GPO's *Historic Shelflist* Update: Where are we now?

History of Historic Shelflist (HSL) Project

First Phase

In 2010, GPO began a long-term project to make entries in their card catalog available to the public. Cards in the catalog describe Federal Government publications ranging from the 1870s-1992. In October 1992, GPO's card catalog was officially closed, and became the Historic Shelflist (HSL). In this first phase of the project from 2010-2014, metadata was transcribed into MARC records in GPO's Integrated Library System (ILS), and appear in the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (CGP).

Second Phase

In 2015, cataloging of the HSL cards moved to GPO's bibliographic utility, OCLC Connexion, and followed GPO's preferred cataloging treatment by mode of issuance for continuing resources and monographs. This change made HSL records accessible to more institutions, and helped improved the overall quality and depth of information available for all HSL cards in the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (CGP). All OCLC records were also added to the CGP, but now with the added benefit of serial issue data available thru CGP summary holdings.

Interim Phase

Between 2017-2018, GPO batch-processed approximately 73,000 monograph records from the first phase of the HSL project from the ILS into OCLC. GPO records were matched to the MARC 086 and the MARC 245 title fields. GPO holdings were added to matched OCLC records. If a record match was not found, a new GPO HSL record was created.

Where are we now?

Third (Final) Phase

In October 2021, GPO resumed the project with a goal to complete cataloging for all remaining HSL cards. Remaining cards were estimated between 66,000-88,000 individual cards. Work is expected to include some of the most complex cards in GPO's Historic Shelflist. ILS records without OCLC control numbers (MARC 035) from the first phase of the project are being updated to include any missing OCLC control numbers. Item and holding records are also added to improve retrieval by Superintendent of Documents Classification numbers (SuDocs). Cataloging of cartographic materials, and other specialized materials such as loose-leaf integrating resources, and CD-ROMs are also part of this phase of the project. Microfiche records are cataloged separately from GPO's single-approach records when FDLP distribution information is found on the HSL card. Currently, GPO is approximately 68% through the inventory list of remaining HSL drawers with a target date of 2026 for completion.

How to Locate Historic Shelflist Records in the CGP and Beyond

Since 2010, GPO has cataloged over 220,000 HSL records in the three phases of the project. HSL records can be retrieved by using a keyword phrase search "Historic Shelflist" in the CGP. Interested parties can also select sets or specific records by using the drop-down box with keyword, title, author, etc. in the HSL collection search box in the CGP. At the conclusion of the project, GPO may make the entire Historic Shelflist record collection available for download as one of the collections in Library Services and Content Management's (LSCM) GitHub repository.

Did You know?

- Beginning in 2015, all HSL records include a MARC 500 note "GPO Historic Shelflist Project- publication not in hand" to identify records as part of GPO's HSL project.

- Over 1,000,000 3x5 cards in 932 drawers make-up the entire HSL card catalog.

- Some metadata, such as initial articles, and prepositions in titles are missing in GPO's HSL records. Original descriptive metadata was abridged to allow for the most important bibliographic descriptive information to be typed on the 3x5 card. Abridged metadata also helped limit the number of 3X5 cards used for each resource. Parties interested in HSL records should search for titles by using the most specific keywords for best search results for this collection. GPO does not currently have the staffing resources to correct any missing metadata for the HSL records unless encountered in the normal course of bibliographic record maintenance, or new cataloging work with HSL record touchpoints.

- HSL records can be identified by the use of a local MARC 955 field, with the phrase "Historic Shelflist." 955 local fields also reference the exact drawer were the card was originally filed. For example: "955 Historic Shelflist; Drawer 230."

- The HSL included cards for non-English language materials such as Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

- Tangible documents are the only formats found in the Historic Shelflist records. Cataloging for online records were not included in this project, but in-scope online publications from official government agency web sites for any HSL record can be reported through GPO's askGPO "Unreported Publications" category for consideration, and cataloging as staffing resources permit.

- Some duplicate catalog records may have accidentally been created due to the brevity of some metadata elements on the cards. Possible duplicate records are reviewed and marked for deletion when identified. If metadata is similar, but not identical to another record, GPO may cite possible duplicate records for the same resource by use of a reciprocal local note (MARC 590).

- CGP HSL records may be replaced with new, updated full-level cataloging.

- Preferred cataloging treatments may have changed from monograph to continuing resource based on updated serial cataloging policies and internal treatment decisions.

- To learn more about the HSL, visit the FDLP Academy for additional webcasts on this topic such as the webcast: Show & Tell – Cards of the Historic Shelf-list. Or visit the project web page on FDLP.gov for updates to the project.

