

# Doc's Prescriptions

## Ohio GODORT

*Karen R. Kotsy*  
Editor

*Fall 1990*  
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*To the Members:*  
*by Coleen Parmer, President*

The executive officers met at the State Library in August to discuss plans for the upcoming year and we have some interesting ideas that I would like to share with you. First, however, I invite you to visit the regional library. We were impressed with the remodelling efforts. The area is greatly expanded and the documents main reference room is much more conducive to service and research. Mr. Hordusky and his staff are to be commended for the excellent service and support they give to the depositories.

There are three WHCLIS (White House Conference on Library Information Service) meetings in Columbus this Fall and I urge you to attend at least one of the sessions. Mary Prophet has been asked to attend the session on Democracy and give reactions to the proposals and resolutions from the Ohio depositories perspective. If you have questions or suggestions, call her.

Some of the ideas generated at the Executive Meeting focused on increasing statewide awareness of the depository program. We would like to create a portable documents display which Ohio librarians could borrow for demonstrations. Mary Prophet is willing to work on this and we need volunteers to work with her. The display could also be set up at the State Fair next summer. We thought that Ohio GODORT could apply for an exhibit table with members from the organization volunteering a day to staff the exhibit and answer questions about documents and the depository program. This would be a good way to reach a lot of our public and would also be fun. I am interested in your reactions to this proposal, and wonder if there are enough members willing to volunteer a day.

Clyde Hordusky is going to be revising the State Plan. Several people have volunteered to work with him and we need one or two more volunteers. If you are interested, call Clyde.

The lighted bins crisis which has caused so much

havoc among Ohio's depositories points to the need for an efficient, timely communication mechanism. I think we need a bulletin board or an E-mail network. George Barnum is investigating the possibility of setting up an Ohio GODORT bulletin board on the Cleveland Freenet system. As he explained the proposal to me, it appears workable if we are willing to give some service such as answering reference queries through the system in return. Freenet seems to be an ideal network because access is available to both public libraries and academic libraries. Are any members willing to work with George on this project?

Setting up such a network raises up the issue of information rich versus information poor environments. Some depositories have electronic access with expensive hardware and software while others do not. We need to work closely together. Those depositories with computer access need to work with neighboring depositories that do not have such facilities and to share information. This calls for sensitivity on all our parts. Perhaps a preliminary directory of Ohio depository collections could be published as soon as possible after the surveys have been returned giving the computer capabilities of the libraries.

I would also like to propose a change in our programming at the spring meetings. I think that since we meet at different libraries each spring, we should take advantage of this. Instead of setting up a program with speakers, I propose that the hosting library give a tour and hands-on demonstrations. This could acquaint us with new solutions for processing, collection organization and public service. We have discussed doing this after the afternoon program, but there is just not enough time since most members need to leave by 3:00 p.m. or so. I would welcome comments on this proposal. I would also be interested in any ideas that you have about programming or meeting agenda items.

I hope you can attend the Fall meeting at Denison on November 2. I look forward to a productive meeting and exciting program.

## Editorial and Editor's Bulletin Board

It's Fall and we are off and running -- behind already. Has anyone worked out the geometric progression of time used for adding new, improved, work saving computers and software to a documents office? Or is it my imagination that each new advancement doubles the time it takes to complete a project. I do like the reports that can be generated in Dbase IV, so in the long run it is probably worth all the trials and adventures. Now if I can just figure out how to create the margins I want on Word Perfect--when and where I want them....

We are starting a new feature in the newsletter. It is a column of profiles of our members. This time we are profiling our officers and some of our columnists. Next issue Evron Collins and I will be calling some of our new members to learn more about them and their document experiences. Mami Ball has started work on a profile of our former officers as we prepare for our 10th year as a group. Volunteers to help on this are welcomed, encouraged and fervently hoped for. We would like to create a profile of our entire membership over the next couple of years.

Joe McClane, GPO's Chief Inspector called me after he received the last issue of the newsletter with a clarification on what should be included in an automated "shelflist". GPO is not requiring that we have accession numbers and the other things mentioned in the Admin Notes article. They do require that a piece record be kept and Joe encourages us to follow what was written in the Manual and Guidelines.

The September issue of dttp has the nomination form for the notable documents list. I do not remember any Ohio documents ever making the list. Do you have any suggestions? Perhaps if we got some Ohio documents nominated for the list, this would help to remind the Ohio agencies that people do use the material that they put out and that we appreciate the documents that are well done.

