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DttP

Documents to the People

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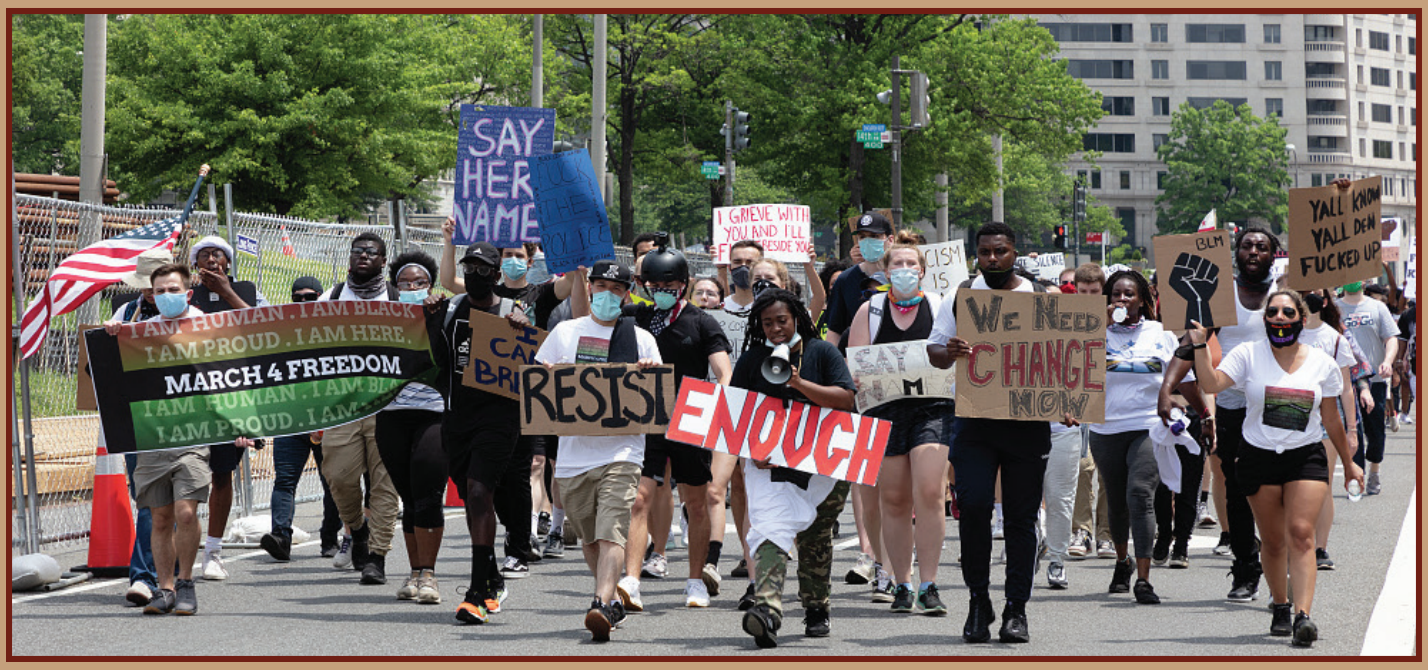

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Book Review

About the Cover: Highsmith, Carol M. "One of the many Black Lives Matter events on or near Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, D.C." Washington D.C., District of Columbia, United States of America, 2020. Photograph. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/2020720161/.

Editor's Corner: Politics in Medicine Hurts Everyone

Elizabeth Sanders

As I write this editorial, it is almost June. Pride Month has never felt more important to me as now, when transphobia and transmisia plague the federal government and its publications. Sadly, these attacks on trans, non-binary, intersex, and others with gender-diverse or gender-expansive identities (hereafter shortened to trans) are not new. However, since President Trump issued the Executive Order (EO) "Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation," it has green-lit codifying transphobia and transmisia in U.S. publications and policy.[1]

The EO led to a newly released review from the Department of Health & Human Services.[2] Titled *Treatment for Pediatric Gender Dysphoria: Review of Evidence and Best Practices* (hereafter Review of Evidence), it does not use the obviously transphobic language of Trump's EO or the (also recently released) Make America Healthy Again report.[3] However, this publication is arguably more frightening because of its purported neutrality. Examining the review shows it is neither scientifically nor politically neutral.

There are many initial criticisms of the Review of Evidence.[4] While a full analysis is beyond the scope of this editorial, I will look at Appendix 4, a separate document from the Review of Evidence which provides an overview of systematic reviews (SRs) gathered and used for the review.[5] From the perspective of evidence synthesis, Appendix 4 has several issues. First, it does not name the contributors. A HHS press release states that there were multiple contributors, including "medical doctors, medical ethicists, and a methodologist," who supposedly "represent a wide range of political viewpoints" but were chosen "for their commitment to scientific principles." It later states that names of the contributors are not being made public "to help maintain the integrity" of the post-publication peer review.[6] There is no time frame given for this post-publication peer review, which is troubling. By refusing to release the names of contributors and their affiliations, no one can verify their expertise or potential conflicts of interest.

Second, it does not include the level of detail needed to meet the standards of transparency and reproducibility. For example, it states that it performed searches in three scholarly databases (Medline, Embase, PsychINFO), then two other databases (ACCESSSS, Epistemonikos), and finally a grey literature search (PROSPERO, Google Scholar). However, it only provides the search details for one of the searches (Medline).

Finally, and most glaringly, Appendix 4 includes evidence from SRs for populations up to the age of 25 – despite its stated purpose to look at *pediatric* interventions. Pediatrics would include anyone under the age of 18; individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 fall squarely into the adult age range, medically and legally. These distinctions are standard in medical literature. Yet, in a note, it states that "SRs in this area are usually provided for patients under 18 or those under 26" and that "the evidence for <18 and for <26 years did not identify any significant differences in outcomes." While that may be true, it does not change the fact that the contributors purposefully expanded the age range beyond that of pediatric medicine, perhaps to justify inclusion of certain SRs over others. Likewise, they created a new term of "mature adults" for those 26 or older, again seemingly to justify excluding other SRs that look at a mix of adult and pediatric populations.

