

Opening Pandora's Box: Assessing a Government Document Collection

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Introduction

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Library has been a United States Federal Depository Library since 1884. The library's federal depository holdings include over one million items in various media format, such as e-resources, paper documents, and even floppy disks. As a collaboration between members of the Government Information Team and several other units and stakeholders in the library, we developed this project, which aims to assess our large federal government information holdings at the University Library.

With this project, we aim to support the research, teaching and learning needs of the university community and the service mission to the public population. This poster outlines our work on the project so far; due to the project's scope, we are currently continuing with the assessment process as well as outreach/discoverability projects.



Image taken from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Library

Discoverability and Accessibility

During our discussions and process of the project, one challenge that emerged was the difficulties in navigating search engines and databases to find government information and documents. Although we have a lot of valuable sources, it is not easy for our users to have access to this information.

As an end result of the project, we hope to make discoverability/accessibility one of our main goals in order to facilitate understanding and strategies to enhance the use of our collection.

Currently, our unit is partnering with the Acquisitions Department to make search terms in our databases more user-friendly. We also envision that with the inclusion of our future projects (creating LibGuides, Instruction and Outreach efforts, etc.), the information will become more intuitive for our users.

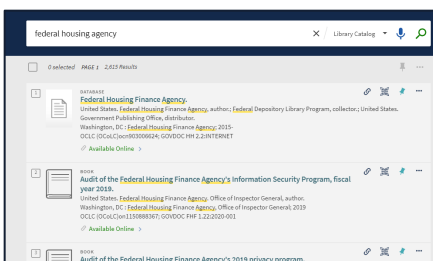
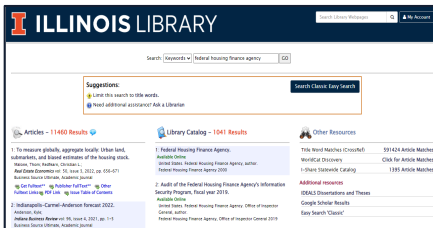


Image 2-3. The search results in both Easy Search (user-facing search engine) and the Library Catalog return 1,000-2,600 search results for one similar keyword search. This can lead to information overload and other challenges for our users.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives

We will be incorporating **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility** initiatives in our assessment project. We first looked to other library initiatives to inform our understanding of DEIA efforts in collection assessment.

Using the DEIA statement from the University, we began assessing our collection by establishing a clear definition of diversity and a controlled vocabulary to talk about DEIA. To do so we referred to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility statement from the University Library.

We will continue to center DEIA in our collection assessment project. Some initiatives we might consider is improving accessibility to non-U.S. documents, updating language and metadata terms, identify collection gaps, and promote diverse aspects of our collection. We are also aware of challenges that might arise as we go forward with our efforts like the inequitable practices in government documents and problematic Library of Congress subject headings.



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Usage Statistics Assessment

Circulation Statistics

The circulation statistics report was helpful in identifying physical government titles that were circulated the most and discovering patterns in the usage.

Title	Count of Events
Official gazette of the United States Patent and Trademark Office.	2708
Annual report.	1070
Congressional record : proceedings and debates of the ... Congress.	1066
Area wage survey.	814
USAPAT U.S. patent documents on CD-ROM.	764
1990 census of population and housing.	749
USAPAT facsimile images of United States patents issued 1790 to present.	618
Water resources data.	538
Nuclear Regulatory Commission issuances /	438
Vital statistics of the United States.	437
1980 census of population and housing.	410
Daily depository shipping list.	402

Table 1. Circulation statistics for physical government titles

FDP L PURL Usage Reports

For the Library's electronic federal collection titles, the Government Publishing Office's (GPO) Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) provides Permanent Uniform Resource Locator (PURL) usage reports for our institution. From these reports, we were able to extract the usage statistics of titles, where the titles were accessed through (catalog, library guides, library website, etc.), and more.

