

## U.S. GOVERNMENT ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES: A START-UP KIT FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED LIBRARIES

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The U.S. Government is the largest producer of information in the world. Through its agencies it creates, gathers, and produces information on topics from the arts to the sciences and for all types of library users – children to senior citizens. Since 1858 the Federal Depository Library Program (F.D.L.P.) has been responsible for collecting, organizing, maintaining, preserving, and providing information from the federal government. Congressionally-designated libraries (up to two per congressional district) receive selected classes of government resources at no cost, and in return are obligated to provide open and free access to this material. These include some of the most useful reference sources at the information desk – the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, and the *World Factbook*. While depository libraries receive these items free, non-depository libraries have had to purchase these materials from the Government Printing Office (G.P.O.) or a repackaged version from a commercial publisher.

Since 1994 G.P.O. and other federal agencies have been moving steadily toward electronic production of information. By June 2002, the Superintendent of Documents reported that 61% of depository items had been made available electronically. Virtually all of these information sources are now freely available on the Internet. In many cases the new electronic resources are better than their print counterparts. Through conversion to online, many resources have been enhanced with search and download capabilities not possible with print versions such as the *Congressional Directory*. In addition, new resources have been created and more extensive information provided that was not made available in print, such as the *American FactFinder*.

With the exponential proliferation of electronic government information resources, choosing which resources to add to the collection or highlight on library web sites can be a daunting task. Fortunately, G.P.O. and federal depository librarians have teamed up to produce a variety of tools to make it easier for all libraries to identify and add valuable government information to their library collection.

Following is a start-up kit to assist small and medium-sized libraries in adding federal government resources to their online public access catalog and/or library web site.

### ADDING U.S. GOVERNMENT ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS TO THE ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOG

The government has made it practical to add electronic resources to the library catalog by providing a free database of full MARC catalog records for documents produced by federal agencies since 1994. The *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cgp/index.html>), is easily searched by title or keyword to locate electronic resources. One concern libraries have about adding an electronic document to the catalog is the instability of links to the resources. In an effort to achieve permanent public access to essential government information, G.P.O. has developed PURLS (Persistent Uniform Resource Locator) for many government resources. PURLS relieve the library of having to keep track of moving Internet sites, by insuring that the user is always redirected to the current site for the electronic resource. A variety of resources are available from G.P.O. and its federal depository library partners for determining which resources should be added to the catalog:

- This *F.D.L.P. Basic Collection* ([http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/basic-01.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/basic-01.html)) is an excellent place to start in adding valuable government resources to the collection. It includes the core list of documents that all federal depository libraries are expected to make available to their constituencies.
- *Core Documents of U.S. Democracy* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/coredocs.html>) includes links to authenticated versions of current and historical government publications that have been identified as essential to the definition of American democratic society. A full MARC record with PURL for the *Core Documents* web site is available for downloading from the *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*.

- *U.S. Government Documents Reference Shelf (Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne)* ([http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/pirs/us\\_government/information/us\\_government\\_documents\\_reference\\_shelf.html](http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/pirs/us_government/information/us_government_documents_reference_shelf.html)) includes continually updated list of links to classic and new electronic government reference resources.
- *New Electronic Titles* ([http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/locators/net/index.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/locators/net/index.html)) provides an easy way to identify recently cataloged electronic documents. Monthly links perform a search of the *Catalog of U.S. Publications* producing a list of recently cataloged electronic documents on a wide variety of topics. A search of August 2002 New Electronic Titles yielded records for such diverse items as *Popular baby names* (<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS21592>), *Talking with your doctor: a guide for older people* (<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS7028>), and *Child sexual exploitation: improving investigations and protecting victims* (<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS21621>).

The U.S. Government also publishes and produces a number of periodicals – *Endangered Species Bulletin*, *FDA Consumer*, *Monthly Labor Review*, *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, and *Smithsonian Magazine* – and databases/indexes – *ERIC*, *GPO Access*, *Healthfinder*, *PubMed*, and *Thomas* – of use to small and medium-sized libraries. Following are web sites that identify U.S. Government periodicals, indexes, and databases that are freely available on the Internet. Full MARC records for individual periodical titles, databases, and indexes are available through the *Catalog of U.S. Publications*.

