

# Get to Know . . .

Dominique Hallett

Gwen Sinclair

**D**ominique Hallett's enthusiasm for government information is immediately apparent as she exclaims, "NASA is cool!" while explaining how she uses NASA publications in information literacy instruction. As the Government Documents Coordinator and STEM Librarian at Arkansas State University's Dean B. Ellis Library, she is responsible for reference, instruction, and cataloging for government documents. As Dominique put it, "Basically, I'm the department here. I'm pretty much it."

Astate is a fifty-six percent federal depository and will quietly observe its 110th anniversary as a depository this year. When the library was undergoing a reorganization in 2014, her supervisor, April Sheppard, evidently saw the government documents gleam in Dominique's eye and said "I think you'd be great at this," whereupon Dominique became the government documents coordinator. She is proud that the library was the second in Arkansas to become a Preservation Steward and the first in the nation to be a Preservation Steward for NASA (natch!).

At Astate, Dominique teaches a one-credit class that trains students how to use the library. She also teaches the government documents class at the University of Illinois School of Information Sciences. Teaching the course was a "baptism by fire!" she joked. She explained that she was originally recruited to co-teach the course in Spring 2022 with Kenya Flash of Yale, but sadly Kenya passed away in late 2021. Scott Matheson, also of Yale (and now Superintendent of Documents), had previously co-taught the course with Kenya and he graciously stepped in to teach with Dominique during her first term as an instructor. It expanded her knowledge of federal government information and planted a desire to learn more about international government information. Data sciences is another interest, and after she finishes her doctorate, she would like to study statistics.

Dominique is currently working on her PhD in Heritage Studies at Astate and expects to finish within the next two years. Amazingly, she still has time in the midst of her teaching and doctoral studies to publish. She is especially proud of a book chapter that she wrote with Kenya.<sup>1</sup> That project led to her acquaintance with Tom Diamond and a co-edited book, *What Can US Government Information Do for Me?* which should be published in Fall 2023.<sup>2</sup>

NASA and the National Park Service are Dominique's favorite government agencies and she uses them as examples

when she teaches information literacy. "I have made connections with faculty that I would never have otherwise because of NASA," she said. Students in the graduate class do expert presentations about a particular government resource such as the Toxics Release Inventory. That inspired Dominique to envision a 10-minute podcast, "Docs Talk," about specific government documents or databases that she would like to launch in the future.

Dominique is concerned about the shift to an all-digital depository system because of the lack of internet access and computer literacy in some areas. She noted that southern Arkansas, for example, is an area where many people do not have consistent access to electricity, much less internet access or computers. "How often does Puerto Rico lose internet access and electricity? And how many people don't necessarily have computers, or the expertise to use them?" she asked by way of explanation.

On a personal level, Dominique is a fan of science fiction and fantasy and avidly listens to audio books. She just finished *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume and is currently reading *The Echo of Old Books* by Barbara Davis. She loves role playing games, especially *Dungeons and Dragons*, and has been known to stash dice in her office. She is also a fiber artist, dyer, knitter, and spinner. She even sent a hat she had knitted to Scott Matheson when he took office as the Superintendent of Documents.

Her biggest piece of advice for new government information librarians is to get to know someone who can help and be a mentor. She cited Karen Russ of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Frances Hager at Arkansas Tech as the people who helped her the most when she was new to the field. "I want to do a sort of pub crawl, a 'Docs Crawl' to visit every single depository in the State." It would be a fabulous way to get to know the depository community in the region, she added. Government documents librarians are "a small, close-knit community. I've got hundreds of friends that I can call on. Everybody knows everybody, and that's really cool."

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**Notes**

1. Dominique Hallett and Kenya Flash, “Documents De-emphasized? The Shifting Roles of Government Information Professionals,” in *The Academic Librarian in the Digital Age: Essays on Changing Roles and Responsibilities*, ed. Tom Diamond (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020), 108–19.
2. Tom Diamond and Dominique Hallett, eds., *What Can U.S. Government Information Do for Me?* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2023).