I am sorry for the delay in getting this issue out especially as my contributors were very prompt in getting their material to me in what should have been plenty of time. Ruth Levor is the Documents Librarian at the UC Marx Law Library and prepared the article on getting information from the government by using the Freedom of Information Act. Jess Parmer is a member of our group and he volunteered his comments on cost sharing and the depositories. I tend to get real excited about articles that are volunteered. George Barnum's article on rare and valuable documents will, I hope, be the first of many columns for the newsletter. I would like to thank them for their articles and also Coleen, Jeff, Mami and Evron for their help on this issue. I also want to thank my staff and student assistants for their help and patience.

The next issue of DOC'S PRESCRIPTIONS will be sent out in January. Any and all contributions will be accepted until the 10th of December. In between reference questions I have been reading about lines and boxes, may even try some graphics in the next issue. Would anyone with experience using Word Perfect 5.1 be interested in volunteering some help, advice, words of comfort and/or an article for DOC'S PRESCRIPTIONS? I am also looking for someone to write a basic article on dBase and how to use it with the census CD-ROMS.

I just got caught up on my reading of GOVDOC-L, and there were 36 messages waiting. In addition to the many messages on the State Department's new publication Dispatch, which is included below in Doc Alert, and a comment on the conditions of boxes and shipments which is a very "hot" topic and is mentioned in On Exchange, there were comments on the receipt of the export and import CD on the 17th at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, questions about UN collections and requests for help in answering a reference question.

If you have or can get access to a Bitnet account I encourage you to do so. I am currently reading GOVDOC-L through the kindness of the Chemistry-Biology Librarian. The library is in the process of switching to a new E-mail system and I am waiting for it to come up so I will have to learn only one method of using Bitnet. I am currently in a read only mode.

I know that the following are subscribers to GOVDOC-L: Coleen Parmer, George Barnum, Jean Sears, and Margaret Powell. I am certain that if you have questions on how it operates or what is included that any of them will be glad to help. I would be very much in favor of a network for the Ohio document librarians and I hope that something can be set up in the very near future.

### Ohio Docs

The University of Cincinnati has been successful in obtaining the following items:

Ohio Data Abstract -(Note: As of Jan. 1991 ODOC is going to charge \$9.00/yr. for their newsletter)

Ohio Data Users Center  
77 South High St.  
P.O. Box 1001  
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0101

## Summary of the Duties of the Inspector General's Office

Office of the State Inspector General  
77 High St.  
29th Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

## Annual Reports for 1987 and 1988 of the Industrial Commission of Ohio and The Ohio Bureau of Worker's Compensation

Industrial Commission of Ohio  
246 North High St.  
Columbus, Ohio 43266

## State Of Ohio Telephone Directory.

(Note: \$2.17 + \$1.63 postage and handling)

Department of Administrative  
Services  
226 North 5th St.  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

A reminder from Clyde Hordusky on the schedule for requesting permission to discard:

## Disposal Schedule for U.S. Government Documents

January - Y's  
February - A's  
March - C's  
April - D's  
May - E's thru G's  
July - H's  
August - I's, J's  
September - L's thru N's  
October - O's thru S's  
December - T's thru X's

June and November are not on the schedule. They are catch up months or can be used to discard State of Ohio documents.

## Of Interest

The US Postal Service has a handbook entitled Dead Letter Branch Operations (P 1.31/11:105) which details the steps taken by the Post Office for mail that can't be delivered, including mail damaged in transit.

Indoor Air: Reference Bibliography.  
(EP 1.23/9:600/8-89/067F).

A List of Medicare approved heart transplant facilities may be found in the Medicare/Hospital Manual. (HE 22.8/2: Chapter 4, section 416).

STAR has resumed publication and NASA will be printing the issues not published in 1989.

Metro Insights covers basic statistical and economic information for 100 MSA's. It was published by the Regional Information Group - Data Resources, 24 Hartwell Avenue, Lexington MA 02173.

## Doc Tech

More articles are appearing in the library journals on using various software products for document processing. Some of the latest ones are:

"Using Finder Information Storage and Retrieval Software for Government Documents," by Karen A. Becker in the January/February 1990 issue of Library Software Review, p.14-17.