- *Catalogs, Indexes, and Databases* (University of North Texas) (<http://www.library.unt.edu/govinfo/subject/catsindx.html>)
- *Government Databases by Subject* (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) (<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/subjectareas/gov/dbsubject.html>)
- *Government Periodicals* (University of Louisville) (<http://library.louisville.edu/government/periodicals/periodall.html>)
- *Government Periodicals Online* (Western Illinois University) (<http://www.wiu.edu/library/govpubs/resources/epubs/>)
- *U.S. Government Periodicals on the Web* (Auburn University) (<http://www.lib.auburn.edu/madd/docs/govperiodicals.html>)

## ADDING U.S. GOVERNMENT WEB SITES TO THE LIBRARY'S WEB SITE

Adding electronic government information to the library's web site has also been made easier through the efforts of the American Library Association's Govern-

ment Information Technology Committee. The Committee has created the *Government Information Web Page Template* (<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/GODORT/gitco/govinfotemplate.html>), a basic guide to key federal, state, and international government information sites. Each section includes five to six links to what the author's consider to be the best and most durable sites.

In addition to the template, the site includes instructions on how to download the template and add it "as is" to your library's web site. It also includes directions on how to customize the template for your institution – adding color and graphics, adding and deleting links within the template supplied sections, and adding and deleting sections.

While the authors of the template have selected excellent sites, following are some suggestions for building upon the template. These additional recommended links and sections have been chosen for their overall quality, reliability, and interest to the general public.

## ADDITIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION WEB PAGE TEMPLATE SECTIONS

### Federal Government: General Information

In addition to the sites listed on the template for Federal Government: General Information – University of Michigan's *Federal Government Resources on the Web*, ALA's *Frequently Used Sites Related to U.S. Government Information*, LSU's *U.S. Federal Government Agencies Directory*, *Supreme Court of the United States*, *U.S. House of Representatives*, *U.S. Senate*, and *White House* pages consider adding the following:

- *Federal Web Locator* (Center for Information Law and Policy) (<http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/>) provides a list of links by branch of government and agency.
- *FirstGov* (<http://www.firstgov.gov/>) serves as the official U.S. gateway to government information.
- *U.S. Government Manual* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/gmanual/index.html>) provides comprehensive information on the agencies of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches. It also includes information on quasi-official agencies and international organizations in which the United States participates; and boards, commissions, and committees.

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY INFORMATION

In addition to the sites listed on the template for Federal Government: Legislative and Regulatory Information – *Code of Federal Regulations*,

Congress.Org, Federal Register, GPO Access, Legislative Branch Internet Resources, Thomas, and University of North Texas Law web site consider adding the following:

- *Congressional Bills* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/bills/index.html>) contains the full-text of congressional bills from 1993 to present.
- *FindLaw* (<http://www.findlaw.com/10fedgov/>) is a comprehensive source for all legal information at the state, federal, and international level.
- *Public and Private Laws* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/plaws/index.html>) contains the full-text of public and private laws passed by Congress since 1995.

## STATISTICAL RESOURCES

In addition to the sites listed on the template for Statistical Resources – the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, *Business & Economics Numeric Data* from Mansfield University, *Fedstats*, the United Nations *InfoNation*, *National Center for Education Statistics*, *National Center for Health Statistics*, *Statistical Agencies and Information* from the University of North Texas, and the *U.S. Census Bureau*, consider adding the following:

- *Bureau of Justice Statistics* (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/>) collects and analyzes data on crime, criminal offenders, and crime victims.
- *Bureau of Transportation Statistics* (<http://www.bts.gov/>) compiles, analyzes, and produces data on all aspects of transportation and transportation safety.
- *Economics Statistics Briefing Room* (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/fsbr/esbr.html>) provides current federal economic indicators including consumer price index, unemployment rates, and poverty rate.
- *Government Statistics* (Vanderbilt University and Federal Documents Task Force of ALA) (<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/statics.html>) is a subject guide to sources of federal statistics.
- *Social Statistics Briefing Room* (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/fsbr/ssbr.html>) provides current federal social statistics such as crime rates, population counts, and vital health statistics.
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/statistical-abstractus.html>) is the most essential of all statistical resources, includes a compilation of statistics produced by federal agencies and some non-governmental organizations.
- *United States Historical Census Data Browser, 1790-1960* (<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/census/>) provides demographic, economic, and social data for U.S. states and counties from 1790-1960.