I also question the quality of three included SRs from Miroshnychenko et al., which are defined as having "low risk of bias."[7] One of these SRs, published in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, has received a critique addressing its "shortcomings, methodologic flaws, and erroneous assumptions."[8] As in my critique of Appendix 4, it highlights that the SR focuses on the "young adult population" and that "authors make the unjustified claim that anyone younger than 26 should be considered an adolescent." It also highlights that the SR was funded by the Society for Evidence Based Medicine (SEGM).[9] SEGM is designated as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and is known for promoting misinformation about trans health and political lobbying in support of anti-trans legislation.[10] Neither Appendix 4 nor the Review of Evidence mentions or addresses these concerns over age or affiliation with SEGM. I further note that both the other SRs also extend the age to under 26 and are funded by SEGM—and that the Review of Evidence cites SEGM frequently in its bibliography without addressing its known bias.

To end, I would like to share some additional, recent information related to trans youth. According to data from the 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBSS), 3.3% of high school students identified as transgender and 2.2% as questioning. 25.3% of transgender and 26.4% of questioning students skipped school because they felt unsafe; an estimated 40% of transgender and questioning students were bullied at school. 69% of questioning students and 70% of transgender students experienced persistent

Editor's Corner: Politics in Medicine Hurts Everyone

feelings of sadness and hopelessness. 26% of transgender and questioning students attempted suicide in the past year, compared to 5% cisgender males and 11% cisgender females.[11]

This 2023 data is the first ever collected and disseminated from the YRBSS that included openly trans and questioning students. With the direction of the current federal government, which refuses to fund research that includes trans individuals, cuts research funding in general, and cherry-picks its evidence to promote ideology over fact, it may also be the last. Either way, this population and their needs will not go away. The injection of political goals into supposedly scientific, neutral reviews of medical evidence endangers the health of everyone, as any population or intervention can be targeted.

The views expressed in this editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government Documents Round Table (GODORT), the American Library Association (ALA), Lamar University, or any other entity.

Elizabeth Sanders (esanders5@lamar.edu), Interim Department Head of Research, Engagement, and Learning, Lamar University.

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DttP From the Chair

Andie Craley, GODORT Chair

The current school year across various levels of educational institutions from primary to universities and colleges is starting to wind down, and dreams of summer breaks and vacations that may bring relaxation and end of chaotic and stressful schedules are drawing ever closer. The anticipation of graduation and commencement ceremonies are lighting the festive mood as planning is in full swing to celebrate reaching the long-awaited conclusion of one journey that will lead to brand new roads to discover.

Within that festive mood is the realization that our United States of America is on its own precipice of reaching a milestone in its journey of 250 years of independence on July 4, 2026. Various events leading up to that anniversary have already begun in various states on the East Coast, with:

- March 22, 2025: 250th Bush Declaration, the signing of the Bush Declaration, a document where 34 men from Harford County pledged their support to the 2nd Continental Congress and the Provincial Convention of Maryland[1]
- April 18, 2025: 250th Anniversary of Paul Revere's Ride[2]
- April 19, 2025: 250th Anniversary of the Battles at Lexington and Concord[3]
- May 10, 2025: 250th Anniversary of the 2nd Continental Congress Assembly[4]
- June 15, 2025: 250th Anniversary of George Washington Being Elected to Command the Continental Army[5]

Libraries, museums, and many historical organizations and associations nationwide are beginning their planning of displays, exhibits, and events for the coming celebrations. I highly recommend the resource America 250 as a starting point on your roadmap for this journey.[6] It is a nationwide resource for the United States of America's 250th anniversary which is led by the U.S Semiquincentennial Commission that was established by the 114th Congress in 2016 with Public Law 114-196 to help inspire participation in planning this 2026 celebration, and we are now arriving on the doorstep.[7] On a state or territory level, you can see what your individual state or territory may be planning with their own commission to bring that celebration to a more local level. You can locate a list with links at the America 250 State and Territory Commissions.[8]

There are so many additional resources; I will list a few more:

- America 250 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services[9]
- Declaration 250 at The National Archives[10]
- Our shared Future: 250 at the Smithsonian Institution[11]
- 250th Anniversary of American Independence from the National Park Service[12]

GODORT is planning on bringing the 250th inspiration to the ALA Annual 2025 Conference in Philadelphia, PA at the end of June. What a great place to launch ideas for a 250th Anniversary celebration! On Saturday June 28 from 2:30-3:30 PM, the GODORT Chairs Program will sponsor *"America at 250: Celebrating Freedom, Confronting Inequities, and Considering a New Constitutional Era"*. Keep checking back at the GODORT ALA Annual Conference Events in Philadelphia tab on the GODORT 2025 Annual Meetings LibGuide for updates on this program and GODORT's other June 27 and June 28 ALA Annual Events.[13]

In addition, GODORT will be hosting its weeklong virtual committees and interest groups meetings the week of June 9-13. All are welcome to attend these meetings to learn about GODORT and our various committees and interest groups! See our GODORT 2025 ALA Annual LibGuide for the schedules and for the free registration link to receive the Zoom link for these meetings.[14]

GODORT would love to have volunteers fill some open vacancies in our committees and interest groups for the upcoming 2025-2026 season as we have some committee members who will roll off from their terms. You can see all the work our GODORT committees do at ALA GODORT Committees, Task Forces, and Interest Groups.[15] Want to get involved? Please see more information at New Members or contact GODORT Chair Andie Craley with any questions and volunteer interest. [16]