"Using A Bibliographic Database Management System to Improve Access to State Government Posters," by Diane Gonzales Kirby in the January/February issue of Library Software Review, p.10-13. The software package used was Pro Cite.

In the same issue of Library Software Review on p. 25 & 26 was another article on "Pro Cite: Developing a Statistical Resources Database."

The September 1990 issue of Online has articles on E-mail and networks.

"Using the National Networks:Bitnet & the Internet," by Caroline R. Arms, p. 24-29.

"E-mail connections: It's Still a Jungle Out There...But It's Getting Better," by Erik Delfino, p. 31-35.

"A New Information infrastructure", by Caroline R. Arms, p. 15-22.

I would also recommend The Cuckoo's Egg by Clifford Stoll (1989, Doubleday) as a very informative and easily read book on computers, networks, etc.

### Meetings, Conferences, etc.

Marcive is considering convening a users group at ALA Midwinter. Call Jan Meldrum or Marcive at 800-531-7678 for additional information.

The Cleveland Public Library will sponsor a day-long workshop, "Accessing Patent Information," presented by the Patent and Trademark Office of Patent Depository Library Programs on Saturday, November 17, 1990, 9 am-5pm, in the Auditorium at the library, 325 Superior Avenue, Cleveland. The workshop is free and open to all, contact Sig Weinhold at (216) 623-2870 for information and registration.

### Doc Alert

The publication of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles is being reviewed by the Department of Labor according to the Federal Register (Aug. 10, 1990; pp. 32868 - 32871). They are not going to cancel the title but are looking for ways to make it "cost effective." Deadline for comments were Oct. 9th but you may still want to send a letter to

Robert A. Schaerfl  
Director, U.S. Employment Service  
Employment and Training Administration  
Department of Labor, Room N-4470,  
200 Constitution Ave.,  
Washington, DC.

From GODOC-L submitted by Duncan L. Aldrich, University of Nevada, Reno.

The following has been taken from several messages on GOVDOC-L. The Department of State replacement for the Bulletin is starting to come. The second issue of the Dispatch dated September 10th was distributed on shipping list 90-584-P. Issue number 1 was sent to non depository libraries, about a month ago, who asked to be put on a mailing list, but it was not sent to GPO for distribution to the depository libraries. The libraries that called the State Department asking for a copy of issue one are now being referred to GPO for copies. More as it develops.

Another aspect of this situation is that the State Department published three issues of Current Treaty Actions as a temporary predecessor. They may be found in depository collections with the following call numbers:

S 1.2:T 71/3  
S 1.2:T 71/4  
S 1.2:T 71/5

### Around the State

The UC Marx Law Library has the CIS Master File 2, which is the CIS Index from 1970 to date. It looks very nice and Ruth Levor is finding all sorts of uses for it. They also have the Autographic's CD version of the Monthly Catalog.

Charles Parsons, Documents Assistant at the UC Marx Law Library is using Pro Cite to create a shelflist for their Congressional Hearings.

Connie Menefee, in the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Government and Business Section has prepared two flyers, Women in the Military and Military and Defense Periodicals at the Public Library. They are available from the Library.

The OKDoc Group (Southwestern Ohio & Northern Kentucky Depository Documents Librarians) are planning a meeting in January at the UC Marx Law Library. The Ruth Levor is hosting the meeting and arranging the program. A demonstration of the various databases and CDs used by the law libraries is planned.

The OKDOC group is also updating their directory and microform union list, let me know if you would like a copy.

George Barnum, Carol Singer & Jeff Wanser are working on the Core Collection updates for the revised GPO manuals. I am certain that they would be glad of any help or suggestions that you may have.

The survey of the document collections in Ohio is progressing and should be mailed out soon. It will be mailed to all Ohio GODORT member libraries, the federal depositories in Ohio, the state depository libraries and other selected libraries in the state in the very near future. All libraries that fill out the survey will receive a copy of the results.

### On Exchange

From Eagle Press (the newsletter of the Wisconsin Document Group) "Understanding the Rulemaking Process in Wisconsin,"

by William J. Ebbott, Aug 1990, p.7-11.

Julia Wallace (Documents Librarian at the University of Minnesota) sent a memo to Govdoc-L that Randy Menakes at Notis is working on programming which should make sudoc numbers sort correctly when you try to search by call number on Notes. You may want to contact either of them if you have thoughts on the subject.

