

# From the Chair



## Welcome to the next 40 years!

Barbara Miller

**Welcome to the next 40 years of GODORT!** Milestone anniversaries, such as our 40th, are usually a time to look back and reflect on past achievements and remember former (or continuing!) colleagues.

Our last *DttP* issue did just that, including an interview with Bernadine Hoduski, one of GODORT's founders, as well as Beth Clausen's review of "40 great things about GODORT." The GODORT summer conference reception also gave us a chance to celebrate 40 great years (thank you Linda Spiro and Gretchen Gould for a great job!) while looking at slides from GODORT's early years. We had a chance to congratulate John Phillips for a long career with government documents.

However, here we are now at the beginning of the *next* 40 years! Time to move forward! Let's assess our strengths as a round table. It always helps to move forward from a strong base. First of all (and this wasn't always the case), we are financially sound (thank you to treasurer John Hernandez for keeping the books). Not only do we have a safe level of carry over, but we have a large enough endowment to cover our annual Rozkuszka scholarship without going into our reserve funds (thank you Steve Hayes and the Endowment Committee). In addition, we have a preconference planned for 2013 (thank you International Documents Task Force), which already has vendor funding! We have just voted in a successful bylaws revision that allows us to have more flexibility with committee structure, and that streamlined the bylaws putting more *procedures* into the Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM). The PPM was in turn extensively revised to create a more parallel structure and make duties of various parts of GODORT more understandable to new officers, coordinators, and committee chairs. Thank you Kathy Bayer and Valerie Glenn, and the entire Bylaws Committee, for their VERY hard work this year. We have a strong Legislative Committee coming in, many with previous legislative experience and/or experience with other ALA units, for a broader perspective on how to handle legislative issues. We have a great slate of chairs and officers, thanks to hard work of the nominating committee (thank you Sarah Erickson and the Nominating Committee). The Membership Committee also worked hard this year to get out publicity, and even found us GODORT bags and mugs for our 40th. Thank you Rebecca Hyde and the Membership Committee. The Education

Committee has taken over a successful webinar project; thank you Jesse Silva and the Education Committee. We have a strong GODORT councilor, John Stevenson, and we have several other ALA councilors from GODORT ranks to keep government information interests before Council. We have a GODORT representative on the ALA Executive Committee (thank you Kevin Reynolds). GODORT *Occasional Papers* continue to be published each year, providing a publishing venue for GODORT researchers (thank you Helen Sheehy and the Publications Committee). We have had a smooth transition to a new *DttP* editorial team (welcome Greg Curtis).

We have good relationships with several vendors who help us by sponsoring our receptions, preconferences, and awards (and a thank you to Awards and Andrea Severson, for another great job). And, we have a fairly well working ALA Connect, as well as the GODORT Wiki (except for Conference, of course) to keep us communicating (and a big thank you to Barbie Selby, GODORT secretary, for keeping all minutes going and Connect updated). We are coming off a great program in Anaheim, with more than 120 people attending, which helped raise GODORT's profile as a unit of ALA (thank you Richard Guajardo, Crenetha Brunson, and the Catalog Committee). Many of our committees are successfully working through changes. GITCO is no more, but has successfully transformed into a Discussion Group (thank you Amy West). Rare and Endangered is considering a similar move, or a move to a virtual Midwinter Meeting (thank you Aimee Quinn for accepting this challenge). All of these moves are now possible because of the new bylaws. We have good working relationships with many other units of ALA, and have co-sponsored programs with many this year, including ALCTS and the new E-government Subcommittee of the Committee On Legislation. Our relationship with the GPO is strong. I could go on, but you get the idea, and I apologize if I left out any great things I know the various units of GODORT have accomplished recently.

As demonstrated above, the greatest asset of GODORT is GODORT members. There are so many people who work so hard to make GODORT a success, who never give up and who give of their time for the good of the organization. And a big thanks to immediate past chair Kirsten Clark for putting all this together to move GODORT forward with all these activities this year.

So, where do we go from here? Let's start with your new

chair. Do I have any strengths? After four years on Council I decided to run for GODORT chair, because I felt that my years on Council have given me a different perspective of ALA, which could prove useful to GODORT. These years have also given me several “big ALA” contacts, so I feel comfortable contacting the Washington office or ALA officers to sort out problems. I also came in contact with many other units of ALA and learned about their interests. This past year I worked on the Bylaws Committee, which familiarized me with a lot of the PPM. Chair-elect duties of committee appointments put me in contact with many members. Being program chair connected me with GPO, Marcive, and Library of Congress. Over the past few months, as my term of chair drew ever closer, I vacillated between the “can I do this?” hysteria and the “I CAN do this!” self encouragement. But a big thank you to Kirsten, here, for encouraging bylaws changes and running GODORT so efficiently, passing down to me a round table in such good shape. This swings the scales towards encouragement (a couple glasses of wine helps, too).

As chair, I feel my job is to provide a good working round table that allows ideas of members to flow, rather than to enforce my own opinions. My job is to coordinate these ideas with other ALA groups, the Washington office, the GPO, and other external groups, and to make sure GODORT runs smoothly. However, there are a few challenges in GODORT structure I see as impediments to a smooth flowing round table, and I hope to work on those this year. Fortunately, big ALA has inadvertently helped with two of them!

**First challenge.** The Legislative Committee has had many problems trying to push resolutions through the various layers of ALA to get to the Council floor. We have to vet resolutions through the Legislative Assembly, through the Government Information Subcommittee (GIS) of the Committee on Legislation (COL), through COL itself, and often through the Washington office staff. Unfortunately, many of their meetings are at the same time as Legislative Committee meetings. Enter the ALA Conference Committee, with the news that ALL units of ALA will be changing their meeting schedules to accommodate a new grid with shorter meeting times and five meeting slots per day instead of four. This is a boon for GODORT, if we can encourage these

other groups to keep us in the loop and can correspondingly change our schedules after they change theirs and avoid overlap. I have already been in discussions with these groups about scheduling, and hope this will come about.

**Second challenge.** Connecting with other ALA groups that have similar interests. I have already asked committee and task force chairs to look at other groups they liaise with and let me know of any other conflicts we can forestall with a new schedule. For example, BRASS and GODORT always have programs at the same time. I have already spoken to the BRASS chair about this, and she is in agreement that we can coordinate. In addition to the new grid with more meeting times, several of our committees are considering meeting virtually at either Midwinter or Annual, which would again open up our schedule and allow more time for GODORT members to communicate with other ALA units, such as MAGERT and RUSA, and to attend and/or cosponsor a program with them. All programs will move to the convention center, allowing for even more flexibility in attending programs and giving the additional hope that more people will see our programs. Finally, all ALA programs will become webcasts. I had a few requests for this for our 2012 program, but GODORT did not have the ability or funds to do this. Now ALA will cover the costs and will do the filming.

**Third challenge.** Work more closely with the GPO, to see what GODORT (and ALA) can do to get the word out to non-depository units of ALA about GPO’s programs that are open for all interested in government information. Kirsten, Suzanne, and I have already met with Mary Alice Baish and Jane Sanchez to see what we can work on together. They are interested in providing programs for state library associations, and perhaps state and local can work on this with them.

These challenges are plenty to work on, but there is one more problem I would like to fix, and that is to better update our external liaisons to other ALA units (and some units outside ALA, such as IFLA). I hope to ensure that we have enough liaisons to these groups to get our name out there beyond the docs community.

That’s quite a bit to work on. Hopefully by the time this goes to press we will see many of these changes. I hope you are all up to it. Let’s make the next 40 years an era to remember!