

Public Documents Highlights



September 1983
No. 63 (GP3.27.63)



Presenting a certificate to recognize 35 years of depository service by the North Texas State University Library is Ed Ochs, right, manager of the GPO's Dallas Bookstore as Edward R. Johnson, Library Director, and Damron S. Dennis, Documents Librarian, look on.

NTSU DOCUMENTS LIBRARY CELEBRATES 35TH YEAR

The Government documents department of North Texas State University, located in Denton, Texas, is 35 years old.

Mrs. Damron Dennis has been the librarian in charge of the depository since 1972. Miss Pauline Ward was the first documents librarian, succeeded in 1953 by Mrs. Velma Cathey. Before retiring in 1974, Mrs. Cathey established many of the systems, including cataloging of documents, which allow the department to function efficiently and to provide ready access to the Government materials.

NTSU was designated a depository library in March 1948. When Texas Women's University, then Texas State College for Women, dropped its depository status in 1947, North Texas State Teachers College, now NTSU, was able to conclude negotiations with Superintendent of Documents Fred W. Cromwell and Representative Ed Gossett (D.-Texas) to become a depository library for the area. The library began receiving documents in April 1948.

McClure, Hernon Book Challenged

McClure, Charles R. and Hernon, Peter. *Improving the Quality of Reference Service for Government Publications.* (ALA Studies in Librarianship No. 10) Chicago, American Library Association, 1983.

Reviewed by LeRoy C. Schwarzkopf

The major findings on Government documents referral services from this study were presented in the April 1983 issue of *Public Documents Highlights* under the headline, "Documents Librarians Called Lax in Providing Referral Services." However, this was a summation of only one of six chapters of this book.

The first chapter presents the background of the study, the methodology, a review of other unobtrusive testing of reference service, and a review of other research on access to government information.

The second chapter reports the accuracy of answers to 20 questions, by question and geographic region. The average was 37% correct answers. The results are more alarming when compared to previous studies of unobtrusive testing in general reference situations, which report a 52% average. Questions are analyzed as to degree of difficulty. Data are reported and analyzed on duration of the reference interview and search, primary reason for incorrect or partially correct answer, accuracy by phone and in-person, and percentage of first-contact answers.

The third chapter reports and analyzes the following institutional variables on response accuracy, delivery method, and type of question: highest degree offered, volumes held, library budget, number of depository items selected, number of documents staff, physical arrangement of the collection, and organization for documents service. It concludes that none of these variables had statistical significance on the results.

The fourth chapter presents results and conclusions on referral, many of which were previously reported in *Public Documents Highlights*. Results are analyzed by institutional variables, type of questions, and information provider to whom referred. However, the unsatisfactory results are less alarming

since the authors report that "general reference staff [also] infrequently engage in referral activity." (p. 89)

Suggestions Offered

The last two chapters, representing 55% of the text (less appendices), go beyond the factual presentation of the research results, and present suggestions for improving documents reference service and the depository library system based on review of the literature and personal opinion.

Chapter five presents suggestions for improving reference service in three areas: integration of documents service into the library as a whole; improving individual skills and competencies related to the reference process; and "developing administrative strategies . . . to provide the environment that will encourage the exploitation of Government publications and assist in the overall integration."

Although many of the suggestions are not new, they bear repeating. Of particular significance are the authors' arguments for a broader interpretation of "integration" beyond physical integration of materials. With improved technology, "bibliographic integration" offers more rewards given the greater availability of government publications in online data bases and improved bibliographic control by the Federal Government. (p. 140)

The last chapter discusses the implications of the following factors for improving the depository library system: Number of publications entering the program; importance of performance standards; *Guideline for the Depository Library System*; inspection program; state plans; cost effectiveness of the program; and the program as an inter-

(Continued on page 2)

Sarah T. Kadec, Director of Library Programs Service since January 1983, has resigned to accept a position with the Environmental Protection Agency. The announcement was made at the Depository Library Council meeting in Seattle in mid-September.

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Public Documents Highlights is circulated regularly primarily for librarians of the Federal Depository Library Program, and mailed at first class rates.

Material for use in this publication should be sent to the Editor, Public Documents Highlights, c/o Superintendent of Documents (SD), Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20401.

All submissions may be edited or condensed for space consideration. Comments are most welcome and may be printed if the sender is clearly identified.