GODORT is a nurturing and supportive network where information professionals share a passion for learning, advocating, creating awareness, and preserving access to all levels of government information for everyone. GODORT supports several initiatives for this:

- Help! I'm an Accidental Government Information Librarian webinars[17]
- Kenya Flash Lecture Series (in collaboration often with the Politics, Policy and International Relations Section (PPIRS) of the ALA ACRL Division)[18]
- GODORT Friday Chats[19]
- GODORT LibGuides[20]

DttP From the Chair

Andie Craley

- GODORT Publications and Resources such as Documents to the People (DttP), Notable Documents, and Occasional Papers[21]

GODORT is looking forward with anticipation of a great year ahead to share and collaborate with its community of those interested in government and historical information, as we prepare for our nation's 250th anniversary. Get out your party gear and get ready to celebrate!

Andie Craley (acraley@harford.edu),
Technical Services & Government Information Librarian,
Harford Community College.

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Get to Know …

Sinai Wood

A positive attitude and natural curiosity are the qualities that have buoyed Sinai Wood through many changes during her distinguished career in government information. Today, she is an Associate Professor & Documents Librarian at Baylor University Libraries. Her work with gov docs dates back to her service as a paraprofessional while she was getting her library degree at Texas Woman's University. Thanks to her undergraduate business degree (double major in marketing and management), she began her librarian career as a business librarian and subsequently moved into a position in government documents in 1992. Sinai loves teaching and seeing students get excited about resources such as Policy Map when she presents guest lectures in her liaison areas of social work, sociology, and political science.

Sinai's enthusiasm for government information extends to her work with research fellows at the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty and on an Environmental Protection Agency-funded Community Change grant to combat food insecurity in the Waco area. Together with her library colleague Josh Been, Director of Data and Digital Scholarship and a former docs librarian, they produce data dashboards for classroom use by social work instructors and students, and most recently the Hunger Data Lab that provide researchers with data about food insecurity and school meals, with data available by county and school district in Texas. "Food insecurity touches all of us. And to be a part of that, in an interdisciplinary partnership, has been highly rewarding," she said.

Many people in the government documents community know Sinai through her work with TRAIL, the Technical Reports Archive and Image Library, which is a cooperative project to digitize federal technical reports and make them available online.[1] Sinai has served on the TRAIL Steering Committee and Working Groups almost since TRAIL's inception in 2006. She said of her work for TRAIL, "That has been so rewarding. And over the span of all these years, I've gotten to know so many colleagues. Name almost any state, and I know somebody that I've worked with through TRAIL."

With her long tenure as a government information librarian, Sinai has known many of the luminaries in the field. Asked what makes someone a good gov docs librarian, she said, "Back in the day, we would say you have to be crazy to work with documents. You have to have a good sense of humor. You have to have fun. I think now you have to be excited about the thrill of the hunt, and to know that we possess knowledge about finding government information that a lot of our colleagues don't have." She said that intellectual curiosity and a desire to understand the origins of things are also the hallmarks of a good gov docs librarian.

Sinai's curiosity has led her to learn about Waco's history and she enjoys finding ways to incorporate it into her teaching. She explained, "I've been reading some oral histories through the Baylor institutional repository that have been fascinating. And they cover a lot of topics—Texas Baptist life, Baylor history, Waco history. And to hear first person accounts of 'This is what I experienced,' it's been fascinating." In her classes, she uses this information to help students to understand the throughlines in Waco's history.

Although some librarians have expressed dismay at the transition to a mostly digital FDLP, Sinai is glad that government documents "aren't just sitting on a shelf anymore. It's exciting to me that more people have access to government information." It follows that one of her favorite government information tools is https://data.census.gov/.[2] "There's nothing like it, I guess. And they're constantly improving it. They're adding functionality to it all the time," she said. In terms of learning new technologies, Sinai recognizes the need to understand artificial intelligence in order to help students use it appropriately.

Sinai is energized by those who recognize the value of her expertise. "It's that give and take. I enjoy the relationship between the faculty member and myself. They say, 'Hey, let's work on a research project.' And then that leads into something else. And next thing you know, they'll receive a grant and they'll say, 'Oh, you have to be part of this. You get this; I want you to help me with it.' So, building relationships with faculty and teaching—those are the rewarding [moments]...when everybody is commenting on how helpful you were."

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

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Resisting Censorship and Defending the Integrity of Federally Supported Information

Lisa Schiff

Federal information is under significant threat from the Trump administration's unprecedented levels of censorship, expressed through direct suppression of specific terms, distortion and deletion of research, and targeted cuts to agencies' funding and staffing that are the engine of federal information generation. These acts challenge the ongoing development and integrity of the federal research record and impede public access to that record. A flourishing, democratic society requires the free flow of reliable government-sponsored information, from its creation by qualified researchers to its use by other scholars and the general public. Ensuring access to reliable information is foundational to the profession of librarianship; as librarians, we must now work to protect that principle as it is being deliberately dismantled.

