

states. Of the eighty-one questionnaires distributed, forty-seven replies were received. Seven of the nine geographic areas were represented by a reply from a city of each size. Twenty-one of the libraries replying were federal depositories and twenty-six were not. Twenty-one replies came from the largest cities, fourteen from the medium-sized cities, and twelve from the smallest-sized cities. Six of the largest cities have populations of over 500,000, and eight are in metropolitan areas of over 1,000,000. Thirty-two of the forty-nine questions were background and selection questions and the remaining seventeen were in the reference area.

Since the treatment of government publications varies so much in libraries and since this treatment affects selection, a few questions about how documents are organized were included. Twenty-one libraries reported a combination of distribution of documents in their libraries that involves some being kept in one department and others being distributed by subject. The department most commonly reported to have major responsibility for government publications was the reference department. The selector may be the head of the subject department, the head of the government publications department, the head of the department where they are housed, the librarian, the head of adult services, or the cataloger.

Most of the libraries surveyed receive publications from local, state, and federal governments. Eleven of the largest city libraries reported receiving state documents from all states, but none of the medium-sized or smaller libraries receive publications from all of the states. Ten of the largest, fourteen of the medium-sized, and one of the smallest receive the publications of just their own states, and five of those reporting receive the documents of nearby states. Naturally, not all librarians answered all the questions. Eleven of the largest cities, twelve of the medium-sized, and five of the smallest indicated receiving city publications just from their own cities, while ten of the largest and one each of the smallest and medium-sized cities receive documents from other cities.

Of the various selection aids listed, the tool most frequently used is the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* with thirty-two checks. However, only three of these come from libraries serving cities of under 50,000. *Selected United States Government Publications* is the tool second in popularity with twenty-eight checks—ten each from the largest and medium-sized cities, but eight from the smallest cities—which seems quite logical. The *Monthly Checklist of State Publica-*

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tions is third, with twenty-three users—fifteen from the largest cities, seven from medium-sized, and one from the smallest.

The *Price Lists* issued by the Superintendent of Documents were noted twenty times and rather curiously by ten of the largest cities, seven of the medium-sized and only three of the smallest. This list is annotated and would seem to be a helpful aid to the small library. The same number of credits is given to the *Library Journal*, but here the distribution was even with ten, six, and four checks.

Vertical File Index has a well balanced distribution with a total of nineteen checks, eight, five, and six in descending order by size of the reporting libraries. Catalogs of specific government agencies were also noted nineteen times—eleven, five, and three. The *Wilson Library Bulletin*, too, was checked nineteen times—five, nine, and five. *Publishers' Weekly* was noted by seventeen libraries in the order of six, nine, and two. The largest cities noted that the aids they use are too numerous to record.

Of the forty-one librarians who replied to a question as to whether they would be more likely to select a publication listed in *Public Affairs Information Service* than one listed in the *Biological and Agricultural Index*, twenty-six reported affirmatively and fifteen negatively. The *Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin* was listed among "others" checked by some librarians.

Of the twenty-two libraries which indicated they are depositories, eighteen are from the largest cities, and ten of these stated that they receive the majority of the depository publications, while four receive all; of the smaller cities, three receive the majority. This means that seventeen depository libraries receive most of the depository publications. Some librarians indicated that it was not necessary to answer questions about United States publications since they are depository libraries. It is true that depository items are theoretically publications of general interest, but since there are many valuable publications that are not depository items and since there are so many government publications that are not listed in the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, this is quite an area of potential selections to overlook. It is possible that lack of staff is a reason for this situation. Fifteen libraries mostly from the largest cities reported that they are depository libraries for other than United States documents. Fifteen are depositories for their own states' documents and ten for their own cities'.

Thirteen libraries subscribe to microform, all in the largest cities,

but only six municipal libraries subscribe to large series of federal documents in microform. At the same time thirty-two libraries feel that they are handicapped in their selection of government publications by space problems (thirteen, fourteen, and five). This may well be a problem of cost, and limitation of use, as well as reflecting need for something not quite as comprehensive as some of the present microform offerings.

Sixteen libraries (seven, seven, and two) expressed the need for better book selection aids. Some specific needs expressed are for annotations, a more descriptive *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, better state and local aids, and a further breakdown of items offered to federal depository libraries. The Superintendent of Documents has been attempting to provide more help of this type. One specific request is that, rather than adding more tools, the present ones should be improved. Thirty-four libraries (sixteen, ten, and eight) would like to have government publications more widely reviewed.

