In This Issue:

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Columns

Feature

Student Features

Round the Table

About the Cover: Flagg, James Montgomery. "Wake Up America! Civilization Calls Every Man, Woman and Child!" New York: The Hegeman Print, 1917. Lithograph. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, https://www.loc.gov/item/91726511/.

Editor's Corner: Difficulties Documenting DOGE

Elizabeth Sanders

Introduction

For many, the US Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, is synonymous with President Donald Trump's second term—for good reason, as it featured heavily in the first months of his presidency. State legislatures, especially in Republican majority states, also launched their own versions of DOGE or other "government efficiency" initiatives after DOGE's establishment.[1] DOGE's early prominence and large-scale slashing of government resources makes both its dissolution and how said dissolution was announced initially puzzling.

On November 23, 2025, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Scott Kupor's announced that DOGE no longer exists—later clarifying via social media that it no longer exists as an independent agency.[2] As of November 25, 2025, there has been no formal announcement or press release from OPM or any other government entity regarding DOGE's status or why it has been dissolved eight months early. These actions taken in larger context, however, are not surprising at all. From the beginning, information related to DOGE has vacillated between that which is documented formally and clearly via the government and that which is informally documented in the press and social media, if documented at all.

Given the immediate and yet unknown long-term consequences of DOGE's work and similar, continuing efforts in federal and state governments under the auspices of "government efficiency," being able to locate information about this short-lived entity will likely continue to be important. This editorial seeks to provide a short overview of government information related to DOGE and its efforts as of December 2025. It is not, and does not try to be, comprehensive but instead acts as a starting point for future, more in-depth research. Numerous journal articles examining DOGE have been published as well but will not be discussed in this editorial.[3] Likewise, several excellent resources tracking and discussing DOGE's impacts exist but will not be discussed in this editorial.[4]

Timeline

The New York Times published two articles in February 2025 based on interviews with over 60 individuals that helps with understanding the origins of DOGE and Trump's Elon Musk's, and other key players' roles therein.[5] For the purposes of this editorial, I will highlight only that efforts began prior to Trump's election and inauguration with a small circle of individuals, with the intent of implementing changes quickly after Trump's inauguration.

In January 2025, Trump signed Executive Order (Exec. Order) No. 14158, which established DOGE.[6] Specifically, it reorganized and renamed the US Digital Service (USDS) into DOGE; established the DOGE Service Temporary Organization (USDSTO) to advance DOGE's agenda until July 4, 2026; and directed all agency heads to establish DOGE teams to coordinate with DOGE and advise the agency head on implementing DOGE's agenda.[7] Elon Musk began working as the head of DOGE in January, with the White House confirming his position as a "special employee" in early February 2025 via a CSPAN clip.[8] No formal appointment documentation or press release exists, to my knowledge. DOGE's website also launched in January 2025.[9]

In February 2025, Trump signed Exec. Order No. 14210, No. 14219, and No. 14222, which implemented DOGE's Workforce Optimization Initiative, Deregulatory Initiative, and Cost Efficiency Initiative, respectively.[10] Also in February 2025, several senators and representatives expressed concerns regarding Musk's role with DOGE via letters to various government administrators and agencies and a factsheet.[11]

In March 2025, Representative Connolly wrote a letter to Amy Gleason, acting administrator of DOGE, discussing lack of transparency and conflicts of interest in DOGE, as well as requesting information.[12] The House Committee on the Budget also released a fact sheet titled *The So-Called "DOGE"* that provides some key details about DOGE's creation and management, as well as overviews of key ethical concerns.[13]

In April 2025, several members of Congress signed a letter to Trump reminding him that Musk must be removed from his government position by May 30. The letter also detailed how Musk's actions as a special government employee (SGE) harmed Americans while he profited.[14] The US Homeland Security Government Affairs (HSGAC) Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Minority Staff released a memo titled *Calculating Risk: Estimating the Legal Liability Elon Musk May Avoid Through His Government Takeover*, which summarizes complaints against Musk's interests unresolved prior to his becoming an SGE, as well as Musk's conflicts of interest and benefits since becoming a SGE.[15]

In May 2025, Musk left his position with DOGE, which led to a flurry of press coverage.[16] However, the White House posted only a short video and pictures from a press conference on May 30.[17] No formal documentation or press release regarding his dismissal exists, to my knowledge.

In June 2025, Senator Warren's office released a report titled *Special Interests over the Public Interest: Elon Musk's 130 Days in*

the Trump Administration, which summarizes actions taken to that profited Musk, along with links to various sources.[18]

In August 2025, Senator Warren, Representative Garcia, and Senator Blumenthal wrote a letter about continued concerns over DOGE's role in the federal government, including embedding DOGE employees in key government agency positions and that such efforts are likely illegal.[19]

In September 2025, the HSGAC Minority Staff released a report titled *Unchecked and Unaccountable: How DOGE Jeopardizes Americans' Data Without Regard for Law and Congress*.[20]

Finally, in November 2025, DOGE's dissolution was announced, as mentioned previously. As a result, several news stories were published discussing the event, though again nothing formal from the government was released, to my knowledge.[21]

Related Entities

In this section, I will briefly introduce two entities related to DOGE that may be of interest. First, the Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency was established in the HSGAC. This Subcommittee held several congressional hearings in 2025.[22] As of February 2026, the subcommittee remains active. Second, the Congressional DOGE Caucus was established in early 2025, though by mid-2025 it seems to have stagnated. As of February 2026, however, the caucus continues to exist.[23]

Conclusion

Though this editorial attempts primarily to provide an overview of government resources related to DOGE, it also highlights two larger, disturbing trends in government information during Trump's second presidential term. First, critical government information that impacts decisions with widespread consequences is not shared directly or transparently—within the federal government or outside of it. Second, the information the government releases regarding its decisions is often politicized, if not propagandized, heavy on style while light on credible, verifiable substance. These features, in turn, make it difficult to understand and trust said information, much less act on it or preserve it. Most chilling, these features and their impacts are not accidental; they are acting as designed. Neither contemporary stakeholders nor future researchers should shy away from that knowledge.

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.

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Notes

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From the Chair

Julia Ezzo, GODORT Chair

This year's ALA Annual Conference in Chicago will be more than just a regular event: it'll also be a celebration of ALA's 150th anniversary. Along with all of the celebratory events to commemorate this milestone, GODORT is proud to host its own compelling programs, highlighting our rich history and the vital role government information professionals play in safeguarding public access to government information.

Each year, ALA selects a limited number of educational programs that goes through a rigorous juried process. This year, GODORT's dedicated Programming Committee collaborated with members of the government information community to develop a standout program entitled "Government Information Lifeguards: Preserving Public Access to our Nation's Digital Resources." I'm thrilled to announce that the ALA jury selected this panel presentation, featuring experts from academic institutions and nonprofit organizations. They will share some of their critically important efforts to preserve and sustain continued access to digital government information, efforts that feel especially urgent amid the troubling alterations and removals of such information since January 2025. It is heartening that the ALA jury has selected our program to help spread the word more broadly at the Annual Conference about what is going on, why it matters, and what we all can do to combat the loss of government information.

Complementing ALA's anniversary events, GODORT's Chair's Program—"150 Years of Government Information at ALA: Sesquicentennial of Government Documents Librarianship"—offers a captivating historical overview. Panelists will revisit the early challenges libraries encountered with government information since 1876, highlighting ALA's pivotal role in fostering solutions. Tracing this evolution through the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, the program will celebrate key figures who shaped our field, explore their enduring legacies, and examine how these challenges have transformed over time.

Beyond these highlights, GODORT invites conference attendees to our "GODORT 101: Getting to Know the Government Documents Round Table" orientation and the General Membership Meeting. To maximize inclusivity, committee meetings will convene virtually before the in-person conference, ensuring broader participation regardless of travel constraints.

ALA Annual Conference is always a great time to connect and learn—and this year will be no different. I look forward to seeing you all virtually and in-person in Chicago this June.

Julia Ezzo (julia@msu.edu), Government Information, Packaging, and Political Science Librarian, Michigan State University

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.

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Notes

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Evolving with the FDLP: A Case Study in Managing the Shift to Digital Government Documents

Emily Croft

Introduction

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has long been the backbone of public access to government information, with physical documents flowing steadily into libraries nationwide. The FDLP has, however, recently completed its three-decade-long shift to an all-online distribution model, halting most distribution of physical print materials to its participating libraries.[1]

For institutions that have, for decades, served as custodians of physical government documents, this decision raises existential questions: What does it mean to be a government depository library when there are no more tangible documents being deposited? What is the point of a government depository program that no longer sends deposits? Finally, how can libraries shift to providing digital documents in a way that fulfills their mission? The implications are profound, as libraries must now reconcile with a reality in which they are expected to maintain their status and function without the physical materials that once defined them.

The transition to an online model represents more than just a change in how information is disseminated; it marks a fundamental shift in the relationship between depository libraries and the government. Since the establishment of the modern FDLP in 1962, depository libraries have taken pride in their role as custodians of physical government documents, with their identity closely tied to the stewardship of these tangible materials. The Government Publishing Office (GPO)'s recent decision to adopt a digital-only format, however, now forces depository libraries to reassess their mission and purpose in this evolving landscape. As the emphasis shifts away from physical collections, these libraries must redefine what it means to fulfill their role without the tangible artifacts that once formed the core of their work. Although the transition has been gradual, the abrupt end of physical shipments has fundamentally changed the nature of our work in ways that are both profound and career changing.