While bureaucratic enterprises like federal agencies can certainly accrete inefficiencies over time and new administrations understandably seek to align federal resources with new policy aims, the Trump administration's actions do not reflect a thoughtful corrective. Instead, the goal seems to be the crippling of the U.S. research enterprise. To illustrate the magnitude of this effort since January 2025: in a running tally last updated May 28, PEN America has identified over 350 terms that trigger reviews of agency-supported work and, in many cases, disqualify the research for continued or future funding; as of June 9, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) had canceled more than 2,100 grants reflecting approximately $9.5 billion in research funding, though a June 16 federal court decision has ordered some to be reinstated; 65% of National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) staff were laid off in April, and as of June 28 just over 1400 grants, worth nearly $430 million, have been terminated; and at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), all 75 staff members were eliminated and approximately 1,200 program and state grants were terminated in late March, with some staff and grants provisionally reinstated per pending lawsuits.[1]

These actions imperil a broad swath of federal information, from materials traditionally collected by the Federal Depository Library Program (i.e., that labeled by Jacobs and Jacobs as "Public Information" and defined as "the universe of content made available to the public by the federal government"), to research conducted by federal agency staff, research supported by federal grants, and supportive infrastructure (e.g., repositories, libraries and librarians) – it is all in jeopardy.[2] Librarians are tracking these developments with great concern. Indeed, the administration's actions threaten almost all of the eleven "Key Principles of Government Information" identified by the American Library Association, but none more significantly than the assertion that "Government information policy must ensure the integrity of public information."[3] Ensuring information integrity is a core value of our profession, and we are witnessing–and being called to respond to–the profound disruption of the national systems underpinning reliable and trustworthy information.

Politics and Federal Information: A Brief History

This moment, of course, does not represent the first collision between politics and federally supported information in recent U.S. history.[4] The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) first began tracking suppression of research under George W. Bush's administration and has continued this work through subsequent presidential administrations, recording instances of interference in a public database.[5] The Obama administration attempted to safeguard federally supported research by ensuring that federal agencies established science integrity policies; however these proved insufficient during President Trump's first term, in which he exerted new levels of effort to control the research activities of those agencies.[6] The first Trump administration's response to the COVID pandemic and resistance to the scientific community's rapidly evolving understanding about causes, prevention, and treatment is perhaps most notable – but

it wasn't unique. That administration also ignored federal agency findings, relying instead on representatives and information from industry over experts and data from agencies; removed or changed information on agency websites; terminated some grants; forbade use of some terms; and attempted to reduce funding for targeted agencies.[7]

While the Biden administration sought to enact new policies to address both the weaknesses of the Obama era policies and the types of anti-information efforts seen within federal agencies in the first Trump administration, President Trump's current actions are bolder and more sweeping this time.[8] In his second term, Trump is attempting to transform the entire national research infrastructure by engaging in more extensive censorship efforts, attempting to control public and private higher education institutions through funding cuts and lawsuits, and issuing a new science integrity standard that notably establishes makes no mention of research independence from political interference.[9]

Censorship's Many Guises

Those who have not yet been let go from a federal agency, had a grant terminated, or had to consider self-censoring by withdrawing or revising a manuscript based on newly forbidden words may not be closely tracking the ongoing changes related to research and education enacted through Presidential Executive Orders and expressed in new federal agency policies. Even with a narrowed focus on censorship, the administration's actions are challenging to keep up with due to the myriad permutations of that censorship.

Operationalizing Trump's stated intentions to end any considerations of gender, race and ethnicity and to support his administration's policy objectives (such as prioritizing the use of coal, gas, and oil in place of renewable energy sources), newly appointed heads of federal agencies have begun directly censoring agency-produced or -supported research, and some directors are employing such strategies to advance their own policy goals.[10] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the NIH, and many others have developed lists of terms that are now either explicitly forbidden or that will trigger reviews of research projects and their related publications. These restrictions range from the seemingly ridiculous ("rural water," "systemic," and "peanut allergies") to the obviously political ("DEI" "global warming," and "vaccines").[11] As a concrete example, the CDC was not allowed to release information at the end of March forecasting the spread of measles and the efficacy of the measles vaccine. By June 24, 2025, several months later, the CDC website reflected 1,227 confirmed measles cases across the country, compared to 285 in 2024.[12]

The administration's restrictions regarding concepts of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual identity have also extended to federal information developed for the benefit of the general public in both online and physical venues. The Department of Defense implementation of these orders required eliminating all online "DEI content" and anything with a focus on "immutable characteristics, such race, ethnicity, or sex."[13] As a result, Arlington National Cemetery removed many pages from its website, including Jackie Robinson's military profile and a history of the World War II Navajo Code Talkers, both of which were brought back after public outcry.[14] Detailed lesson plans about African American and women's military history, however, have either been removed from easy site navigation or taken down altogether.[15]

A separate Executive Order requires the removal of any "public monuments, memorials,

statues, markers, or similar properties" from National Park Service sites and other publicly managed land that does not sufficiently recognize the country's unique accomplishments and natural beauty of its landscape.[16] While an uplifting focus is not unexpected at national public sites, this same order also mandates the posting of signs asking visitors to report any information presenting a critical or "disparaging" perspective.[17] This form of censorship directly impedes the ability of park staff to accurately share the full history associated with a given federal location and has led to objections from organizations such as the Japanese American National Museum, which is concerned that information related to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II will be erased from public view and public memory.[18]

Building on more direct forms of censorship described above, entire swaths of research and education associated with newly forbidden concepts have begun to be eliminated either through budget cuts or agency "reductions in force." In the area of climate change, the website that previously provided government-sponsored climate information for the general public, Climate.gov, now redirects to a climate page on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) website. All the staff who were maintaining Climate.gov have been let go, creating uncertainty about the future of this service's content and overall mission.[19] Similarly, the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP), which is responsible for the congressionally mandated quadrennial National Climate Assessment reports, has also been ended. Per administration orders in April 2025, the consulting contract for the 2028 report has been terminated and staff were removed from the program itself. As of June 30, the website has been taken down, eliminating ready access to the five previous reports. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is now the stated home for these critical documents, but no section on NASA's website clearly collects the reports—and search results

only surface the third report, released in 2014.[20] Either of these instances could be understood as reasonable efforts to streamline public funds; however such an interpretation is doubtful given the diminished discoverability of the content, making it difficult to access this valuable government information.

