Government Documents Check-in in an Electronic Environment

Jerry Frobom, University of Nebraska - Lincoln
Lincoln, NE

I am pleased to be here to describe to you today the process that the University of Nebraska- Lincoln Libraries System has undertaken during the past 3 1/2 years to integrate the Federal Government Documents collection into the regular collections within the Library system.

Slide 1 **[Note: Slides not in this Web version of the Proceedings]**

I will first describe the Libraries System and the Federal Documents collections in it, the elements of our automated system and how we interpreted the GPO Guidelines regarding our situation, I will then show you some examples of how documents records appear in our data base, and conclude with a discussion of some of the challenges we still need to resolve before we can call the project complete.

I would ask that you save your questions until after the end of the presentation. I am sure that we will have ample time to answer any questions you may have, and feel free to make comments about our program at that time.

Slide 2

The Documents Depository is a unit within the General Services Department, one of 3 Departments on the Public Services element of the Libraries System. With a recent reorganization taking place, all Department Chairs now report directly to the Dean of Libraries. The organizational chart here will give an idea of our structure. However, there are some support staff units, such as the Automated Systems Office, and the Collections Development Office which are not on the chart.

The General Services Department has 4 units: Photocopy/Microforms Services, Interlibrary Loan, Circulation, and the Government Documents Depository.

The Documents Depository has two elements: the Federal Depository, and the United Nations, Nebraska publications, and OAS collections.

Slide 3

The unit is staffed by one professional librarian, a library specialist who is a paraprofessional (also my computer expert), 2 clerical library assistant II's for the Federal Program, and a .5 library assistant II for the UN/NEB/OAS collections.

Slide 4

The University of Nebraska is the designated land-grant university for Nebraska and is the primary research institution in the State. The enrollment is about 25,000, and we are divided into two campuses: the City (or Main) Campus, and the Agricultural Campus, or East Campus, which is about 2.5 miles away.

The University Libraries System consists of Love Library which is the main library, plus 9 branch libraries. Love Library houses the main documents collection and the unit offices. The largest branch docs collection at this point is in the Agriculture Library on East Campus, and we also have a substantial docs collection in the Engineering Library on City Campus. The Law Library, which is on East Campus, is a separate entity, although its holdings appear in the University Libraries data base.

We also are going to be developing a docs collection in the Geology branch, which is on City Campus.

Slide 5

Prior to automation, the Federal documents collection was handled in a rather traditional way. We had a paper shelf-list arranged in SuDocs order with typed shelf-list cards for the monographs, and check-in cards of several types for checking in periodicals and serials. Also included in the shelf list were cards giving binding information, such as cover color, the number of issues per binding unit, and cover title. Much of the information for the current periodicals and serials, such as holdings, issue dates, and binding information has been transferred to our check-in records, which I will discuss in a few minutes.

Also included on the paper check-in cards was format information, such as microfiche holdings, and we used the same monographs to indicate dates of superseding issues for irregularly issued items.

The University Libraries has 4 major elements in our automated Innovative Interfaces (III) system, which we refer to as IRIS.

Slide 6

First, for our discussion, the data base includes MARC bibliographic records, item level records, serials check-in records and on-line check-in cards, patron records, and a variety of tables which serve to connect all these elements together, depending upon the function requested.

The Federal documents which have MARC records (after 1976), are now incorporated into our database and displayed on our on-line Public Access Catalog or PAC, along with the rest of the libraries' holdings.

We use the circulation module of the system to circulate practically all of our documents.

We use the serials module of the system to check-in the periodicals and serials we receive, combined with the binding module which we use in conjunction with the binding unit of the libraries to bind our materials.

The IRIS data base consists of three elements:

The main element of the database is the MARC bibliographic record, which provides a description of each title in our collection. We have both monographic and serial records for the documents in our collection.

Attached to the bibliographic record is an item level record, which contains coded information on a piece-level basis for each individual monograph, or bound periodical volume. For current periodicals and serials, a check-in record is also attached at this level, which provides holdings information, vendor and binding information, and a on-line check-in card for checking in current issues.

Slide 7

An order level record is created for each document serial so that we can use the report function of our system to give us a title count of the current serials and periodicals being received.

