

Docs Prescriptions



The Newsletter of the Government Documents Round Table of Ohio

Issue 59

Spring 2004

From the President

J. Peter Thayer
Marietta College

It's been quite a year for me, both professionally and personally. As your president, I wish I had been able to accomplish more but as the saying goes, "People plan, God laughs". One task I wanted to accomplish was to review our constitution and by-laws. As part of the review I wanted to find answers to two questions: 1) Is the organization on track as far as our governing documents are concerned? 2) Are there portions of our governing documents that need to be stricken out or amended? At this point, I would ask that we initiate a review of our constitution and our by-laws. If you feel that such a task is justified, then I would be happy to serve as chair of an ad hoc committee to address the matter. Although I personally did not accomplish as much as I wished this year, I am proud of what the group as a whole has been able to accomplish. Thanks to the efforts of Jennifer McMullen and the Ohio GODORT home page committee, our website has been updated. In case you haven't seen our newly updated site, the URL is <http://www.wooster.edu/library/gov/ohgodort/>.

Doreen Hockenberry and Karen Kimber worked hard to pull off a great Fall 2003 meeting at Wright State. For me, one of the

highlights of the meeting was the discussion we had about what I would call "GPO's Reformation." As it turned out this discussion proved to be the catalyst for deciding the focus of the Spring 2004 meeting, which Doreen Hockenberry has cleverly titled, "From St. Louis to Columbus to Washington D.C.: A Working Meeting: Ohio Depositories' Influence". I hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend our Spring 2004 meeting in Columbus on Friday, May 7. This could possibly be one of the most important meetings the Ohio GODORT has had in some time. I urge you to attend and provide your input. As you know, lots of initiatives are on the table regarding GPO and the FDLP. Doreen, who just returned from the Spring DLC meeting in St. Louis, will give us an update on how these initiatives are coming along. During the program portion of our meeting you'll be given the opportunity to have your say on GPO matters. The end goal of our meeting will be to collect your input and send along to GPO. Ohio depository librarians are an important bloc in FDLP matters and hopefully we can have powerful influence on the future of GPO and the FDLP.

Thanks to all of you for your work this year. Thanks particularly to Jan Marotta for her service as Secretary/Treasurer, Doreen Hockenberry as President-Elect/Program Chair, the "Bowling Green Duo" (Coleen Parmer and Carol Singer) for serving on the nominating committee, Jennifer McMullen et al. for their work on the web site, and Karen Kimber for working on Docs RX.

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J. Peter Thayer, President
Dawes Memorial Library
Marietta College
Marietta, OH 45750
(740) 376-4361
thayerp@marietta.edu

Doreen Hockenberry
Program Chair/President Elect
Alden Library
Ohio University
Athens, OH 45701
(740) 593-2718
hockenbe@ohio.edu

Jan Marotta, Secretary/Treasurer
Ashland University Library
Ashland, OH 44805
(419) 289-5410
jmarotta@ashland.edu

Karen Kimber, Editor
Dunbar Library
Wright State University
Dayton, OH 45435
937-775-2533
karen.kimber@wright.edu

The Web page of the Government Documents
Round Table of Ohio is at:

<http://www.wooster.edu/library/gov/ohgodort/>

Minutes

Fall Meeting • October 31, 2003
Wright State University

Twenty-eight individuals attended the Fall meeting. The group received a welcome from Sheila Shellabarger, Associate University Librarian. The Keynote Speakers for the meeting were:

Linda Resler, Inspector, Government Printing Office, spoke to the group on Promoting Government Collections. After her talk, she spent time answering a variety of questions from the group.

Dawne Dewey, Head of Special Collections and Archives at Wright State University, gave a tour of the Special Collections and Archives of Wright State. She showed us various items within the collection pertaining to the Wright Brothers.

After lunch on our own, Peter Thayer called the business meeting to order at 1:30 pm. Peter thanked Karen Kimber and Wright State for hosting our meeting.

Karen Kimber reported that Heidi Gauder has sent a proposal for the University of Dayton to host the Spring 2005 Depository Library Council Meeting. It will be some time before we know if they have been accepted.

John Hendricks from the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County spoke to the group about becoming a Passport Acceptance Agent. The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County has become one. He passed around a notebook showing what you need to do if you are one and encouraged members of the group to consider becoming agents also. The \$30 application fee is kept by the agent so it is also a money making situation.

Minutes from the Spring Meeting were approved.