Yet another permutation of censorship has been the distortion of knowledge and research. The administration has launched numerous such efforts, from framing global warming as beneficial, to requiring the NIH to investigate "transition regret," to the aforementioned assertions that the measles vaccine is ineffective and dangerous.[21] Libraries and librarians have not been exempted. The Trump administration's renaming of the "Gulf of Mexico" and "Mount Denali" to the "Gulf of America" and "Mount McKinley," respectively, and the unusually rapid update of the Library of Congress Subject Headings raised concerns at the time about the seeming ease with which librarians accommodated and incorporated these changes.[22]

Development of new scholarship in target areas is being prevented through layoffs of agency-based researchers and cancelation of many thousands of both new grants and grant-sponsored work already underway, a de facto form of censorship.[23] As these examples illustrate, all disciplines have been impacted by the significant funding cuts applied across federal agencies, which have halted: scholarship into the mathematical field of homotopy theory; a study aiming to increase oral cavity cancer survival rates; research documenting an all-Black U.S. Army codebreaking unit in World War II; and local newspaper digitization projects across twenty-three states to support the preservation of unique historic content and its contribution to the longstanding National Digital Newspaper Program for public access via the Library of Congress.[24] Decisions in some of the many related lawsuits have required reinstatement of grants, but the administration has resisted compliance and, in some cases, has made it clear that follow-on legal challenges are not far off.[25] In his July 2, 2025 filing regarding his June 30 court order to restore some NIH grants, U.S. District Judge William Young in Massachusetts, appointed by Ronald Reagan, identifies the serious challenge the administration's censorship poses to the integrity of the health focused federally supported research enterprise, but which logically extends to all areas:

Indeed, the American people have enjoyed a historical norm of a largely apolitical scientific research agency supporting research in an elegant, merit-based approach that benefits everyone.

> That historical norm changed on January 20, 2025. The new Administration began weaponizing what should not be weaponized –- the health of all Americans through its abuse of HHS and the NIH systems, creating chaos and promoting an unreasonable and unreasoned agenda of blacklisting certain topics, that on this Administrative Record, has absolutely nothing to do with the promotion of science or research.[26]

These many forms of censorship create gaps, fissures, and uncertainties within the government supported research record and instability in the related information ecosystem. This challenge to the integrity of federal information writ large is definitionally of significant concern to librarians.

Protecting Federal Information Integrity

The scale, scope, and speed of the administration's actions, which began almost immediately after President Trump's inauguration and continue as of the writing of this article in early July 2025, make it almost impossible to stay abreast of the specific implications. But librarians, situated so centrally in knowledge and research hubs, are well positioned to respond and many are doing just that.

Government information librarians (at UC San Diego and the University of Minnesota, for instance) are helping scholars navigate whirlwind changes in federally supported information by rapidly and regularly updating LibGuides to track the Trump administration's actions, convey the implications to users, and provide reliable alternative sources where possible.[27] Others are focused on leading, participating in, or otherwise contributing to the numerous and massive efforts to secure federally supported data and publications before these materials are censored or disappeared.[28]

Pre-existing initiatives like the Data Rescue Project and Data Lumos, to name just two, are expanding to meet the vast need.[29] New library partnerships, such as the UChicago Data Mirror, are forming to support and extend this work, and individual librarians have established complementary efforts, like Tracking Gov Info, to fill important gaps.[30]

Still other librarians are organizing public resistance, as with the "Declaration to Defend Research from U.S Government Censorship, which was created and released to provide individuals and organizations a shared, public location from which to condemn government censorship and encourage others to do the same. Having gathered now almost 5,000 signatories at the time of writing, the co-authors of the declaration (including the author of this paper) are now also promoting concrete actions to demand that elected officials and other decision makers intervene to end censorship.[31]

Inspiring Acts Inspire More Action

Librarians, highly attuned to censorship and threats against information access and intellectual freedom, are, as described above, responding with critical, concrete steps, steps that can move more of us to take any number of actions:

- Stay up to date about threats to government supported information, academic freedom, and academic libraries and talk with each other about the implications and potential responses. Peter Suber's running list of projects that track or monitor Trump administration actions and the websites and social media posts of organizations and initiatives such as the Union of Concerned Scientists, Stand Up for Science, EveryLibrary Institute, and The Impact Map are among the many excellent resources for keeping current.[32]
- Identify and share instances of censorship when they occur, raising awareness, providing evidence, and possibly intervening.
- Sign and distribute public statements denouncing censorship and threats to federal information integrity, thus amplifying the reach of those statements and their potential to generate change.
- Spread the word about efforts organized by researcher communities.
- Share ways to take action with our networks of librarians and scholars.
- Participate in or support one of the many efforts to safeguard government supported data and publications.
- Contact elected officials to demand that they intervene to stop the administration's efforts related to the federal knowledge infrastructure.
- Write opinion pieces or letters to the editor in local news outlets to help the broader public understand the implications of the Trump administration's actions.

The above list is, of course, merely a sampling of the possible ways to be involved that are underway right now.[33] Often, though, the most effective actions are those specific to local circumstances, where the reasons for acting are most keenly felt and clearest to understand. Where we see a need, we can see an opportunity to respond and to invite others around us to join in, knowing that the accumulation of all our many efforts will be the most effective in preserving and protecting federal information.