Slide 8

Early in 1992, a GPO Tape Load Committee was created, which included staff members from both the Technical Services Departments and Public Services Departments of the University Libraries and the University Law Libraries. Cooperation between the two libraries and all the departments involved has been critical from the very beginning of the project. That cooperation still continues, as tech services units assist in the creation of check-in records for docs serials, and docs staff members regularly attend tech services units meetings to facilitate communication between all units involved.

The committee was charged to examine the desirability and feasibility of making a transition by the docs staff from the current paper check-in to a completely electronic on-line system.

After several months of meetings, and an exhaustive examination of workflows, the committee determined that the transition was feasible, and recommended that Marcive, Inc. of San Antonio be the provider of the necessary MARC records. Marcive had provided the records and processing for the existing data base, so we had a track record to judge performance. They were also very familiar with our existing system.

The tape load was made in several parts. We began the full retrospective tape load of 280,000 records in January 1993. Because of the size of the files, the file was broken into 10 sections. Beginning with the serials, the entire process for loading the retrospective files took about 16 months. Because decisions regarding the map records have yet to be finalized, the 12,000 map records remain suppressed.

Loading the monthly GPO MARC records began February, 1993, loading concurrently with the retrospective tape load. Part of the processing is running the item level records through the rapid-up-date capabilities of IRIS to change location codes, determined by the SuDocs stem number.

Slide 9

In order to take advantage of the serials check-in system, check-in records began to be created in the spring of 1993, with 400 check-in records completed by June 30, 1993. 700 more check- in records had been created a year later, and by June 30, 1995, we had 3,900 check-in records.

For the first 21 months of the transition, we maintained our paper shelf-list, except for the serials which we were checking in, using the serials module of IRIS. However, we were becoming more and more aware of the time lag between the receipt of monographs and the availability of MARC records.

In order to bridge the gap, we began subscribing to Marcive's Shipping List Service (SLS) records, which provide an on-line record within 7-10 days of receiving the materials. On October 1, 1994, we officially closed out the paper shelf list, having elected to use the on-line SLS records to indicate receipt of materials.

Underlying all our discussions regarding feasibility and examination of work flows was the issue of GPO requirements for piece-level records for materials received through the Federal Depository Library Program.

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We decided that although we were not going to use separate bibliographic records for materials received in paper and fiche, we would create item level records for each individual piece. So for dual distribution items, we have one item level record for the paper piece, and a second item level record for the fiche. At the recommendation of our Public Service librarians, we also create a separate item level record for each piece of multi-part monographs, such as hearings. Our serial records include a summary holdings statement indicating what we have received. We use these to list items received and bound, and also indicate missing or lacking pieces. We use the check-in record to record items being currently received, and when a volume is bound, we change the summary holdings statement to up-date it.

We probably have better records now than we have ever had, since we often go directly to the shelf and conduct an inventory before creating holdings statements.

I will admit, however, that we do not have a perfect system, and we do have a few serials records which have the statement Check shelf for availability, indicating that we do not have piece-level records for these items.

Our initial record for a monograph is the Shipping List Service record we purchase from Marcive. This is the way the record appears on our PAC.

Slide 11

You will note that the information is minimal-- there is no indication of availability that you will see on the full MARC PAC record. Additional information such as the shipping list number is suppressed in the public mode.

This record will be overlaid by the full MARC record including an item level record when we receive it via the monthly tape load. Marcive includes an accession number on each of its SLS records, and then includes that same number in the MARC record, so IRIS is able to match and overlay. If an item level record has been attached to the SLS, such as would occur had the piece circulated, that item level record will transfer to the new MARC record.

Initially, we loaded the SLS records and immediately suppressed them, unsuppressing them as part of our check-in procedure to indicate that we had received the item. However, we now load them unsuppressed, and only suppress them if we have not received a piece, along with a note indicating when an item has been claimed.

We were also concerned with quality control, but we found that the quality of the Marcive records did not justify examining each and every record.

Slide 12

This is what a monograph record looks like in our PAC.

Notice that there are two item-level records for this particular piece--one for the paper issue which is available for circulation--the second is for the fiche edition which is limited to in-library use only.