Concerns

The transition to digital government documents introduces a range of concerns that, while paralleling issues inherent in electronic documents and archives, also present unique challenges.[2] Despite the FDLP's commitment to its mandate, the program is not immune to potential failures in online preservation. Some of the challenges unique to preserving digital government documents are examined below.

"The Man" vs the Machine

A significant and concerning risk associated with born-digital government documents is the potential for government entities to remove or otherwise cause the disappearance of information deemed "inconvenient" or politically sensitive. This risk highlights the importance of stringent measures to safeguard the integrity and availability of government records.[3] The ease with which digital records can be modified or deleted exacerbates this risk, making it crucial to implement protections against such actions.

Furthermore, ongoing government funding plays a crucial role in preserving born-digital documents. Consistent and adequate funding is necessary to support the technological infrastructure and human resources required for effective digital preservation. Without sustained financial support, efforts to maintain and preserve digital records may falter, jeopardizing the longevity and accessibility of these important documents.

Strategic partnerships with organizations committed to digital preservation play a significant role in the overall preservation ecosystem. The GPO has established several such partnerships to enhance the preservation and accessibility of government publications.[4] These partnerships involve organizations that commit to preserving government documents in their libraries permanently, ensuring they are accessible to the public for free. In addition, some organizations contribute digital content to the GPO for

inclusion in GovInfo, the government's official digital repository.[5] These collaborations broaden the scope and redundancy of digital preservation initiatives, promoting a cooperative effort to protect public information.

Print Backups vs Digital Backups

One of the key advantages of the print distribution model was the inherent redundancy it provided: multiple copies of government documents were distributed across the country, ensuring that these materials were preserved and accessible, even if one or more copies were lost or damaged. This decentralized approach created a natural safeguard against the loss of information.

As the FDLP transitions to a digital program, the need for a strong digital preservation strategy becomes increasingly important. This includes ensuring digital backups, redundancy, and protection against technological failures or cyber threats. While the FDLP should develop comprehensive strategies to replicate or back up digital government documents across multiple locations, participating libraries can also take on this role independently.

Another consideration is the physical space being exchanged for digital space. Libraries could be asked to contribute server space or other resources to host digital backups, thereby distributing both the responsibility and the cost of preserving these essential government documents across the network of depository libraries.

Unreported Publications

The issue of unreported publications poses a significant challenge for born-digital government documents. These are documents not captured or made accessible through official channels like the FDLP, often due to agencies publishing outside traditional pathways. This can happen due to a lack of awareness or adherence to dissemination requirements, the use of agency-specific websites that are not systematically archived, or the publication of documents in formats that are not easily captured by archiving systems. The transient nature of websites and the frequent restructuring of government web content exacerbate this problem, leading to the potential loss of valuable information.[6]

To address these challenges, the FDLP and its libraries must adopt a multifaceted approach that includes proactively identifying and archiving unreported documents, using persistent identifiers like PURLs to maintain stable access, and fostering collaborations with government agencies and other libraries to ensure a more comprehensive capture of government publications. Additionally, advocating for better archiving practices and standardized dissemination formats within government agencies is essential to reduce the likelihood of documents becoming unreported. By integrating these strategies, libraries can help preserve the integrity and accessibility of government information in a digital environment.

Moving Forward

While the impact of this shift to digital content is significant, it also presents a clear need for practical action. One of the most pressing concerns for libraries is the need for comprehensive guidance or detailed protocols from the FDLP on effectively managing this transition. Without clear instructions, libraries are left to navigate this new landscape independently, developing their own strategies to ensure that they continue to fulfill their mission of providing public access to government information. In January 2022, the FDLP published guidelines for transitioning to digital selections, which are helpful.[7] But they were created to opt *into* a digital framework, and now, with the recent changes, there is no way to opt *out* and return to receiving print publications.

At the Armacost Library, our past processes heavily relied on the regular influx of physical documents, which were cataloged, shelved, and made accessible to the public in our government documents section. Since government documents have been available online for decades, and our university community generally prefers online access to resources, we have completed some weeding projects to replace print serials with online. This paper will outline our latest efforts, describe how our approach has shifted, and explain our future needs and plans.

Background and Rationale

Academic libraries, traditionally repositories of vast physical collections, make regular adjustments in response to changing user demands and institutional priorities. We face unique pressures to change space and shift collections due to evolving educational needs, technological advancements, and institutional demands.[8] As our patrons increasingly prioritize digital resources and remote access, libraries have adapted by reallocating physical space previously dedicated to print collections to accommodate collaborative learning environments, technology labs, and study areas that support modern pedagogical methods and student preferences.[9] Furthermore, these changes are often driven by the university's need to maximize the utility of available space in response to fluctuating student enrollment, interdisciplinary research requirements, and strategic goals.[10] Consequently, academic libraries must balance the preservation of traditional resources with the integration of innovative services, all while responding to administrative directives and the diverse needs of their patrons.

The increasing availability of government documents online has significantly influenced this shift. Since the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act came into effect in 1993,

there has been a trend toward digitizing government publications, making them more accessible to a broader audience. This trend has accelerated in recent years, driven by advancements in digital technology, the growing demand for remote access to information, and the cost savings associated with online publishing. As early as 2013, the National Academy of Public Administration reported that approximately 97 percent of all federal documents were born digital.[11]

Since January 2022, when the GPO Task Force began to study the feasibility of a digital FDLP, the FDLP has been transitioning towards a predominantly digital model, with fewer physical copies distributed nationwide.[12] These changes are motivated primarily by cost considerations and the goal of enhancing public access to government information. As the FDLP moves almost all publications online, selective FDLP libraries must reassess their collections and adapt to this new paradigm.

The literature on library collection management and document withdrawal has extensively covered general strategies for deaccessioning physical materials and transitioning to digital resources. Excellent work has been done on moving print collections to offsite repositories, high-density shelving, and collaborative print-sharing networks. There is a notable gap, however, regarding specific strategies for the systematic withdrawal of government documents in academic libraries. This is particularly true in the context of recent changes in federal publication practices that have significantly reduced the number of printed government books, shifting towards digitally created formats. This gap is critical, as academic libraries must navigate the complexities of ensuring long-term access, authenticity, and preservation of digital government documents while also managing physical space effectively. Our project addresses this gap by proposing a clear, replicable process for strategically withdrawing physical copies. In addition, it examines the broader implications of the federal changes relating to library space utilization and collection management, providing a much-needed framework for other academic libraries facing similar challenges.

The Armacost Library

The Armacost Library (hereafter Armacost) at the University of Redlands, a private, non-profit liberal arts institution in Southern California, has been a selective federal depository library since 1933. As of 2012, the library's FDLP selections and holdings covered basic legislative, administrative, and judicial documents, as well as volumes from the full range of federal subject areas. In addition to print materials, the library has holdings in maps, CD-ROMs, microfiche, and audiovisual formats. We also inherited several extended historical periodical runs from the California College Library in the first few decades of the twentieth century, even before joining the FDLP. Government documents are shelved separately by SuDocs classification, while the general collection is shelved by the Library of Congress (LC) Classification. The government documents collection is located at the "end" of the library, on the fourth floor, and as of 2012, the rest of the collection was housed on the second, third, and fourth floors. The collection currently occupies approximately 4,620 linear feet of shelving, and we do not receive any physical deliveries from FDLP.

Objectives

Our primary objective at Armacost was to optimize library space by withdrawing government documents that had become available online. This process involved carefully evaluating the government documents collection to identify documents that could be replaced with digital versions. This process freed up valuable space within the library which has been repurposed to meet other institutional needs.

While the library had been planning to undertake a significant shift of the collection since 2015, it was waiting for the completion of several weeding projects and sufficient staffing. The government documents department planned to participate by removing many long runs of serials and most of our census documents. The space gained from withdrawing physical government documents helped us expand the general collection, reclassify and relocate reference materials, and create a more aesthetically pleasing environment for studying. The reorganization effort was designed to align with modern pedagogical methods and support our patrons' evolving educational and research needs.

One of the underlying reasons for the weeding process in our library is to maintain an orderly and aesthetically pleasing appearance on the shelves. Cluttered shelves filled with outdated or rarely used documents can create frustration and hinder efficient research. Moreover, a collection overflowing with seemingly obsolete materials can give the impression that the library is a repository for old and irrelevant resources. By systematically withdrawing government documents that are available online and no longer in high demand, we ensure that the physical collection is relevant and accessible.

Methodology

Criteria for Withdrawal

The criteria used to determine which government documents to withdraw centered on ensuring that the public retains access to necessary information. Since the items do not circulate, there are no usage statistics to consult; however, we reviewed reference transactions to ensure we were not inadvertently withdrawing items that had recently been used in a reference interview. By applying the following criteria, we aimed to balance the immediate spatial needs of the library with the long-term

accessibility and integrity of government information, ensuring a smooth transition to a more digitally oriented collection.

