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30 Years of Distributed Depository Responsibility

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In June 1968, the Government Printing Office approved the creation of the first joint regional depository library. The University of North Dakota (UND), Chester Fritz Library and the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Library have for the last thirty years shared the responsibility of providing Government publications to the state of North Dakota.

Chester Fritz Library and the North Dakota State University Library Directors wrote to the Government Printing Office, "We have investigated the implications of this proposal and believe that it will prove to be in the best interests of the two Universities and the State of North Dakota." From its inception in North Dakota, the shared regional depository has shown itself to be an effective organizational model.

Over the course of 30 years, as Government information expanded exponentially, it became increasingly difficult for depositories to meet the Government information demands of a varied population. The joint regional depository structure of shared responsibility can serve to lighten the burden. It has allowed this sparsely populated state to develop a comprehensive collection of Government information, with an effective delivery system. NDSU and UND have been able to fulfill this major function of regional depository libraries as well as serve the needs of their respective campuses.

A committee representing both institutions negotiated the division of the depository materials. Depository responsibilities were divided by letter, taking into consideration the curriculum strengths of the two campuses. Where disciplines overlapped, the committee negotiated the division. Both institutions have strong teacher education programs that would utilize the Department of Education documents. North Dakota State University retained responsibility for the E's. The University of North Dakota in turn selected approximately 40% of the E's to serve the needs of the University. Each institution selects materials that are appropriate to the mission of the library, their primary clientele, and local community. A reasonable amount of overlap occurs.

When curricular strengths change, the division of the letters is renegotiated. The establishment of the Center for Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota was

followed by the transfer of the letter N, with its thousands of NASA publications, to the Chester Fritz Library.

Each institution retains responsibility for: bibliographic instruction, outreach, technical processing, equipment and maintenance for their respective letters.

The shared regional depository library model has strengths, as well as weaknesses. Conserving available shelf space was a major concern for both libraries at the onset of this arrangement. However, over the past 30 years, that advantage has largely disappeared.

By only having half of the documents, the respective institutions have become more expert in their use. The completeness of the collection is assured by each partner offering the other the overlapping publications that are withdrawn after 5 years.

The two regional librarians share the oversight of the 7 selective libraries. The two librarians can easily arrange on site visits to the selective libraries in the state. The document community in North Dakota is small, but covers a wide geographic area. For the most part, the librarians at the selective libraries are seasoned veterans of state as well as Federal documents. Document librarians meet through the Government Documents Roundtable section of the North Dakota Library Association.

The advances in technology have also bolstered the effectiveness of the shared regional model. NDSU maintains a listserv for North Dakota Government document librarians. Both institutions have developed Web pages with links to one another and to the wider world of documents. In 1993, UND added the 1976+ documents to their online catalog, which significantly increased accessibility of documents to patrons from across the state.

There are drawbacks to being a shared regional depository. Shared regionals are sometimes treated like selectives when claiming items. In addition, it is occasionally difficult for patrons to identify which institution has a needed document. This last problem has been addressed in two ways.

In 1992, UND and NDSU established a daily shuttle bus to transfer documents and Interlibrary Loan materials between campuses. This has provided patrons with a seamless method of rapidly retrieving documents from either institution.

The state of North Dakota expects to implement a new online system by the year 2001. At that time, NDSU and UND will use the same online system. This will further facilitate document access to residents of North Dakota.

Chester Fritz Library and Distributed Responsibility

At the University of North Dakota, depository documents are part of the Documents, Patents, Trademarks and Periodical Department. UND has been a Patent and Trademark Depository Library since 1990. Technical service, as well as public service for documents, periodicals, microforms, software and media kits are the responsibility of this department. The department is staffed by one librarian, six library associates and 30 student employees. Departmental student employees are cross trained in the use of periodicals and government

documents. The wide range of activities in this department has necessitated distributing document responsibilities to other departments in Chester Fritz Library.

The reference and research services librarians respond to the majority of the reference questions concerning documents. All reference librarians are trained to respond to the questions concerning Government documents. The bibliographic instruction librarian coordinates the instruction on the use of Government documents, as well as the creation of pathfinders and guides.

Promotion and outreach are a joint effort of the Reference and Research Services staff and the Documents staff. The electronic services librarian maintains a core number of document CD-ROM's on workstations in the Reference and Research Services Department. In the summer of 1998, a GIS workstation will be placed in the Reference and Research Services area.

Document responsibility has been further distributed by selectively housing Government documents in three campus libraries. The Harley French Library of the Health Sciences, Thormsgaard Law Library and the Geology Library house a significant number of documents. Annually each library is encouraged to select or deselect items.

These housing agreements benefit the Chester Fritz Library as well as the University. The documents are placed in the library where they will have optimum use and greater accessibility. The University of North Dakota Geology Library selectively houses thousands of United States Geological Survey publications and topographic maps.

Selective housing enhances the capability of these libraries to develop collections of greater depth. The selective libraries assume responsibility for the cataloging, binding and maintenance of the selected documents. Promotion, bibliographic instruction and reference for these materials also become the responsibility of the selective library.

The judicious use of selective housing agreements has served to alleviate some concern over space in the Chester Fritz Library, as well as heightened the accessibility of documents on the University of North Dakota campus.

Distributed depository responsibility has been a reality, a necessity, as well as a successful organizational structure that has been a benefit to the citizens of North Dakota. North Dakota's joint regional depository library celebrates its thirtieth anniversary and looks forward to the next century.