The following message was sent to GOVDOC-L by Bev Norton, Documents Librarian at Brigham Young University:

I'm glad to hear that we are not the only one getting strange shipments. We have been getting bill fiche with no finding aids and finding aids with no fiche.... Also we have received several depository boxes that have items but only some of the shipping lists as well as a couple of lists with absolutely no items. Yesterday I received three Administrative Notes in the same box that were all exact dups of each other.... Something strange is going on back there.

*Maps and Freedom of Information*  
by Evron Collins  
Bowling Green University

Although freedom of information affects all aspects of government, many people have not considered how it affects mapping agencies. Within the government today, there are maps created which never become available to the public, mainly because of national security reasons. However, maps are relatively expensive to publish so whenever there are budget constraints, maps are frequently victims. This does not always mean that they are withdrawn from publication. Many maps are updated periodically and this may be postponed or the time frame lengthened so that currency becomes a problem. The USGS is issuing maps overprinted with purple rather than redoing the whole map. The Census Bureau has considered only issuing maps in electronic format or perhaps not at all. Can you imagine using Census Tract data without a map available?

Map series frequently disappear from the depository program. A perfect example of this is the DMA. Of the series originally surveyed in June 1983, eighteen have been discontinued or replaced by other series. Even more distressing is the fact that some of these series did not appear on the survey in 1989. You only found out they had been replaced through Ad Notes or if you checked time against the new Class List. The numbers of the original series which were replaced or discounted that I know of are listed below:

379-A-1 to 9 --- replaced by 378-E-1  
379-B-1 to 9 --- replaced by 378-E-2  
379-C-1 to 9 --- replaced by 378-E-3  
379-E-1 to 9 --- discontinued  
379-F-2 ----- replaced by 378-E-35  
379-F-3 ----- discontinued  
379-F-8 ----- discontinued  
379-F-9 ----- discontinued  
379-F-11 ----- discontinued  
379-F-14 ----- discontinued  
379-F-15 ----- replaced by 378-E-35  
379-H-1 to 9 --- discontinued  
379-J-1 to 9 --- discontinued  
379-K-1 to 3 --- replaced by 378-E-7  
379-L-1 to 3 --- discontinued  
379-P-1 to 9 --- replaced by 378-E-30  
379-Y-1 to 9 --- replaced by 378-E-21 to 29

Of course those item numbers which were replaced by another item number have also had the call number changed.

Sometimes things just never appear. The Gazetteers from the Board of Geographic Names published by the DMA were to be converted to microfiche (which I did not like in the first place). They disappear in the microfiche mess and have not been seen ever since. Map librarians are attempting to track them down but I haven't seen a status report recently.

Since the date is one of the criteria for determining which map gives current information, delays in issuing maps or updating them become of lack of information. Maps published by commercial publishers are very expensive so any government maps (such as USGS) which are turned over to commercial publishers will cost much more than currently. Putting maps in a category of the LC priorities for minimal cataloging means a delay in cataloging or simplified cataloging and therefore restricts access. All these things contribute to a problem which grows out of the freedom of information debate.

## Member Profiles

This is a new column in DOC'S PRESCRIPTIONS. We have tried it in two different ways.. Since Coleen and Evron are at Bowling Green, they interviewed each other and faxed me their write ups. In a few moments of calm I called Nani, Jeff and George and to ask them some questions. Evron Collins and Nani Ball have volunteered to help with this column, but we would like to have one or two additional GODOPT members helping to gather the information. We also need some comments from the readers of the newsletter as to what you would like to know about the document people and collections in the state of Ohio.

### *Coleen Parmer Bowling Green University*

I have had a somewhat checkered career in government documents. I began working as a paraprofessional in the Documents Department of Jerome Library in 1975. It became clear to me very quickly that I had found a home. The collection fascinated me, and the reference service I was able to provide gave me great satisfaction. In 1987 I took a year's leave and attended Kent State School of Library Science to work on my MLS. I returned to BGSU in 1988 and applied for the documents librarian position which, fortunately for me had just opened. I am currently coordinator of Government Documents at BGSU Jerome Library.