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A Librarian Speaks Out

"Micro Mania: You Have Information But Will Library Patrons Use It?"

(Editor's note: Since publication earlier this year of an article critical of documents librarian service, interest has been heightened. Not connected with that article, but nonetheless appropos to the subject, is a speech presented at the New Jersey Government Documents Association. This article is taken from that talk by Diane H. Smith, Head of Documents, The Pennsylvania State University. Because of its length, it will appear in three parts starting with this month's issue of Public Documents Highlights. Reader comments are encouraged.)

Today's libraries find themselves in the midst of a revolution in Government publishing and, as in many revolutions, the reasons for change have become fuzzy and intermingled over time.

Three trends stand out as major causes of this publishing revolution:

First, Government publishing is in a state of flux and evolution; since 1789, politics and Government publishing have been closely intertwined.

Second, there have been substantial developments in printing technologies in the recent past.

Finally, we are in the burgeoning "Information Age," in which there is an insatiable need for more data; in response to this demand, more Federal information is available from a greater number of sources, both private and public.

One outgrowth of the convergence of these three trends was the 1977 GPO policy to distribute documents on microfiche. This decision has resulted in a vast outcry over the difficulties of documents on microfiche and of patron resistance.

I believe that the issuance of documents on fiche has only brought to the forefront problems in document librarianship which were always there: Bibliographic access,

locking network. The authors are particularly critical of the *Guidelines* and the inspection program.

Validity Questioned

While I applaud this important, much-needed contribution of scientific research to the field of documents librarianship where little exists, I have serious reservations about the validity of some conclusions of a study which depends on a number of subjective factors.

Are the questions representative? I have doubts about several.

Was the degree of difficulty fair to judge the quality of reference service, or to make a fair comparison with other studies? I think not.

storage, reference, document awareness in administrators' minds, and distribution. I contend that the true cause of the resistance to microfiche is not the medium but rather the varying methods of distributing Government documents, the types of bibliographic access and the quality of reference service.

In order to survive this "micro mania," we must understand and be comfortable with the content and workings, as well as the formats, of our document collections. We must be able to explain clearly to our users the various sources available to locate documents and the resulting distribution patterns. Finally, we must maintain and instill a positive attitude toward microfiche in our staff.

To demonstrate how one can develop these characteristics, I would like to touch briefly on four essential facets of managing a microform documents collection. None of these four principles are startling new concepts, but they are all characteristics which must be present in your library if you wish to have a microform documents collection which is used by your patrons.

(To be continued in the next issue.)

THREE NEW DEPOSITORIES

Three more libraries have been designated as depositories:

Norma Perkins Hagan Memorial Library, Cumberland College, Williamsburg, KY;

Learning Resource Center, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, School of Medicine, Bethesda, MD; and


Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Library, Washington, D.C.

For unobstructive testing by students, the questions do not appear as simple as they would be if they were administered obstructively by library school professors. Validity of test administration is suspect when one group, the Northeast, outperforms the Southeast by the wide margin of 49% to 20%.

Is the assumption valid that accuracy of response to unobstructive questions is the major indicator of the quality of reference service? I think now, especially when the major finding (repeated many times) is "that the individual library staff member is the single most significant factor affecting the quality of reference service." (Note: emphasis is the authors' (p. 111).) And the recommended cure to correct this deficiency "continuing education"—is conventional wisdom and opinion.

All depository libraries regardless of type or designation should obtain the study and use it to evaluate the quality of their reference service. They should review the suggestions and recommendations, and apply those which are appropriate to their situation to improve services for their library's clientele and the public.

(Schwarzkopf was Government Documents Librarian at the University of Maryland from 1967 to 1983, in charge of a regional depository. He made frequent contributions to *Documents to the People* since 1972, and served as editor from 1978 to 1982. He has written major articles on the history of the depository library program and the role of regional depository libraries. In 1981, he received the fifth annual CIS/GODORT/ALA Documents to the People Award.)



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Friday: 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday: 1 - 10 p.m.

The Documents Department of the Tulane University Library has produced a new brochure. Shown here are the front and back sides. The Department was formed by merging the former Tulane Documents Department with the Howard Memorial Library Collection (some of which dates as far back as 1884). The Department now receives more than 75 percent of available items in both hard copy and microfiche. Government publications are listed in a separate card catalog.



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