Conclusion

The well-worn trope of existential crisis is unfortunately more than apt for the challenges to knowledge we currently face. The numerous expressions of government censorship are contributing to a worrisome destabilization of the federal information infrastructure; these acts are unlikely to cease and may possibly expand without encountering significant resistance. Indeed, the administration's 2026 federal budget, just passed by Congress as of this writing on July 3, and presented as a plan to reduce duplication of government services and overall expenditures, includes increased defense spending alongside significant funding cuts to agencies such as the NSF, as well as the complete shutdown of the IMLS.[34] As information professionals who are mission-driven, understand what is at stake, and take pride in supporting intellectual freedom and rigorous scholarly inquiry, we are being tested in a most extreme way. Librarians of all types must decide what each of us is willing to do to meet this moment. Many are responding in significant ways that we as a community can be quite proud of and take as inspiration to find our own ways to safeguard the creation of and access to an intact, rich body of federal information today and into the future.

Lisa Schiff, M.L.I.S., Ph.D. is a librarian at the California Digital Library, University of California. The thoughts and perspectives shared on this topic are her own and are not meant to represent those of her employer. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3572-2981, (sflschiff@yahoo.com)

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On the Same (Web)Page: Using LibGuides to Connect Researchers to Government Information and Data Rescue Projects

Olivia Ivey, Jessica Breen, Sarah Burns Gilchrist, Gwendolyn Reece

Introduction

Like many library workers, American University (AU) librarians have been concerned about the data loss, website removal, and untracked edits to government information taking place in the current Trump administration. Our researchers use government data, our students prioritize internships with the federal government, and our work as educators of future civil servants relies on access to federal data. Shortly after the news broke that Executive Order No. 14168 had led to the removal of websites and documents from government websites, we set out to find others that were collecting and retaining government data so that we could connect those efforts to our community.[1] Our goals included ensuring that ongoing research projects could remain active and that librarians and faculty at AU who wanted to assist with data preservation efforts knew what steps to take.

In the search for a communication tool to advance our goals, LibGuides, a content management platform published by Springshare that is widely used by academic libraries, emerged as a clear choice.[2] LibGuides are easy to edit, can be managed by multiple users, and are already trusted by our researchers. Our guide "Government Information Data Rescue" (hereafter Data Rescue Guide) was built to connect our campus community to the work of many librarians, archivists, government employees, and citizens.[3] Communications from faculty and students to the library began as soon as news broke of websites and datasets coming down in the wake of E.O. 14168.[4] The Data Rescue Guide allowed us to leverage the strength of the library community to support those requests and plan next steps.

Beyond meeting the immediate need, the Data Rescue Guide became a vector for conversations in the library and with our campus partners about the need for data preservation, the limits of our work, and what it will mean for the relationship between researchers and the federal government moving forward. The redaction of data, text, and pages from the federal government's information space is more than a loss of content; these deliberate actions are a form of censorship led by the executive branch of our government. Furthermore, as content is "restored" by the current administration, (whether because of an action by the courts, due to the outcomes of a lawsuit, or for other reasons) with no clear documentation of redactions and changes, citizens and researchers are left without confidence that prior research is presented in its proper context, or that future outputs can be trusted in the same way as their predecessors.

Government Data and Research Needs at American University

The United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs reported on the Open Government Data Act stating, "Open data, or data that is made available to use without restriction, has led to innovation in both the public and private sectors, supported economic growth, and helped to improve performance and transparency in government programs."[5] AU, a four-year residential, doctoral-granting, urban institution (with newly attained R1 status) in Washington, D.C., is no exception. AU is not a member of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), but we support government information access for our users through online research guides, classroom instruction, and subscriptions to third-party databases that index government information alongside other sources. Washington, DC is home to twenty-nine FDLPs.[7] AU

is a member of the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC). Meeting our researchers' needs has always been an exercise in collaboration. Data rescue and the loss and movement of government reports from .gov websites is no exception. While we do not maintain an inventory of research projects that rely specifically on federal data, our campus research office operates under the motto "Eagles SOAR: Societal Outcomes, Actionable Research," an ethos that closely aligns with the values and benefits of open data.

Without a preexisting inventory, we needed to determine the scope of concern. To do this, we created an email address, monitored by a team, dedicated to collecting information from faculty. Distributed to an all-faculty email list, the initial communication came from the University Librarian with two asks: 1) that researchers tell us if they have datasets they rely on for their research that need to be preserved and 2) if they have begun storing data locally that needs to be uploaded to centralized storage on our campus or in other venues. We also formed a cross-departmental library working group between the Academic Technology department and Research, Teaching, and Learning unit. This brought a range of capabilities to the table including technological expertise, subject matter knowledge, and deep familiarity with campus research trends and data needs. We sought to determine our available resources, including assessing if our institutional repository could be used, even temporarily, to host data and to establish workflows once unique needs were identified.

A striking characteristic of this project is the speed with which we were able to move forward. This was made possible by an organizational culture that fosters relationship-building and brainstorming across departmental lines, a structure that enables initiatives to be rapidly brought up the chain for decision-making, and a library leadership that is able and willing to be rapidly responsive to user needs and willing to embrace an experimental approach.

The turnaround for the Data Rescue Guide was quick and our team was able to respond to needs in less than a week. The Executive Order was released on Thursday, January 30th. On Friday, January 31st we had our first informal conversations as a group and determined that we needed to act. On Sunday, February 2, the library received its first anxious request from a faculty researcher asking for help. By Monday, February 3rd, we had a plan and launched the Data Rescue Guide. On Tuesday, February 4th, we sent out campus-wide communication announcing our plan and providing a link to the Data Rescue Guide. We received numerous requests from faculty that same day. Most requests came in within the first two weeks, representing 27 datasets across nine federal agencies. A few of the datasets requested are not produced by the U.S. Federal Government, but either rely on federal funding for collection and publishing of the data, thus causing concern about the permanence of online access, or were produced by the District of Columbia, leading to concerns tied to Home Rule.6 As we responded to these emails, we realized that many of the datasets in question were already mirrored by the Internet Archive, IPUMS (part of the Institute for Social Research and Data Innovation at the University of Minnesota), and DataLumos, an archive on the ICPSR platform (the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research hosted at the University of Michigan).8 Our job in those cases was not to duplicate the work of others, but to point our researchers to sources that would keep their research and teaching on track.