The Documents Department is a unit of Information Services. The unit handles all technical processing while reference librarians in the Reference Department handle documents public service. As coordinator, I supervise all technical processing and act as documents reference specialist. In addition to covering 8-10 hours a week on the reference desk, I also do collection development and bibliographic instruction for documents and political science. Currently, I am working on an article on the topic of paraprofessionals and job satisfaction and will be giving a paper on this topic at the fall ALAO Conference.

Karen asked me what my favorite document is. I guess that depends on what she means by favorite. I find myself depending on Statistical Abstract more than any other source: however, I have two other documents which I just plain like. They are: What's to Eat, one of the Department of Agriculture Yearbooks, and Code Duello in America, a Smithsonian publication (SI 11.2: C 64).

### *Jeff Wanser Hiram College*

Jeff is the Coordinator for Reference, Government Documents and Collection Development at Hiram College. He got his library degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1983. The position at Hiram College is his first library job. He also has a second masters in anthropology from SUNY Binghamton.

I spoke with Jeff between the many bibliographic instruction classes that he is giving this fall. In addition to his library duties, Jeff is teaching an anthropology class, writing reviews for Choice on anthropological reference works and helping with the update of the core collections for the revision of the GPO Manual.

Jeff's favorite documents come from the Smithsonian Institute and he especially mentioned the Folklife Annual. His least favorite documents are anything that come in loose leaf format!

His research interests are in the field of archeology. He is currently working on a proposal for a sabbatical to compile a bibliography of cemetery and gravestone studies. Last summer he participated in an archeological excavation in Virginia.

Jeff is married to Linda Spear, the Children's Librarian at the Euclid Public Library.

### *Nani Ball Miami University at Middletown*

Nani received her training in documents at Miami University, where she was the Documents Assistant for 3 years. In her current position she is the Reference Librarian with many public service duties in addition to her document selection and collection development duties. Nani enjoys reference work and "gets excited when you see the glimmer in someone's eyes when you make contact."

Miami University at Middletown selects 12% of the available item numbers. It is a small collection, which is always 5 to 6 years old, which Nani weeds on a regular basis. This is possible as the Documents Department at Miami University in Oxford is near by.

She recommends using the footnotes in the Statistical Abstract as an index to the collection, if your library has a limited budget and does not have all of the commercial indexes.

Mani is using the County and City Databook CD in a public service setting. They also have the OCLC CD version of the Monthly Catalog. Her favorite documents are those published by the Congressional Research Service. And her least favorite are the DOE microfiche, which she still remembers from her previous job.

*Evron S. Collins*  
*Bowling Green University*

I came to documents via maps. I got my library degree from the University of Illinois in 1960. In 1981 the Jerome Library took over the map collection from the Geography Department and I became the Map Librarian. Later the Map Collection was combined with the Government Documents Collection and I was put in charge of the combined department. I stayed with the Map Collection and added some collection development duties when the units were separated in 1986. This fall I am the Secretary of the Senate at BGSU and therefore am really in the Map Collection 1/4 time.

I enjoy working in a library but I find that I need to do other things to keep the library work in perspective. In my leisure time I do needlework of all kinds, read a lot and collect things. I have several collections including dragons, thimbles, cats (I have 5 at home), and my largest collection--miniature books. I have now started to find miniature books which are geographic in nature such as atlases and gazetteers, as well as maps which fold down to miniature size. Therefore I am able to combine some interests.

My favorite things in my work are numerous. It would take too long to describe my favorite maps but I do think I like the ones with humor on them or the ones with lots of color such as the geologic maps from USGS. I enjoy explaining maps to people, especially to kids. I have visits from 3rd and 4th graders regularly and it is fun. I enjoy a good search and that frequently happens in map work. It is such a good feeling when you finally find just the right map for the person. Of course I only want that kind of question when I do not have a million other things to do at the same time.

*George Barnum*  
*Case Western Reserve University*

George started working with documents in 1980 at the Geauga County Public Library. He became Documents Assistant at Case Western Reserve in 1984 and he is currently Head of Government Documents there. He is also finishing up a Masters degree in Library Science at Kent State, where this summer he took the documents course from Coleen.

George is involved with all aspects of documents including the cataloging of documents using OCLC for their online catalog. Case Western is selecting at the 50% rate. The collection is housed in three different locations, the Arts and Humanities Library, the Science Library and storage. They officially became a depository in 1913, but the collection is older than this. George's current career goal is to see the top of his desk, but he would like to do a retrospective conversion of the collection. Another goal is to through the collection, evaluating the older materials and making decisions on preservation.

