

and various special commissions have issued documents on United States art and culture.

State documents, when they are available, may be equally useful in the school. Agriculture departments, conservation departments, historical commissions, and other agencies of state government issue publications which will support the instructional program of the school. Many local government publications are also useful in school curricula, especially in courses in citizenship and government. Yet few government publications from any level of government are used to the extent that their quality, number, and low price would seem to warrant.

One of the reasons so few government publications are used is probably that school librarians lack adequate information concerning them. Most of the publishing and research concerning the use of these materials in school libraries has merely attempted to supply lists of government documents for a single subject useful to schools.

Several works relating to government documents written in the past decade and a half concern those useful in specific subject areas. Mason,¹ in 1951, and Libby,² six years later, wrote master's theses dealing with publications which might be used in home economics courses. Both papers include sections concerning the availability and use of government publications in schools, but are basically bibliographies listing specific titles. Schenck compiled a list of documents for use in junior high school social studies courses.³ Hoffman, on the other hand, attempting to inform other school librarians of the broad subject range of federal government documents, compiled an annotated list under twenty-five subject headings, including both works useful in instruction and also professional publications for teachers.⁴

Though no one has compiled an extensive general handbook of government publications which emphasizes their relationship to elementary and secondary school curricula, school librarians could use effectively the guides for general use which have been published. Hoffman recommended Hirshberg and Melinat's *Subject Guide to United States Government Publications*,⁵ Leidy's *Popular Guide to Government Publications*⁶ and the bi-weekly *Selected United States Government Publications* from the Superintendent of Documents for use in selecting government documents in school libraries.⁷ Sister Mary John Francis also recommended the latter,⁸ as did most other writers on the subject.

Shaulis listed five useful selection tools.⁹ Good listed and annotated eleven,¹⁰ and White listed fourteen,¹¹ including periodicals with regular or frequent bibliographies of government publications. Both Sister

Selection and Reference Use in the School Library

Mary John Francis and White included sources for lists of state publications, and for United Nations documents. White also discussed sources for local government publications. The most frequently recommended, and probably the most frequently used source for government publications is *Selected United States Government Publications*. Heavy reliance on this small bi-weekly list may account, in part, for the failure of some school librarians to make more extensive use of federal government publications. The fact that these lists are neither comprehensive nor arranged in subject categories makes systematic selection of curriculum-related materials difficult.

Good reported that lack of information concerning government documents was an important reason listed by many school librarians for not using them.¹⁰ Good's own data, and the studies of others, indicate an abundance of sources of information. No doubt many school librarians are unfamiliar with the available aids, but other problems hamper their selection of these materials as well.

Good's study of the use of government publications in the high school libraries of North Carolina provides the only extensive data on this topic. She gathered information from one hundred and fifty-four senior high schools by questionnaire. Her analysis of the returns indicated that most schools selected and used government documents only occasionally, though there were radical differences from school to school. The chief reasons given for this were that teachers made little use of government publications in teaching, and that librarians and teachers lacked knowledge of them.

The librarians reported that they ordered government publications only irregularly, and used a limited number of sources from which to select them. In all, 59 percent used *Selected United States Government Publications*, and 16 percent used the Superintendent of Documents' *Price Lists*. Many libraries received some documents free from Congressmen. The number received from all sources ranged from two to two hundred pamphlets per year, and from one to twenty-five books. Use during the same period ranged from two to eleven hundred pamphlets, and from one to two hundred and fifty books.

Many respondents said that they could not provide information on acquisition and use specifically of government publications. The pamphlets were part of vertical file collections, and the books were cataloged like those of any other publisher. To the question whether these materials were used as often as they could be, only three librarians said yes, while a hundred and twenty-one said that their use was not as great as was desirable.