We prioritized the withdrawal of long runs of serials to increase efficiency in the process. Next, we evaluated the availability of these documents online through the official Catalog of US Government Publications (CGP). We did not consider databases such as Hathi Trust, HeinOnline, or Internet Archive. If no online version was available, the librarian considered withdrawing the periodical regardless. The factors considered in this decision were usage, relevance to the curriculum and research activity, and physical condition.

Finally, the rules for withdrawal in California's selective repositories stipulate that an item must be at least five years old before it can be considered for withdrawal. Permission to withdraw the item is still required after five years, even if an online version is available. Therefore, as we identified items and serials for withdrawal, they were included in an official spreadsheet for submission to the California State Library. Although the current guidelines do not provide any exceptions for census documents, previous editions allowed us to remove many census series without permission.[13]

By contrast, a different weeding strategy can lead to very different outcomes. In a presentation describing the San Diego Public Library's government documents project, staff undertook a sequential, shelf-by-shelf review with the goal of removing as much print material as possible.[8] This approach surfaced a significant number of unique and locally important publications that were neither cataloged nor digitized. While these discoveries were intellectually and historically valuable, they also generated additional, unplanned projects, as the materials required further evaluation, temporary segregation, or future processing. Because staffing and time constraints limited how much could be addressed immediately, many items could only be set aside rather than fully resolved.

This example illustrates a key tradeoff in large-scale government documents weeding: comprehensive, linear review can reveal hidden or unique materials, but it can also expand the scope of a project beyond its original objectives. In contrast, our decision to prioritize long serial runs and defer item-level discovery work allowed us to remain focused on efficiently reducing the physical footprint of the collection and completing a coordinated transition to digital access.

Withdrawal Process

The deselection work described here focused primarily on long-running serials and large legacy series that received little or no documented use and had stable digital surrogates available through FDLP or agency websites. Using local circulation data, historical reference patterns, and the availability of reliable digital versions, we targeted series such as Census publications, National Institute of Standards and Technology reports, Climatological Data, Agricultural Outlook, Social Security Bulletin, and various US Geological Survey and National Labor Relations Board reports. These series occupied significant shelf space, were rarely consulted in print, and had comprehensive digital coverage, making them strong candidates for withdrawal.

Instead of removing items to a staging area, the government documents librarian used a mobile device to photograph government documents that she identified for possible withdrawal, along with digital notes for holdings. The research to determine their eligibility for withdrawal was conducted later by referring to these photos. Once confirmed, the items were added to the withdrawal list.

The decision was made to keep the items on the shelf in their normal location, as the withdrawal process typically takes approximately two months to complete, and there is insufficient temporary shelving to accommodate all items during this period. Additionally, keeping items on the shelves until the final stage prevents large gaps of empty space, which can be visually unappealing and may attract unwanted attention from other departments. We have kept "withdrawn" government documents remaining on the shelves for years after being approved for withdrawal. This approach helps minimize disruption and guarantees that the library maintains a polished and organized look during transition periods.

One of the library's long-term objectives is to remove some shelving units and replace them with seating and study areas. Achieving this goal requires assistance from the university facilities maintenance department, which is also experiencing resource constraints. Despite these challenges, creating more seating and study areas remains a priority to enhance the library's role as a conducive environment for student learning and engagement.

Transitioning Online

As part of our broader strategy to modernize and optimize our collection management, we previously began transitioning our depository collection to a more digital-focused model. We recognized that many print volumes, particularly reference materials, were better suited to an online format due to their frequent updates and the ease of access digital versions provide. Accordingly, we started to disable print deliveries in the Depository Selection Information Management System (DSIMS) and replace them with online options whenever possible. This gradual shift aligned with the official guidelines provided by the FDLP.[14]

Regarding the discoverability of digital government documents, we selected the following collections in our discovery

service, Primo: "Freely Accessible Government documents," "US Government documents," and FRASER publications. "US Government documents" was later disabled, however, because it contains over 250,000 titles and introduced a high volume of non-relevant materials into search results.

Reorganization Plan

The space freed up by withdrawing and digitizing government documents was repurposed to shift and, in some cases, reclassify our general collection, reference materials, and periodicals. Our colleagues in Public Services developed a detailed plan to shift these sections. We started from the end ranges where the government documents were located and worked backward, systematically providing additional space for the general collection. This minimized disruption and allowed for a smooth transition of materials.

The general collection was expanded by reclassifying some reference materials and integrating them into the general collection, ensuring that frequently used resources are more readily available to patrons. The remaining reference materials were relocated to a lower-traffic area with ample seating, natural light, and quiet study space. Periodicals were similarly weeded and relocated to lower-traffic areas, acknowledging that there will be very few additions to that section in the future.

Results

In total, we withdrew 220 titles. This number does not include census documents and prior editions of the US Code, which did not require formal permission for withdrawal. The space reclaimed through these withdrawals has enabled us to shift a portion of the general collection, specifically the QH-SB sections, to the 4th floor, reallocating approximately 288 linear meters of shelving. Once the remaining volumes are removed from the shelf, we anticipate freeing up an additional 244 linear meters. This reallocation of space not only optimizes our physical resources but also enhances the accessibility and organization of the general collection, ultimately improving the overall user experience.

It is important to note that the project described in this case study took place before the FDLP's recent shift to an all-digital distribution model. At that time, our library was already proactively transitioning some of our government document collections to digital formats. We understood the practical advantages of digital formats and were committed to ensuring our collections remained relevant and accessible to our patrons. Despite our willingness to embrace this digital evolution, the recent shift to a completely digital model has raised new concerns. While we acknowledge the efficiencies gained, we grapple with the loss of tangible government documents and the implications this has for our identity as a depository library. In keeping with these shifts, our library has chosen to forgo the limited print distribution options and operates as a fully digital depository. But the transition has forced us to reconsider our role and the balance between embracing digital progress and preserving the historical and symbolic value of physical collections.

Staffing Challenges and Their Impact on Library Services and Collections

Changes and understaffing in all areas of the Armacost Library—professional, paraprofessional, and student employment—have frequently halted the project over the years. Modern staffing challenges in libraries, such as budget constraints, hiring freezes, and the increasing need for specialized skills, significantly impact the ability to maintain consistent and high-quality services.[15] The turnover rates in both professional and paraprofessional positions often result in gaps in institutional knowledge and disruptions in ongoing projects.[16] Student employment, which many libraries rely on for support, is also subject to fluctuations based on budgets, academic schedules, and availability.

As mentioned above, the items scheduled for withdrawal were left in their designated places on the shelf until final approval to remove them was obtained. This approach proved to be advantageous in terms of time management, as it minimized the time spent rearranging books. It also proved to be essential due to unpredictable staffing levels, allowing for greater flexibility in executing the project. This method ensured that despite staffing challenges, progress could be made gradually, without compromising the quality of work or the organization of the collection.

Future Plans

We have identified several areas within our government documents collection that require further attention to optimize their utility and organization. First, it is imperative to review the FDLP lists, Core and Core+ (formerly called Academic Core) to ensure that all essential materials are properly cataloged and accessible. These will be activated in our discovery service, Primo, and we will consider creating Primo Collections or LibGuides for them as well.[17]

In addition, we need to review our electronic government documents resources in Primo. We initially selected a wide array of government titles, but it would be beneficial to curate this collection more effectively. Without proper curation, the excess government documents selections can lead to larger result sets, increasing confusion, reducing search accuracy, and leading to information overload.[18]

The Maps Room has been identified as an ideal location to convert into study rooms, and the majority of our maps are

government documents. While maps are withdrawn in the same manner as regular items, they are more time-consuming to process. Therefore, careful consideration and planning are required to repurpose this space effectively.

Microfiche is not a priority for removal, as these materials take up little physical space. They can be discarded unless they are part of a long run or have specific relevance to California, in which case they must follow standard withdrawal procedures. Each microfiche must be reviewed individually to determine its relevance. Fortunately, those that do not meet state preservation criteria can skip the standard withdrawal process.

Lastly, integrating government documents digital finding aids with online legal and business resources in our LibGuides will enhance accessibility and usability, providing a more cohesive and comprehensive resource for our patrons.[19] Moreover, the university has approved a new Data Science minor, and the library can promote official government data sources in our outreach to these students and faculty.

By addressing these areas, we can improve the organization and functionality of our government documents collection, ensuring it meets the evolving needs of our users.

Practical Lessons Learned

Our local experience revealed several practical lessons. Perhaps the most important insight was the value of beginning with long, legacy serial runs. These long-established sets often occupy entire ranges, see virtually no use in print, and have stable digital counterparts. Focusing on these first allowed us to gain early momentum and reclaim space quickly in ways that were both structurally and psychologically helpful.

We also learned that the most efficient way to identify candidates for withdrawal was to adopt a mobile workflow. Because our bibliographic and holdings records for government documents are incomplete, neither end of the traditional process provided enough information on its own: when standing in the stacks, we often lacked the details needed to confirm digital availability, and when sitting at our desks, we lacked the ability to visualize what was physically on the shelf. Using a mobile device allowed us to conduct the eligibility research when we had the CGP and FDLP guidance in front of us.

