DocumentOr

Message from the President

By
Ted Smith
DIGOR President
Email: tedsmith@oregon.uoregon.edu

"Government documents are difficult to use," the professor stated authoritatively as she introduced me to the class, "but Mr. Smith is going to try to make it easier for us." I smiled and gave a friendly nod, hoping that what I had to say would, in fact, make it easier for them. As anyone who has given a presentation on government information to a reluctant group of students can attest, half the battle consists of convincing them that government publications both contain useful information and can be located and used without Herculean effort.

Much of our problem in getting people to use what we know is a valuable and useful resource is the result of our own practices and procedures. For the sake of expediency, we segregate government materials from the rest of the library's collection, and fail to include them in the library catalog. Because they are perceived as "difficult", many of our own colleagues in the library profession are reluctant to learn to use them well. Due to tradition or past practices, we often keep handling documents "the old way", even if we know it means people will have trouble finding them.

This is the way it has been for many years in documents librarianship. But thankfully in recent years there seems to have been a change for the better. Computer technology makes it possible for companies such as Marcive and Auto-Graphics to offer services for the automated loading of bibliographic records for documents into online catalogs. Library administrators are sometimes more willing to invest technical services resources in an effort to make documents collections more accessible. Colleagues in general reference work are more cognizant of the value of government information, and supportive of efforts to catalog them along with materials that we pay for. Our DIGOR program this month is on the topic of "The State of Documents Cataloging in Oregon". This will give us the opportunity to discuss our successes and remaining challenges in getting government publications into our library catalogs. I hope that many of you will be able to join us for this useful sharing of ideas. But whether you can make it to the meeting or not, I hope you will join me in the effort to make our collections more accessible to the people of Oregon.

NEXT DIGOR MEETING

January 23, 1998
Reed College
3203 SE Woodstock Blvd.
Portland, Oregon
Directions: http://web.reed.edu/apply/visit.html
Map of campus: http://web.reed.edu/apply/map.html

Agenda
11:00 am -- Business meeting, Grey Campus Center

12:30 pm – Lunch, Dining Hall, Grey Campus Center

1:30 pm – Program/Discussion, Library Instruction Room

Topic: "The State of Documents Cataloging in Oregon"
Federal Depository Documents
Oregon State Documents
Retrospective Conversion Needs and Projects

Come prepared to discuss projects, plans, hopes, and dreams at your library! Technical services staff who work with documents are encouraged to attend.

Please RSVP to:

Dena Hutto, Documents/Social Sciences Librarian
Reed College Library
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Phone: (503) 777-7572

RITNet: A Library-Based Community Information Network

By
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RITNet (http://www.region.portland,or.us/) is a library-centered community information network that provides access to governmental and non-profit information from the Portland, OR / Vancouver, WA metropolitan area. Specifically, it covers Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah and Washington Counties. The concept for RITNet came out of Multnomah County Chair Bev Stein's office in the fall of 1995. The vision was based on the premise that citizens' information needs do not stop at geographic or political boundaries and that a network of information needed to be created to help people find information quickly.

The project was originally funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (the Hatfield Grant) and has been heavily supported by Multnomah County Library. One of the purposes of the grant was to create a library-centered model system that could be replicated elsewhere. The project compliments the work being done at the University of Michigan School of Information Community Networking Initiative (UM-SI CNI) (http://www.si.umich.edu/Community/).

RITNet's three primary objectives are to facilitate the creation and organization of community information, to provide information about public access and educational opportunities and to provide opportunities for citizen involvement. The site was launched in January 1996. Much of the first two years has been spent building infrastructure and working with agencies to create sites. Donna Reed, Community Information Specialist at Multnomah County Library, coordinates the site and numerous people from governmental agencies participate in its development. Multnomah County Library hosts the site's structure on its web server.

RITNet also maintains subject specific categories. Regional Transportation is maintained by Tri-Met's librarian Dareth Murray. She organizes links to sites relating to transportation and transportation related events. Celia Heron from the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Associations maintains links to regional neighborhood associations. Walter Minkel, School Corps Librarian from Multnomah County Library has developed Educational Area Resources

(EAR) which is full of links to schools and universities and to sites that support educators, teachers and students. Sue Gemmell from Metro's Creative Services Office coordinates the Arts and Entertainment section. Lucien Kress, formerly of Teleport, volunteers to coordinate the Non-Profit listings section. He has been adding a lot of new information to the site in recent months. The Non-Profit site is augmented by the Organizations database that is maintained by Multnomah County Library and available from its OPAC.

