GODORT Rare & Endangered Government Publications (REGP) Committee
ALA (Zoom virtual meeting)
Tuesday, June 15, 2021
3:00–4:42 p.m. CST
Recording:
https://ala-events.zoom.us/rec/share/358fPZafQ0K53GADsx1Qnpa2grPlW8gfNDUo7lPeOKuRxu4J1xsUeqSNupD7Fhn4.MAwcG3Qqwfv-L3wp?startTime=1623787246000

Committee members present: Angela Bonnell, Cynthia Etkin, Kathryn Little

Guests present: Kris Abery, Michael Alguire, John Beekman, Kristina Bobe, Brandon Burnette, Susanne Caro, Jennifer Castle, Andie Craley, Jenny Groome, Samantha Hager, Dominque Hallett, Naomi Lederer, Abigail McDermott, Aimée Quinn, Kathy Stroud

Meeting Agenda

I.   **Welcome**
     Kathryn Little welcomed all attending and volunteered to lead the meeting in the absence of Committee Chair Mark Love who was unable to attend. Angela Bonnell volunteered to take meeting minutes. [*The meeting is being recorded.*]

     Little offered a brief overview that REGP's Committee mission is to identify rare, unique and/or endangered government publications, in all formats and from all levels of government; to evaluate materials for preservation and conservation; and to plan programs, workshops, and create LibGuides on the preservation of these materials, in any format. A recent REGP project was to create a Guidelines for the Preservation of Military Items.

II. **Update on the Guidelines Document**
     Little described the committee's current project to create a Planning Document for Determining At-Risk Government Publications. She shared the draft document through Zoom. She gave an overview that the resource guide will provide assistance with identifying materials in government documents collections that are at risk by creating a literature review and a checklist to aid in making such a determination. Little scrolled through the resource guide noting it is being developed for use by those who manage government documents collections, at any level of government including local documents; state; national; and international documents. The goals and strategies would be useful for libraries that may not have a preservation or conservation unit, or have limited funding and staff to preserve documents. She also shared the measures of success along with the deliverables and timeline.

Little shared that Cynthia Etkin has been spearheading the group on this work and asked Etkin if she would like to add anything about the project. Etkin shared the resource is in a draft form yet and the guide's elements would be included in a LibGuide to serve as a handy checklist for those working with collection management. For the purpose of this work "at-risk" is defined as publications that are in danger of losing their intellectual or physical content. After the guide's completion the group would be interested in writing a *DttP* article or offering webinars. Work on the project will continue with duties to be divided as new REGP committee members and a committee chair are appointed.

III. **Election of a New Chair**
Little shared that Mark Love is an outgoing REGP member and outgoing chair. Those interested in being considered for that appointment should contact the GODORT Chair.

IV. **Discussion**
Little asked for questions or comments.

Alguire was interested in learning more on the definition of endangered public documents the committee used for the resource guide. Little shared this is one reason for the need of the guide, to better define the issue. Alguire referenced a past Friday GODORT chat when at risk documents were discussed.

Quinn referenced an excellent ERIC document https://eric.ed.gov/?q=ED357746 authored by Jim Walsh and others involved with ALA RBMS/GODORT/MAGERT. [*Rare and Valuable Government Documents: A Resource Packet on Identification, Preservation, and Security Issues for Government Documents Collection*s, LC 1.2:R 20/993.] This source offers definitions and includes extensive bibliographies for rare and valuable sources. Etkin noted she was aware of the document with its lengthy bibliography. The preservation packet focuses on tangible items but also addresses digital as well.

Throughout the discussion the group discussed the distinctions for those sources considered endangered, at risk, rare and/or valuable, with the Serial Set containing examples of all types.

Etkin noted the scope for the project is limited to at-risk documents (not rare and endangered). Rarity and condition could be aspects that play a role in that designation though. Etkin stressed that REGP will not be identifying lists of documents. It would serve as a checklist for those managing collections to mitigate problems. Etkin also addressed a chat question about copyright and that it will not be an issue with the resource guide.

