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A Newsletter of the Documents Interest Group of Oregon

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Message from the President

By
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DIGOR President
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How do you promote the use of your documents collection? It is not unusual for documents librarians to bemoan the relative lack of use our collections receive. "Underutilized", "overlooked", "hidden treasure": these are all terms that have been used to describe our important public documents.

One might point to a number of factors that contribute to this disturbing lack of use- separate collections, arcane numbering schemes, failure to include in online catalogs, etc. But I would suggest to you that a major factor is in our own failure to adequately promote the use of our materials. Publicity is something that we know we are supposed to do, but often don't. Again, excuses abound: "I'm too busy", "I get plenty of reference questions already", "other things are more important", "I don't know how to go about it".

This latter point is, I think, significant. The truth is, most of us don't really picture ourselves as P.R. type people. Our strengths as librarians lie in our ability to organize and understand vast amounts of information, and in interacting with individuals to help them locate and make use of the information they need. If we were good at promotion we would be working on Madison Avenue or in a high-powered sales job! But the fact is that promotion of our "product" (government information) is as much a part of our job as is cataloging, answering reference questions, or serving on committees. Our own words testify to the need- we should take those words to heart and take action on them.

Furthermore, I would argue that most of us have the skills we need to do the job, and do it well. Many of us are experienced in giving presentations to classes and other groups, so speaking to people about our "hidden treasures" should be not problem. We are (by and large) experienced and skilled at using computers, so new media technologies such as the Internet should be an

opportunity, and not a barrier, for us. Most importantly, we have a great "product" to sell- the wide variety of valuable information produced by the government and contained within our collections. What is missing is a proactive approach to publicity. We wait for professors to ask us to speak to their class rather than contacting them to let them know what we have that could be useful to their students. We wait for the citizen to come into the library seeking information, rather than contacting civic groups and other organizations asking for the opportunity to speak to them about the value of government information. Let's together agree that the next time we are tempted to complain about the how under-utilized our collections are, that instead of giving voice to our frustration we will go out and do something about it.

NEXT DIGOR MEETING

March 31, 1998
Oregon Library Association Conference
Hilton Hotel
Eugene, Oregon

Agenda

Program - 3:30-5:00 pm
Business Meeting - 5:00-6:00 pm

Program Description

Government Information for Business Users on the Internet

Presenters:

Karen R. Diller, WSU-Vancouver
Alexey Panchenko, UO
David Johnson, OSU

This program will discuss the variety of government information sources on the Internet that are useful for business purposes. Presenters will describe the government information available online and discuss the ways in which it might be useful for businesses, investors, business students and other library users. The focus will be on free sources, but some subscription databases (such as STAT-USA) will also be covered.

From “None Of (Y)Our Business” To “We Are in Business”:

The experience of merging business and government documents reference at the University of Oregon Library

By
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As the University of Oregon Knight Library's administration was completing its search for a new Business Reference Librarian in June 1996, a decision was also made to transfer this position from the Reference Department to Government Documents. As a result, having applied for a position in the Reference Department, I accepted the job only to find myself employed by Government Documents, an area which was almost *terra incognita* for me. This transfer was conceived and implemented while the position was vacant, but the change would have been considered anyway. The decision was based on the Library administration's belief that government documents are very closely related to business reference.

The situation at the Knight Library is not as extreme as suggested by the title of this article, which is intended to reflect attitudes among reference librarians towards using government documents for providing business reference service. Both Reference and Government Documents have been staffed and headed by professionals with broad experience so there has always been a certain degree of sharing between the two department's reference desks when dealing with business related questions. This interaction could be seen not only in the many patrons served jointly by both departments, but also in cooperative publishing efforts (see an excellent bibliography of Oregon local data sources authored jointly by my predecessor and the two Government Documents Librarians at <http://oregon.uoregon.edu/~govdocs/sources.html>). The transfer was supposed to create an environment in which the next Business Reference Librarian would get even more exposure to government documents, and it was hoped this would increase the visibility of business information services to the local community, as well as make the business community more aware of the value of government publications for business related research.