RITNet volunteers are currently working to further develop the Public Access and Citizen Involvement parts of the site. Paul Irving from Insite Web Publishing is donating time to help work on the design of these new components. Volunteer librarian Dan Gibson is working to create an environmental information section and Andrea Drury, formerly librarian at Tri-Met, is helping to rework the library-related information. RITNet is looking for people (hint, this is a volunteer opportunity) to help develop health and housing sites.

1998 promises to be a year of growth and change. The site will undergo a name change in early 1998 -- based on the results of an online election. The Marketing Committee will work to get the word out about the name change and there will be a widespread effort to gain greater public recognition. The library community will play a key role in getting the word out. Those wishing to find out more are invited to contact Donna Reed at Multnomah County Library.

Suggested Reading

Cohill, Andrew Michael (1997). Community Networks: Lessons from Blacksburg, Virginia. Boston: Artech House.

Libraries for the Future [http://www.lff.org/].

Miller, Steven (1996). Civilizing Cyberspace: Policy, Power, and the Information Superhighway. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Schuler, Douglas (1996). New Community Networks: Wired for Change. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Schwartz, Ed (1996). Net Activism: How Citizens Use the Internet. Sebastapol: O'Reilly.

University of Michigan. School of Information. Community Networking Initiative (UM-SI CNI). The Community Connector: Community Networks and Community Information Systems [http://www.si.umich.edu/Community/].

Internet Resources Review

Thinking about Subscribing to Congressional Compass or Lexis-Nexis Universe? It's a Quality of Life Decision

By
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When I first moved from a large academic library "back East" to Oregon and Reed College a year and a half ago, the one resource I missed the most was Lexis-Nexis. Yes, of course I still had access to many full-text resources: Thomas, GPO Access, Supreme Court decisions, state government laws and legislation … the amount of government information that is available for free on the World Wide Web is truly amazing. Even the New York Times and some of my favorite government infozines, like *Governing* and *Government Computing News*, have free web sites.

So why did I still pine for Lexis-Nexis? Yes, it's a text-based service with a less-than-friendly user interface. Sure, much of the content is geared toward the business, government, and legal professions, not toward undergraduates at liberal arts colleges like Reed. What I missed was the ability to do precise, full-text searching on any term or phrase on so much relevant information at once; all newspapers, all federal case law; all magazines. Certainly I -- or any other knowledgeable searcher -- can find similar information for free on the web, as long as I have a pretty good idea of what I'm looking for and where it can be found. The fabulous thing about Lexis-Nexis is that you and your library users can find something relevant without knowing ahead of time exactly what kind of resource would contain that information.

During the last year, Lexis-Nexis and Congressional Information Service, both companies owned by corporate parent Reed Elsevier, have introduced web-based services that utilize information from the text-based Lexis-Nexis service. Both products are designed for the academic users, rather that working professionals. They're also pricey enough to make any librarian spend a little time figuring out whether the added value in these products merits the hefty subscription.

Congressional Compass is a web-based version of CIS/Index that complements the index with full text from the Lexis-Nexis service and from government sources. Simply having the CIS/Index in electronic form was a big improvement at my library, which has never subscribed to Congressional Masterfile, the CD-ROM version of the index. The ability to search all years of indexing, from 1970 to date, frees students - and the librarians they ask for help - from thumbing through many years' worth of volumes in order to locate a congressional document.

There are at least three unique advantages to the web-based version of CIS/Index. First, the search results show students the citations to both paper and microfiche documents in the library's collection in addition to links to electronic text. This illustrates the true range of information formats that are available in a way that my printed guide to the documents collection cannot. Second, the Congressional Compass site pulls together related information about the members of congress, text of bills, laws, and regulations, and supporting news and commentary from National Journal. The addition of these resources makes it far easier for students to gain a complete picture of the background behind a piece of legislation and how it has been implemented. Best of all, Congressional Compass includes wonderful online help in its "How Do I ..." directory, which provides the answers to questions from "How do I find information on a bill I heard about yesterday" to "How do I cite congressional publications in my paper?"

