

# **“Help! I’m an Accidental Government Information Librarian”: Web-based Outreach to Non-Traditional Documents Librarians**

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## **What We’ll Cover**

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## What We'll Cover

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## Acknowledgement

- I wish to gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Lynda Kellam, GRS Chair, with this presentation

## Introduction

- In spring 2011, the NCLA Government Resources Section launched the “Help! I’m an Accidental Government Information Librarian” webinar series
- Series proved far more successful than anticipated
- Why and how we did it

## About the Government Resources Section

- The purpose of the Government Resources Section of the North Carolina Library Association shall be
  1. to promote state-wide cooperation among library employees working with all types of government documents,
  2. **to provide opportunities for continuing education and idea sharing,**
  3. to support all levels of government in making their public documents readily available to all types of libraries, and
  4. to seek to fulfill the objectives of the North Carolina Library Association.

(Source: GRS Bylaws; emphasis added-DD)

## Why the “Help!” Program

- Originally conceived at Spring 2009 GRS executive board meeting
- Fill the perceived need of “accidental” government documents/information librarians for training and development opportunities

## “Accidental Government Documents Librarians”

- Many depository library coordinators are either new to librarianship and/or serving on an interim basis
- Many documents librarians now have substantial duties beyond working with government information (ex: reference, collection development, acquisitions)

Source: Payne, Yadira V.; Guth, LuMarie; and Sharpe, Chris (2012) "COMO White Paper - No Melting Pot: Results and Reflections from the 2011 Southeastern Federal Depository Coordinators Salary Survey Project," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 49: Iss. 3, Article 8. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glg/vol49/iss3/8>

## “Accidental Government Documents Librarians”

- “The typical interim government documents librarian is a newer, public services oriented individual in an academic library who sees his or her role as that of maintaining the status quo of the collection until the “real” government documents librarian is able to take over. . . They are frustrated with the support and training they received prior to beginning their position.”

Source: Yelinek, Kathryn, and Marilou Hinchcliff. "Accidental government documents librarian: A review of experiences and training needs of interim documents librarians." *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 35, no. 1 (2009): 46-56.

## Why the “Help!” Program

- “Because very few of us were getting the training we needed (I never had a class in govdocs because it wasn’t offered while I was a student. I also wouldn’t have probably taken it because I didn’t plan to become a govdoc librarian specifically. So, we wanted to get those people.” (L. Kellam)

## Why a Webinar Series

- Making a virtue of necessity
- Budget issues and the small size of GRS ruled out physical workshops/presentations as an option
- UNC-G has access to Elluminate (now Blackboard Collaborate) “classroom”, allows for online presentations, co-browsing and chat

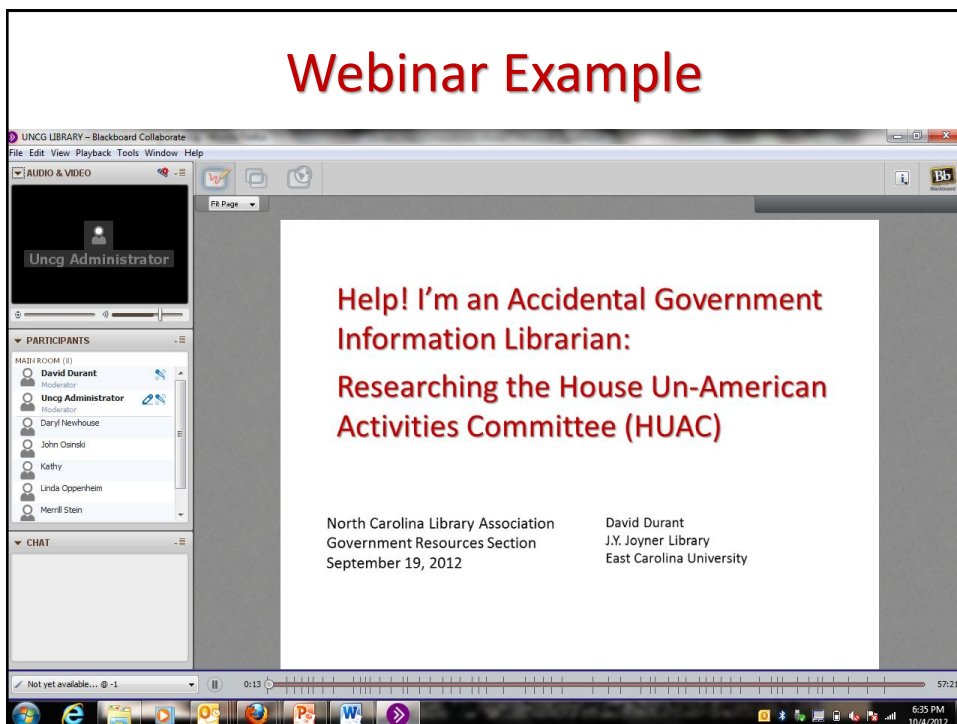
## Implementation

- Users need to register in advance with Lynda Kellam, Elluminate link is sent out in advance for test purposes
- Registration is free, do not have to be in GRS or in NC
- Webinars are archived and are freely available on GRS website

