

Get to Know ...

Liza Weisbrod

Gwen Sinclair

As an academic librarian who wears many hats, Liza Weisbrod embodies the need to be flexible. In her current position as the Coordinator of Innovation Support at the Ralph Brown Draughon Library at Auburn University, she oversees the makerspace, virtual reality space, and audio studio. Liza is also the Music, Government Information, and Research Support Librarian and has been the depository coordinator since 2006.

Were it not for a chance encounter with a church choir member who was attending library school, Liza Weisbrod might still be a full-time pianist. As it happened, Liza, who was the choir's accompanist, realized that librarianship sounded like a great career. She completed her MLIS degree at the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, where she cataloged agriculture publications as a graduate assistant: “The *Farmer's Bulletin* with the sheep-killing dog...these were great! I just enjoyed the whole thing,” she recalls. Taking a government documents class from Terry Weech opened her eyes to the variability and range of government information and further sparked her interest in documents. This sense of wonder is still evident as she enthuses about the vast amount of information available on the US Geological Survey website. “You can find volcanoes and earthquakes in real time, maps, lots of really interesting images, and data of all varieties.”

As a long-time member of the government documents community, Liza has seen a lot of changes over the course of her career. When she first became the depository coordinator at Auburn, the library had a ninety-eight percent selection rate for federal documents, and the staff was much larger. Eventually, the collection, which once covered an entire floor of the library, was moved to closed stacks—and it no longer has its own service desk. “I understand they wanted the room, but I feel kind of sad about it being hidden away,” she said. She is a little nervous about the transition to a mostly-digital FDLP. “It is a little scary. With paper, you had a shot at finding something, but online, they can all just disappear.”

Liza is especially proud of her work to establish Auburn as a Center of Excellence (COE) for aviation-related publications and some agricultural agencies as part of the Association of Southeast Research Libraries initiative, which former Superintendent of Documents Judy Russell spearheaded when she was the dean of libraries at the University of Florida. “It's a good project. A lot of things got cataloged that wouldn't have otherwise,” she said. Liza also worked on a project to digitize the Air Service Information Circulars.¹ “A lot of basic, foundational research into aeronautics was done by the government and published in these circulars, so it's really nice to have a collection where they're available to

anyone.” One of her favorite documents is a National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics publication about testing various substances as de-icing agents, including Karo syrup!²

In addition to her MLIS, Liza obtained her master's degree in piano performance at the University of Notre Dame. She still enjoys playing mostly classical and religious pieces to accompany music students and community choirs. Liza admits to reading mostly for pleasure, but she's currently devouring *Data Detective: Ten Easy Rules to Make Sense of Statistics* by Tim Harford, whose podcast *Cautionary Tales* she enjoys.

Liza said of her GODORT membership, “It's been great because I've met a lot of other people. I've learned a lot about how things work and how other people have things set up.” She is currently the chair of the Cataloging Committee and has also served as the chair of the Government Information for Children and Education committees. She advises new government information librarians to join GODORT and get to know other librarians because they are so generous and knowledgeable. She credits Lucy Farrow, the former regional coordinator at Auburn University at Montgomery, for mentoring her in the early days. “Lucy was so helpful. People would ask me things, and I'd write to her, and she'd say, ‘Go look in this microfilm set, and it will be there.’ And it was! It was just amazing.” In terms of professional development, Liza praises the FDLP Academy and GODORT's *Help!* webinars. Finally, she said that while the sessions at virtual FDLP conferences are great, “I really wish we would have our Depository Library Conference in person. I really wish that would come back.” It is a sentiment with which many *DttP* readers would no doubt heartily agree.

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

Notes

1. “Air Service Information Circulars Collection,” Auburn University, <https://diglib.auburn.edu/collections/airservice/>.
2. Montgomery Knight and William C. Clay, *Refrigerated Wind Tunnel Tests on Surface Coatings for Preventing Ice Formation*. Technical note no. 339 (Washington, D.C.: National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, 1930). <https://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo144430>.