The Future is Now
GODORT/Ohio and Kentucky GODORT's Program on Electronic Government Information

[*Editor's Note: On June 17, 1996, Maggie Farrell of the GPO Electronic Transition Staff, came to Cincinnati for a day-long presentation on electronic government information sponsored by GODORT/Ohio, and the Government Documents Roundtable of the Kentucky Library Association, and attended by librarians from Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia , and Indiana. Maggie's morning presentation focused on her work with Raeanne Dossett on GPO's Pathway Services. Her talk is transcribed here, with (we hope) only minor editorial alterations. In the next issue, we will include a portion of her presentation on the GPO Transition .*]

Raeanne [Dossett] and I started at GPO last year. We became feds for a year. The two of us are glad we've been in this together primarily because a lot of times we have been able to just sit down together and say, "If I were at the reference desk how would I begin to approach finding government information in the Internet." What we thought of a year ago when we started and what we're doing now are different because the technology has changed. What I want to talk about today in the end of the first year's work, which is really just the beginning. The work will continue, and we're in the process of bringing in two new librarians to take our place later this summer.

As we go through this, part of what I'm looking for you from you is to say "That's really stupid!" or, "Have you thought about this?" or "That's really terrific, you should get a bonus."

The URL for Pathway Services is http:// www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces760.html , or you can get to Pathway Services through the GPO pages. A word of caution and a word of encouragement: if you've used the SuDocs web pages and have found them to be particularly difficult to navigate, they're in the process of revamping them and making them very much flatter. Right now you can do a lot of circles and keep going around and not find certain things. The new ones (keep your fingers crossed) should be done by ALA.

Anyway, Raeanne and I sat down and said, "How do people find information when they go into the library. Usually the find it in one of two ways: They come in, they get a call number, they go into the stacks and then browse to see what they can find. Or, they come to us and say, "I need this book with this call number." From that we developed two ways to search: browsing to see what's available and searching for something very specific.

Before we begin talking about those two approaches, let me give a little overview of how we got there. Usually, when you go to a web site, you start out very "high" - at the agency level, for example www.commerce.gov. As you move down through the site you'll find directories which can be divided into subjects, subagencies, directories. So in Commerce, you start at the agency level and work your way all the way down to an individual publication, although I say that somewhat lightly, because what we think of as a publication today is a printed and very substantial item. A publication online can be very different: you might see a complete book, for example *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* ; you go to the Centers for Disease Control, then down through their directories, and finally come to the complete *MMWR*, full text. That complete document may be in various formats - ascii, a pdf facsimile. It could be just a set of files with a tables of contents. It could be the actual database of information , like the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*. When you look at the *CFDA* it's not like looking at a facsimile of the printed page or a text file, you're actually in the source database.

As I go through our Pathway services you'll se why this idea of hierarchy is important. When you look by agency you then go down the directory structure to the point where you actually se the publication or what we could think of as the specific context information. I think this is important because it's what 's changing so rapidly. When we talk in five years we

might not be talking about "a publication" but groups of publications.

In developing Pathway we decided that we would point you to a method of searching depending on how you get into a database and how you're searching. So if you're going into **Browse Topics** we've arranged government agency sites and you're browsing at the agency level. in **Browse Titles** you're down to the publication level. *[A sample of the Pathway Services Homepage is on page 7]*

Browse Topics

Browse Topics was the very first thing that we worked on. We had found that there are several guides being developed by documents librarians: I did one, Blake Gumprecht did one, there are others. Those are wonderful because they help people get directly to information. What we have done is to expand on that idea using subject terms from the *Subject Bibliographies*. . These are terms that the documents community is well aware of. We put a place for "hot topics" at the top, and then the alphabetical list. Raeanne and I have gone out and searched the Internet and pulled together topics according to criteria that we developed. If possible we also put a descriptive annotation to the topic; there are 170 topics and we were considering doing a detailed analysis of each page we included, maybe a page long. Finally we said, "no." But there are brief annotations on many of the topics. We have thrown out some of the SB terms that we felt were not good and fixed others, for instance "Educational Statistics" was there but "Education" wasn't. "Bosnia" is not in the SBs but we added it because we think depository librarians will want it. We pulled together everything we could find on the Civil War, for example, and included those sites with the most significant content.

Now you're thinking, "This is good, but what else is out there?" You're probably familiar with the NTIS subject guide to government information on the Internet,

which is very good. However they're using the subject categories for *GRA&I* , so it tends to be a bit heavy on technology. Our tends to be a little bit more "popular." If you go to Yahoo, the commercial indexer, they have a subject guide. But they index non-government sites as well as government. I would recommend that you use whatever resource meets you needs, being aware what the differences are. As you look at various sites, remember that they're using categories most pertinent to their primary clientele.

Browse Titles

This is a relatively new list for us. It's a listing of what is called, by GPO's definition, "electronic information products." It's arranged by alphabetically by agency and then subagency and publication. So, for example, you'll find Forest Service under Agriculture Dept. Again, since we're developing this for depository librarians it includes SuDocs number and item number. Nobody else in the world really cares about these two things, but we know it's important to you [laughter]x. We want the ability to track publications as they migrate from paper or microfiche to electronic. Now whether that will continue in five years, three years, whatever, who knows? For right now, though, we have SuDocs and item and we want to make that correlation.

