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Where is Government Information? The complex Relationship Between Libraries & Federal Repositories

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Where is Government Information?
The Complex Relationship between Libraries & Federal Repositories

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Purpose
Through data analysis and a survey, this research identifies the location of government documents departments/units in academic libraries – including their institutional orientation, current practices, & future plans. This preliminary data analysis presents trends amongst the community of academic library participants in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), of which they comprise 55% of the total. We identify common practices and priorities that might foster collaboration.

Survey & Participant Description
This survey sought volunteer participants from a pool of federal depository coordinators (staff members at academic libraries). A publicly searchable database of information about institutions that participate in the FDLP is available on the FDLP website. The directory categorizes academic libraries based on the size of their collections. This survey sought responses from up to 490 institutions listed as “Medium” or “Large.”

Participants
The survey sample size allowed researchers to obtain a significant number of complete responses, 175, a 36% response rate after survey distribution. 157 Selectives and 18 Regions fully responded. Responses were received from every state and the District of Columbia, except Arizona, Delaware, and New Hampshire. 102 libraries indicated they were “Large” size, 70 were “Medium,” and 5 were “Small.” Some responses did not match the listed size in the FDLP directory.

Survey Design
The survey presented up to 25 multiple choice questions, some of which allowed for multiple selections. Respondents were able to provide open-ended responses on some questions. The survey collected information related to institutional operations, collection access, program priorities, digitization approaches, collaboration, and outreach.

Preliminary Results

Who Oversees Your Government Documents?

What are your Current Practices & Priorities?
The survey asked respondents to rank priorities. Processing was consistently ranked first, followed by Weeding and Identifying Digital Items, then Preservation, Digitization, and then “Other” categories. “Other” responses included Retro Cataloging, Promotion, Reference, and Collection Development.

156 respondents described their collaboration partners. 80% collaborate with FDLP libraries in their state while 50% collaborate regionally. 32.5% collaborate with their State Data Center and 27% collaborate with local public libraries. “Other” responses included collaboration with state depositories or libraries, other regions, or indicated that they did not collaborate.

How Do You Promote your Collection?

Comparisons to the FDLP Biennial Survey
We purposefully included questions to obtain supplemental data from the Biennial Survey. Some results presented here were derived from the preliminary release of 2017 Biennial Survey data in March 2018. Note that this survey expanded on operations, program priorities, and specifically identified and emphasized the institutional position of the coordinator and materials. These topics are difficult to identify in the current biennial survey.

Limitations
By design the survey was opt-in. This resulted in selective participation. Since we have a response rate of 36%, this survey is a snap shot of the larger population of academic libraries in the FDLP.

Want to Contribute?
The survey will remain open until November 30th. We appreciate your contributions. Email jen.kirk@usu.edu for an invite.

Thank you to all of our participants!