The Treasurer's report was reviewed and accepted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Access to State Government Information And Publications

Coleen Parmer reported that the Electronic Government Services Act has been defeated. Peter had sent a letter on behalf of the group recommending its defeat. Coleen also reported that the Index of Congressional Research Services Reports may be discontinued. She recommended that we send letters to Patrice McDermontt opposing this. The letters are due by November 3rd. Coleen will send a letter on our behalf.

Newsletter

Karen Kimber reported a distribution of the Fall 2002 Newsletter to members only for a cost of \$40.98. Karen encouraged the group to submit information for the newsletter to her. Karen has also begun a new column called the Honor Roll of Electronic Sites. She encouraged everyone to submit sites.

NEW BUSINESS

Audrey Hall reported to the group on the Federal Depository Conference. She attended the Regionals Meeting prior to the full conference, as well as the conference. 17 people from Ohio attended the conference. Attendees were informed that in the next 5 years, 95% of government documents would be distributed electronically. Microfiche is being phased out. The only GPO bookstore still open is the main one. Libraries giving up depository status will be asked to return their documents. There was much discussion concerning legacy collections. The biggest statement made by Mr. Bruce James was that GPO Depository Program is going to

have to pay for itself. There was much speculation on what this might mean.

Peter asked for volunteers for the Nominating Committee. Coleen Parmer and Carol Singer will serve on that committee.

The Ohio GODORT web site has a new home. It has been turned over to Jennifer McMullen at Wooster. The new URL is: www.wooster.edu/library/gov/ohgodort. For now it looks the same but Jennifer will be working on it. She asked for suggestions.

Doreen Hockenberry told the group that the membership directory needs updating. She will be updating it. She will send the new list to Jennifer for inclusion on the web site. If anyone knows of changes, she asked that you send them to her. Karen Kimber will send the latest Docs Prescriptions to Jennifer for inclusion on the web site. Joe Salem volunteered to convert items to PDF for inclusion in the web site. Doreen also volunteered to assist with the web site. Other suggestions for the web site included a handout exchange, an update to the membership brochure and links to Ohio Depository Library web sites.

The State Library of Ohio agreed to host the next meeting to be held in May. It was suggested that we spend the meeting in discussion of the various document issues.

Cheryl Paine encouraged group members to consider submitting a program proposal for the Ohio Commons for Digital Education Conference. The link for more information is www.ohn.org. The conference is to be held at the Easton Hilton in Columbus on March 8th and 9th.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Marotta
Secretary/Treasurer

Book Review

Mae N. Schreiber
University of Akron

The United States Government Internet Manual 2003-2004. Peggy Garvin, editor. Lanham, MD: Bernan. 2003. ISBN: 0890599122. \$59.00.

This book is well-organized and easy-to-use, with each website uniformly presented including name, URL, alternate URL, description, subject areas covered and publications. Entry consistency facilitates finding the needed data as the user doesn't waste time trying to figure what is included. Another nice feature is its extensive index by agency name, publication index, SuDoc index, and a master index.

The website description covers mission of the agency, years available for its publications, searchable aspects such as by keyword, and the subject headings used. After the introduction, *The United States Government Internet Manual* (Government Manual) begins with an organization chart of the U.S. Government and URLs for the branches of government and agencies. There are twenty chapters covering topics: finding aids; agriculture, fishing, forestry; business and economics; culture and recreation; defense and intelligence; demographics and sociology; education; employment; energy; engineering and technology; environment and nature; government and politics; health and safety; international relations and ending with transportation.

It replaces Bernan's *Government Information on the Internet (GII)*. The organization is very similar with the name of the website, URL, sponsor, description, and subject. They both begin with FINDING AIDS and then proceed to the agency

websites. *GII* annotates each site with advantages and drawbacks to the site. There is overlap with agency website coverage in both of these sources. Other sources such as *Government on the Net* do not have as extensive coverage of federal government sources, with a heavier emphasis on the legal aspects of government and more state government information.

The *Government Manual* is a handy reference source and a good checklist when teaching class to be sure relevant government agencies are included. It also is useful for ideas of other possible places to search for elusive answers.

My opinion of the book is favorable. It is well organized, substantive, and a useful source for finding federal government information in an efficient and timely manner

The book is recommended for academic and public libraries, researchers, graduate students and faculty.

