



Acquisition, Handling and Servicing in State Libraries

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SINCE THERE IS LITTLE to be found in library journals specifically on government publications in state libraries, it was necessary to collect most of the data for this article by questionnaire. Replies were received from more than three-fourths of the state libraries, and the author gratefully acknowledges this assistance. The functions performed by state library agencies vary; and in some states these functions are centralized in one agency, whereas in others they are dispersed.¹ These variations are no doubt partially responsible for the differences found in the acquisition, handling, and servicing of government publications among the state library agencies.

Librarians have been concerned for many years with the need for building up in each state a strong collection of documents.² Most recently *Standards for Library Functions at the State Level* established the following guidelines concerning government publications: "Each state should maintain a complete collection of the documents of its own government and of current documents of comparable states, plus a strong central collection of both local and federal documents. . . . The full collection for each state would normally be maintained by the state library agency, and a checklist of state documents should be published periodically by the state."³

In general, state libraries seem to be directing more effort to acquiring United States government publications and the publications of their own states than out-of-state publications or even the publications of local governments in their own states. Twenty-eight state libraries are regular depositories for U.S. government publications, and thirteen are regional depositories. In addition, there are ten supreme court or law library depositories, eight of which are in

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states in which the state library is not a depository, and five depositories in state departments of archives and history or in state historical societies, one of which is in a state in which the state library is not a depository.⁴ Almost all of the state library depositories were designated under the Printing Act of 1895, or even earlier statutes.

The provisions of the Federal Depository Library Act of 1962 have a potential for affecting the holdings of depositories in that (1) a library electing to become a regional depository relinquishes selective depository status and henceforth automatically receives all depository items—and the number of items is increasing as non-GPO produced titles are brought into the program, and (2) a library remaining a selective depository may discard publications after it has held them for five years if there is a regional depository in its state.⁵ However, only a few state libraries indicated that their acquisition policy had been significantly expanded or contracted.

The non-depository libraries, as might be expected, in general receive fewer U.S. government publications than the depositories—ranging from twenty-five to five hundred per year. Among the selective depositories, the number of items chosen from the classified list varies from less than a hundred to all, with most libraries receiving four hundred or more and about half over a thousand. The number of pieces, both depository and non-depository, received annually by the depositories from all U.S. government sources varies from a hundred to more than thirty-five thousand. Most of the estimates were in the thousands, with the regional depositories reporting twenty thousand and up.

It is not surprising that both depositories and non-depositories use the *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* more than any other tool for ordering publications. Other sources mentioned were *Selected United States Government Publications*, *Price Lists*, flyers issued by the Superintendent of Documents, *Business Service Checklist*, issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce, federal agencies' lists, Public Affairs Information Service, Library of Congress cards, and book reviewing media. Few state libraries are making use of the facilities of the Documents Expediting Project or commercial services such as Bernan to obtain U.S. government publications.

Microfacsimile copies are not acquired at present to any great extent, but as the space problem becomes more acute, more libraries are likely to turn to microforms as a solution. The titles most often mentioned as being held on microfilm were the *Congressional Record*

Acquisition, Handling and Servicing in State Libraries

and its predecessors, the *Federal Register*, and the *Official Gazette* of the U.S. Patent Office, and in microprint the non-depository publications and the serial set.

About half of the state libraries are depositories by law for the official publications of their own states. In most of the states where a depository system does not exist, the state library tries to acquire as many of its own state documents as possible by requesting them from the issuing agencies, though one library reported acquiring only those publications for which a need was anticipated and another collects mostly legal materials.

