

Proceedings of the 6th Annual Federal Depository Library Conference

April 14-17, 1997

Bibliographic Control in an Electronic FDLP: Problems, Practices, and Policies

Cynthia Wolff, Northwestern University
Evanston, IL

Let me start off by saying: I am not a cataloger, but I play one on GOVDOC-L.

When I was asked to provide some insight into the "problems, practices, and policies" of providing bibliographic access to electronic resources, I was reminded of a joke by Mr. Fred Allen, an old vaudeville comedian, who wisely noted:

A conference is a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing, but together can decide that nothing can be done.

Of course, he adopted his stage name, Fred Allen, to honor the American Revolution hero Ethan Allen--who, he noted, was no longer using the name.

Fortunately, as we have heard from the first session's presenters, providing bibliographic access to electronic resources is becoming a reality as more and more sources are migrating to electronic only access. In the world of Government documents, this issue is not a new topic. There are some of us who are old enough to remember the receipt of good ol' Census Test Disk No. 2 in 1989. Of course, that was one of the first instances that we noticed the dangers of fugitive electronic documents. Did anyone ever see Census Test Disk No. 1?

GPO has been cataloging electronic resources since 1989 when agencies began using the technology to distribute information. In fact, if you look in Administrative Notes (v.10, no.23) for November 15, 1989, the GPO proudly announced:

...the Interior Department's CD-ROM containing SLAR (Side-Looking Airborne Radar) has been cataloged by GPO staff under OCLC number 20444603. The record, produced on October 5, 1989, contains a detailed description of the item which is titled "Joint Earth Sciences (JES-2) Demonstration Disc." The SuDocs class for the disc is I 19.119:SI 1.

This was page one news!

Why would that be such a big deal? Now, we come to expect the CD-ROM and floppy disks as part of our Monthly Catalog and that they have SuDoc numbers assigned. But, some of you may be as old as me and remember when we had the famous "Technology Tea" in 1990 as part of the Depository Library Council followed up by a survey of libraries (see Administrative Notes, v.11, no. 26) in which the GPO asked us: "Do you want everything even if it doesn't have technical documentation and software?" We said: "YES, we want everything, even if it doesn't have technical documentation and software!" And the GPO sent it, and we said: "HEY, where is the technical documentation and software for the TIGER files?" But, I digress.

As we have all heard, the Federal Depository Library Program has been mandated by Congress to move into an Electronic Federal Depository Library Program in the next five years. Or is that seven? Anyway, fear not, I won't go into the history, politics, and concerns of that part of reinventing government. And, as we know, a number of titles have migrated into electronic only format, a lot in CD-ROM as well as our friend, the Internet. Sorry, but I just have to throw in some more history for you.

In 1994, the 3rd Annual Federal Depository Library Conference included an Internet panel discussion in which Ann Miller, now of Duke University, spoke about "The Internet and Academic Libraries." Ann said:

But slowly, as products have appeared which allow a little more organization of the material available on the networks, we have begun to use the Internet as a ready reference source and perhaps even a supplement to our local collections. I say supplement because there is still a way to go before I see the Internet as a complete replacement for local materials.

Part of this panel included Maggie Parhamovich Farrell, now of Montana State University, who presented a talk entitled "Internet Resources: U.S. Government Information." At that time, all of Maggie's overheads consisted of gopher sites. Three years later, we consider "gopher" to be out of date. Even Grace York of the University of Michigan (another panelist) has recently announced the migration to the World Wide Web of her resources. Of course, Grace had already predicted in her talk that:

Gopher will be replaced, at least in part, by Mosaic and Mosaic by another system and yet by another system.

You may ask yourself: why is she reading old Administrative Notes and old Federal Depository Library Conference proceedings? Looking back from 1997, it seems almost "silly" to re-live these past life experiences. But, my point is that as government information specialists, the issues of bibliographic access of electronic resources are not "new" to us. Even if you are not doing the cataloging, you need to understand what is going on behind the scenes and be assertive enough to make your voice heard in your library. After all, bibliographic access is a public service issue. And you cannot just "assume" that the people in the technical services (or in other areas of public services for that matter) are aware of what has been so "obvious" to us for the past eight years--even longer for those who knew about all this FTPing, gophering and such back in the "old days."

If your library will never ever buy an electronic journal before you retire, and you load the GPO records, via Marcive, OCLC or whoever, you may be receiving cataloging records with URLs. What is the location code? How will they show up in your OPAC? Will you say: well, this is just something that we are not going to deal with at our library, we'll just delete those that have that nasty 856 field. And then your patron may walk up to your OPAC terminal and see that you have the Census of Population from 1790-1990, but they are looking for the Census of 2000.