Judging by my personal observations at several libraries, conversations with government documents and business librarians at other academic institutions,

and a review of publications on the issues of merging or separating government documents and general/social sciences reference services, the "all or nothing" attitude towards using government documents for answering reference questions is a common feature of academic libraries. For a number of objective and not-so-objective reasons it is a rather uncommon pattern for most reference librarians to use a combination of government and non-government reference sources. It is fairly typical of reference librarians to either answer patrons' questions without bringing government publications into the picture, or immediately refer them to a different librarian at the Government Documents desk.

At the same time, smaller academic libraries with the status of selective depositories often combine government documents and reference services in the same department. However, such an arrangement is usually rather a necessity, due to budgetary and other constraints, than a truly desired combination of services. Among larger academic libraries, a significant number of both mergers and separations between Government Documents and Reference/Social Science departments have been reported within the last decade. As the results of some surveys demonstrate [Peete, 1996], most moves towards merging the two services were based on financial considerations. For libraries that have separated the two services, when previously combined in one department, or decided to maintain separate services, an enhancement of services was the primary reason, with financial considerations showing the lowest rating of importance.

Such reorganizations or a decision to abstain from them are quite different from the organizational change implemented at the U of Oregon Library. No other institution seems to have tried a similar arrangement of combining only Business Reference service with the Documents department, while keeping the general Reference service separate (if the readers of this article are aware of other schools' similar arrangements, I would very much appreciate hearing from them). Certainly, among the largest academic institutions, with multiple specialized libraries serving a specific school, college, or department within the university (Cornell, University of Illinois, etc.) there are collections combining business and government materials, and librarians with expertise in both. This article, however, addresses a more typical case of an average academic library with only one point of specialized reference service for business or government documents questions.

Challenges of the transition

- Reference Department's concern with the loss of a faculty position, since the traffic at the main

Reference desk was likely to remain the same, at least for the initial period after the transition.

- Physical location of the business portion of the reference collection: A decision was made to transfer the Business Librarian's position, but business reference materials were to remain in the Reference collection. This makes interaction between patrons and librarians providing business reference at the Government Documents desk somewhat more difficult, due to a larger distance from the bulk of business reference sources. At the same time, more sources are becoming available in electronic format, particularly government materials, in the light of GPO's intention to make its distribution of depository materials eventually fully electronic. This renders the issue of departments (as physical locations of materials, but not as locations of specialized expertise) somewhat obsolete. With electronic formats, many sources are accessible campus-wide or on multiple stations in the library, so patrons do not have to make a choice of what department to go to.
- Sharing responsibilities between the two desks and departments: Several questions had to be addressed here -- should all possible business questions be handled by the Government Documents desk only? If yes, should it be seen as the ultimate arrangement, with the transition towards it made gradually? In that case, what is the timeline for phasing out business reference interactions at the main reference desk? Alternatively, should there always be some sharing of responsibilities in dealing with business-related questions, depending on their depth and/or specificity? Should all reference librarians be trained to achieve the same level of expertise in dealing with more basic business questions, or should the decision to refer a patron to the Government Documents desk depend on an individual reference librarian's expertise and willingness to deal with business or government information?
- Transparency of library services for patrons: The move would add to patron's confusion in how the library collection is organized and whom they should approach with a particular type of question. To make the transition as smooth as possible, it is necessary to inform the primary constituencies served by the Business Librarian about the changes taking place in the Library.
- Coordination of collection development activities between the Business Librarian and Reference department: Materials for the reference collection may be purchased from multiple acquisitions funds. All monographs and most serials are purchased

from the reference budget which is the responsibility of the Head of Reference, but some serials in the reference collection are paid with business or economics funds, managed by the Business Librarian. According to the established practice of the Reference department, consultations with the reference faculty precede any decision to add or remove a certain source from the reference collection. Furthermore, no decision regarding subscribing to or canceling a serial title can be made without the approval by the Head of Collection Development.

