

Cataloging, Classification and Storage in a Separate Collection

documents collection. One library replied in the negative [to the question 'Are you in favor of a separate documents collection?']. One replied that they were in favor of a separate documents department but not a totally separate documents collection (their own documents collection contained primarily administrative, legislative and statistical materials). Another did not actually state a preference but said that theirs was a divided collection."⁶ The University of Massachusetts survey in 1965 showed that of twenty-six large university libraries, nine have a separate collection, seven integrate their documents into the general collection, and ten have a combination of the two systems.⁷

It is not the purpose of this paper to reconsider the administrative question of the organization of the documents collection but to look at the problems of cataloging, classification, and housing that are peculiar to government publications. The problems that arise are obviously predicated to a considerable extent upon the organization of the collection, so it is essential to establish its basis as a point of departure. Since the problems of the integrated collection depend upon the organization of the entire library, they will not be considered here. The separate collection is assumed in the discussion that follows.

What, to begin with, are the characteristics of government publications that make special cataloging and classification systems necessary or desirable? Eastin says of Federal documents:

In number and variety the publications of the government of the United States probably exceed those of any other government or of any commercial publisher. In size they range from pamphlets to ponderous volumes, and in content they vary from articles with a popular appeal to technical treatises of value mostly to the trained scientist. Taken as a whole, they constitute a great library covering almost every field of human knowledge and endeavor.

Many of the publications are transcripts of original records and constitute primary source material in the history of government administration and activities. Others, such as the annual reports, contain accounts by executive officers of the work under their direction. Voluminous series published by different agencies present statistical pictures of conditions and afford bases for measuring social and economic change. An ever-increasing group gives the results of extensive research in both the social and physical sciences.

These books and pamphlets are not mere dry statistical records but touch all facets of human life. Government documents, as they are often called, are the living record of the efforts of a people to govern themselves.⁸

The last phrase quoted, "the living record of the efforts of a people to govern themselves," describes the characteristic that is the source of many of the problems of cataloging and classifying government publications, as well as their greatest value and most enduring fascination. As the record of a living and therefore changing entity, government publications present a continual change in the identifying properties that library records attempt to present in static form: the author changes; the title changes; contents vary; series appear, vanish, merge with other series, and even have publications belonging to three or four series simultaneously. One of the basic facts of documents work that many librarians seem to forget is that government publications are not published for the benefit of libraries, or even with their requirements in mind, and the bureau administrator of today is likely to be little concerned with maintaining consistency in format with the publications that appeared under the aegis of his predecessors.

The well-known *Minerals Yearbook* has been issued, in a manner of speaking, since 1866, with the exception of the years 1876-1881. But it has been issued successively by the Bureau of the Mint, the Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Mines. The last named agency originated in the Department of Commerce and was transferred in 1934 to the Department of the Interior. The publication has been entitled, with variations, *Mineral Resources West of the Rocky Mountains*, *Mineral Resources of the United States*, and, as of the present, *Minerals Yearbook*. From 1894 through 1899 it was published only as part of the *Annual Report* of the Geological Survey. It might properly be contended that three (or four) separate publications are described here, but to the research worker who wants a statistical series that has appeared in it from the beginning, this distinction appears artificial and frustrating.

The American Library Association cataloging rules,⁹ based on the recommendation of Childs,¹⁰ provide that governments are to be considered the corporate authors of their official publications. The name of the specific agency of government from which the publication emanates is used as a subheading.

This rule sounds fairly simple, until one begins to look into the exceptions and exceptions to the exceptions; as long ago as 1912, the Office of the Superintendent of Documents of the United States Government Printing Office pointed out some of the difficulties that ensnare the unfortunate cataloger:

The original legal titles of most Government offices begin with the

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word department or bureau or court or office or division. To alphabet under such names is virtually no alphabeting at all, because it gives rows of the words department, bureau, court, office, and division, with the significant or designating word buried out of easy sight. Still, it is of course desirable to follow the legal form of the title—if it can be ascertained, and some cataloguers think it obligatory to follow it no matter where it may lead. Besides the loss of any useful alphabetic order, these cataloguers have the additional difficulty—and this is almost an insuperable one—of finding out what the legal titles of many Government organizations really are. The name given by law at the time of a bureau's creation is not often adhered to in appropriation acts or other subsequent laws. . . .

Another body of cataloguers hold that alphabeting which really alphabets, that is, which brings the distinguishing and significant word of the title into its correct alphabetic order where it may be most quickly and easily found, is the really vital thing in cataloguing, and that to secure it the legal titles may properly be inverted when necessary. This has been always the attitude and practice of the Public Documents Office¹¹

That the question of legal title has not been resolved (as of 1964) is evidenced by the corporate author entry on Library of Congress card 64-6038:

U.S. Study Commission on the Savannah, Altamaha, Saint Marys, Apalachicola-Chattahoochee, and Perdido-Escambia River Basins and Intervening Areas.

In the title of the report of the Commission for which this is the entry, its name is given as U.S. Study Commission, Southeast River Basins, and the *Monthly Catalog* of April 1964 indexes under this form of the name, with cross-reference from the longer form.