This browse by title is closely related to the *Monthly Catalog*. It's the transition for MoCat. Currently our thinking is that once there's a process at GPO, these electronic publications should be identified and cataloging should sit down and create a full AACR2 record. That's part of the thinking for the transition. So this provides a good list to browse, but for most of us it's not enough. We need the full MARC record. Eventually these electronic publications should be cataloged. For now and until that happens, we are going to identify titles and put them up here on the Browse Title page to there's access. These sources may or may not have migrated totally to electronic format - they may still be coming

out in paper. We haven't seen anything drop totally from paper yet.

Browse Title goes in at the publication level. Previously we were up at the agency level.

GILS

How many are real comfortable with GILS? No hands? OK, here's a GILS overview. What's a GILS? If you have any questions you should let Elliot Christian know on Council. I'm sure he'll be happy to answer all your questions [laughter]. GILS: Government Information Locator Service. It is not a bibliographic record, but it's close. In some ways they are related. Basically people were saying, "We want to find government information, particularly in electronic form." It was mandated for all federal agencies to make GILS records available about their information, and this was to be done by last year. A GILS records can be brief compared to a MARC record/ When we look at AACR2 we view a record about a whole publication that describes that publication in detail: who wrote it, when, how long it is, etc. GILS does the same thing only it's not strictly describing a publication, it's describing agency information in the form of a publication or a database , or a cd/rom, or our favorite example, a collection of rocks. There could be one for this session today. For the most part GILS records are created for what we call metadata - meaning a clump of information together. The idea is to help locate information, in the same way that an OPAC is a locator system. It helps you find the information and it leads you to a point that you can retrieve it on your own. MARC records are much more detailed than GILS records. There are more rigid standards for description. GILS documentation is very slender compared to AACR2.

We developed GILS records, again, with the depository community n mind. So, far example, we included SuDocs number. The subject terms we used - do they look like Library of Congress Subject Headings? No,

you can understand them! [laughter] I'm sorry, I do find LCSH a bit overwhelming.

There's an abstract that comes straight from the *Government Manual* We developed these records primarily as a demonstration project to point the general user back to the Depository Library Program. We're soliciting business for the FDLP! So we're pointing not only to the agency but to depositories. We've also put in cross references to point between the agency, the MoCat and the agency's own GILS.

GILS is a distributed system which means I can do records, you can do records agencies can do records, and they all get combined, for example, in the GPO Access GILS database. So in the same way that if you really want to cover the world of bibliographic data you need to look at OCLC and RLIN and WLN, etc. , in the world of GILS you go to GPO and USGS and Commerce and DTIC.

At this point of implementation, all agencies have or soon will have GILS records about their information program. DTIC and Commerce have started to create GILS records down to the publication level. At some point, if GILS is ever fully implemented (and that's a big if) will be searchable much as you search MoCat, with that kind of comprehensiveness. Until then, you still need both. Will they ever merge? We don't know.

Searching the Web

Let's go to searching the Web. This is a little more cool. Raeanne and I have been developing a robot, much like Yahoo, only out robot is very specific: it only goes to government information sites on the WEB, so .gov, .mil, .fed.us, and to those sites with some direct connection to providing agency information like DOSFAN at Univ. of Illinois-Chicago or Cornell's Agriculture Dept. information. The indexer goes to a very select set of sites. It helps you find information all the way down to the publication level. So, in the example of the Civil War again, you'll see that if the

Civil War appears in just one chapter of a book, you'll just hit on that chapter, not at the beginning of the whole book.

There's a comparable robot/indexer to this one called Govbot, but it will give you completely different results because it has different instructions for what sites to search. When e sat down to design this robot, the idea was to give you the benefit of our expertise (at least we hope!) Because I'm a librarian,. I assumed before that when we said "civil War" we meant American Civil War. The indexer, down here at the file level looking around could well bring up files on civil wars in other regions or publications about civil disputes between factions at war. The robot can't distinguish unless you tell it how. It'll gather up everything it possibly can about your query. It's a problem with computer indexers - they're very literal. You also know from WAIS that the number of occurrences of a term in a document makes a difference.

The difference in the browse and the search approaches is that with browse you're getting the benefit of the librarian preselecting and guiding. With the indexer you're getting back what the computer thinks is a hot, and that's true to a greater or lesser extent with all machine indexing.

Right now there's the Pathway Indexer and Govbot. Commercially there's only one that does government information specifically, and that's Yahoo and it searches all kinds of sites not just government. You'll notice a difference between Pathway and Govbot: we are a bit more particular about how we select our sites and we included a few non-government domain sites like DOSFAN and Cornell that they don't. They might catch them by accident. I think they both will improve, they both need to come an awfully long way because they're both really prototypes. Govbot has only been available since February and they're changing it. We used basically the same technology, software called Harvest, but the interfaces are a little bit different and we hope to keep upgrading. In some ways I think Govbot is really easier to use but with ours you can do

a little more advanced searching. Take a look a both and use the one you're more comfortable with.