Numbers at a glance:

FY2022 – FY2023 New task order

- 69 drawers completed
- 66,302 card images processed
- 31,607 titles were cataloged
- 31,811 serial issues checked in

FY2015 – FY2018 Previous task order(s)

- 533 drawers completed
- 48,388 titles were transcribed
- 133,626 serial issues were checked in

For more information, please see https://www.fdlp.gov/project-list/national-bibliographic-records-inventory-initiative-nbrii
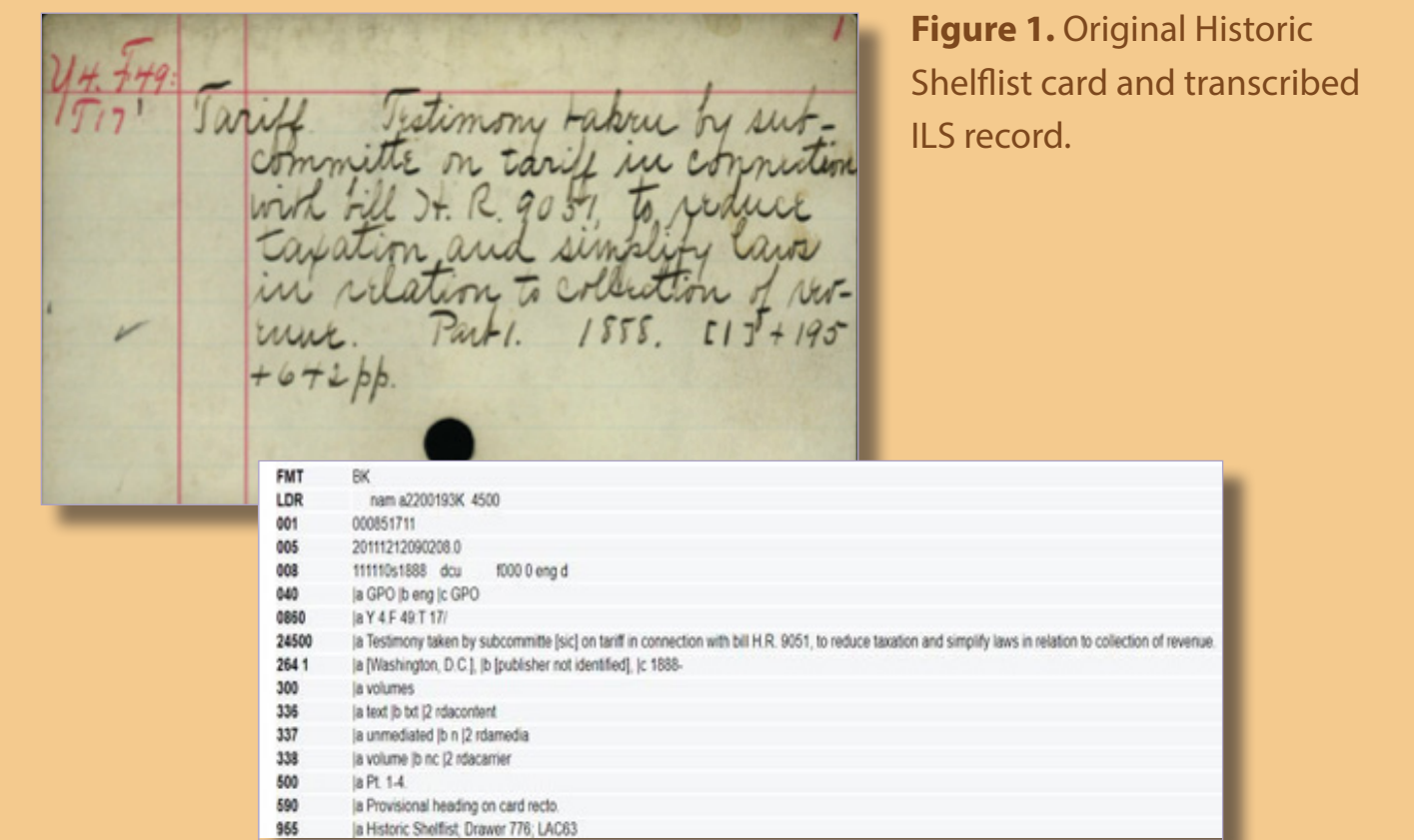