Another lesson concerned the importance of keeping volumes in their normal locations while withdrawal permissions were pending. The withdrawal process in California takes several weeks, and removing items prematurely created logistical problems. Leaving everything in place until the final approval preserved the integrity of the stacks, prevented misunderstandings from other departments, and—critically—allowed us to complete a single, coordinated summer shift rather than repeatedly disrupting the collection with incremental moves.

We also found it helpful to maintain a single, cumulative withdrawal list for each phase of the project. This centralized approach made it easier to track what had been reviewed, what had been submitted for permission, and what still required additional inquiry. It also created a defensible record of decisions, which proved essential during periods of staffing turnover.

Together, these lessons formed a practical, repeatable framework that balanced the realities of limited staffing, incomplete metadata, and evolving user expectations.

Future Studies

Future studies should explore strategies for academic libraries to strengthen partnerships with the FDLP to enhance the preservation and accessibility of digital government documents. Collaborative efforts could focus on developing shared best practices for digital archiving, metadata management, and ensuring the long-term integrity of born-digital materials. Outreach initiatives should be investigated to improve user engagement with digital government documents such as creating targeted information literacy programs and integrating digital documents more effectively into the library's discovery tools and research guides. Finally, there should be an examination of the potential implications and outcomes for libraries considering a departure from the FDLP program. This research needs to assess the risks and benefits of this approach, such as its impact on access to government information and the resources required to maintain a robust independent digital collection. Understanding these factors will be crucial for libraries as they navigate their roles in a digital-first information landscape.

Conclusion

Our experience illustrates that while the transition away from physical documents has been challenging, it has also driven a necessary evolution. The shift to an all-digital FDLP requires us to reassess our role as depository libraries in the absence of the tangible materials that once defined our purpose. This change is not merely logistical; it reflects a broader transformation in the values and practices shaping our responsibilities as public information stewards.

Armacost's strategic initiative to withdraw and transition government documents to digital formats reflects broader trends within academic libraries toward modernization and optimized space utilization. By carefully evaluating digital availability and aligning our withdrawals with institutional needs, we have maintained a relevant and accessible collection while also repurposing valuable space to enhance the overall learning environment.

As we continue to refine our digital collection and improve discoverability and access, the library is well-positioned to meet the future demands of our patrons. The transition to an all-online

depository reflects not only a necessary adaptation to technological changes but also a forward-looking approach that will sustain our relevance and utility for years to come.

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"It's Late": How FRUS Volume Organization Teaches History (and Makes a Massive Backlog)

Sarah Hensler

Introduction

Any archivist who works with new acquisitions must be comfortable with a backlog, but the Foreign Relations of the United States series seems to have pushed that idea to its limit. Originally conceived in 1861 as a contemporary document collection, designed to increase public awareness of international affairs and support government transparency, the Foreign Relations (FRUS) archive currently wades through a twenty-five-year pile-up. Their most recent chronological publication covers the end of the Clinton administration in 2000. In 2025, they plan to release volumes to wrap up the 1977–1980 Carter administration.[1]

Aside from its chronic tardiness, the Office of the Historian organizes the FRUS archives uniquely, grouped by presidential administration and divided into volumes by geographic region and/or topic. There are no hard and fast rules to segmentation. High-tension areas might receive several books, while editors combine multiple other continents into one volume. The exact number of volumes per year varies. Furthermore, the FRUS archives are significantly more curated than other government document compilations. The Office of the Historian runs a team of full-access historians to research, compile, and annotate FRUS volumes on different subject matters, which go through declassification review before publication. Researchers are especially interested in each volume's newly declassified documents in the modern era. This is one of the most significant contributing factors to the publication backlog.

Because the volume organization is so subjective, titles and volume size alone can demonstrate US foreign policy priorities from the last 150 years. This report seeks to answer questions about those priorities, including: how has FRUS volume organization shifted over time, what regions have FRUS volumes prioritized in their naming and organization, and how does FRUS volume organization support or otherwise impact foreign relations research?

Literature Review

In 2015, McAllister et al., FRUS historians, released an autoethnography titled *Toward "Thorough, Accurate, and Reliable": A History of the Foreign Relations of the United States Series*. This book is indispensable for any reader hoping to understand the mission behind FRUS or the historical factors that impact series contents. Authors William B. McAllister et al. argue that users can divide FRUS policy into "immediate accountability" eras from the 1790s to the 1920s and "negotiating responsible historical transparency" from the 1920s on. That transitional window of the 1920s–1930s marked the start of FRUS's substantial backlog (hence the implication that FRUS editors abandoned "immediate accountability" in favor of long-term historical transparency).[2] *Toward "Thorough, Accurate, and Reliable"* focuses on the information in each volume, not the volumes themselves. Users must infer details about volume organization; for example, it discusses how certain countries might have their books delayed due to declassification issues, indicating that information security is likely a factor in volume arrangement.[3]

On the flip side, Gökberk Özsoy et al.'s KG-FRUS novel graph-based dataset focuses solely on the metadata trends within FRUS. This 2023 study combined written text with graphs to illustrate the 217 years of FRUS documents, specifically through document-to-document metadata connections. The researchers created co-occurrence graphs to track relationships between named entities (people, jobs, countries, topics of redacted content, etc.), then contextualized them through Wikidata. Rather than drawing historical conclusions about the FRUS series, Özsoy tested new tag and search methods to increase user engagement and support a better understanding of document contents.[4] The KG-FRUS dataset proves how an entity with high quantitative

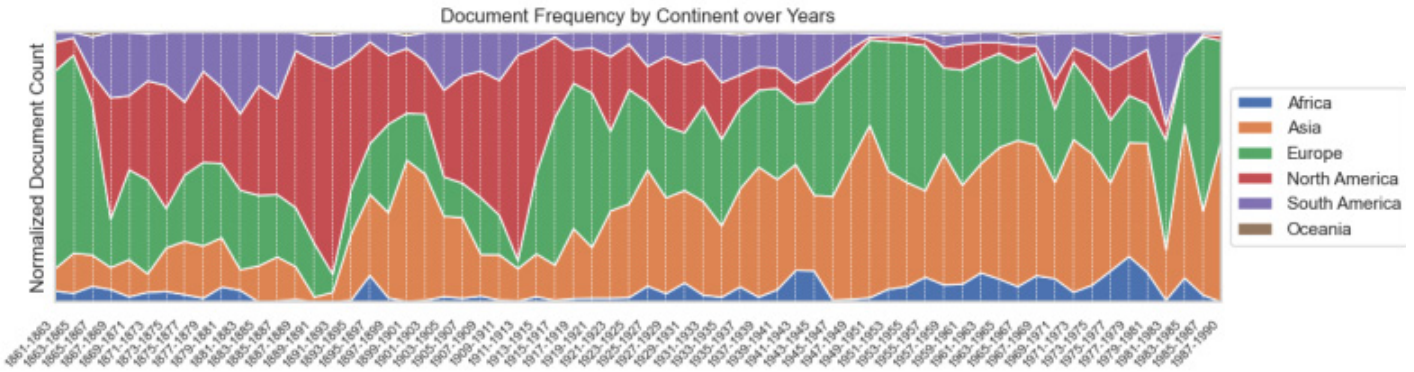

Figure 1. Stacked document count by source continent over years (excluding documents originating from the United States), in periods of two years. "KG-FRUS" dataset, Gökberk Özsoy et al. CC BY-NC-SA.

use in the FRUS series has better documentation, better networking to related concepts, and higher engagement than less commonly occurring peers, even without considering the quality of those appearances. In the context of series organization, this suggests that the mere mention of a region in one volume title may improve that region's metadata presence across every other volume where it appears.

Methodology

The FRUS archives reached a uniform, topical organization system in 1933, so this study begins its dataset there and continues through the end of the Eisenhower presidency in 1960. This creates roughly thirty years of data to analyze without encroaching on the Kennedy assassination or simply getting too big for a single researcher to manage. The chosen dataset includes each title, the year(s) covered, the presidential administration, the volume number within the series, and the total document count. All characters and numbers in the dataset are listed exactly as written on the FRUS online archive. This was all fed into a spreadsheet, which could then compare descriptive data to the item's size. In other words, this report could determine how prolific a given administration, topic, or year was, based on how many FRUS documents were associated with it. The volume number within the series also creates a ranking system from "first published" down to "most recently published." The study hoped to find a trend in what topics get published first from each administration and if there is any evidence to suggest why those titles roll out before the others.

This study excluded volumes that are yet to be released. The backlog is such that three FRUS volumes are currently in production and forty-one volumes are under declassification review. While the titles, topics, years, and administrations for those volumes are public knowledge, they are still subject to change and lack any final document count, which is the most critical statistic for quantitative evaluation.

The data regarding multi year compilation volumes is further limited and this study could not easily code it to produce annual output values. This study divides those document counts by the number of years represented in the volume for estimation. However, that number is only an average and doesn't account for some years producing more content than others. It is interesting to note that later FRUS volumes, especially those extending after this study's dataset, are more likely to include multiple years. This makes them more difficult to analyze with straight numbers and more reliant on nuanced, content-based research.

In total, the study analyzed a total sample size of 159,331 documents from 227 volumes, spanning the years 1933 to 1960.[5] This included the complete FRUS collections from presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower.