Populating the LibGuide: Listservs, Spreadsheets, and the Power of a Creative Commons License

We owe a debt of gratitude to the community of librarians, archivists, and data experts for the content of the Data Rescue Guide. AU Librarians encountered The Data Rescue project on ALA and ACRL listservs including: Politics, Policy and International Relations Section (PPIRS), GODORT (Government Documents Round Table), Education and Behavioral Sciences Section (EBSS), and International Association for Social Science Information Service & Technology (IASSIST). We bookmarked webpages, signed up for alerts, and nominated datasets for backup using the Data Rescue tracking tool. The communication channels allowed us to tap into projects that served our community's needs and addressed their concerns without needless duplication of effort or trying to stretch our personnel and computing resources beyond their bounds. Like any recurring question to a reference and research support desk, we needed to document all of this information in a place for access and review by our public services team and for self-service by our researchers.

Since its launch, the Data Rescue Guide has had more visitors than any other guide on our platform during the same time period, with more than 10,000 views since it was published on February 3, 2025 and between 526 and 5,235 views per month between February and June. Springshare allows guide administrators to track views to guides overall, as well as interaction with specific links/resources, dubbed assets, on each page. Interestingly, the two assets with the most engagement have been the Gov Wayback Machine and The End of Term Archive, both projects of the Internet Archive with a history predating the recent wave of concern.[8] The work of preserving our cultural history and public digital assets is necessary and powerful, even in moments when such work is and can be taken for granted.

The traffic to the website does not come as a surprise, but the outreach from the library community and others from outside of our campus was unexpected. Springshare allows content creators to place their guide in a community where other guide creators can search and reuse pages or boxes from within the guide. Placing a guide within the commons does not change the copyright status of the work, and though there is no technical barrier to reuse, Springshare recommends reaching out to guide authors about one's intent to do so. Inspired by the parameters of Open Educational Research (OER) grants and an attempt to research the copyright practices of library online research guides, AU libraries made a decision in the past year to append a CC BY-NC 4.0 license to all of our LibGuides. This particular Creative Commons license makes the work free to share and allows for adaptations from the original. It also calls for the attribution of the original work.[9] For our purposes, especially with this guide, it is giving others the ability to reuse, remix, and update to meet the needs of research communities beyond AU that matters. We think the attribution piece has increased the outreach from our colleagues, which does have the benefit of helping us build community around the effort, but we don't feel that we own the content in any meaningful way. Every link in the guide represents the work of many, and we are glad to have even a small role in the data preservation efforts that have grown in importance in recent months.

Reflections and Next Steps

The decision to create and publish the Data Rescue Guide was based on a communication need. At first, or at least on the surface, that need was purely logistical in nature; our research community had questions and concerns while our broader professional community was collectively building and executing preservation strategies to meet at least a portion of that need. The communication value turned out to be much broader. The guide has offered us an opportunity to engage within our library, campus, and broader community about the value of public data, the mission and values of libraries, and how to live in those values while they are actively under attack.

Many of the data rescue, preservation, and access challenges are tied up with a common concern of meeting our users with the communication and resources they need at that moment of need. In this case, we needed to educate our users on what did – or did not – happen to data they rely on, while setting expectations for what libraries can – and cannot – do in response. Government websites and other publicly facing information resources often change, especially as administrations turn over, meaning libraries and archives were not inventing preservation strategies on the fly. This data loss, however, is different in kind from other transitions. As the Executive Order makes clear, this is a policy choice. Data is not simply "missing" or "unavailable." It was removed. Public-facing data files can be saved, but files that would have required FOIA requests to access in the past, or were available to researchers who obtained proper security clearances and permissions cannot easily be proactively pulled down from government servers and stored elsewhere. Some permanent loss of data has taken place and more will be lost. Preserving published data supports research already in progress or near completion and allows for replication studies for projects already completed. Future projects reliant on the ongoing data collection efforts of the federal government cannot be rescued.

Moreover, librarians do not just store information. We describe, contextualize, and keep it findable. That is what makes our role in this work so important. In the case of the ongoing data rescue efforts, we must extend this description and contextualization to what is not there and why it is missing. In the spirt of cross-institutional collaboration, librarians at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and California State University, Sacramento, among others, are doing just that with their *Tracking Government Information* project.[10]

The Data Rescue Guide at AU is one piece in a large and collaboratively constructed puzzle designed to shore up as much data and government information as possible in this time of executive branch led censorship of our public assets. It is our hope that we can continue connecting with our colleagues to serve research needs now and in the future.

Olivia Ivey, Associate Librarian, American University, (oivey@american.edu)

Jessica Breen, Program Director for Geospatial Research Support, American University Library, American University, (jbreen@american.edu)

Sarah Burns Gilchrist, Associate Librarian, American University, (gilchris@american.edu)

Gwendolyn Reece, Director of Research, Teaching & Learning, American University Library, American University, (greece@american.edu)

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Lobbying Congress for Support of Libraries

Bernadine Abbott Hoduski

Federal databases are disappearing, or information in them, such as climate change and military women's heroic deeds, are being deleted. A list of terms is used to delete data, including women, female, tribal, Black, Hispanic, and nuclear power. For the complete list, go to the "U. S. Government Information Weekly Roundup" managed by Kelley Smith, Government Information Librarian at the University of California, San Diego.[1] Librarians have downloaded the information from many of these databases. However, this does not assure the restoration of these databases. The White House wants the Institute for Museums and Libraries abolished. ALA is suing to ensure the continued existence of the Institute and its grants program, helping museums and libraries.[2]

Librarians can help the public understand the importance of these programs by creating exhibits and sponsoring talks by former agency employees to explain what these agencies do. The documents librarians in Federal Depository libraries should volunteer to help librarians educate the public about what services government agencies provide the public. Now is the time to lobby members of Congress to ensure the continued existence of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). There will be members of Congress who want to save money by downsizing the amount of money for the FDLP. Every FDLP librarian needs to ask their library directors, library associations, college professors, and researchers dependent on access to government information to urge the members of the House and Senate appropriation committees to fund the FDLP fully.