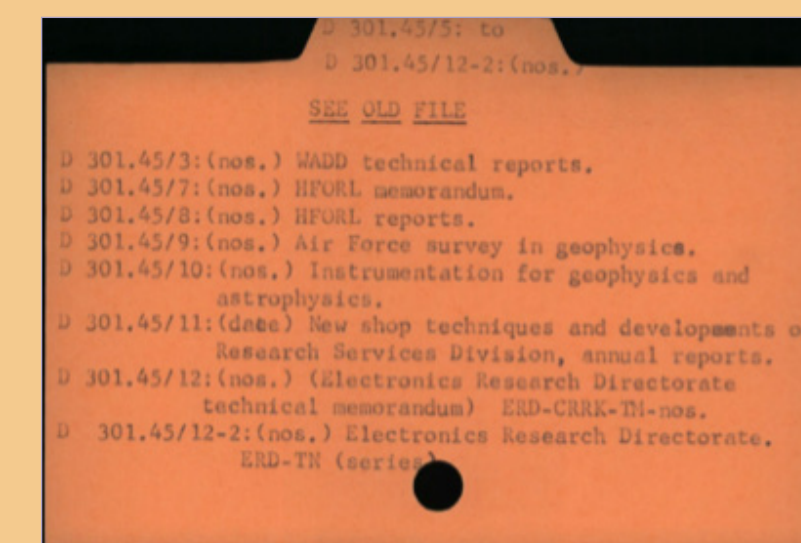**Figure 1.** Original Historic Shelflist card and transcribed ILS record.

Figure 2. One of the many interesting, and colorful cards encountered in the HSL project.
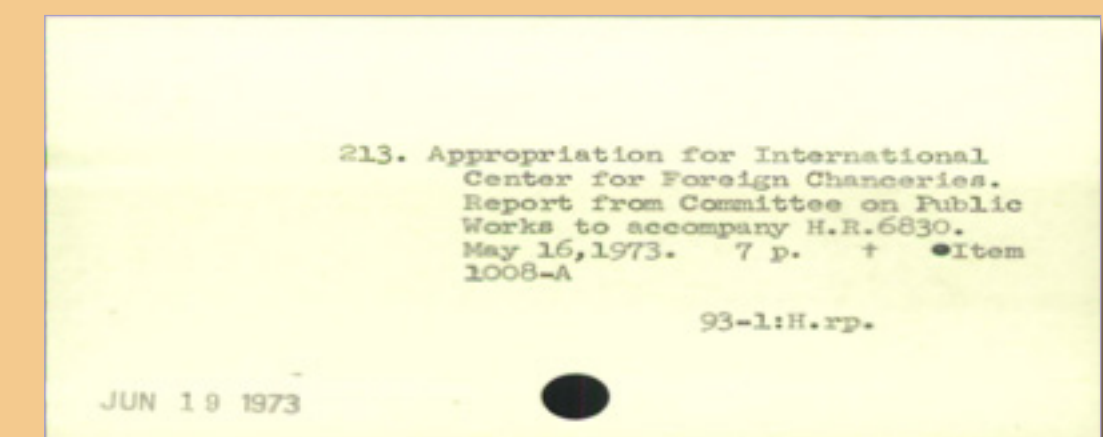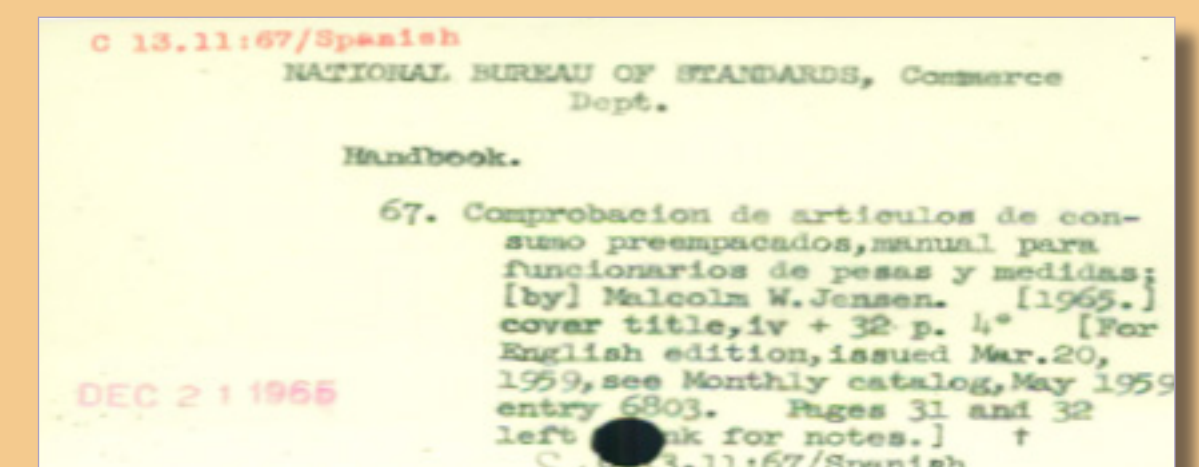

Figure 3. Card with missing words.

Figure 4. Cards in Spanish.