## ADDITIONAL SECTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION WEB PAGE TEMPLATE

### Atlases and Maps

- *American FactFinder* (<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/BasicFactsServlet>) provides census data in graphical format from the national to individual census block levels.
- *Environmental Atlas* (<http://www.epa.gov/ceisweb1/ceishome/atlas/>) provides maps of the environmental quality of U.S. air, land, and water.
- *Map Collections: 1500-2002* (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/gmdhtml/gmdhome.html>) contains digitized historical maps of cities and towns, military battles and campaigns, exploration, transportation, and more.
- *National Atlas* (<http://www-atlas.usgs.gov/atlasvue.html>) provides a comprehensive mapping of scientific, societal, and historical data and easy to use online interactive map capabilities.
- *National Park Service Digital Maps* ([http://www.nps.gov/carto/list\\_a-z.html](http://www.nps.gov/carto/list_a-z.html)) provides digitized versions of national park maps.
- *Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection* (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>) provides an extensive collection of digitized CIA political, geographical, and thematic maps of countries and regions of the world, and links to sources for all types and variety of maps, atlases and gazetteers.
- *Visible Earth* (<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/browse.html>) provides a searchable directory of images, visualizations, and animations of the earth.

### CONSUMER INFORMATION AND SERVICES

- *Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids* (<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/subject.html>) provides links to federal agency web sites developed specifically for k-12 students, parents, and teachers.
- *Consumer.gov* (<http://www.consumer.gov/>) serves as a "one-stop" gateway to a broad range of consumer information from the federal government arranged by broad subjects such as product safety, food, health, transportation, careers, and education.
- *Federal Consumer Information Center* (<http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/>) is home to the National Contact Center for questions about federal programs, benefits, and services, Consumer Action web site for filing complaints, Recall, and Scam information.
- *FirstGov for Seniors* (<http://www.seniors.gov/>) provides access to government sites that provide services for senior citizens, such as Social Security Administration, Health Care Financing Administra-

tion, the Administration on Aging, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and more.

- *Students.gov* (<http://www.students.gov/>) provides access to federal government information and services for students and their families on planning an education, career development, military service, and community service.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: COURT DECISIONS

- Federal Court Locator (Villanova University School of Law) (<http://vls.law.vill.edu/Locator/fedcourt.html>) links to U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Courts of Appeal, and U.S. District Courts.
- *Federal Courts Finder* (Emory School of Law) (<http://www.law.emory.edu/FEDCTS/>) links via a map of the United States to the U.S. Supreme Court, federal circuit courts, tax court, armed forces appeals court, and veteran's claims court.
- *FindLaw* (<http://www.findlaw.com/10fedgov/judicial/index.html>) provides links to U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Courts of Appeal, U.S. District Courts, Bankruptcy Court, and other court-related sites.
- *Supreme Court* (Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne) ([http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/pirs/us\\_government/authority/supreme\\_court.html](http://www.lib.ipfw.edu/pirs/us_government/authority/supreme_court.html)) provides links to various historical and current files of Supreme Court decisions and information on Supreme Court Justices.
- *Supreme Court of the United States* (<http://www.supremecourtus.gov/>) is the official web site of the U.S. Supreme Court including oral arguments, opinions since 2000, and information on justices of the Supreme Court.

## HOT TOPICS AND SUBJECT GUIDES TO U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

- *Documents in the News* (University of Michigan Documents Center) (<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/docnews.html>) provides the most comprehensive site of links to current events information resources from 1995 through current day news events.
- *Federal Resources Organized by Topic* (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/topics/index.html>) provides topical pathfinders to U.S. Government information developed and maintained by volunteer experts.
- *Frequently Used Sites Related to U.S. Federal Government Information* (<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/>) provides easy, colorful access to U.S. government information by broad subject categories.

- *Hot Topics from the University of Louisville* (<http://library.louisville.edu/government/news/otherlinks/otherlinks.html>) provides subject access to sites that maintain current news and documents.
- *Whitehouse* (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>) provides full-text of presidential speeches, proclamations, radio addresses, press briefings, and executive policy documents.

## TAX FORMS AND OTHER FORMS FROM THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- *FedForms.gov* (<http://www.fedforms.gov/>) provides "one-stop-shopping" for the Federal forms most used by the public.
- *Forms from the Feds* (<http://exlibris.memphis.edu/govpubs/forms.htm>) contains downloadable government electronic forms most asked for by the public.
- *Get it Done Online* (<http://www.firstgov.gov/Citizen/Services.shtml>) provides access to forms, applications, and official records available online from the federal government.
- *IRS Forms and Publications* (<http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/>) provides tax forms, instructions, publications, and notices from 1992 through the current year.

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