U.S. Government Weather Reporting Before 1840

Carol A. Singer
Bowling Green State University

The earliest recorded official U.S. government attention to weather reporting was in 1803. President Thomas Jefferson instructed Lewis and Clark to make weather observations during their expedition across North America. He recommended that they record, "climate as characterized by the thermometer, by the proportion of rainy, cloudy & clear days, by lightening, hail, snow, ice, by the access & recess of frost, by the winds, prevailing at different seasons, the dates at which particular plants put forth or lose their flowers, or leaf, times of appearance of particular birds, reptiles or insects."¹

May 2, 1814, the Army's Surgeon General James Tilton issued a general order that directed hospital surgeons, mates, and post surgeons to "keep a diary of the weather with an account of the medical topography of the country in which he serves, and [to] report to the commanding officer every circumstance tending to restore or preserve the health of the troops."² Tilton's successor, Surgeon General Joseph Lovell, expanded on this by ordering the entire Army surgical staff to record meteorological data and data on sick patients and their treatment.³ Lovell justified these orders to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun by saying, "The influence of weather and climate upon diseases, especially epidemic, is perfectly well known...To this end, every surgeon should be furnished with a good thermometer, and in addition to a diary of the weather, should note everything...that may tend to discover the causes of diseases, the promotion of health, and the improvement of medical sciences."⁴

The army surgeons were known for their independence at this time and did a very poor job of reporting weather records or, in fact, any other records. However, by 1825, 18 military posts were sending weather records to headquarters.⁵ The first observations to be published from their work covered 1821-1824 and were printed in the *Medical Repository*. These observations were made from a wide area that stretched as far west as Council Bluffs, Iowa.⁶ The first official meteorological publication of the Army Medical Department was a compilation of weather data from 1822-1825. A register for 1822-25 was published in 1840, with the earlier publication included as an appendix. The data for 1831 to 1842 was published in 1851.⁷

Meanwhile, Josiah Meigs, Commissioner-General of the Land Office had established a system of weather observations in 1817. The twenty regional land offices were directed to take records three times each day. The offices were provided with blank

forms that were to be returned monthly. Other volunteer observers also sent in observations. Meigs attempted to convince Congress to fund this system and purchase instruments for the observers, but was unsuccessful.⁸ Some of the Land Office data was published in contemporary magazines. For instance, the July 24, 1819 *Niles' Register* reported mean and estimated high and low temperatures for Wooster, Zanesville, Cincinnati, Jeffersonville, and Huntsville during May, 1819. The article noted that Wooster had a hard frost May 20, 1819 that destroyed the beans and oak leaves.⁹ The *Cincinnati Literary Gazette* printed summary Land Office records for January and February 1825 and observed "blue-birds and vegetation, made their appearance" about February 14th.¹⁰

By 1836 each of the Surgeon General's army posts had received a rain gauge.¹¹ In that same year Surgeon General Thomas Lawson directed Dr. Samuel Forry to compile the weather observations taken by post surgeons and examined their medical implications. The result was a register for 1826-1830.¹²

Meteorological observations were made at the Depot of Naval Instruments as early as 1833. Records were published in the *Military and Naval Magazine of the United States* during 1833 and 1834.¹³ A few issues of the *Army and Navy Chronicle* carried weather records in 1838 that were listed as having been "kept at the observatory of Capitol Hill."¹⁴ In 1834 the Navy directed the senior surgeon on each ship or navy yard to "keep or prepare a journal of the changes in temperature and weather, as indicated by the thermometer and barometer...The journal is to contain also, notes of gales, storms and hurricanes, with their direction, time of commencement and termination; and a brief statement of the effects, immediate or remote, supposed to be produced by any of the important changes, on the health of the officers and the men. Collection, however, appears to have been as haphazard as that of

the army surgeons had been.¹⁵ In 1838, Lt. Matthew L. Maury took command of the Navy's Depot of Chart and Instruments. He contended the navy needed a wind and current chart that would "blaze a way through the winds of the sea by which the navigator might find the best paths at all seasons." Navy Secretary James K. Paulding asked the Depot to make weather observations every three hours around the clock.¹⁶ These observations were published by the U.S. Naval Observatory, the successor to the Depot, for 1838-1842. This journal includes information on temperatures, winds, and weather. Winds were generally described as light, moderate, fresh, gale, airy, calm, and strong. Weather might be described as cloudy, clear, hazy, foggy, snow, partly cloudy, or misty. Toward the end of this period, entries included the type of cloud, such as cumulo stratus or cirro stratus.¹⁷

In the decades to come other U.S. government agencies, such as the Smithsonian Institution, were active in keeping and compiling weather observations. In 1870, Congress authorized the U.S. Army Signal Corps to organize a national system of weather observation.¹⁸ This function was later transferred several times to become the current National Weather Service.

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