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## Government Information? What's That? Old Challenges in a New Landscape: Promoting Government Information

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The questions in the title of my presentation reflect the reaction, usually accompanied by quizzical looks and some apprehension, that I get when I introduce myself, outside library communities, as Head of the Government Information Department at the University of New Mexico Zimmerman Library.

Mildly curious about what is Government information and what is a Federal depository library, people's interests perk up when I explain that the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and its services are available through taxpayers' money, are free to the public and that the program's purpose is to inform everybody about the political, social and economic aspects of American life. This mild curiosity bears out the public's virtual unawareness of the FDLP's existence, significance and usefulness. The challenge we face, then, is to overcome the public's unawareness by promoting the program in new and exciting forums.

A key assumption of the electronic Federal Depository Library Program Transition Plan--that nearly all of the forthcoming information will be in electronic format--opens new opportunities for promoting the FDLP and Government information. Web pages and reciprocal links are new feasibilities, although trustworthy approaches like advertising, considered a bedrock of business, will continue to be used. Newsletters, flyers, and bookmarks are such examples. Moreover, radio and television are promotional links to be more fully explored.

In this paper I present a number of suggestions for promotional campaigns. Some will be recycled ideas in new contexts, but others, I hope, will be different, challenging and effective.

Presently, a trend in the education field that finally has gained momentum is distance education. Courses offered through distance education programs offer exciting promotional opportunities. For instance, library instruction sessions can be incorporated into course

requirements. These sessions could introduce the depository library program and the many resources available in Government information.

A key to successful participation in distance education programs is to manifest to professors or instructors that the service offered will facilitate their teaching and further enhance their students' success. Our department recently contacted the director of the University of New Mexico (UNM) Extended Education Services to get a list of the classes offered through interactive television. Three professors teaching distance courses were contacted because their classes were in disciplines that could use Government information for research projects. While the responses were positive, the professors were not yet ready to have us participate in their new endeavors. Nonetheless, we will continue to press forward until such time that they feel comfortable with the usefulness of our program.

In another effort, our department met with the director of the UNM Media Technology Services Unit to discuss the feasibility of conducting a series of training workshops, through live interactive television, for librarians in the state's depository libraries.

We also considered including training sessions for other librarians. During our discussions the director was responsive and supportive as he explained his unit's operations and what we would need to do before launching such a program.

We very quickly realized that we would need to seek funding outside the library before forging ahead with our plans for the future. And looking into the future, we further realized that live interactive television and distant education programs open a possible new field for librarians and that is training librarians to conduct instruction before a live camera.

Library instruction workshops through live television can also be linked to Federally funded programs such as those sponsored under the Adult Basic Education Act established in 1964. Under this act the UNM College of Education provides professional development programs and sponsors regional and statewide conferences, among other activities, for teachers of adult learners.

Adult learners are usually eager learners and introducing them to a treasure of information would trickle down to their families as well. Teachers of adult learners would also learn about the various resources available to them for use in classroom instruction.

Another opportunity for promoting Government information would be through adult literacy activities which often function with limited funding and could use free resources. As you know, there are numerous readers, coloring books, posters, cookbooks, and pamphlets that would be appropriate for these programs.

Programs such as talk shows on your local television stations would be other opportunities to promote your depository library and Government information. Television stations often carry programs that feature local community activities and leaders. And radio, as previously stated, still remains a largely untapped outlet. One of our local radio stations sponsors a Sunday morning program to promote the city's various cultural leaders, organizations and activities. Consult with your television and radio stations to find out which feature public

service announcements and would be willing to highlight your library. Perhaps programming could be planned to celebrate National Library Week.

In the print medium, alternative newspapers are always looking for new material. Contact the editors and invite them to visit your library and demonstrate GPO Access. If your local newspapers carry an arts and culture or book section, ask the editors if they would be interested in reviews of Government publications of potential interest to their readerships. Such a publication is *The Roswell Report: Fact Versus Fiction in the New Mexico Desert*, which focuses on unidentified flying objects and sightings and encounters in New Mexico.

In the new electronic environment digital technologies offer opportunities for enhancing instruction, learning and research. The creation of services related to electronic information access and retrieval such as Web pages and reciprocal links are great promotional tools.