Twenty-two libraries wished for more government publications (eight, seven, and seven), whereas five wished for fewer. Eight thought they have the correct amount. Those librarians who were specific expressed the need for more statistics on various subjects with a state and local breakdown. A further desire was expressed for more information on geography, climate, and soils. At the same time most of the thirty-five librarians felt that the publications issued by the government are adequate to meet their needs. The answers were almost evenly distributed as to whether they call on the facilities of other larger libraries to meet their needs in government publications. Twenty-five borrow, and twenty-one do not. The medium-sized cities borrow more and the largest libraries borrow least, as one might expect. Thirty-four libraries have a Federal Regional Depository Library in their area and twenty-three libraries select fewer government publications because of this.

Very few of the answering libraries select many government research reports. Six of the largest cities reported that they add many of such reports. Thirty-four libraries do not, and this is rather evenly divided—ten, fourteen, and ten. Twenty-two libraries acquire a few highly selected research reports. The reasons most often given were that the reports are too technical or that there is no demand for them. The majority of libraries which reported said they sometimes considered as official documents research reports paid for by government funds but published unofficially. Nineteen libraries refer requests for such reports to a center and fifteen do not.

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Only eight libraries reported having a written book selection policy on government publications while thirty-one of those answering this question do not. Of the eight libraries that have a written policy one reported that it is out of date, another that it is meager, and another that it is in preparation. The one library that reported a recent change in book selection policy is a new depository library.

In the reference section of the questionnaire, forty-three of the libraries reported calling on other libraries to help with reference questions concerning documents, and the order was seventeen, eighteen, and eight; thirty-one of the reporting libraries call upon government agencies to help them with reference questions, and the order was eighteen, ten, and three.

Only twelve libraries reported having reference questions handled by government publications librarians. Nine libraries reported that the staff members who work with reference questions in documents had a course in documents, and seven reported having staff with special experience. Seven libraries reported having librarians with special knowledge of documents on duty all of the hours that the library is open.

All forty-seven libraries reported that they use government publications as reference tools. Of fourteen tools that were listed to assist in the use of government publications the one checked by most librarians was the *Congressional Directory* with a total of forty-one (twenty-one, thirteen, and seven). The *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* was a close second with forty (twenty-two, fifteen, and three). Thirty-six libraries checked the *Municipal Yearbook* (seventeen, thirteen, and six), thirty-three the *Book of the States* (fourteen, fourteen, and five), and thirty-two found a valuable reference aid to be their own subject catalog (sixteen, ten, and six). The same number checked the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* (eighteen, ten, and four). Twenty-seven checked the *Public Affairs Information Service* (twenty, six, and one), sixteen checked Hasse³ (sixteen, zero and zero), and fourteen checked Ames⁴ (thirteen, one, and zero). Only thirteen checked the *Documents Catalog*, twelve of them from the largest cities. *Biological and Agricultural Index* received twelve checks (nine, two, and one), and Bowker polled eleven checks (eight, two, and one). The *National Union Library Catalog* polled nine (nine, zero, and zero).

Forty-one said that they do not have a stated reference policy concerning government publications (eighteen, thirteen, and ten)—thirty-five stated that they have no reference manual while seven answered this affirmatively (five, one, and one). There seemed to be a little confusion as to what was meant by a reference manual.

Twenty-five libraries (sixteen, six, and three) replied that they feel they are mostly successful in answering documents reference questions and two answered negatively; eleven felt they are successful sometimes, and one brave librarian stated, "hardly ever"—a small library representative. These were at best calculated guesses since so few libraries keep statistics on this point.

In reply to a query about what caused the most difficulty in answering reference questions, nine libraries (two, five, and two) noted they do not have sufficient government publications, eleven referred to inadequate tools, sixteen (four, eight, and four) replied that no one specializes in documents. Five listed "other" causes (three, one, and one), and one librarian said that new staff members are afraid of documents but enjoy them after they get used to them.

In reply to a question concerning tools that the librarian would like to have but which are not now available, six (three, three, and zero) noted inadequacies in the field of statistics, five checked government personnel (four, one, and zero), sixteen checked state (nine, six, and one), seventeen listed local (eleven, five, and one), four checked federal (four, zero, and zero), and two libraries checked "other." It is apparent that the strongest need felt is for local and state tools.