Groome asked the best way to educate colleagues new to the profession knowing that creating a list could have the unintended consequence of placing them at more risk. It is important to teach and train those new to the profession. Quinn shared her approach has been to invite colleagues to a conversation and coffee, offer small presentations,

consult with rare book librarians, attend RBMS meetings, and seek advice from those who have been in the profession. These approaches are better than publishing a list of items that could target them for theft.

McDermott commented she works with Etkin at GPO. The work with at-risk FDLP documents is really useful because the percentage of what is considered "rare" [McDermott has a background as a rare book librarian] is very small, but those items at risk for loss is much higher. Considerations for at-risk sources include condition issues, low production value, distribution in low numbers, or have been heavily discarded from depositories. Definitions can be complicated but the issue is one the community is thinking about. She also mentioned that access via digitization, a digital surrogate, can be important. Alguire raised the challenge of digital degradation and cited a 2015 Vincent Cerf's article addressing the need for physical copies. [https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/feb/13/google-boss-warns-forgotten-century-email-photos-vint-cerf]

Groome shared in chat that pamphlets are another area of concern. For instance, general public pamphlets are useful for court cases to show what was generally accepted knowledge about lead paint, radon, etc. Regionals don't have to keep superseded pamphlets, and old pamphlets can be lost.

Caro asked how to address data from data.gov or agency sites that we are at risk of loss as well as data curators who use proprietary software used in their creation. Discussion also noted that born digital items are at risk. Beekman pointed out that digital items provide access while limiting damage to physical copies, but that digitization is not equal to preservation. Many agreed with Beekman's chat comment it would easier to access a New Jersey gov doc from 1910 than one from 2010.

Alguire asked about software maintenance to provide access to digital items. Caro suggested upgrading to more recent versions, the use of PDF/A (a specialized form of PDF document used in the archiving and long-term preservation of electronic documents), as well as the use of emulation for much older sources.

Stroud shared this issue is complicated; as a librarian who works with GIS data, some agencies are continuously updating and earlier data is lost. Capturing the historic data is important to users. One example she offered was for older transportation road layers.

Some sources worth consulting include the Library of Congress' Preservation Guidelines for Digitizing Library Materials https://www.loc.gov/preservation/digital/, and Preservation & Reformatting Section (PARS) site https://alair.ala.org/handle/11213/624.

Suggestions for formatting the resource guide included a flow chart. Etkin shared the group is interested in formatting the guide in ways useful to all types of users.

Etkin also shared GPO is creating a group to look at obsolete media. Previously, emulation hadn't advanced enough to meet their needs but it could be reviewed again.

Caro suggested that librarians work with their IT department to provide equipment for accessing floppy drives and also microforms. Many libraries have microcards without the ability to read that content, noting that aperture content [punched card with microform chip] is particularly vulnerable.

Groome questioned requirements in place for libraries to provide the necessary equipment to view materials regardless of format. It was noted requirements vary by state. Etkin noted that an item's treatment in reality varies from regulations and program requirements. This may be one reason for the mass de-acquisitioning occurring in libraries. It isn't feasible to keep older computers in the library to access older formats. She also pointed out GPO's govinfo is the only ISO-16363 certified trustworthy digital repository. It is part of GPO's strategic priority to maintain that certification.

LOCKSS https://www.lockss.org/ remains a valuable source as is the CD-ROM / Floppy Disk Virtual Library at Indiana University https://libraries.indiana.edu/databases/virtualcd.

Etkin shared the working group limited the guide's scope to tangible items and could consider taking on digital later. Caro shared that media could be categorized and addressed formulaically as a checklist and also suggested a webinar working with and helping users with obsolete/endangered formats. Etkin agreed a webinar would be a good venue.

Little shared that when REGP meets again the group will discuss target dates for the resource guide. She welcomed volunteers for this project.

Little thanked all for attending and for the excellent discussion. Etkin also appreciated the questions and contributions from all present. This input gives the group much to consider and it is appreciated.

The meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m. CST.

Notes submitted by A. Bonnell

[*Thanks to Samantha Hager for her technical support during the meeting!*]