His favorite documents are a 1854 map of Central America published by the Department of State and the American State Papers. His least favorite are the Hourly Precipitation Reports and the Real Estate Asset Inventory.

*Ex Libris Minus Aestimatis*  
*By George Barnum*  
*Case Western Reserve University*

J.H. Powell, in his 1956 Rosenbach Lecture in Bibliography, lamented that government documents are "alas! books no collector esteems, and bibliographers have not studied. To pore over...fiscal accounts, departmental and committee reports,...Senate and House journals,...and the like is not the most beguiling pursuit in American studies."

"Yet," he continued, "the subject is not entirely lacking in that special kind of charm which belongs to books...and there are actually items, even minor ones, which tell the sort of story collectors love." Powell went on to suggest that his discussion of these "books of a new nation" could appear under the Latin phrase above, "Out of the least noticed books." We in the field of documents librarianship are starting to discover that "special kind of charm" that Powell described for the first time in the mid-50's. In the wake of the increased and increasing attention that our colleagues are devoting to preserving our collections of increasingly fragile materials, and in the face of skyrocketing prices on the open market for books, we in documents, too, have begun to turn our eyes toward what is in our collections that is of value and how we can act to safeguard it on a number of fronts.

The first question that is asked in this discussion of what we now routinely call rare and valuable documents, and which needs to be asked again and again, is "What constitutes rarity and value?" There is, naturally, no firm ten-word answer. There is no firmer an answer from rare books and special collections librarians with regard to our

collections in general. There are, however, guideposts, and the list of considerations seems to be fairly consistent among collectors, dealers, and librarians:

- \*Fundamental Documents (landmarks, eg.: the Emancipation Proclamation in the General Orders of the War Department)
- \*Authority (author of significance)
- \*Graphic embellishment (plates, photographs, maps, etc.)
- \*Geographical discovery, especially the West
- \*Scientific or technological discovery
- \*Change or revolution in any branch of government
- \*Political activity or change
- \*Landmark or controversial laws
- \*Significant hearings or investigations (eg: the Warren Commission, probably before long the Iran-Contra hearings)
- \*Agency of origin (defunct agencies, controversial agencies)
- \*Printer
- \*Association value (who owned/gave/stole/wrote in/sold the volume)
- \*Scarcity factor (How many were printed, how many are left?)

(I am indebted for this list to James Babcock, who outlined it at last year's rare and valuable documents session at Depository Library Council).

This list is in no particular order or ranking, but divides into a couple of categories: those concerns unique to government documents, and those common to all rare books collections. Any of us who have collections more than a very few years old begin to think immediately of titles which fit into one of these criteria. One example that is frequently given is the National Atlas, which many have in their collections, and which fetches a substantial price on the O.P. market. Another is the Warren Commission report (Pr 36.8:K 38/H 35/). Documents need not be old or august to be considered valuable.

The key to preserving and safeguarding what is of value in our collections is awareness. Over the coming issues of Doc's Prescriptions, I hope to look at some of the issues that surround rare and valuable documents themselves. In addition, I'll be keeping an eye on the rare book market and offering updates on what's changing hands.

One final note, if you've never read The Books of A New Nation by J.H. Powell (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), you owe it to yourself. I dislike pronouncements like "A must-read for documents librarians", but Powell's lectures are a literate and very warm examination of pre-GPO government printing and publishing that may well change the way you see your collection.

## *Formula for Filing an "FOIA" by Ruth Levor*

We are all aware of the flood of government information that pours into our depositories on a semi-regular basis. However, there is a mass of information about government activity that remains hidden from public view unless it is ferreted out by interested or concerned citizens, public interest groups or news gathering agencies by means of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Recent examples of information that has surfaced through FOIA applications illustrate the types of government activity that may come to light by exercise of the rights provided by this federal statute and its state counterparts.

\*The families of sailors killed in the April 19, 1989, explosion aboard the battleship USS Iowa, dissatisfied with the Navy's inquiry into the matter, have used FOIA requests in carrying out their own investigation of the incident.

\*The National Resources Defense Council, a private research group, has obtained a document from the Defense Intelligence Agency that the NRDC says proves that Israel possesses nuclear and chemical warheads.