Appendix 13 of the report has an explanation of the method of adopting the shortened form:

Because of the inconvenience of the long title, the Commission, on February 2, 1959, decided to shorten its name subject to the approval of the Appropriations Committees and of the Congress. At the hearings on the Fiscal Year 1960 appropriations, both the House and Senate Appropriation Committees were informed of the desire to shorten the name of the Commission to United States Study Commission, Southeast River Basins. The regular appropriations for Fiscal Year 1960 and each of the following years were made by Congress, with the concurrence of the Bureau of the Budget, in the name of "The United States Study Commission, Southeast River Basins."¹²

The *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* which the Library of Congress issues gives indication that it has begun to weaken elsewhere in the struggle to follow the legal form. In 1963, for instance, the name of the Colorado Game and Fish Department was changed by statute to Game, Fish, and Parks Department.¹³ In the August 1965 issue of the *Monthly Checklist*, the entry Colorado. *Game and Fish Dept.* is still being used, with a note for the first title listed, "Issued by the dept. under a variant name: Colorado Game, Fish and Parks Dept." Succeeding entries in this same issue of the *Monthly Checklist* have the variant name as "Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks," and simply "Colorado Game, Fish, Parks."

Here we have both the problem of determining what the legal form of the name is, and that of following the convolutions of bureaucracy in its lack of regard for correct legal usage. The realistic Office of the Superintendent of Documents has long followed the principle of entering each publication, including serials, under the inverted name of the agency at time of issue, not only in the book-form catalogs (which could hardly use any other than the name at time of issue of the publications listed, since they are practically contemporaneous), but also, notably, in the retrospective *Checklist of United States Public Documents, 1789-1909*. 3d ed. (Washington, G.P.O., 1911). The ALA rules, following Childs, call for entry under the latest form.¹⁴ The recent decision of the Association of Research Libraries Committee on the Revision of the Cataloging Code to enter corporate bodies with changed names under successive names, rather than the latest, brings the catalogers at last into conformity with this long-standing practice of documents librarians, so far as change of name goes. The problems of variants of current names and of inverted form remain unresolved.¹⁵

Other differences are apparent between the standards of practice for entry of United States government publications according to the ALA rules and to those of the Office of Superintendent of Documents. The Office of the Superintendent of Documents enters publications under the agency of issue, which is not always the same as the corporate author, or of the entry under ALA rules.

Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, for instance, has the Library of Congress entry (card no. 47-31575): *Göring, Hermann, 1893-1945*, defendant. The *Monthly Catalog* entries are under "War Dept." and its successor agency "Civil Affairs Division, Dept. of the Army."¹⁶

In 1957 and 1958, a subcommittee of the Committee on House Ad-

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ministration of the U.S. House of Representatives held hearings on the proposed revision of depository library laws. In connection with these hearings, the Public Documents Committee of the American Library Association formulated a questionnaire which was sent to librarians of depository libraries and to those of other libraries interested in the distribution of government publications. The questionnaire, an analysis of the returns from it, and the recommendations of Powell and Pullen based upon it, were published as Appendix B-H of the *Hearings*.¹⁷ An analysis of the returns to the two questions that related directly to the bibliographical practices of the Office of Superintendent of Documents was made by Shore. Of the 666 responses to the questionnaire, only one indicated that the agency entries should follow Library of Congress usage; so it appears that the considerable divergence between the practice of the Office of Superintendent of Documents in the *Monthly Catalog* and the Library of Congress does not create the major problem that might be expected. Whether or not this is because libraries that use the indexes of the Office of Superintendent of Documents do not depend upon Library of Congress entries for any bibliographical control, or for other reasons, might be a subject for further investigation.¹⁸

More attention was given to the differences between Library of Congress and Office of Superintendent of Documents subject headings, with the recommendation that the usage in the *Monthly Catalog* be made to conform to that of the Library of Congress. A study of the special requirements of a subject heading list for current government publications and its relation to general lists could well be a major project for investigation.

Tauber¹ and Caldwell summarize findings in respect to classification of government publications, Caldwell indicating that the usual pattern in libraries having a separate documents collection is alphabetical arrangement of non-federal documents by area, agency, and title for all ranks of government publications.¹⁹ The Superintendent of Documents classification system, based upon this principle, is the one most commonly used for Federal documents, doubtless because of its easy availability and use in the *Monthly Catalog* and other guides issued by that agency.²⁰ Low states the reasons that it was not adopted for use in the Oklahoma State University Library, and describes the notation developed there to cover the entire government documents collection, including not only local, State, and Federal agencies of the United States but also publications of foreign governments and inter-governmental organizations.²¹

The California State Library *Manual* describes various classification schemes, both published and unpublished, particularly applicable to collections of State documents. Most of these follow the same basic pattern of arrangement by issuing office, so the only problem is that of choosing the notation that appeals to the individual library as best suiting its needs.²²

California also has a list of some of the kinds of equipment that are useful for specialized housing of the odd forms in which government publications are issued: single sheets, myriads of leaflets and pamphlets, loose-leaf compilations, books disproportionately long and narrow, series the separate issues of which are of different sizes and shapes, and other Protean forms. Any major study of this tribulation of documents librarians has escaped this writer's attention. So long as bureaucracy continues its multifaceted ways, the topic probably will be studiously avoided; but it might well be recommended to the attention of a courageous Ph.D. candidate in any of several disciplines—library science, engineering, architecture, or thaumaturgy.²³

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