Having access to Congressional Compass has made legislative history much easier at my library, but it didn't completely console me. I still missed that sense of complete mastery of current events that Lexis-Nexis used to give me. So I was very interested to hear about the development of a new product, Lexis-Nexis Universe, at last summer's American Library Association conference. Universe is a web-based version of the original Lexis-Nexis system designed for academic libraries. Unlike the original, it is intended to be self-starting, no-training-required information service.

Does Lexis-Nexis Universe deliver what it promises? After two months of using it, I would answer yes, with just a few reservations. While it contains almost all of the same publication files as the original service, there are several limitations in the new searching interface. There are no all-encompassing "ALLNWS" or CURRNWS" file searching options in Universe, although searchers may still choose some group files, such as "Major Papers," "Magazines," or "Western Regional Sources" file options. In the legal file areas, users cannot search all state constitutions or all state case law, but must instead search each state's laws separately. The web-based search form requires users to fill in a "Topic" box, which searches for words and phrases in authors, titles, and preliminary text of

documents. A second box, labeled "Additional Terms," can be used to search for terms and phrases occurring anywhere in a document. The search form is easy for students to understand, and it presents online instructions and sample searches in a way that is unobtrusive yet easy to find when needed. However, the "Topic" box does have the effect of limiting queries to text that can be found in the preliminary parts of documents.

Despite these searching limitations, Lexis-Nexis Universe is a huge hit with the students who have used it at Reed. The sheer amount of full-text that is available for searching enables them to find information - particularly current events, political, and legal information - that they just wouldn't have had access to in our liberal arts collection without this service.

Are these services worth the subscription price? For a small institution like mine, the fact that both Congressional Compass and Lexis-Nexis are priced according to full-time-equivalent students on campus is very helpful. I also found that access to these services enables our library to consider cutting back some existing subscriptions. For example, we no longer need paper updates to the printed CIS/Index now that we have the continuously-updated Congressional Compass, and our subscription to the full-text New York Times on CD-ROM seems redundant now that we have Lexis-Nexis Universe. In my opinion, the additional access to news, legal, and business publications that we're able to provide to our students is well worth the cost. In addition to the actual information that we're able to provide, we are also giving our students a glimpse of the full breadth of information that is available in today's professional world, and full-text searching gives them some practice in sorting through that information and judging its validity and relevance. That is a real improvement in the quality of the information environment that this library creates for its users.

ORDOCS NEWS

AESOP AND GILS:
A TALE OF TWO ACRONYMS

By
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In some ways, this is both the best and the worst of times for access to government information. Easily accessible online catalogs make information about different libraries' paper holdings readily available, and the World Wide Web provides access to electronic equivalents of many paper publications, in addition to much information that never appears in paper form. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to these electronic marvels, and the information that was there one day may have moved or disappeared the next, with little or no warning. And, while library catalogs provide a standard, formalized system of access to paper publications, no such standardized system exists for the World Wide Web.

To address these issues, the State Library is investigating two possible projects: AESOP and GILS.

AESOP
At the DIGOR meeting at the OLA/WLA conference last spring, DIGOR and the State Library formed a group to investigate the archiving of State of Oregon electronic publications. Members are Deb Hollens (Southern Oregon University), Dee Iltis (State Library), Carrie Ottow (Oregon State University), Christopher Rumbaugh (State Library), Arlene Weible (Willamette University) and me. We met in November, and named ourselves AESOP: Archiving Electronic State of Oregon Publications Task Force.

The purpose of AESOP is to write a proposal to provide free and lasting access for citizens of Oregon to electronic state of Oregon publications.

While it was relatively easy to agree on the group's purpose, coming up with a definition of "electronic publications" was not. It's like Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's comment on pornography: that he wouldn't try to define it, "but I know it when I see it." We agreed on some things that are not electronic publications: they do not include public records, which are in the State Archives bailiwick; they do not include library OPACs; they do not include links to information outside the issuing agency. And we agreed that electronic publications can include: electronic versions of print publications; non-print text documents; statistical tables; data sets; interactive media; databases; and multimedia.

We also talked about models for an electronic archiving proposals. Should the archives be at the State Library, at individual agencies, or a cooperative effort, perhaps adopting the federal "adopt an agency" concept? Would the archived documents be accessible through a special index, webPAC, or government information locator service (GILS)?