Many state libraries have experienced difficulty in obtaining all the publications of their own states. A depository law is no guarantee that the state library will automatically receive all official publications. If there is a state printer, acquisition of the printed documents is somewhat surer, but in recent years, as printing costs have risen, more and more state publications are being duplicated by mimeograph, multi-lith, or other methods. Centralized distribution of both printed and non-printed publications is rare, and the latter are often elusive. The state library has difficulty in learning what has been published and must rely rather heavily on periodic memoranda and visits to agencies, both old and new. Too often a request from a library user will reveal that an important publication was not received. The economic factor is an important one; because of costs, more publications are being issued in limited quantities, and the state library needs to know about new publications and to submit its requests as soon as possible for those not distributed automatically.

Few state libraries are maintaining extensive collections of the official documents of other states. Most of them select publications in subject fields of interest and also place some emphasis upon acquiring publications from adjoining states. Twenty-five state libraries indicated that they have agreements for the exchange of certain official publications with other states. In the twenty-nine states participating in the Interstate Exchange of Legislative Publications under the auspices of the Council of State Governments, only twelve state libraries have been designated as depositories.⁸ Five state libraries reported that they are being ever more selective in the acquisition of out-of-state publications; two indicated that they are expanding their acquisition programs. Thus, Kuhlman's statement in 1940, though it sounds harsh, is still largely true:

A . . . function of the state library has been the systematic collection,
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organization, and preservation of the official publications of other states. Theoretically (by law in most states) the state library has the position of responsibility and of advantage in collecting and preserving the official documents of other states. The exchange laws as well as the exchange traditions of the states enable the state libraries each to build up a practically complete collection of the documents of not merely their own state but of other states at a nominal cost. In some states this has been done effectively. . . . Yet in most states this unique opportunity is not met adequately. In such states there is no systematic effort to build up complete files of the official publications of other states. The result is that the material that accumulates more or less sporadically in the form of official documents of other states is too fragmentary or does not receive proper attention so that it might be useful for research work.⁷

In defense of the state libraries, it should be said that many of them cite lack of staff and space as serious problems in coping with the quantity of documents issued.

Coverage of the local governmental publications in each state is not nearly so extensive as coverage of the official publications of the state. Only five such depositories were reported, two of which are for codes and ordinances only, and most of the remaining states collect only a few local documents. Little effort is made to acquire the local governmental publications of jurisdictions outside the state.

Separate collections of U.S. government publications are maintained by sixteen state libraries; ten have integrated collections and eleven have partially integrated collections. Almost all state libraries reporting classify their U.S. documents either by Dewey or by the Superintendent of Documents' classification, the latter being the favorite two to one. A few place some U.S. documents in the vertical file under subject, usually the more ephemeral ones, and two state libraries arrange U.S. documents alphabetically by author.

In the handling of state and local documents, seven state libraries reported completely integrated collections, and sixteen have separate collections of state and local documents. Eight integrate the documents of their own states with their state history collection, but of the eight, three maintain separate collections of out-of-state documents. The remaining state libraries have partial integration of documents with the general book collection. The separate collections of state and local documents are classified by Dewey or by special schemes, usually based on the Superintendent of Documents' classification, or are shelved alphabetically by agency. Eleven state li-

Acquisition, Handling and Servicing in State Libraries

braries report placing some state and local documents in the vertical file.

As might be expected, in most of the state libraries with separate documents collections, the records are prepared by the documents staff, whereas in integrated collections the records are prepared by the catalog department. In two states where the state documents are integrated with the history collection, the records are prepared by the history department staff. Material placed in the vertical file is sometimes handled by the general reference staff.

Eleven state libraries have a dictionary catalog for U.S. government publications, thirteen for state and local government publications, and four a dictionary catalog only for the publications of their own state. The other state libraries depend upon checklists or shelflists, but several include cards for some government publications in their general public catalogs on a selective basis. Of those that do not put cards for documents into the general public catalog, few reported employing subject referral cards to the documents collection.

