



“Learn to Love Gov Docs”

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U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO)

<https://www.fdlp.gov> | <https://catalog.gpo.gov> | <https://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE 

Good morning! Thank you so much for inviting me to present at Government Information Day; I’m Kate Pitcher and I’m the Chief of Federal Depository Support Services in the Library Services & Content Management business unit at the U.S. Government Publishing Office.

The FDSS team is ultimately responsible for communication and outreach to the Federal Depository Library Program, or FDLP; training and support for a number of GPO tools to assist libraries in the maintenance and organization of collections, as well as to provide guidance, best practices, and conduct surveys and assessments to respond to the needs and conditions of our FDLP community.

If you’ve made a phone call or sent an email to GPO, you’ve most likely interacted with one of our FDSS librarians!

My email = kpitcher@gpo.gov



Outline



1. Who are we? (GPO and the Federal Depository Library Program)
2. Getting comfortable and debunking myths
3. Best practices, tips, and training

So a brief outline of what I will talk about this morning.

I've been asked to share some tips and ideas to make government documents less intimidating and introduce everyone (especially if you are new to government documents and information!) to some of GPO's great resources, as well as debunk some myths about government documents work.



U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO)

- A Federal agency, established in 1861 as the Government Printing Office.
- Printing and publishing services for Federal agencies
- Superintendent of Documents programs including FDLP

Federal Depository Library Program

- Established by Congress to ensure that the American public has access to its Government's information
- 44 United States Code §1901-1916
- Overseen by GPO since 1895

Our mission: Keeping America Informed

Who are we?



Debunking Myths → Getting Comfortable

- Government information isn't important or relevant to my library
- Nobody at my library is using government information
- Government information is boring
- Everything is online
- Government information is intimidating and scary to learn about, so I would rather not

So let's debunk some common myths about government information.
Maybe you have felt this way in the past, or have a colleague who may feel this way.

We've all heard it right?

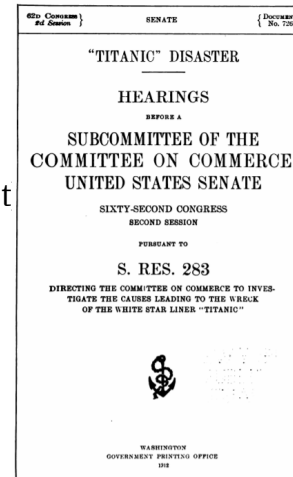


Myths:

Gov info is boring / irrelevant / nobody is using it

Have any of your patrons asked you about...

- Genealogy (ex: military records)
- Weather events
- Crime and safety statistics
- Education programs (ex: tuition reimbursement)
- Food or consumer safety and recalls
- Dietary guidance
- Environment and climate change
- Healthcare
- Historic landmarks
- The Titanic (or American history generally)



The newspaper trick

“There’s an app for that” – “There’s a hearing/document for that”

Titanic Disaster: <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433006539682>

Jefferson: “there is in fact no subject to which a member of Congress may not have occasion to refer”



Not boring

Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic: <http://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo22985>

I wan mei yuan: <https://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/18749>

A Black bear's woodland menu:

https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Atestposters4_1323

Please Do Not Ask the Librarian Tax Law Questions: <https://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/18693>

Action: hire people with disabilities:

https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/islandora/object/ui%3Atestposters4_1706

Bert the Turtle Says Duck and Cover:

<https://mediacommons.unl.edu/luna/servlet/s/zmxh0i>

Breastfeeding ice cream: <https://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/16856>

Viking Pictures of Mars: <https://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/17257>

These are from:

University of Nebraska Government Comics

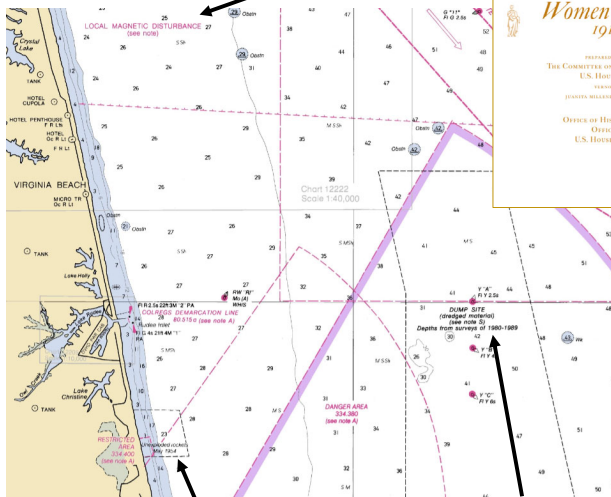
University of Iowa Government Posters

University of Maryland Government Posters



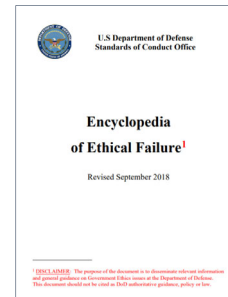
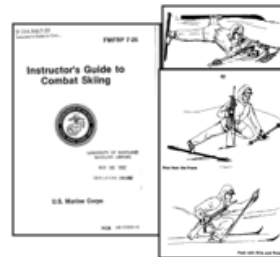
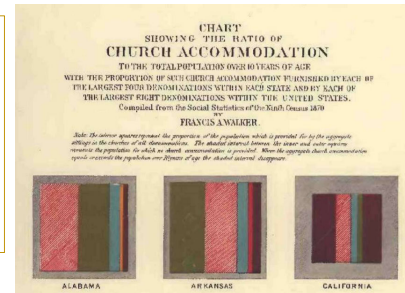
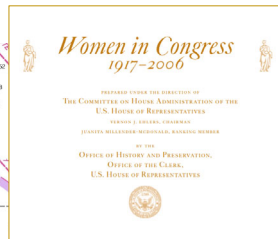
Federal Depository Library Program

Local Magnetic Disturbance



Unexploded rockets May 1954

Dump Site
(dredged material)



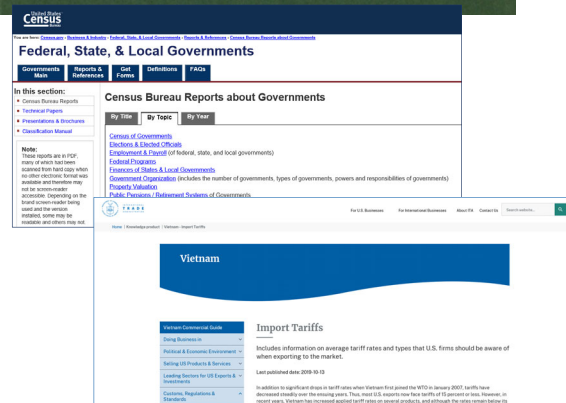
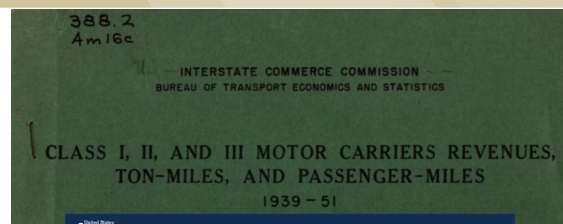
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Not boring



- Looking for truck tonnage data for 1947
- Defense spending by US state, 1940-2010
- How much import duty is paid to the Vietnamese government for used and new automobiles imported?
- Truman Capote's testimony before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on July 21, 1966



These are from govdoc-I

Truman Capote testimony – probably unpublished!



Myth: Everything is online

- A lot is online ... but not everything, and not everything is free
- OK, it's online ... can you find it (easily)? Library staff can help with these potential barriers:
 - Is it the correct information?
 - Can you make sense of it?
 - Can you use the online interface?
- It takes an expert to be able to zero in on the correct source, containing reliable information, of relevance for the user.

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From the first Monthly Catalog, after they say it's designed for users and not librarians: "It has been assumed that in a majority of cases the searcher for information in the Monthly Catalogue will have an idea as to which bureau, or at least which Department, has in charge the particular class of information for which he is seeking..."

