

From the Chair

Hallie Pritchett



To my surprise, my year as GODORT chair is over. Equally surprising: it has been just over a year since I left the University of Georgia to move into library administration at North Dakota State University. While I was in fact job hunting when I agreed to run for chair in 2017, at the time it did not occur to me that there was a good possibility that these two challenging situations would not only overlap but happen simultaneously. Over this past year, I told many people that had I known that would be the case, I never would have run for GODORT chair. In retrospect, I am not so sure that is true. Job hunting is at best a crapshoot; with so many variables and uncertainties, you rarely know how things will go until you get a job offer. I had interviews for jobs I thought would be too much of a stretch given my experience and heard nothing from places I assumed would at least give me a phone interview. My favorite rejection letter was a terse, two sentence email with the subject line “Not Selected” that came months after the position in question was filled. Talk about breaking it to you gently! Although I was getting enough interviews to think I would find a new job at some point, at the time I had no idea when that would be; for all I knew, I would still be at UGA when I started my term as GODORT chair. Ultimately, I decided that being in the middle of a job search was no reason not to run, and so I did; the rest is history.

Moving into library administration at a new institution is a big step. My new job is quite a bit different than my old one; among other things, I am no longer directly involved in the day-to-day operations of a regional Federal Depository Library. And even though I spent most of my life in Minnesota, coming back to the Upper Midwest after eleven and a half years in Georgia was a bit of a culture shock (and don't get me started on to the winter weather!). As I was settling into my new surroundings, I found that being GODORT chair kept me grounded. Whenever I was feeling particularly ignorant and over my head at my new job, I had something familiar to fall back on; after a decade as a regional depository coordinator, I knew the people, the community, and the issues. The level of confidence I received from working with GODORT this past year made all

the difference in adjusting to my new job; for that, I am particularly grateful.

As of this writing, GODORT's personal membership numbers are still below the minimum ALA requires to have a councilor, so we have lost that position for at least a year. Yet I remain confident that this is just a temporary setback. GODORT had many successes this past year that will only make it stronger and more attractive to new members, including a new website and a new Technology Committee to support it; the revival of the State and Local Documents Task Force as an interest group that better meets the needs of the community; and recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion that will ensure that GODORT is and remains welcoming and inviting to all. Our programs and meetings at the 2019 ALA Annual Conference were very well-attended and very well-received, with more than sixty people at the GODORT 101 session alone. This year, every program and meeting started with an announcement about how and why to join GODORT; after every session, people made a point of telling me and other members of the Steering Committee they were planning to do so. In short, GODORT is evolving to meet the needs of information professionals that work with government information and it shows.

But GODORT cannot be content with resting on its laurels; there is and always will be work to do so that GODORT remains vibrant, attractive, and relevant. Since the notion of change tends to make people uncomfortable, as outgoing chair I encourage those who succeed me to instead think of how GODORT can continue to grow and evolve to meet the needs of its current and future members. And let me remind future chairs that you do not have to do this alone. GODORT is at its best when its members work together toward our common goal of educating ourselves and our peers about government information in all formats at all levels of government. Perhaps more than any time in our recent history, people want and need to know more about the information our various governments produce. Now is GODORT's time to shine; all we need to do is what we do best.

Thanks to everyone for your contributions to GODORT this past year; it has been my privilege to serve as chair of our round table.