
Workshop Words Worth Recall

Editor's note: This is an edited revision of remarks made by Margaret T. Lane at the NCLA/SCLA joint conference October 1981. At the time of the address Ms. Lane was coordinator of the State and Local Documents Task Force, GODORT/ALA, and was Recorder of Documents, Louisiana State Library. She is now retired.

State Legislation And The ALA-GODORT Guidelines For State Documents

The State and Local Documents Task Force of GODORT (the Government Documents Round Table of ALA) has recently developed guidelines for State Depository Legislation and for the State Servicing of State Publications. Briefly, the guidelines for legislation comprise six points: 1) State agencies must be required to supply copies of their publications, 2) definitions must be included in the law, 3) there must be an administering agency with responsibilities for systematic and automatic distribution, 4) there must be a system of depository libraries, 5) a historical collection, and 6) a checklist of new state publications. Working with these guidelines are the elements for State Servicing of State Publications: 1) A collection of documents of the state within the state, 2) distribution to depository libraries and exchanges out of state, 3) a checklist, 4) an authority list, and 5) professional personnel to administer the program.¹

The state of North Carolina does have depository legislation (General Statutes 147-50) that meets most of the guidelines, and the Division of State Library—as the agency responsible for producing the state checklist and authority list—meets some of the criteria for the servicing of state publications. The depository legislation does not, however, comprise all of the elements of a state documents program. Although the state legislation designates 15 institutions within the state as depositories, for example, the burden of finding out that a new publication exists remains with the libraries, each of which must find out which agency has issued the document and then obtain it from the agency. Therefore, although a library might be willing to serve as a depository, it cannot meet

its obligation of having the documents available to its users. A successful depository program would, in fact, go beyond *acknowledging* availability (that is, producing the document upon request) by *advertising* availability (letting the community know that the library is the resource center for state government information). The depository library offers more to a community than a library that merely “collects” state documents. The depository library offers advertised availability, assured continuity of accessibility, and guaranteed service. It is a vital part of the distribution pattern for state information.

State Documents Programs

What is a state documents program? How does a state program help depository libraries? A partial answer is: through 1) automatic distribution, 2) comprehensive distribution, 3) tools for handling documents in the library, and 4) aids for publicizing documents.

What can and should a state program do that individual libraries cannot do, or cannot do as effectively, or as economically, as the state administrator? Part of the answer can be found in the State and Local Documents Task Force guidelines. Remember, however, the Guidelines for State Servicing of State Publications are *minimum* guidelines. Both North and South Carolina already meet some of these guidelines, even in the absence of formal document programs.² Your state libraries collect state documents, issue checklists, and probably engage in some exchanges.

Even if a depository program is not established by law, some of these activities are undertaken by state libraries on a voluntary basis to fulfill their own mission, whether that is to serve state agencies or to backstop the public libraries of the state or fulfill another function. A law is not a panacea for all ills in state documents servicing. Without administrative enthusiasm behind it, a law is a mere skeleton. A law cannot specify minute details,

which must result from liberal, imaginative interpretation. The law must be fleshed out with muscles (that is, tools and aids) and skin (training sessions, cooperation among depositories). But nevertheless, it is essential to first enact a law, however sketchy, because you need something on which to build. And once you have the law, it is much easier to obtain financing.

What more is a state program? A state documents program has two faces—one looks toward the state agencies and the other, toward the libraries in the state.

A state program carries with it the responsibility for making the state agencies aware of the value of their publications to the public. State agencies have uses beyond those originally envisioned by the agencies producing them. Individual libraries can develop this kind of appreciation in state agencies only on a small scale. (I've seen library request forms that have a short blurb about the library and the use it makes of the publications it receives.) The continuing education of state agency personnel by letter, telephone, personal visits, and brochures is one of the most important functions a state distribution center can perform. The state administrator can assume the duty of educating the state agencies for many libraries in the state.

When turning its face toward the depository libraries in the state, the distribution center has other duties. The distribution center, which is always located in the state capital, is in a more advantageous position than any library in the state to contact state agencies on behalf of numerous libraries located miles from the capital. The state program can prepare a checklist, which could be comprehensive and reliable, as it is based on documents at hand for which cataloging information may be determined readily from the state agencies. The distribution center can coordinate microreproduction of documents (bills, annual reports, and rare or scarce publications)—and even if it does not do the filming, its staff can advise the agencies as to the national standards for filming and the needs of librarians in the state. Public relations tools, manuals on handling documents in the local libraries—all these can be provided by the distribution center for the benefit of many libraries in the state. Serving as a back-up, historical collection is a function that many state libraries already perform. For state documents, this service is particularly apropos.

A state program serves not only the depository libraries but all libraries in the state.