Analysis and Findings

First, the data shows that FRUS produced an average of approximately 5.89 volumes per administration year. It is essential to know that this is not the average number of publications per year, as those are lower (and again, severely backlogged); rather, this is the average volume needed to encapsulate a year of foreign relations. Although the numbers appear to spike at the end of the sample size in the chart below, those years are when FRUS switched to releasing volumes in three-year increments. The data accounts for this by dividing the number of volumes by three.

Secondly, text analysis of the titles proves that 20th-century FRUS strongly emphasized Europe, but that increasing region specificity might make it less searchable than other geographic designations. For example, Asia, Africa, and the Americas scored best on name consistency. FRUS labels East Asia as "Far East," and the Americas are called "American Republics." Africa is referred to as a whole continent rather than individual countries. Scholars can debate on how accurate these descriptors are,

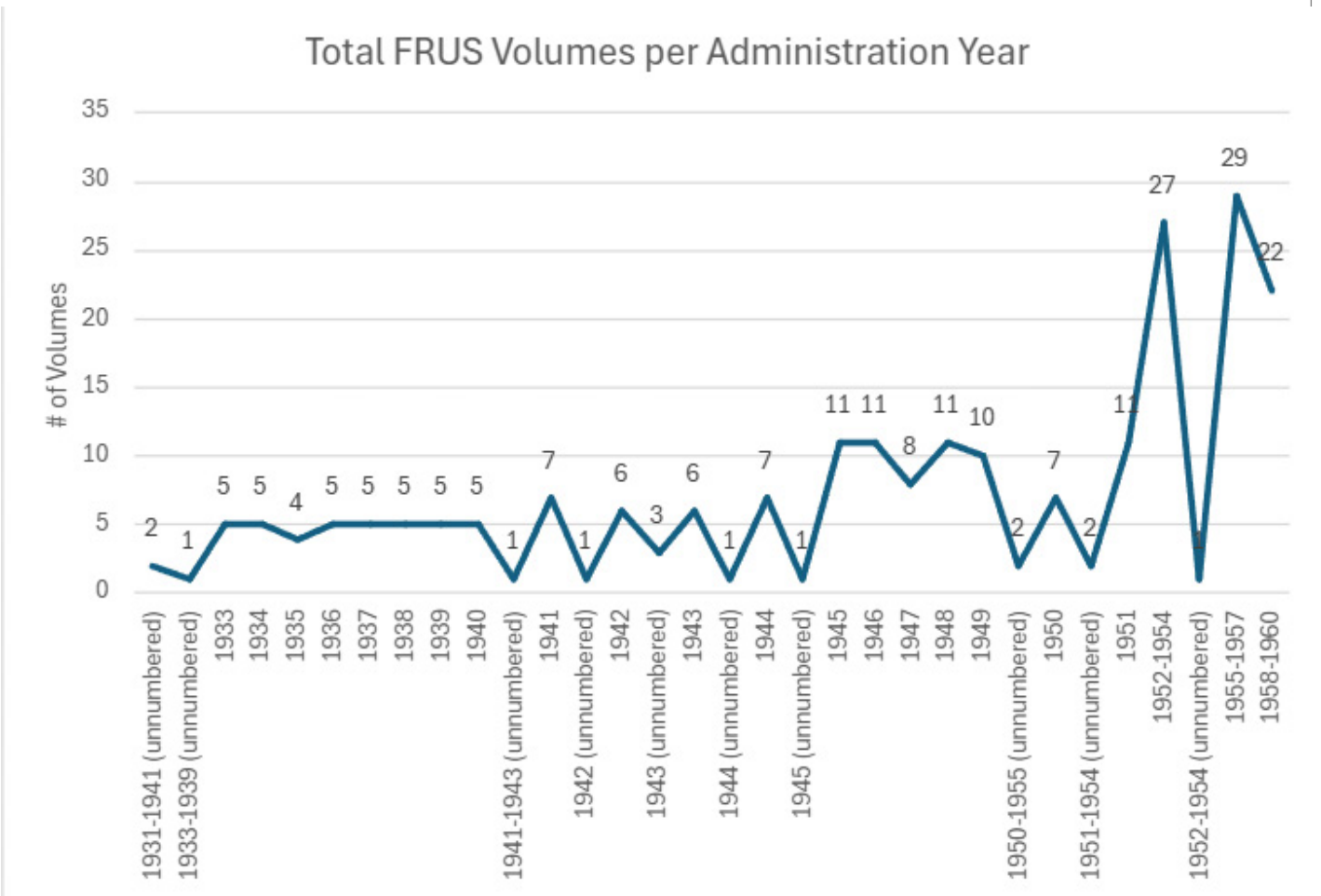

Figure 2. FRUS volume counts by year. Data compiled by Sarah Hensler.

but what they lack in nuance, they make up for in consistency. Twenty-four of twenty-seven African volumes and thirty of fifty-six East Asian volumes share matching names. This miniature controlled vocabulary makes these volumes easier to find because they are all labeled similarly. In reverse, the volumes sometimes title Europe by country, continent, and sub region, often arbitrarily determined and ill-defined in the book. The word "Europe(an)" appeared forty-five times in the titles, but in various phrase combinations, and that still doesn't come close to the sixty-eight total volumes concerning Europe.

Once the titles are clustered by region, it is finally possible to see some trends in diplomatic relations. Most notably, Africa only appears in twenty-seven volumes and doesn't receive a standalone book until vol. 18 of the 1955–1957 series (the 195th volume in the study). It only received one use of a sub-region title, and no African countries were referred to by name. By contrast, China racked up twenty-one direct title mentions and has seven standalone volumes. Africa also appears in titles with up to four unrelated regions stuck together.

Some regions perform well during specific eras but come and go as global politics shift. Great Britain did this in the early years: the British Commonwealth appeared in titles yearly until 1947, when it abruptly stopped and was absorbed into broader European categories. Iran made its FRUS title debut in 1951 and stayed on through the end of the sample data. The series listed Germany and Austria in 1945. Countries with brief blips on the radar are more likely to represent specific events than long-term American diplomatic affairs. Great Britain featured heavily in the 1930s and 1940s because they were a dominant European ally with a massive lend-lease agreement. As the United States took on its post war role as the new Western superpower, it no longer relied on Britain to mediate relationships across the Atlantic. Meanwhile, Germany and Austria couldn't appear before 1945 because the United States had no standing relationship with the Nazi regime. Diplomacy began again after the war, with the organization of Allied-occupied zones.

The longest volumes were, by and large, from the immediate post war era. Six of the twenty longest volumes were from 1945, and ten out of twenty fit between 1945 and 1950. The oldest was from 1939, and the newest covered 1952 to 1954. In other words, FRUS produced all the largest volumes during fifteen years, and 50 percent represented just 18 percent of the total time span.

227 records

Show as: rows **records** Show: 5 10 **25** 50 100 500 1000 records Sort

All	Year	Volume #	Title/Topic	Administration	Document Count
123.	1949	8	Far East, China	Truman	1698
157.	1952-1954	9	Near East, Middle East	Truman, Eisenhower	1573
75.	1944	7	American Republics	Roosevelt	1556
124.	1949	9	Far East, China	Truman	1463
171.	1945	2	Potsdam Conference	Truman	1433
164.	1952-1954	13	Indochina	Truman, Eisenhower	1421
72.	1944	4	Europe	Roosevelt	1339
71.	1944	3	British Commonwealth, Europe	Roosevelt	1321
83.	1945	8	Near East, Africa	Roosevelt, Truman	1294
39.	1940	5	American Republics	Roosevelt	1267
73.	1944	5	Near East, South Asia, Africa, Far East	Roosevelt	1253
120.	1949	6	Near East, South Asia, Africa	Truman	1242
57.	1943	4	Near East, Africa	Roosevelt	1233
84.	1945	9	American Republics	Roosevelt, Truman	1216
79.	1945	4	Europe	Roosevelt, Truman	1214
78.	1945	3	European Advisory Commission, Austria, Germany	Roosevelt, Truman	1206
160.	1952-1954	11	Africa, South Asia	Truman, Eisenhower	1166
102.	1947	7	Far East, China	Truman	1164
30.	1939	1	General	Roosevelt	1157
82.	1945	7	Far East, China	Roosevelt, Truman	1155
95.	1946	11	American Republics	Truman	1135
22.	1937	3	Far East	Roosevelt	1112
94.	1946	10	Far East, China	Truman	1111

Figure 3. OpenRefine analysis of twenty volumes with most documents. Compiled by Sarah Hensler.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect is that titles with more regions listed don't necessarily have more documents than their single-topic peers. Eight of the twenty titles only covered one area (although the size of that area could vary greatly). An additional nine titles covered two areas, many of which functioned like sub headings; that is, "Europe, British Commonwealth" or "Far East, China." Regional distribution was also remarkably flat; American Republics, Far East, Near East, Africa, and Europe were all named four or five times apiece.

These findings are limited by the study's methodology, particularly in the rough division of multi year volumes and the lack of data after 1960. However, it is interesting that later FRUS volumes are more likely to span multiple years and avoid regional divides.