\*The New York Times used FOIA to retrieve documents from former HUD Secretary Samuel Pierce's office files; the Times says that among these are documents showing that Pierce used his influence to gain preferential treatment for his friends from federal agencies.

Closer to home for those of us in academia, authors, historians, scholars often need to utilize FOIA in our research to achieve as true a picture as possible of the historical and political background of a topic.

### How to File

1. Determine what you need. The statute requires that the request "reasonably describe" the records being sought. It is not necessary to identify particular documents by exact title or by an identifying number, but the description of the document or its contents must be sufficient to facilitate location of the records being pursued. On the one hand, the more specific the information you provide, the more likely it is that the agency will be able to identify the appropriate records. On the other hand, there is the risk that, if the request is too narrowly defined, pertinent information that does not fall within the description given will not be supplied.

2. Determine the agency or agencies most likely to have the information you need. This is probably the greatest preliminary challenge and involves the kind of investigation to which librarians, especially depository

librarians are most accustomed. The government does not have a central office to process FOIA requests, but many government agencies do. The secret of success in identifying the appropriate agency involves common sense, perseverance and inventive use of the telephone.

3. Submit your request in writing. Address your letter to the agency's FOIA officer or to the head of the agency. Mark the envelope "Freedom of Information Act Request" in the bottom left-hand corner. The following information must be included in the letter: (A) that you are making a request under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. Sec. 552)--and under the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. Sec. 552a) as well, if you are seeking information about yourself; (B) that you are seeking certain records, with a "reasonable" description of the records, as discussed above; and (C) your name and address. It may be helpful to include your phone number as well.

In addition, you may include a figure indicating the maximum fee you are willing to pay for the requested information and/or a request for waiver or reduction of fees. Fees may be charged to cover copying costs, costs of searching to locate documents and, in the case of commercial requesters, the costs of reviewing documents to determine if any portions are exempt from disclosure under FOIA (exemptions will be discussed supra). Fees will be waived or reduced if it is determined that disclosure of the information is in the public interest in that it is likely to make a significant contribution to the public's understanding of government operations and is not primarily for the commercial benefit of the requester.

#### Reasons for Denial

Simply following the procedures for making FOIA request will not guarantee that the information you request will be turned over to you. The Act designates nine exemptions from disclosure--i.e., reasons why an agency may legally deny access to information.

The first, and possibly best-known exemption is that the information is classified in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. This information was asserted recently by the Coast Guard in denying the request of Exxon Valdez skipper Joseph Hazelwood's attorneys for documents pertaining to decisions by federal agencies, including the Departments of Energy and Transportation, to keep the Port of Valdez open to tanker traffic after the infamous oil spill. Similarly, the Defense Intelligence Agency has refused to release documents on the slaying of six Jesuit priests in El Salvador last November on the same basis.

Information may also be exempt from disclosure if it relates only to internal agency personnel rules and practices or if it specifically restricted under some other law. Another

exemption protects trade secrets and confidential business information received from someone other than a government agency. Internal government communications exchanged in the deliberative process of formulating some policy may be protected during the course of the decision making process. Recently, the Agriculture Department declined to release documents defending its proposed streamlined meat inspection system, claiming the confidentiality protection of FOIA.

If an Agency determines that disclosure of requested information would involve a clearly warranted invasion of an individual's privacy, it may withhold the information. This protection overlaps with that of the Privacy Act of 1974, and both laws should be cited when requesting information about oneself.

There are various dimensions to the FOIA exemption allowing law enforcement records to be withheld in certain instances. Among the more striking denials under these rules, and one which has been upheld in court, is the FBI's recent refusal to turn over information provided by informants for use in prosecuting communists in this country over forty years ago. This information was being sought by a prominent scholar for purposes of historical research.

Other exemptions protect geological information and information in reports for agencies that supervise financial institutions. In addition, under the 1986 amendments to FOIA, there are certain instances in which an agency does not have to disclose that certain records exist. Under certain conditions, where disclosure of information might interfere with an ongoing law enforcement investigation, the agency can deny the request without even disclosing the existence of the investigation. Likewise, an agency may not have to admit the existence of certain records pertaining to informants working for law enforcement agencies, and the FBI may fail to confirm the existence of certain records maintained in connection with intelligence operations or international terrorism.

