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Knowing Your Local Community: Using Federal Information to Learn About Community Change

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This presentation reported on a Montana State University project funded by the Council on Library Resources to encourage libraries as leadership organizations within their communities. It included the showing of the video, *Knowing Your Local Community: Using Federal Information to Learn About Community Change*. The video highlights the role of the Federal Depository Library system and the use of government data for profiling change in rural communities. Three case studies are presented showing how Census and Bureau of Economic Analysis data can be used to understand demographic and economic change in a community or region. The video also describes an interactive video workshop that was held at four depository library sites in Montana. Depository librarians at the sites served as facilitators for the workshop. As part of the workshop, Jerry Johnson presented a case study of one community, describing the methodology involved, and Vicky York covered the portion on finding the data in both print and electronic forms.

The overall goals of the project were to:

- 1) demonstrate the value of distance education technologies (interactive video) to information delivery;
- 2) profile depository libraries and promote cooperation among the depository libraries in the state; and,
- 3) encourage the use of electronic formats for accessing government information.

The project stemmed from the earlier publication of *Measuring Change in Rural Communities: A Workbook for Determining Demographic, Economic and Fiscal Trends*. Participants in the workshop received a copy of the workbook and were encouraged to contact the depository library facilitator nearest them for help in getting started with the data gathering.

As the video shows, the benefits of the project were clear: collaboration among libraries; increased awareness of the role of depository libraries; and better access to information on which to make decisions.

Information about ordering copies of either the workbook or the video is available from:

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