Only two libraries indicated any recent change in their reference policy (one, one, and zero), and one of these is a new federal depository library; and twenty-five indicated no change (eight, ten, and seven). However, in reply to the question about calling on other libraries for reference help, eleven (seven, two, and two) replied that they call on the federal regional depository. Since the new federal act is dated 1962, this may have represented a change of which they were not aware.

Eighteen libraries (eleven, five, and two) replied affirmatively that they have a "quick reference" file for documents, while twenty-five replied negatively (eight, ten, and seven). This question may have been misunderstood. What was meant was a home-made card file of the results of previous searches to help with reference questions. Some seemed to interpret this as a file of publications kept within easy reach.

Seven libraries (two, one, and four) indicated that they keep statistics of the documents reference questions, and forty (eighteen, fourteen, and eight) replied negatively. There was an indication that some tabulate reference requests, but do not count separately requests for government publications.

In summary, there was evidence of a wide range of organization of

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government publications in public libraries, a felt need for reviews to help in selection, a lack of analysis of needs for reference aids, a reliance on the cooperation of larger libraries and depository and regional depository collections, a lack of document specialists, a feeling that documents issued are adequate to meet needs, a feeling that most document questions are answered, a lack of reference statistics and of a stated selection and reference policy, a need for better aids for state and local material, and a lack of deep concern over the information explosion in government research reports. There were differences, of course, according to the size of the city served, but medium-sized and small libraries gave some discerning replies. The prominence of the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* evidenced an awareness of federal documents in the majority of the large and medium-sized libraries replying to the survey, and the fact that more than half of the libraries indicated they would like to have more government publications is noteworthy. The selection stress on just one's own state and city was apparent. There was an awareness of the value of documents as reference aids.

There is no doubt as to the importance of government publications in the public library. Many community planners find them indispensable. However, on a practical level one cannot divorce their selection from the problems of storage space, control of influx, massive output, retrieval, stated policy, staff size and organization, and the background of the selector. These factors are all over and above public need.

Although many documents are relatively inexpensive, anything a library acquires costs money. Therefore, if they are acquired without discrimination, even if free, they are expensive. As libraries become increasingly cost conscious, this affects their selections.

The tremendous number of documents issued yearly means that selection plays an important role. Leidy stated in 1963 that the Government Printing Office had printed over two hundred thousand titles since 1953.⁵ The massive output makes selection aids essential. However, in spite of the acute need, Schmeckebier and Eastin reported in 1961, "The reader who regularly peruses the book-review pages of newspapers and magazines will find few government publications mentioned. Such excellent guides as *Publishers' Weekly* and the *Library Journal* contain a limited number of references to government works. Articles from only a very few of the government's many periodicals are listed in the various indexes to periodicals. The *Vertical File*

Index of the H. W. Wilson Company lists only a small number of the thousands of government pamphlets which would be suitable for inclusion."⁶ The lack of selection aids is noted in the survey reported above.

What types of publications are being issued by the federal government from which librarians may select? In 1949 McCamy observed that the subjects most often found in the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* were legal actions (19 percent), economic analysis and reporting (18 percent), technical analysis and reporting (15 percent), aviation (13 percent), bids, specifications, and invitations (9 percent), management (4 percent), personnel (4 percent), and other subjects (18 percent).⁷ He also noted that the majority of U.S. documents issued are for reference work in a large library and that the publications of general interest must be sorted out. Leidy found in 1963 that there had been no recent change in the number of popular types of publications issued since 1951. He stated that there are a great many laws and Congressional reports, and much technical data—that the publications reflect the increasingly important role abroad of our country, and that more publications are being issued on communism and on foreign technical and economic development.⁸ The most popular titles of the U.S. Government publications are those issued by the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Commerce, the Office of Education, the Children's Bureau, and the Public Health Service.