To lobby your members of Congress, visit the local office of your Senators and Representatives to give them information about the FDLP libraries in their state and district. Ask them to share that information with their member's office in D.C. Invite them to visit your library and encourage the members they work for to visit your library. Check out your member of Congress on their website to see which committees they serve on. If you support funding for FDLP libraries, ask if your member has a staffer on the Committee on House Administration, the Senate Rules Committee, the Joint Committee on Printing, and the House and Senate appropriations committees. If so, they are the staffers you need to talk to about funding FDLP libraries.

Contact your state library association to see what plans are being made for lobbying Congress. Is there a legislation committee that you can work with to identify issues of importance in your state? Find out who from your state will be lobbying Congress for your state's library association. Ask if anyone from your state association is going to D.C. to lobby. Find out if any librarians in your district or state worked on a member's election campaign, are related to someone working for a member of Congress in D.C. or the local office or went to school with the member or a staffer. Ask those librarians to go to the member's office with you.

Once you decide on the issues you will discuss with your member of Congress, start collecting stories about how a particular law or appropriation has helped libraries in your state or district. If you have a bill you want supported, come with the name and number of the bill. If your association has passed a resolution or developed a statement supporting a bill or an issue, bring copies for the member or staffer. Send a thank you letter. Ask about the status of your bill, appropriation, or investigation every week and offer to provide additional information and the names of librarians in their district who would be good witnesses at a hearing. Contact staff enough that they know you by first name.

Bernadine Abbott Hoduski, Author of *Bernadine's Office Building: Working in the Capitol and Other Dangerous Places*, Litwin Press, (ber@montana.com)

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Review

***NASA's First Woman comic book series*. NASA: 2021, 2023.**

In March of 2025, and in the onslaught of institutions wrestling with their previously lauded DEI initiatives now under fire from the administration, NASA removed two comic books from its website in a series: *First Woman*. The first volume, *First Woman, NASA's Promise to Humanity, Issue No. 1 Dream to Reality,* was published online in a free-to-print and digital format in 2021, and the second volume, *First Woman, NASA's Promise for Humanity Issue No. 2 Expanding our universe*, in 2023. The comic books were produced by NASA in collaboration with the National Institute of Aerospace. While the books were deleted from the NASA website, the interactive app experience is still available via the app store. The comics include QR codes and app interactivity for an educational experience that lets readers look up terms like "space weather" and "lava tunnels" as they read along.

The first volume introduces Callie Rodriguez and her AI sidekick robot RT. Callie, the first woman on the moon, has a small team of RT and an assistant, Dan Patel. Working out of a base on the moon, Callie recounts her childhood and life growing up, first as the daughter of an auto mechanic, where she first got her love of engineering, and then as the only daughter of a single mother after her father died. Her parents speak Spanish to her growing up, with the comic including small Spanish phrases. Callie went to school, had good jobs and okay jobs, then found herself at prestigious universities before applying four separate times to be an astronaut. She finally got an interview, showcased her AI skills with her trusty robot, and now leads a moon-top mission. Volume 1 leaves us on a cliff hanger literally, with Callie dangling on a rope to escape a solar storm.

Volume 2 has Callie safely back at the moon mission headquarters explaining how she survived the solar storm. As the first woman on the moon, Callie speaks to up-and-coming astronauts who ask her questions, like Michael, a young boy from the Choctaw community, and Amaya, a young woman depicted as a person of color. Along with Callie is Meshaya, another female astronaut and former Coast Guard pilot, who works under Callie on various moon missions. After the Q & A, Callie, Meshaya and French-Canadian Martin take their own mission to fix a tech issue on the moon's surface. After Martin gets injured, Meshaya and Callie work together and solve the problem to get him back to the base safely for medical attention. Meshaya, shows she has what it takes for a leadership position, flashes forward and becomes a First Woman herself, on Mars!

The *First Woman* series is a fictional portrayal of the future meant to inspire a group of future leaders from diverse backgrounds to get into aeronautics. The comic book is playful, with comic relief coming from robot RT, who mostly speaks in movie sound clips, and low stakes. Geared towards an elementary-age audience, it features mostly people of color in leading aeronautics roles and includes real-life setbacks and perseverance that anyone seeking to be one of the most revered professions nationally – an astronaut – would naturally go through. The scrubbing of the comic book from NASA's website in response to contemporary Executive Orders due its centering on people of color and women shows the negative ramifications of these anti-DEI measures. Fortunately, librarians and archivists saved it – it's available on Wikimedia, the Wayback Machine, and Soundcloud.[1]

Alexandra Acri Godfrey
(agodfrey@os.pasen.gov),
Librarian of the Senate of Pennsylvania, Senate of Pennsylvania

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   - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_Woman_issue_1_Dream_to_Reality_Spanish.pdf
   - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_Woman_issue_2_Expanding_Our_Universe_Spanish.pdf

Please note that the Internet Archive capture loads slowly, but offers additional content not included in the PDF downloads of the comics.

   - https://web.archive.org/web/20250228012642/
   - https://www.nasa.gov/calliefirst/

An audio version of the first issue is available via Soundcloud.

   - https://soundcloud.com/nasa/first-woman-issue-no-1-dream-to-reality