One of his nominators described him "as an exemplary depository coordinator" who "helped support a small state documents community in Illinois." Blaine is commended for his commitment to supporting the state depository program as well as serving Illinois' FDLs as a regional coordinator in good times and bad.

ProQuest/GODORT/ALA "Documents to the People" Award

Bobby Griffith

The ProQuest/GODORT/ALA "Documents to the People" Award is a tribute to someone who has most effectively encouraged the use of government documents in support of library service. This year's DttP awardee, Bobby Griffith began his career in government documents at the University of North Texas in 1984. For the past 38 years, he has been tireless in encouraging the use of government information at UNT and beyond. His detailed research skills, willingness to go the extra mile, and encyclopedic knowledge of the UNT collections, make Bobby the go-to for research assistance by faculty, librarians, and prisoners from across the country. Bobby's outreach efforts are among the best illustrations of his work in encouraging the use of gov info. He assists with events and voter registration drives, presents sessions for the FDLP Academy, and serves as part of the Government Information Online (GIO) team. Bobby also creates displays, presentations, and LibGuides that frame government information in ways users might not imagine. One of Bobby's nominations noted "his contributions in service, outreach, and scholarship have benefited so many and demonstrate a lifetime of dedication to promoting awareness and access to government information."

James Bennett Childs Award

Dan Barkley

The James Bennett Childs award honors an individual who has made a lifetime and significant contribution to the field of documents librarianship, making Dan a perfect fit for this honor. Dan served much of his career as the Regional Depository Coordinator at the University of New Mexico (UNM) where he provided support to selective libraries across New Mexico. Upon his retirement from UNM in 2015, Dan stepped into the role as the Assistant Project Manager for the Technical Report Archive and Image Library (TRAIL). In this role, Dan assists in managing the inventorying, cataloging, and distribution of technical reports for digitization. Dan has always been an outspoken, passionate supporter of government information. He was able to formalize this support as a member of the Depository Library Council (DLC) from 2001 to 2004, through scholarship in the field of librarianship, and as an active member of GODORT. One of Dan's nominators remarked that his career in government documents librarianship "demonstrated his willingness to lead and be of service to the profession."