Advantages of the current arrangement

- The transfer described in this article has resulted in enhancing combined expertise in business-related areas heavily dependent on the use of government and legislative information, such as grant writing or information regarding intellectual property: patents, trademarks, and copyright. It allows patrons to tap into this expertise at a single location in the Library.
- U of Oregon Library is a depository for U.S. federal, state of Oregon, Canadian, and European Community publications. The Government Documents department also acquires numerous publications from international organizations, such as United Nations, World Bank, OECD, etc. These resources allow us to provide extensive reference services, including business-related reference, to students and faculty not only from the College of Business and Department of Economics, but also School of Journalism and Communication; Planning, Public Policy & Management (PPPM), Environmental Studies, International Studies, and Geography departments, and a number of inter-departmental programs (European Studies, Russian & East European Studies Center, etc.).
- Continuously increasing use of the government documents collection by the local business community, and community in general, is another advantage of the current arrangement. Though the university community itself cannot boast a good overall understanding of a government publications and their potential use for research and teaching, one finds even less familiarity with government documents in the general community. Giving the general public an opportunity for one-stop shopping is another way to use the synergy between the two areas of expertise.
- Unlike most other public services departments in the U of Oregon Library system, the Government Documents department at the U of O Library has a somewhat higher degree of independence in processing and circulating its own materials. This

allows more flexibility and higher turnaround time in adding materials to the catalogued portion of the collection, and moving them between stacks, reference, and reserves within the Government Documents Department.

- The move has allowed an increase in evening coverage (till 9 p.m.) at the Government Documents desk by professional librarians and a graduate assistant to four nights a week, without significant changes in total desk hours for each individual librarian.

Disadvantages of current arrangement

- The separation of the Business Librarian from Reference may result in a potential decline in his/her knowledge of some business-related sources in the Reference collection. Materials located in the Technology and Manufacturing, Consumer Education, Mass Media, Communication, Journalism, and some other sections of Reference may be useful in assisting patrons with business-related inquiries. However, the current arrangement may make the coordination of collection development in these areas and accessibility of these resources to patrons, assisted by reference librarians at the Government Documents desk, more problematic. Alternatively, in case of insufficient communication between the two departments, it may result in an unnecessary duplication of collection development effort and acquisition of reference materials.
- Increased time requirements for adding/removing materials from the business section of the Reference collection, due to more complex pattern of Collection Development process (as described in *Challenges* above).

Requirements for making the change successful

- Prior discussions and endorsement of the change by all parties involved in the process are essential, due to the need of subsequent cooperation between multiple departments (Reference, Government Documents, Collection Development, as well as Serials and Cataloguing) to make the new arrangement successful.
- Building plan - adjacency is a must
- Combining Business and Government Documents services requires extensive cross-training between the Business Librarian and Government Documents Librarians. (In this particular case, there was more need for the Business Librarian's training, since the two Government Documents librarians had cumulatively many more years of experience in the academic library environment, and had already

dealt with some business-related questions in the past.) Additional training was also necessary for the department's Graduate Assistant and a number of student employees who staff the Government Documents desk when reference librarians are not available.

- To make the current arrangement more transparent to novice library users, it is advisable to change the Government Documents department's name in a way, which would reflect the inclusion of Business Reference in its responsibilities. Our department is still in the process of adopting a new name. At the same time, the main Reference Desk at the U of O Library continues to handle basic business reference questions. From there, patrons are referred to the Government Documents desk depending on how extensive and/or specific a particular question is, as well as familiarity of an individual librarian with business and government information sources. Such distribution of services and responsibilities between the two desks has to be clearly communicated to patrons through various channels, to minimize users' confusion and frustration.
- An organizational change similar to the one implemented at the U of Oregon Library makes sense primarily at federal and state depository libraries. A solid portion of their collection has no direct acquisition cost, including materials that can be used for business reference. At the same time, a close relationship with the technical services department(s) is necessary, since the value and usability of the collection for patrons becomes increasingly dependent on timely processing and adequate cataloguing of depository materials. Unfortunately, in many libraries, including depository ones, government documents are one of the lowest priorities when it comes to their processing by technical services.

