

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION LIBRARIANS: A PROPOSAL FOR THEIR EDUCATION

The public depends on librarians to assist them in finding and using government information now and in the future. Therefore it is critical that they be educated about the value and uses of government information. Instruction and training must serve the needs of students and librarians who plan to specialize in government information, as well as those who will work with government information as just one of many duties.

Working government information librarians must inform library schools that courses in government documents/information are essential to the ability of working librarians to help the public. Instruction must be cross-departmental because government information is a part of so many facets of library operations: reference, cataloging, collection development, archiving, community outreach, technology, and more. Instruction must also highlight the omnidisciplinarity of government information because there is scarcely any field of study that doesn't have a government information component.

The next generation of librarians needs to hear from working government information librarians about the importance of government information through talking to library school classes, inviting students to visit their libraries, and giving them free first year membership in documents librarians groups. Training the next generation of librarians in government information requires conveying our enthusiasm for its value to LIS students. If the government information course is the best course at every ALA-accredited LIS program, students will be excited about taking it and developing government information skills. Documents librarians should cooperate to establish a working group of government information instructors to share best practices, brainstorm innovations, and serve as mentors to new instructors to assure that government information instruction stands out at every US library school. Student-directed efforts like the University of Wisconsin-Madison Government Information Student Interest Group need to be nurtured and replicated.

Practicing librarians need ongoing education so they can keep up with the changing world of government information. Online training opportunities exist but need to be expanded. Several good programs, including GPO's Community Training Program and the North Carolina Library Association's Accidental Government Information Librarian series, are available. In-person training is also needed. Local and regional training sessions would provide more personalized, hands-on learning for staff who wish to develop new skills, and opportunities for FDLP libraries to spread the word on the importance of government information. The Government Information in the 21st Century program, which provided 75 training events in five states and presented 149 subject modules to over 900 librarians and library workers over a two-year period, is a good model for doing this on a regional scale, but more local partnerships between FDLP and non-FDLP libraries deserve greater focus too.

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