Title	Count of PURL
Motor fuels [electronic resource] : understanding the factors that influence	204
Mitigating the impact of high gas prices on the American workforce : hear	204
Gas prices : how are they really set? : hearings before the Permanent Sub	204
Crude oil : the source of higher gas prices? : hearing before the Subcomm	204
A primer on gasoline prices [electronic resource].	104
FDGC don't duck metadata [electronic resource] : metadata quick guide ;	101
Essential metadata elements [electronic resource] : content standard for	100
the most common metadata errors [electronic resource]	99
(blank)	61
Journal of special operations medicine.	38
Parameters (Carlisle, Pa. : Online)	31
County and city data books (Online)	21
Catalog of U.S. government publications.	24
GovInfo.	21

Table 2. PURL usage by title

Row Labels	Count of PURL
campus CIDR	100
catalog	1967
LibGuide	74
libraries/campus websites	1990
Library/campus websites	178
Grand Total	4309

Table 2. PURL usage by access point

Challenges

One of the main challenges we encountered related to gathering usage statistics. The report only contained the usage statistics of the last two years (2020-2022) due to the implementation of a new Integrated Library System (ILS). Additionally, the Library was closed due to Covid-19 practices for the majority of this time period and a large number of the federal collection was not circulated due to previous policies. Therefore, this data still has limits in representing a comprehensive overview of our collection.

Assessment Process

To begin the assessment process, we began by examining and organizing the selection of federal government titles received by the library through the Federal Depository Library Program.

The list of all GPO documents was then divided by the different agencies. Within the specific agency lists, any duplicate items (those selected in multiple formats) were highlighted. We then turned to the university's list of subject specialist librarians, as they would be consulted on the document selection as part of the assessment process. The different agency/topics lists were then matched to one of the subject specialists. Some agencies did not fall exactly under the purview of any one of the subject specialists; these, as well as documents that fell under her scope, were assessed by the library's Government Information Librarian.

After consulting with the subject specialist librarians, decisions were made to either select or deselect certain items.

Subco	Agency	Sub-Agency	Title	For	Select
A101.29.1	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	NWRC Annual Publications List	EL	Selected
A101.29.4	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Innovative Solutions to Human-Wildlife Conflict	EL	Selected
A101.29.5	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Wildlife Damage Management Technical Series	EL	Selected
A101.30	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Technical Reports	EL	Selected
A101.31	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Fact Sheets	EL	Selected
A101.32	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Electronic Products (misc.)	E	Selected
A101.34	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	List of Laboratories Approved to Receive Soil	EL	Selected
A101.35	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	National Poultry Improvement Plan (Directory)	EL	Selected
A101.47	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	APHIS Veterinary Services Info Sheet (series)	EL	Selected
A101.48	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Industry Alert (series)	EL	Selected
A101.49	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	AgBioSecurity	EL	Selected
A101.50	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Environmental Assessment	EL	Selected
A101.56	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	Regulations, Rules, Instructions	P	Selected
A101.8	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Animal and Plant Health	National Poultry Improvement Plan (Directory)	UNK	Deselected
A104.12/2.3	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Federal Grain Inspection	U.S. Grain Export Quality Report	EL	Selected
A104.12/2.5	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Federal Grain Inspection	U.S. Wheat Quality	P	Selected
A107.2	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Office of Congressional Publications	Handbooks, Manuals, Guides	UNK	Deselected
A109.1/2	AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT	Rural Business/Cooper	Business Programs Annual Report	EL	Selected

Table 4. Titles were divided by the producing agency. After further review, lists with information about the titles were sent to the appropriate subject specialists for recommendations for selection.

Conclusion:

Outreach Initiatives and Future Work

Outreach:

Continuing outreach plans include virtual and physical exhibits highlighting the government resources in the library. Additionally, we will be continuing our instruction efforts to provide our users with knowledge and skills to better navigate and find government information. A future project we want to pursue is the creation of new LibGuides highlighting different search strategies in an accessible way.

Further DEI efforts :

Identifying agencies/ subagencies that could provide information on following themes: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, culture, language, socioeconomic status, veteran status, religion, politics, age, neurodiversity, and physical abilities & making selection changes and outreach/promotion efforts to highlight these items.

Discoverability & accessibility :

We will be working with our Acquisitions and Cataloging Services unit in developing new policies and workflows that will ensure better discoverability & accessibility to our government titles. We are also looking into adding a "Government Information" filter to our catalog to improve discoverability of our government titles.