Advisability

As I mentioned in the *Challenges* section above, with the current trends of converting information sources to electronic format, and providing multiple points of access to each source, the issue of physical location of materials within a certain library department will become increasingly irrelevant for patrons. However, they will still have to consult a subject specialist, to determine which resources suit their needs the best. Therefore it is more important to find the optimal combination of subject specialists' expertise, rather than the best physical co-location of materials.

Judging by the University of Oregon Library's experience, there is a significant benefit to combining Business and Government Documents reference positions in the same department. According to George

Shipman, University Librarian, the Library administration sees the current arrangement as a success, due to the skills and personalities of the people involved. The Library has received positive feedback from the community. The change appears to be advisable to other academic libraries that would meet the requirements listed above. Mr. Shipman warns, however, that some administrators hold "a foolish assumption that only one way works - there are many ways." Among those numerous ways of improving reference service to patrons in academic libraries, the U of Oregon Library's experience clearly presents an option worth considering.

SENDING A REFERENCE QUESTION TO GOVDOC-L?

By
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What makes a government documents listserv a useful mode for answering a reference question? Or is it worth it? Some of you who are subscribed to GOVDOC-L may have seen my recent question concerning a document from the 30's or 40's regarding amphibians of Mount Rainier. I was a bit embarrassed to send it because it showed the resources we lacked at our library and it showed things I had forgotten from when I had worked at a full depository. Well, someone did remind me that NTIS and the Government Reports Announcements and Index (GRAI) were started post-WWII, so if the document was from the 30's it would not be there. Another person reminded me that the initial focus of NTIS was defense related materials. I was getting re-educated but no closer to finding what my patron needed. I was not even sure this was a government document, but I had tried all the readily available sources. I called on Gwen Newborg at our regional depository at Portland State for help. She did a thorough job but the answer is not available in the sources they have.

Then I received this wonderful email from Eleanor Chase at the Government Publications department at the University of Washington. She was reading GOVDOC-L and recognized the name of one of the authors of my fugitive document as having worked there. She passed the question to Carol Green at the Forest Resources Library at the university. Carol dug up biographical information and other writings by the author but could not locate the item in question. So she sent the question and the information she had found to Nancy Hori who is the librarian at the National Park

Service Regional Library in Seattle. It turns out the 1936 document about amphibians was in their catalog and the only copies are at Mount Rainier. So Nancy contacted the Park Library Manager at Mount Rainier National Park who made a copy for my patron.

So, what made it worthwhile to send a reference question to a listserv? Yes, the technology made it a very simple process. The subscribers are people likely to have an interest in the question and skills to bring to bear. The information one person found was easily passed to the next in the process. I was even able to email all of the information in seconds to the patron. But at the heart of the process was the service orientation and the research skills of the librarians who cared enough to pick up this question. It made me proud of our profession as librarians. And my patron got her information promptly!

For more information about GOVDOC-L, consult the GOVDOC-L User Guide at:
<http://www.staff.uiuc.edu/~raeann/govdoc-l.html>

Minutes of the last DIGOR Meeting January 23, 1998

Reed College
Portland, Oregon

Submitted by:
Dena Hutto
DIGOR Secretary
Email: dena.hutto@reed.edu

Present: S. Clarke, A. du Pont, T. French, V. Howe, D. Hutto, D. Iltis, A. Jones, S. Lincum, G. Newborg, K. Nordgren, O. Ogle, C. Ottow, C. Reed, L. Rowlison, L. Schwab, T. Smith, D. Spidal, A. Toth, A. Weible, J. Weinstock

Preliminaries

President Ted Smith called the meeting to order at 11:05 AM. Attendees introduced themselves.