The by-products of the distribution system—the checklist, cataloging, the procedure manual, public relations flyers—can all be used by non-depository libraries. And, it is helpful to have state documents experts at the state library who become known for their expertise and to whom librarians in the state can turn for advice and assistance.

A state program, with a foundation in the law, administered by an enthusiastic, hard-working librarian, provides a service to the whole state, including state agencies, libraries, legislators, and all others within and outside the state.

How Librarians Can Help

What can and should a librarian do to make state information available? What can you do as individuals or in small groups?

Working for legislation is basic to both depository libraries and a state program, and is not an individual activity. It almost requires the involvement of the state library and the state library association. What can the individual librarian do in his own library to hasten the day when legislation is enacted and to further his own professional growth as a librarian?

First, I suggest that you keep statistics on the use of state documents in your library. Tabulation on such use will provide ammunition for lobbying efforts when seeking legislation and will serve as a basis for evaluations of the depository program after it is enacted.

A suggestion that came from the ALA meeting last summer is that you prepare postcards to be mailed by patrons who have used state publications in your library. These might be addressed to your state library, to your state documents committee chairman, or even the individual legislator representing your district. Such indications that state publications are being used, and that they were found at the local library, and any expressions of appreciation that the patron might write on the card would be concrete evidence of the need for state publications in local libraries. If your state has a central distribution center, another postcard can convey the message that a needed publication was not found at the local library. (If you adopt this suggestion, remember to put samples in the Documents on Documents collection.³) A variation of the postcard idea is a guest book in which remarks on the use of documents could be written.

A third suggestion is that you assess the quality of your state checklist. Prepare a list of omitted items gleaned from the *Monthly checklist of state publications*, the *I.H.S. Index to state publications*, the *State government research checklist* (formerly the *Legislative research checklist*), Mansell, the NUC, and so on. (I suggest the checklist itself as the most appropriate place to publish such a list of additional items.) A related idea is to evaluate your state checklist against the State and Local Documents checklist guidelines.⁴

Other Suggestions

Two other ideas appropriate for librarians in or near the state capital are, 1) to analyze state agency mailing lists to determine how many in-state and out-of-state libraries are receiving state documents. Dallas Shaffer did this to good effect in Nebraska.⁵ Or, 2) you might study the cost of state publications and the quantity issued for each title. The records of your state printing office in the finance department are public records that should be available for legitimate investigation. Iowa did a cost study before legislation was adopted there. (You can look at the Iowa study, and a Louisiana one on costs of distribution, in the Documents on Documents collection.)

Concrete ways to demonstrate that state documents are needed by the patrons of the library and that depositing of publications there has a positive cost/benefit ratio are useful in justifying the program to the director in your own library, to your state administering agency, and to the legislature.

Two more solo activities I recommend are, 1) learn what you can from the federal depository program, and 2) work with the State and Local Documents Task Force. The federal program differs from state depository programs in its legal basis, its size (both number of depositories and number of publications), and its funding. Before we had as many state programs as we now have, the federal program was the only example we had. It still blazes the trail. It

is ahead of most states in filming, in automated distribution lists, and in cooperation with the Library of Congress in cataloging. We state documents administrators are ahead in state plans; that is, in establishing systems of depository libraries with specific responsibilities. Today there are numerous state programs—and there are beginning to be materials about the programs that can be used for study: Documents on Documents, the Survey,⁶ books, and articles in library journals. Some of these study items were produced by the State and Local Documents Task Force. Work with the Task Force can be whatever you wish. Most projects originate with a single person, with other Task Force members serving as advisors, helpers and coordinators. As Task Force coordinator I'm trying to involve as many state documents librarians as possible, including those who cannot attend conventions. Let me know your interests. Let us work together to promote access to state documents in every state, including North Carolina, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

References

1. Copies of the guidelines, as of October, 1981, are available from Margaret T. Lane, P.O. Box 3335, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.
2. During 1982, South Carolina enacted depository legislation that establishes a system of ten depository libraries which receive state publications through a central depository and distribution center at the South Carolina State Library.—ed. note.
3. The Documents on Documents collection is a compilation of materials produced for the administration of state documents programs in all the states. It is available on inter-library loan from Grace G. Moore, Recorder of Documents, Louisiana State Library, P.O. Box 131, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.
4. *Documents to the People* 5 (March, 1977), 66-69.
5. Dallas Shaffer, "State document legislation: Nebraska, a case study," *Government publications review* 1 (Fall, 1973), 19-27.
6. Margaret T. Lane, comp., *State publications: Depository distribution and bibliographical programs*, State and Local Documents Task Force, Government Documents Round Table, American Library Association; Texas State Publications Clearinghouse, Documents Monograph Series, nos. 2 and 2A ([Austin, Tex.]: Texas State Library, 1980-81).