



## How to Succeed with Little or Nothing: Ideas for FDLs

### The 2012 Depository Library Council Meeting and Federal Depository Library Conference: Celebrating the Past, Building the Future Together

Wednesday, October 17, 2012

The economic downturn ushered in an era of diminishing staff, budget, and space. So how do librarians manage successful depository programs? How do we “keep calm and carry on” while we “make it work” in the “do more with less” era? A panel of speakers – from academic, public, and regional depositories – who have lived to tell the tale shared how they manage to survive and even thrive.

#### Panelists:

- Robbie Sittel, Government Information Librarian, Tulsa City-County Library
- Cass Hartnett, U.S. Documents & Women Studies Librarian, University of Washington Suzzallo Library
- Janet Fisher, Acting State Librarian and Law & Research Library Director, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records

This program was in a Q&A format, with audience participation. Prior to the meeting, the panelists were sent questions generated by Council’s Sustainability Working Group (Steve Beleu, Marie Concannon, and Peggy Jarrett). The discussion that ensued is captured in the [meeting transcripts](#). However, the questions, which are food for thought for all of us, are listed here.

#### Staff:

- How has your staffing situation changed over the last few years and how has your library adjusted to this change?
- How many staff have you lost over the last few years and how has this changed the FDL services that your library offers?

- Do you still have dedicated government information staff? Have tasks been centralized, spread out, or dropped? Have you done any cross-training? How did you decide what not to do anymore?

### **Collections and Space:**

- Has your documents unit outgrown its space – or – have you been asked to shrink the collection in order to make room for something else? What are your strategies for meeting these challenges?
- Has your FDL collection outgrown its space, have you been asked to shrink your tangible collection, and does your library have plans to convert your FD holdings from a tangible collection to a virtual collection with a smaller or no tangible collection at all, or possibly just those tangible titles that your library would have purchased for reference whether you're an FDL or not?
- How do you balance all the formats? (Do you balance the formats?) How have you handled competing needs for space?

### **Reference:**

- Has your traditional reference service declined and if so, how much has it declined: a little, a lot, drastically? Regardless of the type of library you are, are you now offering E-government services to the people of your Congressional District, and if so, is the demand for that service increasing?
- Is Reference done by a different set of people than 5 years ago? How are you cross-training public service staff? Is the way you do Reference changed? Are you using any social media tools (chat, text, etc.)? Are you actually doing more public service?

### **Advocating to Administrators:**

- For your library type, what is the most important message for documents librarians to relay to administrators?
- Have you had to convince your administration that the FDL is worth continuing in your library? If so, what did you tell them?
- What's your "elevator speech" to your administrator? What's the executive summary of your annual report? What arguments don't seem to work?

### **The Future:**

- What is the future of the FDLP for your library type?
- What do you think the future of the FDLP is?
- What's the future of the FDLP, specifically, in your institution? What's the future of government information, generally, in your library? Is there a new service or approach that looks promising? What do you look forward to?