Separate from the dataset itself, this study also investigated the declassification process behind the FRUS series. The most recent key legislation was the 1991 H.R. 1415, "Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993," now Public Law 102-138. Section 198 of H.R. 1415 amends explicitly the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, also called the FRUS Statute, and authorizes Office of the Historian workers to compile all necessary documents for future volumes.[6] It also mandates the publication of all FRUS volumes within thirty years of the events they discuss. In his signing statement, President George H.W. Bush said:

> This section also must be interpreted in conformity with my constitutional responsibility and authority to protect the United States' national security by preventing the disclosure of state secrets and protecting deliberative communications within the executive branch. To the extent that section 198 addressed the standards for declassification of national security information, it will be interpreted to effect no change in the standards outlined in the existing Executive Order on national security information. Further, section 198 will be implemented in a manner and on a schedule that will not risk ill-considered release of protected information.[7]

This statement illustrates the tensions between the need for secrecy and the desire for "Thorough, Accurate, and Reliable" documentation. It appears to be an early example of adversarial relations between the president and the historian of the United States.

The combination of selective volume grouping and delayed publication helps the government maintain control and privacy over the historical narrative. Delaying the publications by thirty years allows some events to fade from public memory, and consistent trends in volume arrangement, for or against certain regions, influence user expectations about the documents they can access. While it may be comparatively easy for a researcher to focus on an underreported current event, it is much harder for historians to investigate events that were semi-ignored thirty years ago and don't have a clearly defined space in the FRUS volume organization.

Conclusion

The Foreign Relations of the United States series has worked hard to polish its organization and research for users, especially in the last thirty years. While the old adage claims that one shouldn't judge books by their covers, FRUS covers have proven to be excellent gauges of American diplomatic priorities and mindsets throughout history. When users follow FRUS's historical arrangement system, it forces them to think like the authors and editors did, which can encourage understanding of foreign affairs in that era. Users should not take these perspectives lightly. The dataset suggests that countries with consistency in their identity received better metadata than those without. However, that consistency only benefited those countries if the FRUS editors identified their documents as valuable. The titles and document counts show intentional gaps in the FRUS series, brought on by historical disinterest in or bias against certain global regions. One area for further research would be to combine this report's work at the volume/serialization level with document-level work akin to the *KG-FRUS* visualizations. Comparing those datasets might allow users to determine whether biases in the FRUS series stem from diplomats or historians.

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Acid Rain: The EPA's Approach to Water Pollution

Avery Johnson and Lily Larsen

Introduction

The United States government's approach to addressing acid rain has evolved over the past several decades, with the implementation of new methods for tracking emissions and targeting polluters. The government's response to acid rain before 1990 was to place responsibility on individual citizens without regulating the power sector, which is the source of most acid rain–causing pollutants. With the Title IV amendment to the Clean Air Act (also known as the Acid Rain Program) in 1990, the power industry began to face stricter regulations.[1] The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) started tracking emissions of SO_2 and NO_x using the Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET) system in 1991.[2] Although commercial emitters are the primary source of these pollutants, CASTNET only measures non point source pollutants, effectively ignoring commercial sources that originate these pollutants.

Many government publications also fail to reflect the actual major drivers of environmental degradation, instead focusing on the need for individual citizens to contribute to the solution. *Learning About Acid Rain*, a middle-school guide, recommends that students turn off lights when not in use, use alternate forms of transportation, and reduce emissions by lowering their thermostat in the winter.[3] While the government's approach has aimed at increasing individual energy saving, the Acid Rain Program (ARP) has been effective at lowering emissions from the power sector. ARP's market-based regulations in the 1990s included limited authorizations to emit, resulting in a 16.3-million-ton reduction in SO_2 emissions by 2021.[4] As of November 2024, the ARP is up for public comment before it is renewed.[5] This comment period is an opportunity to discuss critical legislation regarding corporate emissions and the landscape of climate change, responsibility, and agency.

Problems and Early Solutions

Acid rain is a phenomenon that occurs when sulfur dioxide (SO_2) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) are emitted into the atmosphere. They create sulfuric and nitric acid when combined with water.[6] Natural events, such as volcanic eruptions or wildfires, can cause acid rain. Still, it is also a significant hallmark of anthropogenic environmental degradation caused by "burning fossil fuels, manufacturing, oil refineries, electricity generation, and vehicles."[7] Power plants are one of the most significant anthropogenic contributors to acid rain. When fossil fuels are burned in large quantities to generate electricity, emissions that cause acid rain are intensified and can lead to severe degradation of local ecosystems.

In the 1950s, scientists began to document the devastating impacts of acid rain on ecosystems in the United States. Lakes and soil are particularly vulnerable to the effects of acid rain, which can last for many decades after an initial disturbance. The sulfuric and nitric acids found in acid rain lower the pH of soil and water, which can lead to wildlife and plant die-offs, as well as drastic ecosystem changes. In the 1960s, one of the worst cases of acid deposition and subsequent environmental degradation drew public attention in the United States. The Adirondack and Catskill mountain ranges experienced both tree and aquatic life die-offs due to acidic soils and water systems.[8] Local programs, such as the Adirondack Long Term Monitoring Program and New York's Acid Deposition Monitoring Network, as well as large-scale federal programs like the Acid Rain Program and the CASTNET Monitoring Program, have contributed to improving these conditions.[9] However, these ecosystems have not yet fully recovered from this disturbance and are likely to remain negatively impacted for years to come.[10]

Corporate Regulation

The impact in the Adirondack and Catskill mountain ranges prompted concerned citizens, scientists, and policymakers to pursue legislative action during the mid-20th century and beyond. Although this is one of the most egregious examples, acid rain negatively impacted most of the United States and disrupted vast swaths of natural land. Because rain is not confined

to a specific geographic area, pollution from one location can be transported by wind currents many miles to a new location. Acid rain crosses state lines, tribal nations, and socioeconomic boundaries. It has adverse impacts in both rural and urban areas, as it can erode manufactured structures in cities and cause issues with heart function (including heart attacks) and worsen lung function in humans, particularly for people who already have pre existing medical conditions.[11]

These factors ultimately pushed the federal government to become increasingly involved in regulating the power industry. Acid rain is a product of both air and water pollution, and as such, air pollution was first federally legislated by inclusion in the Water Pollution Act of 1955.[12] As Forest Service researchers at New Hampshire's Hubbard Brook and scientific centers across America began to identify the depth and severity of the acid rain problem, public and academic concern spurred Congress to pass the Clean Air Act of 1963. This act established funding and legislative justification for increased federal oversight of air pollution.[13] However, it soon became apparent that amendments to this act were necessary to promote efficiency and reduce emissions. In 1970, President Nixon authorized the organization of the EPA, which holds the authority to set state and tribal pollution compliance standards. The initial organization plan included an Air Pollution Control Office, tasked with "the achievement of a wholesome air environment through development of air pollution control technology."[14] The same year saw amendments to the Clean Air Act, which set future reduction goals and significantly strengthened the government's ability to enforce regulations. Acid rain was not the only environmental hazard targeted by the EPA's Clean Air Act programs; particle pollution, carbon monoxide, ground-level ozone, and lead are also tracked, regulated, and reduced through the policies and programs established by the Clean Air Act.[15]

This act laid the groundwork for subsequent amendments in the 1990s that established the CASTNET monitoring system.[16] CASTNET sites across America measure point pollution (pollutant aggregations) to track anthropogenic and natural pollution levels and assess the progress of emission reduction programs. One major reduction program is the ARP, which operates a "cap-and-trade" system founded on private, free market principles. The ARP required major emitters to reduce emissions to half the levels of 1980. This program targeted the power sector, which is responsible for nearly 70 percent of SO_2 and 40 percent of NO_x emissions in the United States.[17] The majority of the power sector is owned and operated by "192 Investor-Owned Utilities (IOUs) [who] account for a significant portion of net generation (38%), transmission (80%), and distribution (50%)."[18] To enforce and incentivize reduction strategies of these utility companies that operate power plants, the EPA initiated an allowance market. After setting a cap on the total amount of allowable pollution, the EPA created a certain number of allowances (permits to pollute) that are available to anyone—a private citizen, independent power company, or traditional utility. These allowances are partially allocated to existing utilities, and the remainder is sold directly or through an auction. If an allowances owner does not use all their allowances, they can sell, trade, or store them for later use.[19] This enables an efficient and cost-effective method of distributing permits without overextending the EPA's resources.

One allowance is worth one ton of released SO_2. The cap-and-trade program sells allowances based on SO_2, as most NO_x emissions originate from motor vehicles. The EPA sets requirements for vehicle manufacturers, including smog tests and gasoline refinement, and requires utilities to provide data on both their SO_2 and NO_x emissions.[20] From the start of these programs in 1991 to the present, it's clear that the ARP and the Clean Air Act have been highly effective in reducing SO_2 and NO_x emissions in the United States. Progress reports from the power sector for 2021 have recorded full compliance with ARP and an overall 94 percent reduction in SO_2 emissions from 1990 levels, as well as an 85 percent reduction in NO_x emissions from 2000 levels. The Eastern US environment, home to the Adirondack and Catskill mountains, has demonstrated considerable recovery in the past twenty years, with wet sulfate deposition down by 71 percent.[21]

Although there have been regulatory advances in the past few decades to hold corporations more accountable for their pollution, this is an ongoing battle. The ARP, which was open to public comment and renewal in November 2024, establishes federal regulations that require compliance by utilities and other major emitters.[22] The program "sets a permanent cap on the total amount of SO_2 that may be emitted by electric generating units (EGUs) in the contiguous United States." In contrast, the NO_x program "applies to a subset of coal-fired EGUs and is closer to a traditional, rate-based regulatory system."[23] The ARP, administered by the EPA, regulates the power sector's allowable emissions. It has been effective in reducing emissions as opposed to previous weaker regulations but still allows corporations to pollute the atmosphere by buying permits to emit pollutants.