Minutes of the Fall 1997 meeting were approved as published in the December issue of DocumentOr.

Reports

Regional Librarian. Gwen Newborg, Portland State University, reported that she is working on a Oregon regional depository library web page that will include the Oregon state plan for federal depository libraries, a list of federal depository libraries in Oregon, and information about the new Digor-L listserv. She also reported that another regional depository librarians' meeting will be held at the University of Maryland-

College Park prior to the Depository Library Conference/Depository Library Council meeting in April.

AESOP. Deanna Iltis, Oregon State Library, delivered the report on archiving electronic Oregon government information for Jey Wann, who was attending another meeting. The group, composed of Oregon State Library staff (Jey Wann, Deanna Iltis, and Chris Rumbaugh) and members of DIGOR (Deb Hollens, Southern Oregon University; Carrie Ottow, Oregon State University; and Arlene Weible, Willamette University, met in November; a report appears in the latest LTLO newsletter. The group recommends a pilot project following the federal partnership model; i.e., libraries or institutions would be asked to partner with state agencies to ensure access to electronic information. The group will make a recommendation to the state library soon. Anyone interested in participating in the pilot project is asked to contact Deanna Iltis.

Update on Program at OLA Annual Meeting

Dena Hutto reported that speakers will be Alexey Pachenko, University of Oregon, on European Union resources, and David Johnson, Oregon State University, on government resources of use to small businesses. Another speaker, preferably a government documents librarian, is needed to speak on U.S. resources.

Publications

DocumentOr editor needed. Tom French announced that he is leaving Linfield College and so resigning as co-editor of DocumentOr. Anyone who is interested in this opportunity is asked to contact Arlene Weible. Ideas for articles would also be appreciated.

DIGOR web site. Arlene Weible, Ted Smith, Dena Hutto, and Debra Spidal volunteered to serve on an ad-hoc group to update and redesign the web site.

OLA Quarterly Special Issue. The Oregon Library Association Publications Committee has invited DIGOR to edit a special issue to be published in summer 1998. Ted Smith and Arlene Weible will co-edit the issue. The deadline for contributions will be in the spring, and there is a 20-page limit for the issue. Fran Buckley, newly appointed Superintendent of Documents, has already been asked to write an introductory piece. Many other ideas for articles were discussed.

DIGOR Merger with OLA

Ted Smith has had a conversation with Andrew Bonamici, Oregon Library Association Treasurer, regarding DIGOR funds, maintenance of the membership list, and other concerns raised at the last

DIGOR meeting. Ted has already obtained a report of DIGOR's funds. Members of the group suggested that an updated membership roster and guidelines for new officers be requested as well.

Report on ALA Midwinter Meeting

Arlene Weible and Dena Hutto reported on news from the Government Printing Office, the GODORT Cataloging Committee's panel discussion on retrospective conversion of pre-1976 documents, and discussions of a possible merger between GODORT and ASCLA.

Future DIGOR Meetings

The next DIGOR meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 31st, at 5:00 PM in Eugene at the Hilton Hotel, as a part of the Oregon Library Association Annual Conference. The DIGOR/BIGOR program will be held on the same date from 3:30 to 5:00 PM.

The Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport was suggested as a site for the fall 1998 meeting. Carrie Ottow, Oregon State University, volunteered to check on the availability of meeting facilities there. Ted Smith mentioned that Tom Stave, University of Oregon, is interested in either arranging for or presenting a program on documents resources of Oregon tribal governments. Ted will pursue this idea with Tom.

The business meeting was adjourned at 12:30 PM.

Program

Dena Hutto served as moderator for a discussion on the topic "The State of Documents Cataloging in Oregon."

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