[This ends the first part of Maggie's presentation. In the next issue we will continue with her presentation on the GPO Transition Plan and the future of government information n depository libraries. If you have questions you may contact her in her new position as Associate Dean of Libraries at Montana State University. Her e-mail address in alimpf@gemini.oscs.montana.edu]

To the Members:
Megan Mitchell,
Program Chair/President Elect
Oberlin College

Hello GODORTers! One of the highlights of my summer was a pleasure and business trip to New York City. Rather than regaling you with stories about my family and the restaurants I discovered, I thought I'd share some thoughts about the ALA Annual Conference. This was my third ALA, and although I'm getting progressively better at coping with the magnitude of the event, I still have a few things to learn. I think would have benefited from a library school seminar like "Timing is Everything: How to do the ALA Annual Conference Successfully."

Lesson 1 would be: READ THE PRE-PROGRAM & PLAN AHEAD. I arrived in the Big Apple after the GODORT meetings where GPO staffers appeared and the future of the FDLP was discussed.

Lesson 2 would be: YOU TAKE YOUR CHANCES WHEN YOU TAKE THE SHUTTLE. Because I misjudged the length of time it would take to get from the Javits Center to the Waldorf Astoria, I was late for the CIS breakfast. Although seats were scarce (it's amazing how many librarians are interested in documents when there is free food and entertainment) I did get a cup of coffee and a muffin, but someone drank my juice.

Lesson 3 would be: ALL OF THE INTERESTING PROGRAMS ARE OFFERED SIMULTANEOUSLY. I attended the ACRL Law and Political Science section program "Political Campaigning in Cyberspace: Selecting Leaders for the Future," which featured Adelaide Elm, the Director of Public Information at Project Vote Smart. It was a good program and what I learned will be very useful as I work with students in the elections class taught this Fall. But I have to wonder what great stuff I missed at the GODORT program, "Power to the States and Localities: Government Information on the `Net" which was going on at the same time in an hotel far, far away.

Lesson 4 would be: YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT GEMS LURK IN THE PROGRAM. Reading the voluminous program on one of many long shuttle trips I discovered what I thought was an ad for an exhibit at the Whitney Museum. When I got there I realized that the museum was closed to the general public but ALA members had been invited to a free viewing of the exhibit "Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West." What an unexpected treat!

I hope others who survived ALA in NYC will share their conference experiences when we get together in the Fall.

From the Editor:
George Barnum
Case Western Reserve University

Gee, I'll bet you'll be glad when the move is all over!" I heard that for weeks leading up to the actual day when materials began to move from the old CWRU library buildings into the shiny new Kelvin Smith Library. And for weeks my response was "Actually, I'll be glad when it starts!" The anticipation and anxiety of those weeks was exhausting. We are, at this writing, into the fourth week of the move, and the end is only just flickering into sight. I could, as the old retort goes, write a

book. I think my first clue that all might not be entirely flawless might have been when, in the course of giving one of the supervisors from the moving company an introduction to how SuDocs classification works, he looked at me and said, very seriously, "No problem, George, this isn't rocket science."

We had a very successful day June 17 in Cincinnati with Maggie Farrell telling us about GPO's electronic future from her perspective after a year on the Transition Staff. About 25 librarians from Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Indiana gathered at the University of Cincinnati's Langsam Library. We were very fortunate to be able to have Maggie come for this program, and thanks are due to the GODORT/Ohio Board, as well as the Government Documents Roundtable of the Kentucky Library Association for their support. Special thanks are due to Karen Kottsy and Denise Sharp for their hospitality, and to Cindy Etkin of Western Kentucky University for her participation. A full report on the day is found elsewhere in this issue.

Also in this issue is a letter from Megan Mitchell, our newly elected Program Chair/President Elect. Megan is filling in for Andrea Peakovic who is on leave this summer, tending to her daughter's preparation for surgery. We certainly send them both our best wishes, and thank Megan for being the designated hitter.

Pathway Services

Pathway Services is a suite of tools being developed by the Federal Depository Library Program to direct librarians and the public to Federal Government information on the Internet.

▶ Browse Topics
    Government Internet sites arranged by topics

▶ Browse Pathway GILS
    Select Government Information Locator Service records

▶ Browse Electronic Titles
    Government Information Products Available via the Internet

▶ Search the Web
    · The Pathway Indexer provides a keyword search of select Federal Web sites

▶ Search MoCat
    The Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications

Need assistance using this service? Contact the *GPO Access* **User Support Team** by Internet e-mail at *gpoaccess@gpo.gov;* *by telephone at 202-512-1530; or by fax at 202-512-1262. Have suggestions or comments for improving Pathway Services? Contact the **GPO Library Programs Service, Electronic Transition Staff** by Internet e-mail at ets@gpo.gov; by telephone at 202-512-1698; or by fax at 202-512-1432.*

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