

From the Chair

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Arlene Weible

My first column as GODORT chair needs to begin with a big thank you to the outgoing chair, John Stevenson. Over the last year, John provided a calm, guiding force for GODORT as we navigated the sometimes rough sea of change that now defines the government information landscape. I have learned a great deal about diplomacy from John, and I will continue to seek his advice as I now take over leadership duties that require skills of tact and patience. I am grateful for John's consultative approach to leading GODORT, which I believe has provided a strong foundation for me to continue to build upon in the coming year.

Another big thank you needs to go to outgoing Treasurer, Ann Miller. Her "tough love" approach to managing the GODORT budget has placed our organization in a stronger financial position. Efforts to build a healthy reserve fund are well underway, and their success will provide GODORT with the stability it needs to move forward. Without the distractions that come with financial troubles, GODORT can focus on initiatives that will provide resources and support for librarians in the age of digital government information.

GODORT has spent much of the last two years focused on providing GPO with comments and feedback about its proposals for revamping the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). While these efforts have been important, the volume and pace of GPO's proposals have resulted in GODORT's collective energy being spent on reacting to new proposals instead of articulating a vision of its own. We also need to pay attention to our user communities, and make sure we are providing the resources our users need, instead of just those GPO is able to deliver. In my own institution, the University of North Texas, we are recognizing that we don't need to wait around for GPO's new systems to begin to provide access to archived electronic government information. We are working to develop our own tools for capturing, archiving, and providing access to government information. Not every library can pursue archiving initiatives, but every library does need to take a look at how it can realistically meet the government information needs of its community. We don't need a one size fits all vision of the future. Over the next year, I will work with the Federal Documents Task Force and pursue other opportunities to organize programs or projects that will help to define a librarian's vision of the FDLP in the digital information age.

We also need to continue to develop GODORT programs and projects that create and deliver resources to librarians responsible for assisting users of all levels of government information, as well as resources that help librarians effectively advocate for access to government information. The Legislation Committee will be working to create sample letters and talking points, and to gather other information that will help librarians with advocacy activities. The Education Committee will be presenting a program on using government information to illustrate information literacy standards at the 2006 Annual Conference in New Orleans. The International Documents Task Force will present a preconference on using international government information resources. These activities demonstrate GODORT's ongoing commitment to communicating with our colleagues about the value of government information.

Finally, I hope to take a look over the next year at GODORT's infrastructure. Given the decline in specialized government information librarian positions, I think we need to face the reality that our active membership will likely not be significantly growing. GODORT's infrastructure may be too large for its current membership, and we need to look at the size of our committees, the number of meetings, and focus our missions to make sure that GODORT can continue to function effectively, and does not collapse under the burden of its own structure.

I look forward to the upcoming year and the challenges it will bring. I welcome any and all suggestions that will help GODORT continue to be an organization that works to provide government information "to the people."