Messaging Pushing for Individual Responsibility

Targeting traditional and independent power utilities via the allowances market and establishing federal caps on allowable emissions has made the most difference in pollution reduction. However, even within these programs targeting major emitters, consumers and private citizens are still held responsible for a considerable amount of pollution. The ARP awards bonus

allowances to utilities that "encourag[e] energy conservation by customers so that less power needs to be produced."[24] Throughout public-facing government documents intended to educate Americans about acid rain and pollution emissions, narratives emphasizing individual responsibility and agency are present. The EPA's 1991 press release regarding the Clean Air Act, "New EPA Rule Gives Every American Right to Buy and Sell Acid Rain Emissions," emphasizes both the free market aspect of the allowances program and the individual roles in regulating acid rain.[25]

The EPA's *Plain English Guide to the Clean Air Act* directs citizens to drive less often, burn less wood, buy energy-saving appliances, plant deciduous trees to keep houses cool, wash clothing with cold water, buy rechargeable batteries, refill the gas in your car during the evenings, and recycle, and it also explains the policies and history of the ARP.[26] While this advice is essential, and individual citizens should understand their role in pollution and do what they can to reduce their impact, the role that large utility companies play is often understated in public communication. The EPA encourages contacting state and local departments for more information. Still, this guide underemphasizes both citizens' ability to hold their utility companies and representatives accountable for pollution and the relative lack of influence citizens have regarding pollution. Power sector legislation and regulation have proven successful and effective in reducing SO_2 and NO_x because they target the pollution source—power plants—and not the consumers of under regulated products.

Communications with the public have not followed a similar pattern of change in response to regulation. In fact, the message to the public has remained relatively stagnant as the acid rain problem and subsequent regulations have fluctuated. A 1990 publication from the EPA titled *Acid Rain: A Student's First Sourcebook* offers this solution for individuals wanting to make a difference:

> Each person who turns off lights when no one is using them and uses energy-saving appliances reduces the amount of energy a power plant needs to produce. When less power needs to be produced, pollution from power plants decreases. Car-pooling, using public transportation, and walking reduce the pollutants that come from vehicles. The sum total of all of these individual actions can be very great indeed.[27]

The book also discusses the root causes of acid rain (mainly the burning of fossil fuels). It has sections on research being conducted and addresses the need for installing scrubbers on power plants' smokestacks and transitioning to alternative energy production. This source does not ignore the cause of the problem but suggests that the actions of individual people are a significant part of the issue, rather than the systemic biases toward fossil fuel energy production that contribute to acid rain.

This messaging to the public has stayed relatively consistent throughout regulation changes. *Learning About Acid Rain: A Teacher's Guide for Grades 6 Through 8* is a 2008 publication from Clean Air Market Programs (a division of the EPA) and is intended for in-classroom learning. It covers the scientific reasons for acid rain, as well as the negative environmental consequences. The publication also includes a section on what individuals can do to address the issue, recommending that students turn off lights when not in use, use alternative forms of transportation, and lower their thermostat in the winter to reduce emissions.[28] Although these are not harmful suggestions, they fail to address the root of the issue, like the other EPA-produced student guide from eighteen years earlier.

Effectiveness and Implications for Environmental Justice

Regulations and emissions levels have changed. Although the acid rain issue is not entirely solved, some progress has been made. This progress, however, has not been reflected in public messaging over the last several decades. Individual responsibility is essential, but the problem does not seem to be a lack of awareness but rather a lack of ability to effect significant systemic changes in the energy production landscape. The present landscape of pollution emission and climate change remains rocky. Researchers continue to develop methods for revitalizing forests, soils, and lakes to improve affected environments. Hubbard Brook scientists have experimented with the "effects of adding calcium back to the soil. At study sites within Hubbard Brook, trees such as Sugar Maple have displayed significant improvements in health after calcium reapplication. These trees exhibit larger, healthier leaves, increased water use—known as evapotranspiration—and less winter injury."[29] Increasing funding for and awareness of climate science initiatives and programs is essential in our fight toward a healthier and more resilient natural environment.

The ARP has proven effective at forcing utility companies to reduce their emissions. However, addressing and resolving pollution issues in the United States, which directly contribute to anthropogenic climate change and global warming, cannot stop there. The EPA's approach to acid rain through the ARP can be adapted by other programs within the EPA and related agencies to combat corporate sources of emissions. Citizens need access to information on the major polluters and the legal avenues for increasing emission restrictions. When discussing individuals'

responsibilities, agencies must recognize that citizens across the United States have unequal levels of power and agency based on their race, gender, and socioeconomic status. People may not be able to afford energy-efficient products or swaps or lack access to cleaner options, such as those living in counties and states without robust public transportation. Those who lack the privilege to exercise agency in these matters are also often the ones hurt most by environmental degradation. According to the EPA's 2021 Power Sector Progress Report, "program evaluation through an environmental justice lens shows more disadvantaged people living near power plants with higher emissions."[30] The ARP's success provides evidence that targeting major emitters, setting caps on the total allowable amount of emissions, and strictly enforcing these regulations can work. Protecting the EPA's regulatory authority, monitoring utility companies' activities, and continually striving for further emissions reductions are more necessary now than ever, as the climate crisis wreaks havoc on our communities, environments, and homes.

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Summaries of GODORT Committees, Interest Groups, and Task Forces from the January 12–16, 2026, Virtual Winter Meetings

Andie Craley, GODORT Past Chair, Compiler

Introduction

The Virtual Winter Meetings for GODORT Committees, Interest Groups, and Task Forces were held January 12–16, 2026. Various slides and recordings are found on the GODORT 2026 Winter Meetings Libguide.[1] Below are summaries from the meetings, labeled with the title of the Committee, Interest Group, or Task Force and the Chair of said Committee, Interest Group, or Task Force. The summaries are organized in alphabetical order based on title of the Committee, Interest Group, or Task Force.

Awards/Conference Committee—Emily Rogers

The Awards/Conference Committee met virtually at 11:00 a.m. CST on Thursday, January 15. The Committee agreed to pursue the Glessner House, Chicago, as the venue for the GODORT Awards Reception, to be held the evening of Sunday, June 28, during ALA Annual. The committee also selected the awards recipients for 2026, which were presented to Steering later that day.

Cataloging Committee—Liza Weisbrod

The Cataloging Committee met virtually at 2:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, January 15. The Committee reviewed the Library of Congress decision to remove subfield $ v from 650 fields beginning in February 2026, noting its impact on cataloging practices, especially for video games and government documents. The treasurer reported a net loss for GODORT for FY 2025, prompting discussion of new revenue options such as paid webinars or pre-conference events. Updates to the Cataloging Toolboxes and the continued need for LibGuides were shared, along with possible plans for accessibility training. The Committee is looking for volunteers to update the Cataloging Toolboxes.[2] Interested people should contact Gwen Sinclair (gsinclai@hawaii.edu). Finally, the Committee noted that reorganization recommendations are expected in June, including a possible shift of the Cataloging Committee toward an interest-group structure to broaden participation.

Development Committee—Shari Laster

The Development Committee met virtually at 12:00 p.m. CST on Friday, January 16. The Committee reported seeking leads to vendors to ask for support for key initiatives, including the Preservation Grant and Awards Reception. Anyone with suggestions for vendors or questions about fundraising needs was encouraged to reach out to Shari Laster (shari.laster@gmail.com).

Education Committee—Aaron Wilson

The Education Committee met virtually at 2:00 p.m. CST on Friday, January 16. The Committee reported updates on a possible Sunshine Week webinar and Voter and Elections Toolkits (VETK). The Committee also reported seeking VETK Toolkit Editors from the following states: Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York,

Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Interested parties should reach out to Aaron Wilson (awilso26@umd.edu) to claim a state. Toolkits will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

Federal Information Interest Group (FIIG)—Hayley Johnson

The Federal Information Interest Group (FIIG) met virtually at 11:00 a.m. CST on Friday, January 16. Their meeting featured updates from the Government Publishing Office (GPO). Scott Matheson, Superintendent of Documents and Cindy Etkin, Senior Program Planning Specialist (Librarian), presented a recap of FY 2025 accomplishments and outlined plans for the coming year across Federal Depository Support Services (FDSS), Metadata and Collection Services (MCS), and Projects and Systems (P&S).

General Membership Meeting—Julia Ezzo

Chair Julia Ezzo hosted the General Membership meeting virtually at 12:00 p.m. CST on Monday, January 12. They approved the Minutes from the June 2025 Annual General Membership Meeting, reviewed the Virtual Winter Meeting Schedule and GODORT Friday Chats, and provided updates regarding changes to elected positions and ALA's financial situation. The Treasurer's report and action items or reports from Committees were shared.