Our library-wide finding guides direct the patron to the correct location for each item.

Slide 13

This is a serial record as it appears to the patron. You will note the item level record includes the holdings statement indicating which pieces are bound, and the second line is created from the on-line check-in card indicating the date of the last piece received.

Slide 14

The first part of the check-in record for current holdings is extensive, including much of the information previously included on several cards in our paper shelf-list. The notes indicate the special handling procedures, the vendor note indicates from whom we get the piece,

and the binding notes contain the information needed by the binding unit to get the volumes bound.

We are using function keys to create much of this card, but since each title is unique, the creation of this record is quite labor-intensive, and requires a great deal of training to insure uniformity.

And this is only the front half of the check-in record, followed by...

Slide 15

...the on-line check-in card.

For current items, this is the record which comes up for library staff members when they search the database to check-in items. The actual check-in can be done with as little as 3 key strokes, but we usually do a lot more, since we like to have the expected date updated to reflect a pre- determined interval based on when we received the last item.

Rather than running a parallel circulation system for government documents, having the documents in the IRIS database enables us to circulate government documents from our regular circulation desk. Remember, to the patron, these pieces donþt look different from anything else he or she has selected to check out.

We don't handle over-dues, fines, items held for patrons, or recalls. These are all ably done by our circulation unit.

Slide 16

There are a few pieces which we don't circulate, as seen here. However, we can override the system should a special request be made to check out an item in these categories.

We are circulating some CDs, particularly those for which we have not loaded software into our stand-alone workstation. Those pieces are in storage cases and are on the shelves, interfiled with the regular docs collection.

Slide 17

After the docs staff was nearly buried alive by the volume of IRIS-generated claims which were being printed and forwarded to us from the Serials Processing unit, we decided that we would limit our claims to pieces missing from shipping lists, and those items we could identify through the system as pieces missing from direct mail/subscriptions.

Although the docs staff initiates the binding of individual items, all the actual binding is done through the binding unit which is part of the Serials Department. We do bind monographs extensively, but do not strictly follow the library-wide guidelines, mainly because of the enormous numbers of volumes involved. For serials, we use the same criteria we use for the rest of Libraries Systems materials.

There are some series which we have not been able to figure out how to set up a check-in record which would make sense to patrons and/or library staff. These are some of the same gems which had shelf list cards which read send directly to stacks. We are still waiting for the CD version of the POMS manual.

On the other hand, we had originally intended that all SLS records would eventually be eliminated after they had been replaced by the full MARC records. However, there are a couple of series which have individual titles listed on the shipping list, but have only serials records available. We are probably going to leave the SLS records in the system, since we can search each title by keyword, thus providing some access to them.

Slide 18

We do have a number of loose ends, or to use the local euphemism, clean-up projects, to consider.

Slide 19

These are not listed in priority order, but probably the largest project is the monographs cataloged as serials entry, since the practice at the University Libraries has been to catalog large series of monographs, such as those received from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Labor, and the Geological Survey as serials, classified for the LC collections. Now that we have individual monographic records available, we are planning on transferring these pieces from their current LC location to SuDocs classifications into docs collections. These are primarily in branch locations which already have documents collections.

Slide 20

Taking everything into consideration, the project has definitely been worth while. Our circulation of gov docs has gone up about 150% over all locations. Patrons now have full bibliographic access to both documents monographs and serials, and we have pretty much removed any stigma that patrons sometimes feel about using government documents.

On the other hand, automation has not saved time or staff. The real benefit is on behalf of the users. Eventually, we expect that we will get caught up creating serials check-in record (5,105 at last count). It does take time to maintain high quality in the database. It takes time to train staff in the intricacies of the system and bibliographic records.

As we discussed the feasibility of the project, the rumor mill had a field day. We realized early that staff had to be kept abreast of decisions and developments regarding this major project. As a team, the Docs Tape Load committee held dog and pony shows to keep the entire library staff advised as to progress. We benefitted greatly from the recommendations that staff provided us, giving us their insights.

The real reward for all the work that has been put in thus far, however, is the sight of a faculty member, grad or undergrad, or the member of the general public heading into our stacks with a multi-page list of documents that he expects to find and use.