

Top 10 List for New State Government Information Librarians

This list offers tips for new state documents librarians on “where to start.” It is offered by the State & Local Documents Task Force of the ALA-Government Documents Round Table, with a tip of the hat to the “Top 10 List for New Documents Librarians,” developed by Sheila McGarr and Robin Haun-Mohamed of the FDLP.

1. In Your Own State

- What is the role of the state library?
- What are the state laws and regulations on the distribution of public documents?
- What is the state depository structure?
 - If you work for your state library, learn about the depository libraries in your state.
 - If you represent a depository library, develop a relationship with the state library.
- Is there a statewide union catalog?
- Is there a cooperative cataloging program for state documents?
- What are the state agencies and their publications?
- What is the status of your state’s legislation on state documents?
 - Does the existing law cover all formats, including online resources?
 - What provisions have been made for permanent public access to your state’s electronic documents?

2. In Your Own Library

- Find out about your library’s mission, vision, goals, strategic planning, organization, staffing and administration.
 - How does your department fit into the library setting?
 - What services is your department responsible for?
 - What are the service hours and staffing?
- Learn about the library’s catalog, classification system for state documents and cataloging requirements.
- Be familiar with the authority list for your state publications.
- What are the acquisitions and circulation policies?
- What are the selection, retention and disposal policies?
- Learn about the depository distribution system, shipping lists and whether there are checklists for state publications.
- What research tools related to state documents does your library offer?
- What reference and information services are provided to the public?
- What products or publications is your library responsible for (i.e. directories, newsletters, checklists, policy reports, statistics, standards, almanacs, etc.).
- Does your library have a web presence? Is it as complete as it should be?

3. Find Out About Professional Associations Related to State Documents

Several are listed below, but consult with your Director or State Coordinator for information about state or regional government documents groups and join one.

- ALA GODORT (Government Documents Round Table) – has a State & Local Documents Task Force (SLDTF). Website at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/godort/taskforces/statelocaldocuments/godortsltdtfindex.htm>
- ALA ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies – has a State Library Agency Section (SLAS). Website at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/ascla/asclaourassoc/asclasections/slas/slas.htm>
- AALL (American Association of Law Librarians) – has a Government Documents Special Interest Section. Website at: <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/gd/>
- Organizations within your state: Check with your state's library association for affiliate sections of GODORT and check with your state library for interest groups related to state documents.

4. Electronic Discussion Lists are a good source of information and advice.

Some suggestions are below, and ALA-GODORT lists a number of pertinent sites at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/godort/godortcommittees/godortmembership/listservs.htm>

General documents listservs and local/regional listservs, such as:

- GOVDOC-L -- A discussion forum about government information and the Federal Depository Library Program: <http://govdoc-l.org/>
- DocTech-L – Devoted to the technical processing of federal, state or UN documents: <http://list.lib.usu.edu/mailman/listinfo/doctech-l>

5. Websites:

Begin bookmarking useful sites for specialized information on state documents management and librarianship. Some good ones to start with:

- State Library Depository Systems (Compiled by Vickey Baggett)
<http://www.ala.org/ala/godort/taskforces/statelocaldocuments/statedepositories.htm>
- Statelist: The Electronic Source for State Publication Lists
The Checklist Project, a joint project of the Documents and Law Libraries at the University of Illinois. This site provides links to state publication checklists and shipping lists that are currently available on the Internet from 32 states. <http://gateway.library.uiuc.edu/doc/StateList/check/check.htm>
- State Government Information (from the Library of Congress)
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/news/stategov/stategov.html>

6. GODORT Handout Exchange:

A collection of guides to government information sources written by library staff across the United States and distributed by the Education Committee of the American Library Association's Government Documents Round Table. Includes a State and Local Documents section.

Located at: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/godort.html>

7. Bibliographies on state documents, such as:

- State and Local Documents Bibliography for the years 1987-2000 can be found at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/godort/taskforces/statelocaldocuments/sldtfbibliographies.htm>

- Annual “Notable Documents List” published in the May 15 issue of Library Journal. Information at: <http://www.ala.org/ala/godort/godortcreated/notdoc.htm>

8. “Docs on Docs,” and other special collections on state documents:

The “Documents on Documents” collection consists of materials relating to the acquisition, classification, distribution, listing, management and servicing of state government publications. These primary materials are largely related to the working of state depository programs, and were gathered for the years 1973 through 1995 by a working group of the GODORT State and Local Documents Task Force. ERIC created microfiche of this collection and the original materials are archived at the University of South Alabama, in Mobile, AL.

These documents are available for anyone to consult for assistance with such issues as writing state depository policies and procedures, or classifying and cataloging state government information, by contacting Vicki Tate (vtate@jaguar1.usouthal.edu), GODORT Archivist.

9. Directories

Directory of Government Documents Collections and Librarians (1997) / Government Documents Round Table, American Library Association.

Section III Documents Collections Index, has an entry for each state, with depository libraries marked with an asterisk; Section IV, Special Collection Index, gives entries for collections in other than the “home” state; and Section VI, State Document Authorities, lists individuals for state responsibilities in each state. Unfortunately this is a little out of date, but a good source.

10. Read, read, and read!

Read the basic publications of your state’s library and literature which supports the study of government documents. Journals of note:

- DttP
- Government Information Quarterly,
- Journal of Government Information,
- Microform Review
- Jurisdoc
- Library Journal.

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