Good also asked for information on teacher use of government publications by subject category. The responses showed that the major users of these publications were teachers of the various social studies courses. The only other heavy users of government documents were science and home economics teachers, but they trailed far behind those of social studies. Fourth and fifth on the list were agriculture and vocational guidance. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for the librarians to identify major difficulties in the use of government publications. Good reported six problems most commonly cited: (1) lack of information concerning government publications, (2) lack of funds to purchase them, (3) lack of time to select and order them, (4) storage of government publications, (5) dislike of using them, and (6) difficulty in handling payment for them. Despite these difficulties, one hundred and sixteen librarians said they would recommend the use of government publications to others.

Shaulis reported an experimental program planned by teachers and a librarian which demonstrated the positive values of government publications in instructional programs.¹² Using an eighth-grade American history class and high school Spanish classes, this group selected and used federal government and international government publications to support units of instruction. Applying nineteen criteria, they evaluated the publications and found them to be of excellent quality for school use, and better than similar material in a standard encyclopedia.

Shaulis reported that the teachers found the materials to be unique in content, or in their manner of presentation of material. Both students and teachers were enthusiastic about the publications and felt that their use should be expanded in the school library program. As elements making government materials especially useful in schools, she emphasized their reliability, attractiveness, and low cost, and the way they often provide an intermediate level of treatment of a subject between the conciseness and lack of detail in encyclopedia articles and the more comprehensive treatment in books.

No research has been reported relating to the use of state government documents, although both Sister Mary John Francis¹³ and White¹⁴ listed the Library of Congress' *Monthly Checklist of State Publications* as a source for their selection. Several state libraries and state library associations issue regular lists of their own state government publications in state library periodicals, (see article by Childs in this issue) but there is no evidence to indicate how widely they are used in school libraries. School librarians probably make little use of local government publications, except those of their own communities

Selection and Reference Use in the School Library

and the few listed occasionally by such a publication as *Vertical File Index*.

The limited literature on the use of federal, state, and local government documents in school libraries appears to indicate relatively little use of these materials in schools, and the limited research on the subject supports this conclusion. Most school librarians would probably agree that they could expand their collections of government publications to support many subjects taught in junior and senior high schools.

At the same time, it is no doubt true that those government publications used in school libraries are not easily identified once they are in the collection. Where public libraries and libraries serving institutions of higher education are more likely to maintain separate collections of government publications, school libraries include those they do acquire in regular book or pamphlet collections in which they receive no special treatment or separate recording.

There are small signs that the use of government publications in school libraries may be increasing. Half of the articles and studies relating to this topic appeared since 1960. Many school systems have made the procurement of federal government publications easier for schools by facilitating the establishment of deposit accounts with the Superintendent of Documents, or by permitting schools to purchase Government Printing Office coupons.

The problems reported by Good,¹⁰ that school librarians lack knowledge of government publications, and lack time to select and order them, relate to the education of school librarians, and to the lack of a guide to government publications organized to emphasize school subjects. School librarians, whether educated in single purpose, school-oriented library education programs, or in graduate library schools, should be encouraged to enroll in courses in government documents, provided that such courses emphasize selection and use of materials and not elaborate schemes for organizing them. A good guide to government publications, planned to acquaint school librarians with selected series of publications and with agencies most likely to issue materials useful to school curricula would facilitate selection.

School librarians might use government publications if their professional education provided them with the competencies necessary to select them systematically and to use them effectively, and if tools were available which gave an understanding of government publishing programs and insight into the relevance of the available materials to school curricula. Recognizing the value of government publications,

they would find the time to select carefully from comprehensive listings, such as the *Monthly Catalog* and the *Monthly Check List of State Publications* instead of relying so heavily on the *Selected United States Government Publications*, which is not intended to provide extensive coverage of available publications but rather to list those of most interest to the general public.

More research of the type initiated by Good, but with a broader base, is needed to direct the attention of school librarians to these publications. Although existing guides and lists of government publications can and should be used, the great wealth of government material is unlikely to be made widely available to students and teachers in schools until school librarians are made more aware of the valuable and useful information contained in those publications and are better educated in their selection and use.

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