## Implementation

- Elluminate requires the user to download and run Java, but no other extra software is needed
- Speaker or headphones needed for audio/voice
- Easy and straightforward to access

## Webinar Example



The screenshot displays a Blackboard Collaborate webinar session. The main content area shows a presentation slide with the following text:

**Help! I'm an Accidental Government Information Librarian:  
Researching the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)**

North Carolina Library Association  
Government Resources Section  
September 19, 2012

David Durant  
J.Y. Joyner Library  
East Carolina University

The interface includes a sidebar with a video player (showing 'Uncg Administrator'), a list of participants (David Durant, Uncg Administrator, Daryl Newhouse, John Oanski, Kathy, Linda Oppenheim, Merrill Stein), and a chat window. The bottom of the screen shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and a system tray displaying the time as 6:35 PM on 10/4/2012.

## The “Help!” Series to Date

- The first session (Help! I'm an Accidental Government Information Librarian: The Basics) took place on April 14, 2011
- Initial goal of 2-3 more sessions in 2011
- Nineteen webinars presented (11 in 2011, 8 in 2012)
- Attendance usually 30-40

## The “Help!” Series to Date

- Topics can be anything related to government information
- Range from general (basic intro., fugitive docs, international docs) to the specific (HUAC, USDA, Creative Commons)
- Presenters have been from throughout the U.S. (6 of 19 from outside NC; 4 from outside SE U.S.)



## Response to the Series

- Very positive from throughout the documents community
- Good feedback from attendee surveys
- A number of requests for specific topics
- Bump in interest/membership in GRS

## Response to the Series

- “Overwhelmingly positive. We survey attendees for each session and there are always comments on how helpful this has been and how much they enjoy it. **I think we stumbled upon a real need in the community.** We have also had a lot of requests for additional topics.”  
(L. Kellam; emphasis added-DD)

The FDLP Desktop serves as a centralized resource for the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), which disseminates U.S. Government information to the American public through libraries across the nation. Stay up-to-date with the latest innovations and progress of the Program and utilize various tools in order to enhance public services.

Libraries, log in with your institution's number and internal password to access depository-only content (e.g., order promotional materials).

Home > Collection Management > Community Insights > Help! I'm an Accidental Government Information Librarian

## Help! I'm an Accidental Government Information Librarian

FDLP Connection – Community Insights

Written by Lynda Kellam, Data Services & Government Information Librarian, University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Written on Tuesday, 07 February 2012

At a board meeting for the North Carolina Library Association's (NCLA) Government Resources Section, a colleague mentioned that more librarians are being called upon to support Government information research without adequate training. Additionally as "Government documents" are distributed online, the nature of supporting Government information has evolved and become more dispersed. Rather than serving as gatekeepers of Government information, librarians are facilitating the process of finding, accessing, and using Government information. In addition to knowing the ins and outs of the SuDoc classification system (as much as one can), we need to have the ability to brainstorm and troubleshoot our way through patron questions to get at where the information might possibly be. Moreover, those who support Government information know that they have holes in their knowledge. Either they didn't pay attention the day their Government documents class went over Census materials or they never had to deal with THAT subject area until THAT subject liaison decided to retire (how dare she!).

## Lessons Learned

- Clear need for continuing education opportunities in the documents community (753 respondents to 2011 Biennial Survey asked for training in "U.S. Government information resources in specific subject areas")
- Convenience matters: easily available; archived
- Cost matters: no registration fee; no travel required
- Keep tech. requirements simple (for yourselves and users)

## Lessons Learned

- Make a virtue out of necessity
- Do what you can with what you have

## Issues for Future

- Sustaining the series after far exceeding initial expectations
- Booking presenters
- Scheduling
- Changes in technology/access
- Archiving

## Next “Help!” Webinar

- Next session on Wednesday, November 14
- United Nations Statistics and Data Resources (Melanie Maksin, Yale)
- Please RSVP by 5:00 PM, November 13:
  - <http://tinyurl.com/grs-session20>

## How You Can Participate

- Contact Lynda Kellam if you are interested in doing a session: [lmkellam@uncg.edu](mailto:lmkellam@uncg.edu)
- Archived copies of all past sessions are available at:  
<http://www.nclaonline.org/government-resources/grs-past-events>

# Questions?

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