The Reciprocal Web Pages Work Group of GODORT's Federal Documents Task Force, at ALA Midwinter 1998, discussed efforts to create reciprocal links with congressional delegations. Members of Congress would be invited to link up with their respective depository libraries.

The Nevada State Library and Archives is one of those libraries with reciprocal links to their state's congressional delegates. Of New Mexico's congressional members, one senator is not linked and one representative does not yet have a Web page. Senator Jeff Bingaman's office is directly linked to GPO Access via UNM's Gateway. In time, with the promotional efforts of librarians, congressional delegations will recognize the value of having reciprocal links with depository libraries.

The same promotional efforts for reciprocal Web pages can be applied to state legislators and legislative councils. Presently, four members of the New Mexico Legislature have Web pages but none are linked to our department's Web page. The same is true of the New Mexico Legislative Council whose Web page does not include a reciprocal link with any library in the state. There are plans to invite those four state legislative members and others as they establish their Web pages and the Legislative Council to connect with us.

Promoting reciprocal Web page links with other agencies and public institutions can be explored. For example, community colleges, cultural centers and their libraries, chambers of commerce, and public school districts. In Albuquerque the library of the local community college has a reciprocal Web page to UNM's General Library. So does the chamber of commerce, whose Webmaster thought the idea of linking up was a terrific source of information. The Indian Cultural Center, a strong point of interest to worldwide tourists, is considering connecting. Public school districts or individual schools, elementary and secondary, can also be invited.

One local high school, the only one approached at this time, is open to having a link. The Webmaster for Albuquerque's public school district connected to our Web page recently. Private schools can be considered as well. Albuquerque's two major private preparatory schools are thinking of including links on their Web pages.

As more and more businesses include Web pages for their daily operations, selected enterprises can be contacted and invited to make reciprocal links. For example, businesses might need the Federal Register, the Commerce Business Daily or the Davis-Bacon Wage Determinations. Such businesses can be found in local publications like the Albuquerque Journal Business Outlook. A recent issue showed that a new firm had established an office in town. This firm, a distributor of high purity pipe, tubing and related components for the semiconductor and industrial markets, could be a possible contact.

Other possibilities for Web page reciprocal links are community centers, senior citizens centers, retirement homes and shopping malls. There is strong interest at these locations to learn about electronic information and they would welcome instruction.

E-mail is another great marketing tool. A recent brief survey conducted on GOVDOC-L indicated that a number of libraries use e-mail to do selective dissemination of information to faculty and interested persons. E-mail, along with Web pages, is used for distributing newsletters and other informational sources about new acquisitions, services and programs.

In the print world of advertising, billboards are still a useful promotional tool. Contact your local bus company and ask about the types of billboards available within your budgets. Albuquerque's bus company has special rates for nonprofit organizations. Billboards posted on the outside of the bus are more expensive than those that are inside the bus. The tail end of the bus is another affordable location for advertising.

Listing your library's number in the phone directory's blue pages is another possibility. In Albuquerque, the rates for a year would be a little over \$150.00.

Bookmarks, an old tried and true advertising tool, can be decorative and colorful or simple, depending on the needs of the library, are relatively inexpensive to produce and easy to distribute. Next time you visit your local grocery store, check with the manager, if he or she will permit the distribution of your library's bookmarks at the checkout counters. Also contact your local bank and inquire if your bookmarks can be made available at the teller's counters. Most bookstores, especially used books bookstores, are willing to post library flyers and distribute bookmarks.

Most of us, at one time or another, have wondered what to do with all those superseded CDs that accumulate in the corner of the office. These can be unusual calling cards. Include a CD in your letter of welcome, along with a bookmark and your business card, to new faculty or new community leaders. Community leaders such as the Fire Chief, Police Chief, or the new mayor would most probably notice your unusual welcome packet.

Most people enjoy receiving flowers. Welcome your new faculty with a bouquet of two or three flowers in your school's colors and your business card and you will be remembered for your thoughtfulness and creative ways of bringing attention to your library. Finally, the new electronic environment offers new possibilities and creative approaches to promoting the Federal Depository Library Program and its services.