When AESOP was first forming, my impression was that this was a large but do-able effort, and that the obvious archiving medium was archival paper or microform. While I still have the prejudice towards paper archiving for items that can be printed, discussions with AESOP, and my own perusal of every Oregon state agency web page on Oregon Online, has convinced me that some electronic publications will not translate to paper or microform and must be archived electronically. Important information included in motion or sound, for instance, just doesn't work on paper.

The members of AESOP are now considering our next step. After the first of the year, we hope to agree on a proposal to take forward and discuss with stakeholders at state agencies, and ultimately suggest to the State Library. Anyone who'd like to have input, feel free to contact me or any other AESOP member.

GILS
The idea of Government Information Locator Systems has been around for several years. Perhaps the most successful is WAGILS, Washington State's effort (http://wagils.wln.com).

In late November, Gayle Palmer and Phil Coombs of the Washington State Library visited OSL to discuss the WAGILS project. Dee Iltis, Ernest Perez and I from OSL attended, along with Roy Turnbaugh and Dan Cantrell from the State Archives, and Mike Zanon from Information Resources Management at the Dept. of Administrative Services.

The Washington State legislature started an effort to increase public access to government information through electronic means. Washington State Library was directed to do the GILS. WLS held public meetings to find out what was useful from a citizen's viewpoint.

When WLS began designing WAGILS, they first considered the federal, centralized model, but felt that it would be expensive and unwieldy. Instead, they adopted a system in which the indexing resides with the information, and record description is updated by whoever creates the information. This means that webmasters at Washington government agencies enter the metadata, using templates and the GILS controlled vocabulary (see http://www.wa.gov/wsl/gils/gilstree.htm). Surprisingly, Palmer and Coombs reported little or no agency opposition to this idea.

To keep the information current, "spiders" search and update approximately once a week. Because of the

frequent updating, Palmer and Coombs feel there's pretty much "no such thing as a dead link". There are also no dead ends: if a search doesn't come up with any hits, the user can email WLS directly.

Ernest Perez (OSL Group Leader for Information and Technical Services) hopes we can pursue a similar GILS approach in Oregon. "With the shift to the web environment by citizens and government agencies, the time for an Oregon GILS is at hand. It's realistic, do-able, and affordable now."

Both AESOP and GILS represent the continuing efforts of documents folks to make government information, in all its forms, readily available to the citizens who paid for its creation.

NEAT STUFF
In preparation for the initial AESOP meeting, I ran across several interesting or unusual web sites.

TRAIL, the Texas Records and Information Locator (http://isadore.tsl.state.tx.us/trail/) is a great source for finding information on Texas state agencies. When you click on the entry for an agency, you get a screen with the agency's address and phone number, and links to the statutes or code pertaining to the agency; electronic resources such as web sites and electronic publications; Texas State Library's catalog for information on printed publications by and about the agency; and a staff directory. While it's not a GILS (it's arranged by agency, so you need to know where you're going when you start), it nicely combines the TSL catalog with other resources.

The web sites for Oregon state agencies are as varied as the agencies themselves. Here are some goodies I discovered in my travels:

Need to know how many truck drivers ran off the road while grabbing a cup of coffee or adjusting the radio in Oregon in 1996? Try http://www.odot.state.or.us/motorcarr/hweb/safety/safestat.htm

The Department of Corrections "hot topics" page (http://www.doc.state.or.us/public/welcome.htm) while a bit flashy for my conservative web tastes, contains much timely information on subjects such as capital punishment, prison siting, and the Summit Book Camp program.

Most agency web sites are there to share information. At the Lottery site (http://www.doc.state.or.us/public/welcome.htm)

they also want to sell you on something - playing the lottery. The site does contain good statistics and information on recent winners, and even a game simulator.

No trip through Oregon government web sites would be complete without a stop at the governor's home page (http://www.governor.state.or.us/governor.html). In addition to the text of speeches, schedules, and information on various task forces, it has a photograph of first baby Logan Kitzhaber.

✂ **ANNOUNCING A NEW LISTSERV** ✂
DIGOR Email Discussion list

The purpose of this list is to provide a forum for discussion of issues relating to the distribution of government information, including both policy issues and technical problems relating to library access to information. It is an open, unmoderated list.