Apparently most state library agencies feel that the methods presently used are best for them, since few indicated that they are making radical changes or would change their methods if starting a new collection. Two state libraries, however, are changing from the Dewey or Library of Congress classification and full cataloging for U.S. government publications to the Superintendent of Documents' classification and reliance on the *Monthly Catalog* for a subject approach. Another state library which formerly kept some U.S. documents in the vertical file has removed them, prepared simple shelflist cards, and uses the *Monthly Catalog* as a subject approach. On the other hand, one state library is adding a pamphlet file to avoid classifying ephemeral material. Another is reclassifying its state documents collection and adding a dictionary catalog. Two state libraries reported an increase in subject analysis, and two are changing from separate to integrated collections.

Mechanization has made little headway in documents collections yet, but three state agencies are considering a computer-produced book catalog of documents. No state libraries reported any special housing for documents other than pamphlet boxes for some and the vertical file for some. The amount of binding done is very small.

State libraries vary as much in services offered as they do in acquisition and handling. Regional depositories for U.S. government publications have a legal responsibility to give interlibrary loan and reference

service to other libraries within their region and also to aid depositories to dispose of unwanted publications.⁵ The RSD-RTSD Interdivisional Committee on Public Documents of the American Library Association has suggested some additional responsibilities for state library agencies, as reported by Shaw: (1) A basic list of reference and other documents should be prepared by the state library with the assistance of the documents librarians in the depository libraries of the state. New depositories and old as well should be required to maintain this basic collection in order to make such titles widely available to the public. (2) The state library should conduct studies to assist in planning the location of new depositories to ensure that they are established in areas not adequately served by existing depositories, and that any library applying to become a depository has the space and staff judged necessary to process, house, and provide reader and reference services. (3) The state library "should impress upon all new applicants for the depository designation that the government expects that the materials selected will receive the same respect and care as any other library stock procured for the library."⁸

Almost all state libraries provide some direct service to the general public, though some circulate materials only to individuals living in areas where there is no local library service. Service to state government agencies and interlibrary loan and reference service to other libraries, however, constitute the major workloads. The trend toward systems and regional libraries has decreased direct service to individuals and increased the number of interlibrary loans. Several state libraries reported also increased use by state agencies and students.

Some publicity is given to government publications by their inclusion in the general accession lists issued by fourteen state libraries. Documents are also sometimes routed to the reference staff, or important documents at least are brought to their attention. A few state libraries notify state agencies by phone of material of interest, and use documents in displays. In addition, a number of state libraries issue checklists of the publications of their own state. In the bibliography of current lists of state publications compiled by the Tennessee State Library in 1962, twenty-three of the thirty-nine lists (for thirty-six states) were compiled by state libraries.⁹

Policies on the use of government publications outside the state library range from one of non-circulation, reported by one library; circulating duplicate copies, reported by four libraries; circulating to state agencies only or only to state agencies and other libraries,

Acquisition, Handling and Servicing in State Libraries

reported by four libraries; to a liberal policy of circulating to any resident of the state, reported by one library. Most state libraries lend rather freely except for certain classes of documents. Categories most often mentioned as not circulating are reference works, long runs of periodicals, the U.S. serial set, census publications, loose-leaf publications, and rare, valuable or irreplaceable items. More use is being made of copying devices to reproduce non-circulating material.

Service is usually provided by the general reference staff, but several state libraries with separate documents collections indicated that if the general reference staff did not find a satisfactory answer, the question was referred to the documents department. In state libraries in which state documents are integrated with the historical collection, the service is usually provided by the staff of that collection.

Eighteen state libraries reported that they depend largely upon printed indexes in servicing U.S. government publications. The *Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications* was used most heavily. PAIS, the *Price Lists* of the Superintendent of Documents, and federal agency lists were also mentioned. Estimates of the adequacy of printed indexes ranged from very poor to very satisfactory. Comments included a wish for more comprehensive coverage, better indexing, cumulations, a compilation done from the librarian's point of view and also easier for the public to use, and regret for the time lag between the appearance of a publication and its listing. Less use is made of printed indexes in servicing state and local government publications, probably because fewer current lists are available with a subject approach.

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MARY SCHELL

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