GODORT 101—Getting to Know the Government Documents Round Table—Julia Ezzo

Chair Julia Ezzo hosted a GODORT 101 Meeting virtually at 11:00 a.m. CST on Monday, January 12 to introduce the activities and offerings of GODORT. The following topics, with associated resources, were discussed: History and Purpose[3]; Elected Officers, Awards, Grants, and Scholarships[4]; Friday Chats and Help! Webinars[5]; Committees, Projects, and Resources[6]; and Publications and Resources.[7]

Government Information for Children (GIC)—Connie Williams

The Government Information for Children (GIC) Committee met virtually at 12:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, January 13. The Committee gave no updates, instead using the meeting to discuss needs related to LibGuides.

International Documents Task Force (IDTF)—Michael Alguire

The International Documents Task Force (IDTF) met virtually at 3:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, January 13. Their meeting featured publisher/vendor updates from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library and its Depository, UN Publications, and Coherent Digital, LLC. These updates were followed by an open discussion, which focused on two topics: firstly, the ramifications of Trump Administration's January 2026 announcement that it will be withdrawing the United States from sixty-six international organizations and, secondly, recent difficulties ingesting World Bank and OECD records into databases like Ex Libris's ALMA platform.

Legislation Committee—Lisa Pritchard

The Legislation Committee met virtually at 1:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, January 12. The Committee hosted Amelia N. Aldred, Deputy Director, State & Local Advocacy, ALA Office of Public Policy and Advocacy, who gave a presentation about work on local and state issues, the work of the Public Policy and Advocacy Office, and a new project to track state legislation that negatively impacts library workers, library services and governance, or the freedom to read. Several members of GODORT agreed to help with the project.

Committee activities since the June 2025 meeting were noted, as follows:

- The Committee drafted a letter of appreciation, which was later approved by the Steering Committee and sent by GODORT President Julia Ezzo, to the Government Publishing Office recognizing their efforts to host the Fall 2025 FDLP Conference.
- The Committee proposed the resolution "ALA Council Resolution to Support and Commend the Work of Librarians and Institutions Preserving Government Information since January 2, 2025," which was approved by GODORT Steering, and brought forward by Small Round Table Councilor Ben Grantham Aldred and ALA At-Large Council Member Aaron M. Wilson at ALA's Winter 2026 meeting.

Membership/Nominating Committee—Andie Craley

The Membership/Nominating Committee met virtually at 2:00 p.m. CST on Tuesday, January 13. They hosted Tina Coleman, Membership Marketing Specialist in ALA's Member Relations & Services Office, and one of the staff liaisons for the Membership Committee and the Membership Promotion Task Force was a guest presenter, who gave some pointers on marketing collaborative efforts among Round Tables to attract memberships. The GODORT Steering–approved slate of

Nominations for GODORT elected positions of Chair-Elect, Secretary, and Councilor and for Depository Library Council (DLC) was sent to ALA Staff Liaison. GODORT elected position nominees were notified of their candidacy status and asked to fill out the candidate biographical form in the ALA portal by December 19. DLC nominees were notified and asked to submit their letters and resumes/CV in PDF format to a link provided by ALA Staff Liaison by December 19. The remaining task is to get the information from the ALA collection site to the GPO's form, which they are using to centralize all DLC nominees, by January 30. By the next committee meeting on February 3, the Committee will be working to have a proposed revised PPM for the combined Membership & Nominating Committee. A suggestion was made to reach out and network with the Federal & Armed Forces Libraries (FAFLIG), which is an Interest Group under Reference & User Services Association (RUSA), a division under ALA.

Notable Documents Panel—Jennifer Castle

The Notable Documents Panel met virtually at 3:00 p.m. CST on Monday, January 12. The Panel held a training session for its members.

Programming/Help/Kenya Flash Committee—Elizabeth Sanders

The Programming/Help/Kenya Flash Committee met virtually at 3:00 p.m. CST on Friday, January 16. The Committee reported the details regarding the 2026 Chair's Program information, was submitted to ALA, as follows:

- Date & Time: Saturday, June 27, 2026, 2:30–3:30 p.m.
- Title: 150 Years of Government Information at ALA: Sesquicentennial of Government Documents Librarianship
- Speakers: Bernadine Abbot Hoduski, Sarah Erekson chair/potential participant
- Brief Description: Building off Susan Grabler's 1995 article "Government Information of, by, and for the People: The Changing Mission of the American Library Association's Public Documents Committee, 1876–1956," this program will feature panelists discussing early government information issues in libraries and how the American Library Association (ALA) provided a forum to address them.

The Committee also reported the details for the GOROT Juried Proposal for ALA 2026 that was accepted, as follows:

- Date & Time: TBD
- Title: Government Information Lifeguards: Preserving Public Access to our Nation's Digital Resources
- Speakers: Peter Musser, Digital Public Goods Library & James R. Jacobs, Stanford University
- Brief Summary: Preserving and maintaining accessibility to digital information and resources have always been a concern of librarians due to the ephemeral nature of the internet. This topic has become more urgent given the loss of information across the federal government domain. In this panel discussion, experts from various academic institutions and non-profit organizations will discuss their efforts in preserving and providing access to digital government information. Presenters will share the why's of their work, their knowledge, and their resources.

The Committee reported that the current Resident of the Kenya S. Flash Residency at Yale Library, Nick Wantsala, could be a potential speaker for the Kenya Flash Lecture Series and would be contacted to confirm interest and availability.

Publications Committee—Jennifer Castle

The Publications Committee met virtually at 2:00 p.m. CST on Monday, January 12. The Committee approved the Minutes from the October 3, 2025 meeting. They announced that the Fall and Winter 2025 issues for *Documents to the People* (*DttP*) were released, with the Spring 2026 issue in progress. They reported that the DttP Book Review Editor had stepped off from the position and the editorial board. They discussed the financial situation affecting *DttP* and other ALA published journals and the desire to keep the journal afloat.

Rare & Endangered Government Publications Committee (REGP)—Susanne Caro

The New Rare and Endangered Government Publications Committee (REGP) met virtually at 12:00 p.m. CST on Wednesday, January 14. They opened the meeting with viewing the REGP Libguide.[8] They discussed difficulties in collecting certain documents. They mentioned a specific need to collect documents related to sixty-six International Government Organizations (IGO) from which the United States would be withdrawing, per President Trump, as well as some challenges in doing so. They discussed various projects to preserve documents but that with groups becoming open access metadata previously recorded were getting lost. They also discussed the potential loss of LibGuides due to ALA pushing their internal infrastructure, the need to push for continuing to use LibGuides due to the difficulty in transferring content, and the need to push for continuing the

subscription to LibGuides due to the difficulty in transferring to a new host. Concerns about *DttP* were raised, with a representative of Standford University Libraries volunteering to discuss potential help with hosting, as they host the *DttP* archives.

State & Local Documents Interest Group (SLDIG)—Denise Jones

The State and Local Documents Interest Group (SLDIG) met virtually at 1:00 p.m. CST on Wednesday, January 13. Their discussion was "Digitization for Preservation," with speakers from New Mexico State Library, State Library of Pennsylvania, and California State Library. The speakers shared their experiences on selection and digitization of their respective collections.

Steering Committee—Julia Ezzo

The Steering Committee met virtually at 3:00 p.m. CST on Thursday, January 15. They approved the minutes from their previous meeting.

The following old business was discussed:

1. The audit of GODORT LibGuides is ongoing and focusing on accessibility compliance with WCAG 2.2[9] and cleanup of user accounts.
2. The GODORT Special Reorganization Committee has been meeting weekly. To avoid excessive committee consolidations, the Special Reorganization Committee is investigating the possibility of transitioning several GODORT committees into task forces/interest groups. Under this plan, GODORT committees that focus on issues and advocacy would be transitioned to task forces/interest groups, while committees that assist in GODORT operations would remain committees. While the plan has yet to be finalized, the Reorganization Committee intends to complete its plan in time to present it in *DttP* and at the Annual Conference.

The following new business was discussed:

1. Discussion regarding *DttP* for the upcoming year due to finances was stalled, as there was no updated fiscal information for fiscal year 2025/2026. It was moved to table discussion of *DttP* and invite the ALA Treasurer to come to a future meeting to clarify the budget situation and answer questions. The motion carried. It was moved to table the discussion of *DttP* until more information was provided to the GODORT Steering Committee, including hopefully a response and visit from the ALA Treasurer. The motion carried.
2. Discussion of GODORT-hosted paid, continuing education webinars to help earn funds was held. It was moved to postpone consideration of this item until the next Steering Committee Meeting. The motion carried.
3. The Steering Committee entered a closed session and approved the candidates for several awards as brought forward by Emily Rogers of the Awards/Conference Committee.

Technology/Social Media/Outreach Committee—Sanga Sung

The Technology/Social Media/Outreach Committee did not meet in January 2026. However, they reminded everyone that if they have any announcements, events, or government information–related activities to share on GODORT social media, including committee news or institutional programs, send them to godortsocialmedia@gmail.com. To report issues with GODORT webpages or suggest updates or improvements, people can contact Sanga Sung (ssung@illinois.edu) or email godorttechnology@gmail.com.

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

Notes

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