Back in 1949 McCamy found that state publications were of less general interest than federal because of the geographic factor, and because usually the titles are fewer and more specialized. He furnishes us with this analysis: ". . . the outstanding subject categories for state documents in a one-month sample of the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, April, 1948, published by the Library of Congress, were as follows: of a total of 565 titles, annual reports amounted to 15.9 percent; legal actions, 15.2 percent; catalogues, 11.5 percent; economic analysis and reporting, 10.8 percent; and technical analysis and reporting, 10.4 percent."⁹

In the area of state publications there has been a trend for more and more states to issue lists of their own publications with many more items than are to be found in the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications*. There has been, however, a noticeable increase in the number of items included in the *Monthly Checklist of State Publications*, and there is a need for a single comprehensive listing to avoid the necessity of multiple checking for selection purposes.

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City documents are even harder to define as to subject than federal and state. In discussing their subject coverage, McCamy says, "Finance, budgets, charters, ordinances, and education, in that order, are by far the most discussed subjects in municipal documents. Next in order, but considerably lower, is a group of four subjects, . . . fire protection, public health, and public libraries, and . . . waterworks."¹⁰ The lack of a good list of city documents and the difficulty in securing such documents affect selection of city material.

In *Building Library Collections*, Carter and Bonk point out that the large public libraries serve the most heterogeneous group and have the greatest number of specialists to aid in book selection.¹¹ Their problem is primarily to know what not to buy. The medium-sized library serves a smaller but still diverse group of patrons, has to use most of its professional staff to help in selection, and has to budget very carefully. The small public library has very limited funds and perhaps only one person to select materials. For libraries of all sizes, cooperation is necessary in selecting government publications because of the mass of output. For the small public library, it is essential.

Selection of federal government depository publications is actually done in a preliminary way for the depository library by the fact that the publications offered to depository libraries are supposed to be confined to those which are of general interest, and there is a range of difference in value of depository items. Moreover, many non-depository publications are very valuable. Yet there is a tendency for librarians in some libraries with depository collections to feel that no further selection is necessary.

The appearance on the scene of the regional federal depository library has potential implications in regard to documents added by depository libraries. Large municipal libraries that are non-depositories will not alter their selection of documents, because of the diversity of their needs and the urgency of immediate retrieval. However, smaller depositories will alter their selections. As the federal government begins to distribute non-Government Printing Office material to depository libraries, this will again increase the selection problem.

There have been various suggestions for policy in adding government publications. Drury¹² suggested in 1930 that federal documents can be classified as (a) administrative, (b) popular, and (c) research. The first group should be acquired for reference by the larger libraries, and the popular and research publications should be evaluated. He suggests, for example, getting those publications indexed in *Readers'*

Guide. As for the states, he says, "Some documents of the *state* are needed by all libraries in it, but by no means all documents of the state are needed by every library."¹³ He suggests that use be the criterion. Some of the most important state documents are the reports and bulletins of the Natural History Surveys, bulletins of agriculture experiment stations, history and education bulletins of various offices, statistical reports on finance, labor, insurance, etc., judged by their information and reference use. It was his opinion that every library will want most, if not all, of the documents of its own city both for local history and for reference.

In regard to the selection of local government publications, Wilcox advised in 1955, "The acquisition of municipal and county government publications might well be restricted to municipal reference libraries and a limited number of the larger research libraries. This is particularly true of publications from cities under 100,000 population and from most counties. Publications from the various departments of cities of over 500,000 population could, on the other hand, supplement a state document collection wherever held. In most cases, one extensive collection within the state of the municipal publications of any one state should certainly suffice."¹⁴

In listing three trends in acquisitions, Wilcox said, "The third type of acquisition and that which affects the largest number of libraries, particularly the public libraries, is the trend toward selective collection for reference and local interest needs limited, for example, to the type of government publication listed in W. P. Leidy's *Popular Guide to Government Publications*."¹⁵

Carter and Bonk in 1964 were very much against overall ordering of government publications and felt that this does away with the selection of materials.¹⁶ This same trend can be seen in the offering of a selection of depository items and the attempt to break down more finely those items which are offered to depository libraries.

What selection is actually being practiced by public libraries? The ALA Survey of Reference Services, concluded that in two-thirds of the libraries it dealt with, "little attempt is made to collect and use documents which relate to the public affairs and specialized interests of citizens."¹⁷ In the survey reported here, most public libraries, (aside from the very large ones,) are mainly concerned with their own state and city publications except for a few highly selected titles. With the space limitation which most libraries face, unless automation in some way changes this, the idea of borrowing from a center or of referring a patron to a center seems the best approach to this need in all but the

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largest libraries. In such a large area of selection there is great need of a stated policy for government publications regardless of how the material is organized.