From Chris Brown's "Mastering U.S. Government Info" book: "It's one thing to be able to put a few words in a search engine; it's quite another to understand the underlying file types, data sets, and information portals that contain this information and that are, very often, opaque to Google crawling"

For the question of "can all government documents be found online" the answer is no. Certainly many of them are online and more are getting there all the time, but to my way of thinking the more important question is "even if a piece of government information is online, how easily findable is it?" Often you need a lot of expertise to locate a piece of digitized information, and search engine and even discovery searches that include database layers frequently do not search "deep" enough to find a digitized item or publication. The Federal government is very complex and agencies and responsibilities and laws/regulations and publication titles change, and titles are non-descriptive, so government information librarians are absolutely essential for finding things and strategizing how to approach reference questions and where to look. People will always come into the library with

questions that come back to government information.



Publications of the State Department

Alleged cruelties committed upon Armenians. 11 pp. 8° 5c

Beach apparatus drill. By Lieut. C. H. McLellan. [Reprint.] 27 pp. 8° 5c

Most congressional hearings are published two months to two years after they are held. Hearings are available on govinfo as they become available during each session of Congress.

Not all congressional hearings are available on govinfo. Whether or not a hearing is disseminated on govinfo depends on the committee.

Armenians – the first publication listed in the first Monthly Catalog (January 1895)

Beach apparatus drill CGP record:

https://catalog.gpo.gov/F/?func=direct&doc_number=000888589&local_base=GPO01PUB

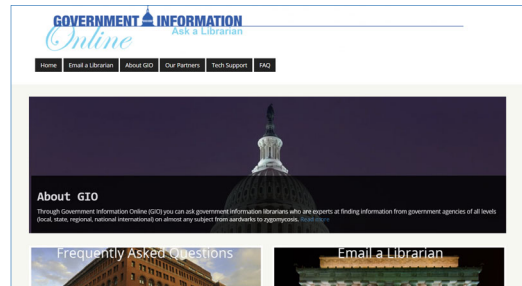
Braille pubs – the physical is a different experience from a digital/screen reader version



Myth: Gov info is intimidating and scary / hard to learn

There is lots to learn, but there is lots of help and expertise available too

- Government Information Online
- govdoc-L and maps-L



Lots of experts out in the FDLP community!

Government Information Online is one great example of a community network:

GIO is a free online information service supported by libraries that participate in the U.S. Government Publishing Office's [Federal Depository Library Program](#). Many are also official depository libraries for other types of governments and public agencies. GIO is sponsored by the [Government Documents Round Table](#) of the American Library Association.

Listservs are also a great way to get help on particularly difficult reference or government documents-related questions.



Best Practices: Celebrate your Accomplishments



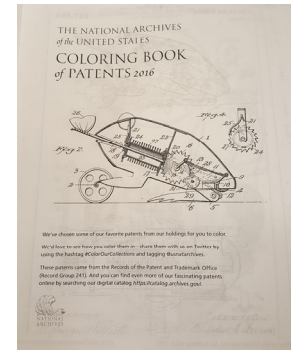
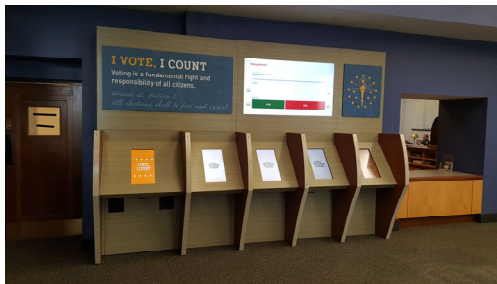
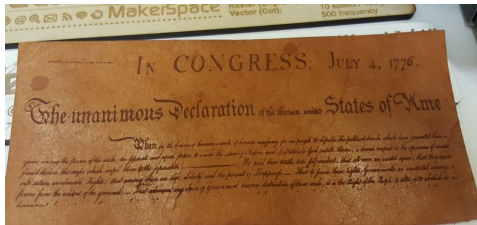
If you are a member of our Federal Depository Library Program, celebrate your accomplishments! Here you can see some photos of depository libraries celebrating their anniversaries as part of the FDLP and their commitment to provide free access to government information. Typically this involves eating of sheet cake and presentation of a plaque or award by a GPO staff member such as former director Davita Vance Cook. She is pictured here, second from the left.

But you can get very creative with your celebrations. We've seen readings of interesting and important government documents, pudgy eagles.

Submit an anniversary award request through askGPO to get your milestone plaque or letter and certificate for participation.



