



## Publishers: GODORT's Unsung Heroes

Barbara Miller

At the 2012 ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim some of us GODORT officers were treated to dinner by Proquest. We had a wonderful time and met several interesting Proquest reps I had not known previously. Wine flowed, conversation was great, and at our end of the table we had a great talk about opera, among other things. It was really nice to meet on a social basis with our colleagues in the publishing profession. There was a rather large group for dinner and we appreciate that this was a very generous gesture on the part of Proquest. Nevertheless, when I wrote my last post, discussing all the positives GODORT had going for us on our 40th birthday, I glossed over one of our greatest assets, the publishers who work with GODORT. Now, you might think that government information librarians would not be concerned with private (read costly) publishing, since we have the Government Printing Office, the Depository Program, and the various government agencies to serve us with no-fee paper and open access electronic materials. In addition, many publishers (none of those mentioned here, of course) are often thought of as on the "other side" of the open access argument, charging high fees for journals, and so on. However, it has long been known that a core group of private publishers supply us with many publications essential to our work with government information. In addition, this group has long had an important symbiotic relationship with GODORT, as we work to keep our Roundtable moving forward and they work to produce relevant publications that make our jobs easier.

For their part, these publishers seek our business and spend long hours visiting with documents librarians to see what we need and how we need it, to try to publish materials that fill in the gaps in our government information needs, and of course to sell us these publications. They are very responsive to our requests and work hard to make sure their publications are relevant. They also know that we are the ones who evaluate their products, recommend them to other librarians, and who often review their products for various journals. They often ask us to serve as consultants in the creation of new products. Occasionally they come to the rescue when one of our former resources disappears. Witness the recent cooperative project by Proquest and Bernan to publish the *Statistical Abstract* when Congress shut down the Census Bureau's production division. They even

offered to work with us on ideas to offer the paper version at a discount to small impoverished libraries. Thank you!

But in turn, these publishers help GODORT both financially and in other ways. This summer, for example, our preconference committee was delighted to find out that Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offered to fund the food for the GODORT summer 2013 preconference in Chicago, at which they are speaking. Because of this generous offer, GODORT is able to charge less for the conference, which will allow more people to attend who might not otherwise be able to afford it. And there will be a greater return for GODORT from the preconference—money that can be put to good use to fund our organization's projects. Truly a help bringing documents to the people!

As a Roundtable, a somewhat smaller unit of ALA, GODORT often has to operate on somewhat of a financial shoestring. Corporate sponsorship of GODORT events has helped us for a long time. Several years ago, when I chaired the conference committee, I was delighted to find out that no less than six publishers donated toward our awards reception, which again made our life easier and allowed us to avoid digging into GODORT's coffers to honor our award winners. I remember GODORT finished financially in the black that year because we did not have to spend so much for our awards reception. These sponsors have continued to help us to the present day. Thank you to Readex/Newsbank, Proquest, Bernan, Marcive, Paratext, and Renouf for being so generous to us.

And on the subject of awards, let us once again thank Readex/Newsbank (Catharine J. Reynolds Research Grant) and Proquest (the Documents to the People award) for sponsoring an annual award each, plus a cosponsored award (Margaret Lane Virginia Saunders Memorial Research Award) to provide monetary assistance to help further research our innovative projects and to make docs librarians feel their creative efforts are worth it! GODORT just has to select the winners (which I know is a big job, too!). Proquest sponsors a breakfast at ALA Annual to honor their awardees, and adds in an interesting speaker, which has been a highlight of ALA Annual Conference for GODORT people for years! Readex also sponsors a breakfast, giving us a chance to hear an interesting speaker and to visit over great food at the same time. With a busy GODORT schedule at ALA, often these two events are

the only “programs” GODORT people can attend. Thank you!

When GODORT recently worked to create an endowment, Readex/Newsbank volunteered to donate a week each at two elegant, corporately owned vacation homes for a silent auction, to raise money for our endowment. Each year these auctions raise more than \$1,500!

Besides financial help, our corporate sponsors also actively participate in GODORT business. Many of their reps are librarians themselves, and several GODORT committees have members who are from Proquest, Marcive, and other publishers. Last year’s chair of REGP, for example, was Proquest rep, Andrew Laas, who this year helped push out the new format of their congressional database (and GODORT members also advised on this project!). Jim Noel, from Marcive, has long been a catalog committee participant, and this year was a speaker on our program about the new RDA Catalog. We have often enjoyed August Imholtz’s talks both at Readex/Newsbank events and at our own GODORT programs. Our own Andrea Severson, currently with Proquest, has chaired several GODORT committees (including the current Awards Committee), and has chaired GODORT as well. Very recently she was also editor of our very own *DttP*. GODORT would not be quite so successful without these active members from the publishing community. Knowing them as librarians, and as friends, and knowing their work, we all have more confidence in the final products produced by these publishers. Thank you to all of you!

Finally, although I have been on my soapbox about thanking private publishers, I cannot end this article without thanking the US Government Printing Office, one of the world’s largest publishers, for all their help to us. For many years GODORT and the GPO have worked together on issues, both about the depository program and about various government information problems such as technology, access, archiving, and so on. GPO

realizes that hearing from us is important because we are on the front lines and often know firsthand what the users need or what format they want, and GPO works with us to make it happen. They always try to be responsive to our needs and to include us in problem solving. In turn, GODORT tries to help them. GODORT has many librarians on the Depository Library Council to advise GPO, and many of us also attend these conferences to discuss the issues of council on a wider basis. GPO provides the conference at no charge, picking up the tab for renting the conference rooms in the hotel, often providing us with wonderful food for breaks and breakfast. They try their hardest to make it easy to attend and to listen to our needs when we get there. In addition, GODORT works with the Washington Office, the Committee on Legislation and the Government Information Subcommittee, as well as our GODORT Councilor, to try to bring the force and strength of the larger organization to bear on Congress when they are engaged in actions impacting the GPO.

As you know, many GPO staffers are committee members for GODORT. Last year Kathy Bayer cochaired the Bylaws committee and did a wonderful job. Laurie Hall is often at Catalog Committee meetings. And Mary Alice Baish, our current Superintendent of Documents, is always at GODORT meetings to give us updates on GPO concerns and actions and engage in discussion.

The next time you meet up with a publishing rep, take time to speak with them about their publications. Ask them about their services, and ask them about *their* point of view on some issues GODORT is considering: It might be an eye opener! These people are some of our most important allies in the fight for Documents to the People. Don’t forget to thank them for all the things they do for GODORT and for the world of government information.