#### How to Appeal a Denial of Your FOIA Request

If your FOIA request is denied for one of the above reasons, you may appeal the denial. You may also appeal a denial of your request for a fee waiver or any other adverse determination concerning your request, even the inadequacy of the record search conducted in connection with your request. Although the statute does not set a time limit for filing an appeal, some agencies have regulations setting time limits. In any event, it is wise to file promptly, because the agency must preserve the documents in question as long as a request or appeal is under consideration, but in the interim, the documents could be destroyed.

There is no fee for filing an administrative FOIA appeal. A letter must be sent to the head of the agency identifying

the request that is being appealed. If the request was assigned an FOIA number by the agency, that number should be supplied, as well as the requester's name and address, and for good measure, the requester's telephone number and a copy of the decision denying the request. The envelope should be marked in the lower left-hand corner with the words "Freedom of Information Act Appeal." Although the letter need not advance any arguments in support of the appeal, it is common and generally good practice to include these. The arguments would normally justify why the information requested should not be deemed to fall under an FOIA exemption.

Agencies are supposed to respond to FOIA requests within ten working days and to appeals within twenty working days, but these deadlines are routinely extended, and delays are commonplace. Although you may go to court immediately upon expiration of the appeal deadline, courts are not prone to grant requests merely on the basis of the lapse of the time period. If your appeal is denied, you may sue for disclosure in the US District Court in the district where you live, in the district where the documents are located or in the District of Columbia. The assistance of a legal counsel is recommended, although it is not required.

#### Information Sources

The above is necessarily a cursory review of the process provided by FOIA. Two excellent guides are: "A Citizen's Guide on Using the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act of 1974 to Request Government Records," House Report 101-193, Committee on Government Operations, July 28, 1989; and "The Freedom of Information Act: A User's Guide," The Freedom of Information Clearinghouse (a Ralph Nader project), P.O. Box 19367, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 785-3704.

#### *Cost Sharing by U.S. Government Documents Depositories: A Position for the 1990s* by Jess Parmer

Recent Proposals over the last year to amend U.S. Code Title 44, which provides for the timely and equitable dissemination of public information by the federal government, have raised issues of policy in the area where the effects of electronic information technology on democracy are, or will be profound. The most serious of these proposals is one that will remove the control from the Office of the Management of the Budget (OMB) all policy making on government documents; the Government Printing Office (GPO) will assume this role. While the effect of the proposal on the daily access to government information is still not clear, improvement is bound to result from

shifting control of public access from accountants to publishers in direct touch with government information consumers of all types.

Any bill along the above lines must also be marked up, as it approaches enactment, to include online databases and their software management systems. User fees for these, pegged in some versions to "marginal costs of production", are left to agreements between publishing agencies and GPO, with price reductions totally in the agencies' control. From the taxpayer's point of view, all federal government information has already been paid for by the time it exists; taxpayer access is mandated to be equitable as far as possible. What rationale, therefore, exists for charges of any size, either to the taxpayer or to his or her distributor, which is in effect one or more of the 1,400 U.S. Government Documents Depositories? Such depositories already pay considerable sums simply to house and access federal documents--sums derived from federal and local taxes. User fees will only deprive tax- or income-poor depository districts of public information, the existence of which has in part been financed by just such districts. From this point of view, no matter how small they are, user fees can never be fair.

Instead of this truncation of access to government, wide ways through gates of varying size that open electronic information to genuine public use are the only renewable option. Virtually every depository should have the means to read federal data published on compact discs, and Title 44 should be amended to require inclusion of this hardware with the next significant CD publication. Likewise, the next new online publication by a federal agency should include the software and hardware to read and download the data, at least for regional depositories, and soon thereafter for all. Electronic hardware has become the new page and cover for which electronic information is to be the print and illustration. Restriction of access to the wealthy, whether organized as corporations or not, really only amounts to the emperor's new book: not blank pages but huge tomes that weigh nothing. Restrictions, of any tangible sort, on information in a democracy need not arise from radical solutions to government paperwork. User fees on electronic government information are restrictions that sound like new taxes -- taxes to be imposed without consulting the governed.

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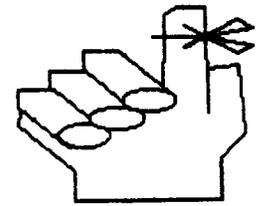
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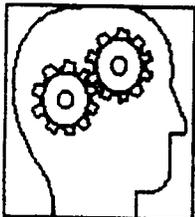
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