If your patron doesn't ask the right person, they are going fill out an interlibrary loan request or drive downstate because they "know" that the University of Illinois has everything and Northwestern doesn't have diddley. Because, the patron may not "know" it's only on the Internet and they are just going to assume that your library doesn't have it, just like all those other documents prior to July 1976. Even if your library is not buying the GPO tapes, your collection is migrating to the Internet and your patron may find those URL records on the SilverPlatter CD and ask you what it means. See the Administrative Notes Technical Supplements or the University of Memphis Migrating Titles page <http://www.lib/memphis.edu/gpo/mig.htm>.> for living proof. Or you may think: hey, I'm only a 15% depository, this won't affect me. But, perhaps you are a full State depository. We just received notice that the Illinois Administrative Code from this edition forward will only be available via CD-ROM.

The reason that Northwestern University (NU) Library has developed a policy for bibliographic access for electronic resources is not just because I keep forwarding to the Head of Serials copies of statements from journals that read: "last issue, available only on the WWW." (Although, I admit it did sort of push enough buttons in Serials to make them realize that this was going to be a problem since I wasn't going to leave them alone). The reason that we are dealing with the issue is not just because of government publications. There were other problems in the Main Library:

1. CDs/Floppies that accompany books: Should they stay with the book? Should they circulate? How do we mark the pieces? If they are not on the Library LAN, Where should they be housed?
2. Journal subscriptions on the WWW: How do we let people know that we have an electronic version?
3. What about resources that we create at NU such as electronic text?
4. How do we catalog them? Separate records? Every format in one bibliographic record? What about those materials that are available only to the Northwestern Community due to site licenses? Do we assign a call number?

As these questions were being asked and more and more electronic resources continued to flow into our library (not just from the Federal Government), Northwestern's Assistant University Librarian (AUL) for Technical Services formed a committee that became known as BAER (Bibliographic Access to Electronic Resources) in February 1996. (I give the AUL, Roxanne Sellberg, all credit for a brilliant acronym). As Roxanne pointed out, she wanted to

create a policy rather than a tradition. The committee consisted of the AUL and the Head of Bibliographic Records Service (i.e., monographic cataloging) as co-chairs along with the Head of Serials Cataloging, the Transportation Library Cataloger, the Head of the Science and Engineering Library, a main library original cataloger who was the de facto electronic resources cataloger, the Reference Electronic Resources Coordinator, and myself. It is important to note that the committee was a library-wide committee and not just a technical services committee. Because, as the Head of Serials cataloging told me one day: "we don't care where it goes, we just need to know where it is going!"

The very first time that BAER met, I was excited: finally, we are going to deal with this migration of sources to the Internet! I pulled together my remarks from the Superintendent of Documents and Gil Baldwin at the 1996 ALA Mid-Winter GPO Updates regarding migration and classification issues and Tad Downing's updates from the Cataloging Branch as well as issues that had appeared on GOVDOC-L and one of the first examples of a cataloging record with a URL: The Federal Bulletin Board. I had my pile (despite the electronic world, a few trees still give their lives for the electronic migration process) and was ready to talk. Then I realized: these non-government librarians were just now dealing with issues that I have been dealing with since 1989. I was going to have to slow down. Be patient. Bite my lip. Try not to say snide things.

One of the first questions of bibliographic access to electronic resources on the Internet had already been raised in the documents community as early as 1993 (for the historians in the audience: the first I found on the GOVDOC-L archive was on March 1, 1993 by Cathy Dwyer at SUNY Albany and the only response to her query that I found was from Duncan Aldrich at University of Nevada, Reno). These people were just now trying to deal with the fact that all these CDs and floppies were coming into the library. Do they stay with the book? How do we mark the pieces? Where do we put them? Do we circulate them? I already had over a thousand CDs and floppies in my collection. What was the big deal? But, in the non-documents world, this is just now becoming a big deal.

We met every Tuesday from 9 to 11 a.m. Yes, every week, from February until December 1996. We had "testimony" from various library departments as to what they wanted to see in the OPAC (e.g., Preservation, Media Center, Social Sciences Data Services, Electronic Text). We gathered information from other institutions that were already cataloging electronic resources (including the University of Virginia, the University of Michigan, and Florida State University). In March 1996, I made a call on GOVDOC-L asking if anyone wanted to get together for an "informal" discussion of BAER issues. Some of you may have been one of the seventy-five that showed up in April during the 1996 Conference. You may be surprised to hear that when I reported back that all these government documents types showed up to this informal discussion, that the NU BAER committee was surprised that so many of us "non-cataloging" types would be interested in the issue. I explained it is a documents librarian tradition to make technical service nightmares come true.