Best Practices: Make it Fun



<https://www.fdlp.gov> | <https://catalog.gpo.gov> | <https://www.govinfo.gov>

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A lot of people think government information is boring or they may find it intimidating. But it doesn't have to be! Think outside the box and make government information fun. At the top you can see the declaration of Independence that was created in a maker space. Below it is a interactive exhibit on voting. On the right you can see a Gov Info disk drop that GPO staff have used at conferences to make government information more fun. And to the right of the disk drop is a coloring book of patents. I have been told by some academic staff members that coloring can be a good activity for stressed students during finals.



Best Practices: Make it Relevant



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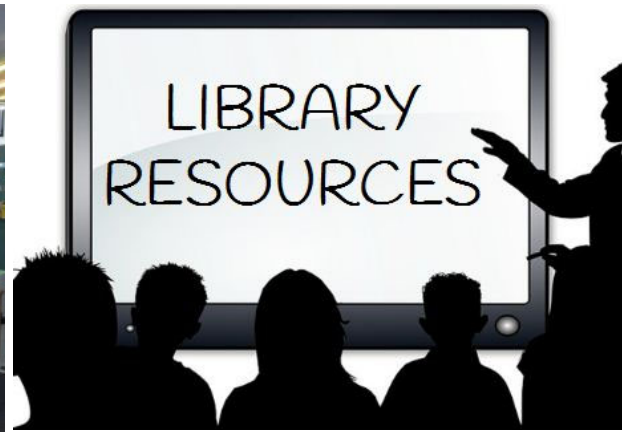
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Try to make government information more relevant to your community or to current events. Hosting citizenship classes is a great way to help the community and provide valuable government information. In the middle you see a census poster. Use the decennial census as a way to promote access to this material and any assistance you may provide with filling out the census. And on the right you can see a poster for the movie *Hidden Figures*. This library tied the movie to NASA publications.

Many of the libraries in the FDLP take advantage of the Constitution Day free promotions of the pocket Constitutions and host events surrounding Constitution Day.




Best Practices: Get Sneaky!



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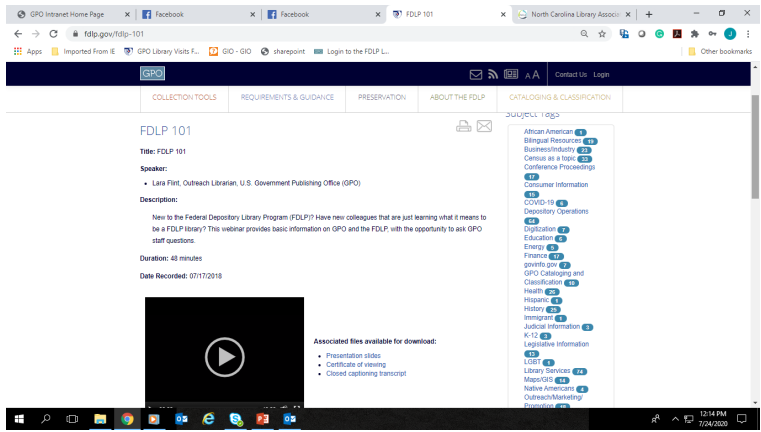
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Ok this is probably not one you would think about when you are thinking of best practices with government information. But hold on now and let me explain. Most patrons don't know what a SuDoc number is or what a government document is. They just want the best information for what they are looking for. This is where you can get sneaky. When you are providing reference assistance you can provide government information as one of the sources. Government information is authentic and is a great source for information that people are looking for. You can add government information to library displays. Government information can be found on literally any topic! So the next time your library is doing a display suggest relevant government information sources. Don't forget about your library instruction sessions. Make sure to include government information to show the variety of resources your library has and it's a great way to introduce government information.



Federal Depository Library Program

Training






Request training at
<https://ask.gpo.gov/s/>

<https://www.fdlp.gov/fdlp-academy/fdlp-academy-training-repository>

<https://www.fdlp.gov> |
 <https://catalog.gpo.gov> |
 <https://www.govinfo.gov>

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Switching gears now. I want to talk a little bit about training other library staff members. If you conduct your training in a fun and interesting way, your colleagues will come to love government documents. You can point your colleagues to already established webinar series such as GODORT's Help! I am an Accidental Government Information Librarian and our FDLP Academy webinars. We are a federal agency so you can download and use our presentations for your own use. Consider downloading our pdfs and use them in your own training. Or request us to present training virtually or in person if you're a FDLP library.