Subscription information

New subscribers can subscribe to the list by sending a message to majordomo@lists.uoregon.edu with the contents:

    subscribe digor

Posts intended for the entire list should be addressed to:

    digor@lists.uoregon.edu

Questions about the administration of this list should be addressed to:

    owner-digor@lists.uoregon.edu

To unsubscribe yourself from this list send a message to majordomo@lists.uoregon.edu with the contents:

    unsubscribe digor
    end

Listowner: Ted Smith, University of Oregon

Minutes of the last DIGOR Meeting
September 26, 1997

Central Oregon Community College
Bend, Oregon

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

Present: J. Cross, A. du Pont, T. French, D. Hutto, A. Jones, S. McKnight, G. Newborg, O. Ogle, A. Panchenko, T. Smith, D. Spidal, A. Weible, P. Wheeler

Preliminaries
Ted Smith called the business meeting to order at 11:30 AM. Attendees introduced themselves.

Minutes of the Spring 1997 meeting were approved as published in the September 1997 issue of Documentor.

Regional Depository Librarians' Meeting
Gwen Newborg, Portland State University, regional depository librarian for Oregon, reported on the regional librarians meeting held in Minneapolis, MN in August. (Gwen's written report of this meeting was also published in the September DocumentOr). Some of the topics covered in that meeting were:

- Partnerships between libraries and the Government Printing Office to ensure preservation and access to electronic publications, such as the State Dept./University of Illinois-Chicago/GPO partnership
- Need for revision of state plans
- Guidelines for creation of depository library web pages (e.g., Louisiana State University has guidelines)
- Workshop programs for depository library staff (e.g., Library of Michigan)
- State-wide discussion lists and web sites to facilitate discard policies
- Presentations on new services and technologies such as GPO Access, geographic information systems

Another regional depository librarians' meeting will be held at the University of Maryland-College Park in April 1998, prior to the Depository Library Conference.

After Gwen's report, there was discussion about these topics. Ted Smith volunteered to initiate a DIGOR listserv to facilitate discards. Since Oregon libraries are

due to receive self-studies from GPO in late 1998 or early 1999, the group agreed that a DIGOR program should be held at the fall 1998 meeting on how to do a self-study.

Oregon Library Association Program
The Oregon Library Association's annual conference will be held in Eugene on Monday-Tuesday, March 30 & 31, 1998. There was discussion about a program to be jointly presented by DIGOR and BIGOR (our business librarians' counterpart) that would focus on free business information available from government resources. Alexy Panchenko, University of Oregon, and Dena Hutto, Reed College, agreed to organize a panel of speakers on this topic and to come up with a possible title for the session.

DIGOR/OLA Administrative Issues
Arlene Weible, Willamette University, suggested that we make formal contact with our new parent organization, OLA, to obtain a membership and address list. The DocumentOr needs a list of DIGOR members in order to update its mailing list, and since DIGOR no longer has a treasurer, we will need a report of DIGOR funds from OLA as well. There was consensus that in the absence of a DIGOR treasurer, it would be the job of the DIGOR secretary to obtain this report. Arlene further suggested that DIGOR establish procedures for maintaining contact with OLA's administrative office.

DocumentOr
Co-editors Tom French, Linfield College, and Arlene Weible solicited ideas for features and articles for future issues. Suggestions included: reviews of web resources; profiles of documents collections in the state; the state of documents cataloging in Oregon; state agency profiles.

Washington Documents Librarians' Group
Documents librarians in Washington are discussing the possibility of forming an organization of their own. One of the organizational structures that has come up in their discussion is the possibility of joining with documents librarians in neighboring states to create a regional group. Members present at this meeting discussed what DIGOR's relationship to such a group should be. The consensus was that having just joined OLA, DIGOR should definitely continue to exist as an organization for Oregon documents librarians. However, everyone present supported the idea of working cooperatively with the new group on joint programs or other projects.

Next Meeting

Dena Hutto suggested that the next meeting be held at the Reed College campus in Portland, where a new campus center and dining facility have just opened and parking is free and unmonitored. The date was set for Friday, January 23, 1998 and possible program ideas were discussed.

The business meeting was adjourned at 12:45.

Program
Cam MacIntosh, Census Bureau, presented an afternoon program on access tools and publications available via the U.S. Census web site.

1997-98 DIGOR Officers

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