Let us now examine some studies in the reference area of government publications. The conviction that a government documents collection has a strong reference potential is far from new. McCamy in 1949 attested to the value of government documents as important reference sources in large libraries. He noted that in one library, "The Business and Civic Department answers at least two-thirds of reference questions through documents."¹⁸ The ALA Reference Survey of 1955 found, "Documents play an important role in the reference service of the large public library. State and federal documents appear to receive equal use. Sixty per cent of the large public libraries make extensive use of both. One-third or less of the medium and small public libraries use government documents extensively. In the medium and small libraries more use is made of state than federal documents."¹⁷

Since government publications are in the reference departments in many libraries, the general findings of this ALA Reference Survey may also be applicable to the groups who use documents services. In descending order they are noted as high school students, club women, teachers, college students, businessmen, children, other staff members, and factory workers. Other groups mentioned were artists, city officials, clergy, laborers, lawyers, housewives, and writers.¹⁹ In a department concerned only with government publications the most frequent users were special libraries, government officials, businessmen, lawyers, and, of course, students.

To help in reference work with government publications the use of a special card index is a valuable aid. The ALA Reference Survey noted, "At least 21.2 per cent evidently have some method for recording questions and sources of information to avoid repetition of work. More frequently libraries keep track of the volume of reference questions they handle. About 30 per cent record both those received personally and by telephone. Slightly fewer, 17.6 per cent keep a record of all mail requests."²⁰ According to Reed in an article on "Public Library Reference Services," most libraries have placed some restrictions on telephone reference service.²¹ This is a demanding service for the library staff.

Tools are very important in all reference work. The ALA Reference Survey listed the indexes for which subscriptions were found in the public libraries reporting. From these the following are selected because they seem especially valuable in the field of reference with gov-

ernment publications: *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* (40 percent), *Vertical File Index* (38 percent), *Public Affairs Information Service* (17 percent), *New York Times Index* (24 percent), *Facts on File* (30 percent), and *Education Index* (14 percent).²²

The specific type of tool used in depository libraries may also be of interest. Several depository libraries purchased additional copies of directories, government manuals, bibliographical material, yearbooks, and reference information books in that order of popularity according to the federal hearings in 1958 on the Revision of Depository Library Laws.²³ In these same hearings the libraries surveyed were asked to name reference guides they would find useful, and the following opinions were recorded: an accumulated biennial or quadrennial catalog of U.S. Government publications, similar to the discontinued *Documents Catalog* was the first choice of fifty-three public depository and thirty-four public non-depository libraries; and a comprehensive catalog or checklist of congressional hearings was the choice of five public depository and of four public non-depository libraries.²⁴ An up-to-date checklist of documents (similar to the 1909 version) was the first choice of forty-four public depository libraries and forty-one public non-depository libraries. In answer to a request for suggested improvements in the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, need for a better index was noted by thirty, for more current listing by six, and for a cumulative index by thirteen. Thirty public depository libraries favored a better index, and thirteen favored a cumulative index.

In the comments received in the present survey, it was surprising that so little mention was made of the need for a more comprehensive directory of government personnel which would be revised regularly, a more recent cumulative index to the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, as well as a more complete index of it, a comprehensive and detailed index to federal hearings, a new manual on the use of state publications, a more thorough indexing of census statistics, and a better indexing and arrangement of some of the older federal tools.

In many cases reference work with government publications involves a search requiring patience and skill, though the various approaches to public documents in libraries and the lack of statistics and policies make its analysis elusive. A strong well-chosen collection of government publications intelligently used can greatly enhance the resources and enrich the reference services of the public library. As the library scene becomes brighter with the addition of federal and state aid, as the federal depository libraries and the regional deposi-

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tories increase in number, as the need for information becomes more acute, and as libraries become increasingly aware of the amazing resources available to them in government documents, the way is being cleared for improved service to the public. However, the key is not just money, adequate tools, stated policy, manuals, and statistics. The *sine qua non* is staff—with dedication and with documents know-how. Unless constructive measures are taken in selective recruiting, institutes, workshops, in-service training, and local and informal courses in all phases of documents, the hoped-for improvements may not materialize because of the lack of this basic human ingredient.

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