Tips: Promote, Promote, Promote

The screenshot shows the Pueblo.GPO.gov U.S. Government Bookstore website. The header includes the Pueblo.GPO.gov logo and the text "U.S. GOVERNMENT BOOKSTORE". Below the header is a search bar with fields for "Category", "Format", "Language", and "Enter Search Text". A "View Cart" link is also present. The main content area features a "Featured Publications" section with a large article titled "Understand Your Credit Score" and a list of other publications such as "Money Smart for Older Adults Resource Guide", "Managing Someone Else's Money: Help for Agents Under a Power of Attorney", and "Managing Someone Else's Money: Help for Court-Appointed Guardians of Property and Conservators". A sidebar on the left lists various categories like Consumer Protection, Education, Employment, Family, Food, Health, History, Housing, Money, and Travel. To the right of the website screenshot is a collage of promotional materials, including a cartoon character in a blue suit and top hat, a "How to Locate a U.S. Government Publication" poster, and several "ASK ME" signs.

<https://www.fdip.gov> | <https://catalog.gpo.gov> | <https://www.govinfo.gov>

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One of the most important things you can do is to promote the government information that your library has. If people don't know you're an access point for government information they may not ask for it. Having interesting posters and handouts may catch someone's eye and cause them to stop and look at the promotional material.

If your library is a member of the FDLP then you can order free promotional information. We even pay for the shipping! You can see on the screen some of the promotional information that you can request.

If you are not a member of the FDLP you can order handouts from federal agencies or you can order free government information handouts from our pueblo.gpo.gov location.



Tips: Don't Reinvent the Wheel

ARTICLE 1: UNIVERSITY RESOURCES: Original
Collections
Library Services
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Contact Us
MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
LIBRARY SERVICES



Census 2020 Display

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Bibliography and photographs of a display of government documents from Minnesota State University, Mankato.



Rutgers Census Display

Rutgers University

Photograph of a display of government documents from Rutgers, The State University.



Census Information

St. Mary's University, Texas

Photographs of a display of government documents from St. Mary's University, Texas.

Other ideas:

- Check out what other libraries are doing
- Check out listservs such as govdoc-L
- Subscribe to Agency emails

When trying to make government information interesting don't reinvent the wheel. You don't have to spend a lot of time and energy finding interesting facts and examples of government information. Instead get inspired by what others are doing.

- You can do this by checking out their library social media accounts or blogs. Or check out the displays posted on the Minnesota State University of Mankato's *Government Documents Display Clearinghouse*. Here you can see how other libraries have created displays on issues such as voting, census, holidays, and civil rights.
- Listservs such as govdoc-L can be a great place to bounce ideas off of other documents librarians or ask for advice.
- Subscribe to Agency emails. Federal agencies like to promote their information products and services. So subscribing to different agency emails can alert you to new products and services that you can in turn inform you patrons about.

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Government Posters and Graphic Publications- Community Guides: Home

Posters, Comic Books, Brochures and other graphic publications

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University of North Texas Libraries
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University of Mississippi
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GODORT

Posters

- [World War II Posters](#)
Illinois State University
- [Government Posters and Prints](#)
University of North Texas
- [Government Issue Comics](#)
Universities of Iowa Libraries
- [U.S. Posters](#)
University of Iowa Libraries
- [World War II Poster Collection](#)
Northwestern University

Last Updated: Oct 19, 2021 9:55 AM | URL: <https://libguides.fdlp.gov/GraphicsPosters> | [Print Page](#) | [Login](#)

Subjects: [Comics](#), [Graphics](#), [History](#), [Military](#), [Posters](#)

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If you have a LibGuides subscription, reuse the FDLP LibGuides – it’s a great way to direct your users to government information content.

LibGuides are also an easy way to direct users to digital content and is a good starting point for a lot of research.



Contact us at <https://ask.gpo.gov/s/>