I gave them a copy of the GPO Cataloging Guidelines from the WWW. A few were pleased and surprised that GPO already had developed a policy and actual implemented procedures. I pointed out that the GPO **had** to create a policy because while the subject bibliographers may pick and choose what electronic products they want to buy, the GPO has to take whatever format they receive from the agencies. So, if things are now on the

Internet, there is an expectation and requirement that the GPO will provide bibliographic access from those of us in Federal Depository Library Land. In fact, we are pretty vocal about our expectations to catalog and classify the materials. And, the loudest voices were not just from the government documents librarians who are catalogers.

I will spare you a blow by blow about the details of these meetings. Our final report is available on the WWW <http://www.library.nwu.edu/tech/baer/>. It's interesting to note that in the very beginning, the committee could not even agree on "the vision thing." Part of the group felt that the OPAC would continue to be the primary source for all types of materials. Others in the group felt that the Internet would be the starting point for all sources and that the OPAC would be a secondary tool where users would locate books and other non-Internet resources. One thing we did agree upon: that as fast as the technology is changing, the next few years will be a transition period. I refer to it as the-never-ending-BAER-committee.

Things we did agree to implement for Internet:

1. For those items that migrate to the Web and retain their same titles, information will be recorded in the bibliographic record, just as GPO uses the same record for microfiche, paper, and electronic.

Score one for the Documents Librarians who like one record. Again, traditional cataloging at NU creates a separate record for microfiche, print, and electronic publications. But, in the world of "shrinking technical services resources" (read: staff), there is a need to streamline. For many years, the Government Publications Department has added a second copy holding on the same record for different formats.

2. For titles that are available on the Internet, we have created a series of location codes for our NOTIS system:

govt,int

afri,int

ref,int

All these codes will display the location: INTERNET

The theory behind having departments identified in the staff mode is that if the URL goes "bad", Cataloging will have a "responsible" department to find a new one or to have the record suppressed. If you look at GPO Cataloging Guidelines, they actually have a section entitled "remote files no longer available" (i.e., dead URLs).

3. URLs will be recorded in the 856 field, which displays in the notes area, and they will be labeled: "Access method."

4. In the call number field, the message will read: "See URL above."

5. For holdings, there will be an 852 field displayed which says: "See Internet for available issues."

Now, these seem like simple, obvious solutions. However, if you get involved in such a project, you will find that everyone has an opinion and we all feel that ours is the right one! And there will be major arguments and arm wrestling over words: is it better to have INTERNET or WWW or World Wide Web? Should the message say: See URL above or See URL in notes above or See WWW address above?

Another part of the NUL BAER dealt with issues for tangible electronic resources (e.g., CD-ROMs and floppies). We recommended creation of location codes for electronic products such as:

ref, elec

which will display in the OPAC:

Main Reference (Electronic).

Prior to this, CDs in the Reference Department would be either Reference or Reference Desk (depending on when it arrived and/or who assigned the location code in Reference). And if the patron didn't notice that the Dewey number was for an electronic product and didn't stop at the desk, they could spend a couple of hours looking through the Reference stacks and think perhaps it was on the reshelving stacks. Naturally, we have used a govt,elec location code for at least four years. Of course, we could have the same stack search if our patron has only provided us a SuDocs number.

So, where are we at Northwestern University Library Government Publications and Maps Department in providing bibliographic access to electronic products? To borrow a new phrase that is floating around in cataloging circles: we have a "virtual backlog." We have procedures in place and have begun using the new location codes for titles that have migrated to electronic only access. But, at this point, my department is cleaning up the Marcive tape loads. See, you are not behind: we may have invented NOTIS in 1970, but we are now on tape 5 of the 8 tapes ranging from July 1976 to 1995. And we are "ready" for when our current tape load begins for those electronic products with the URL in the 856 field.

As the first speaker for this session, I just wanted to remind you how much you already know about bibliographic access to electronic resources just by virtue of being government information specialists. And I encourage you not to think that "you don't know nothing about birthing no bib records." So, when you hear Carol, Barbie, and Arlene speak about how they do good at their institution, don't think that you are behind--just remember: most libraries haven't done that pre-July 1976 recon of their collections. And use what skills you already have to move your library toward providing access to electronic resources. And if your library won't go, you can at least move your government documents forward.