

# Get to Know . . .

## Perveen Rustomfram

Gwen Sinclair

**P**erveen Rustomfram presides over one of the newest regional federal depository collections at the Ned McWherter Library at the University of Memphis (UM), which is also a depository for Tennessee state publications. She has had a fulfilling and illustrious career at UM, where she started as a reference and instruction librarian in 1995. She previously cut her teeth on government documents at the Memphis Public Library, where she worked from 1987 to 1993. Originally from Hyderabad, India, she obtained a BSW in Social Work from Bombay University, an MA in Sociology from the University of Hyderabad, a BLS in Library Science from SNTD University, and an MLS from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Perveen loves the variety of challenges inherent in working with government information in a regional depository. She is proud of her accomplishments since her appointment as head of Government Publications in 2013. For example, she restarted retrospective cataloging of federal documents and is currently involved with selecting titles for remote storage, which requires intimate knowledge of the collection in terms of which sections are growing and which are stable. In addition, UM is a Center of Excellence, Preservation Steward, and Digitization Partner for Peace Corps publications. Recently, her department began adding born-digital Tennessee documents to UM's online repository.

The UM library has been a depository since 1956 but only became a regional in 1989. The documents collection was once a library-within-a-library. Several years ago, the library consolidated its reference desks, which Perveen believes may have impacted the volume of reference questions and level of expertise in the collection. The move to an all-digital FDLP makes her wonder whether the decrease in tangible material will further impact librarians' familiarity with their collections. In terms of developing her own expertise, Perveen said, "I would like to go more into the Serial Set because I think it's a very interesting resource, and I would like to learn more about the government's open data initiatives."

Tennessee has an unusual disposal process. When Sandra Williams was the depository coordinator, UM made a unique "shared holdings" arrangement with six other Tennessee libraries that hold portions of the regional collection. Thus, UM is the regional for documents received from 1989 to the present and its own share of the pre-1989 collection, while the other libraries hold various portions of the pre-1989 regional collection. This arrangement adds a layer of complexity when it comes to handling discards because the library is also a member of the Association of

Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) and uses its disposition database. Perveen expressed gratitude that FDLP staff members are more involved with the disposal process when libraries withdraw from the FDLP. Two Tennessee selectives have dropped status recently, and Perveen was glad for GPO's help with the withdrawal and disposal process.

Perveen's passion for the intricacies of government information is evident in her selection of data.census.gov as a favorite resource. She finds it satisfying to keep up with its ever-evolving interface and to teach others about using it. "I wouldn't say I'm proficient at it—it keeps improving and new capabilities are added to it. Every time you get into it, it's 'Oh, I can do this with it!'" She also enjoys promoting government information to K-12 schools and has given numerous presentations to teachers and school librarians in Memphis. Perveen serves on the GODORT Government Information for Children Committee as well.

In addition to her work promoting census data and K-12 resources, Perveen coordinates many other events. During the pandemic, she initiated monthly virtual gatherings for Tennessee GODORT coordinators, which have proved popular and are still taking place. Since 2018, her department has organized voter registration drives each year in partnership with the county election commission. In conjunction with the drive, she has organized a companion panel event where experts from the University address a voting-related theme.

In the future, Perveen looks forward to traveling, particularly to Egypt and Morocco. "The cultures really fascinate me—the pyramids!" she exclaimed. Walking and watching films are other favorite pastimes. "I would really like to get into knitting, but I work long hours and don't have time right now," she added regretfully.

Perveen offered the following advice to new government information librarians: "Be very organized. Take time to understand the process of government information and how it works. Reach out to others outside your library for help—the gov docs community is very helpful and supportive. It can be a lot of fun! Buckle up!" she said with a laugh.

**Gwen Sinclair** (gsinclair@hawaii.edu), Chair,  
Government Documents & Maps Department,  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library.