Government Documents Exhibits:

Planning and Developing Your Own

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Hello!

Ben Chiewphasa

Government Information Librarian

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Interests:
- Data Information Literacy
- Research Data Support Services in Social Sciences Librarianship
- Community Engagement in Academic Libraries

What are government documents exhibits?

Endangered Data Week 2019, University of Montana

Montana State University-Billings' 60th Anniversary in the FDLP

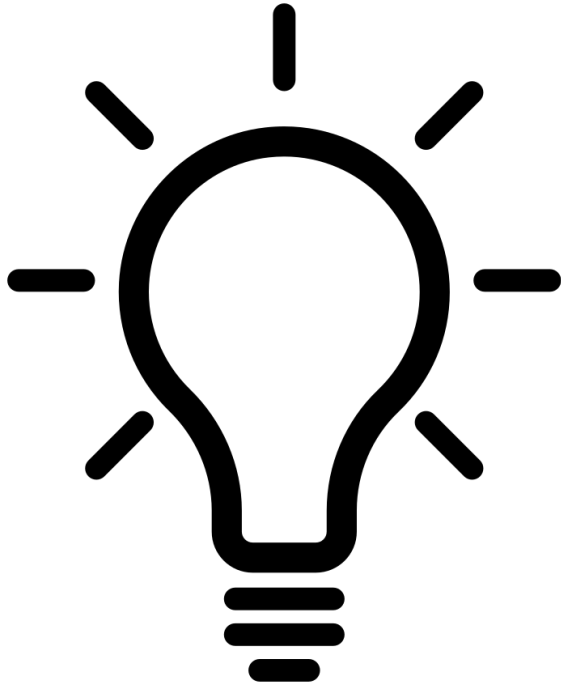Simply put, a way to promote government information!

Why Bother with Exhibits?

- Highlight gems in your collection
  - Builds advocacy for belonging in FDLP
- A direct way to inform public of library's status as a Depository
- Demystifies government information/documents
- Builds partnerships
- The goal of an exhibit "is to transform some aspect of the visitor's interests, attitudes, or values affectively, due to the visitor's discovery of some level of meaning in the objects or content on display…"[1]
- For Academic Libraries: furthers the university's educational mission.

1. Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, Manual of Museum Exhibitions (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 12.

Steps Involved

- Brainstorming (week-month-years?)
  - What's trending?
  - Build upon feedback
  - Consult past exhibit examples and be cognizant of relevant and recurring events/holidays
- Curating
- Designing
- Implementation
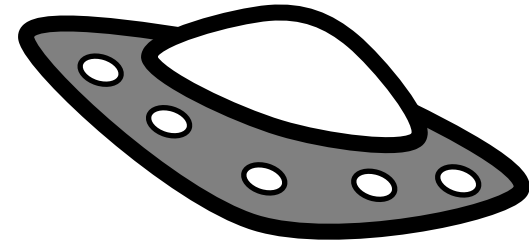- De-installation

Brainstorming Process

- Develop main idea
- Decide on theme
- Decide which objects to incorporate
- Develop the narrative

Brainstorming

2. Trending news

1. Comment boxes

I WONDER

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

DID NATIVE VOICES LEAVE YOU WONDERING ANYTHING?

3. Resources for Inspiration

#1: https://www.fdlp.gov/promotion
#2: https://libguides.fdlp.gov/coordinator-calendar
#3: *Government Documents Display Clearinghouse*
https://cornerstone.lib.mnsu.edu/lib-services-govdoc-displays/

Some questions to ponder [1]

- What meanings do we wish to communicate?
- To whom do we intend to communicate these meanings?
- What are the most appropriate means of communication these meanings?

1. Barry Lord and Maria Piacente, Manual of Museum Exhibitions (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 15.

Amplify Hidden Voices

- What is in the "spotlight"? Why?
- How is the story told?
- Do we have our implicit biases checked?
- The words used are important for everyone's understanding of material presented; the words chosen will impact how people understand the exhibit.
  - Question why we feel uncomfortable with addressing certain issues.

Don't forget about logistics…

- A lot of this is dependent on your library's policies (especially with regards to space).

- Space requirements?

- Are you using existing display cases? Considering buying display cases? Plastic book stands?

- Doesn't have to be a financial burden. Consider using book carts, tables, etc.

- Reminder: Seek advice from colleagues who have experience developing/planning exhibits in your workplace!

Protecting Documents

- Be mindful of light
  - Light can be harmful for objects on display—try to keep at minimum.
- Documents with binding
  - If shown open, ill-advised to lay out flat in 180° angle; consider using book cradles, clear book strips, easels
- Protecting Paper and Book Collections During Exhibition (NEDCC): https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/2.-the-environment/2.5-protecting-paper-and-book-collections-during-exhibition

Curating Content/Resources

- Search catalog—use your librarian hat!
- Browse stacks
  - Large portions of collection may not be cataloged and embedded in your OPAC

Curating Content/Resources

- Be mindful of SuDoc stems and numbers
  - The ".2" *General Publications* category class
    - These are generally one-time publications that do not belong in specific series/categories. For some agencies, ".2" miscellaneous documents can act as treasure troves.
    - Examples:
      - C 9.2: = Bureau of Lighthouses *General Publications*
      - A 1.2 = Department of Agriculture *General Publications*
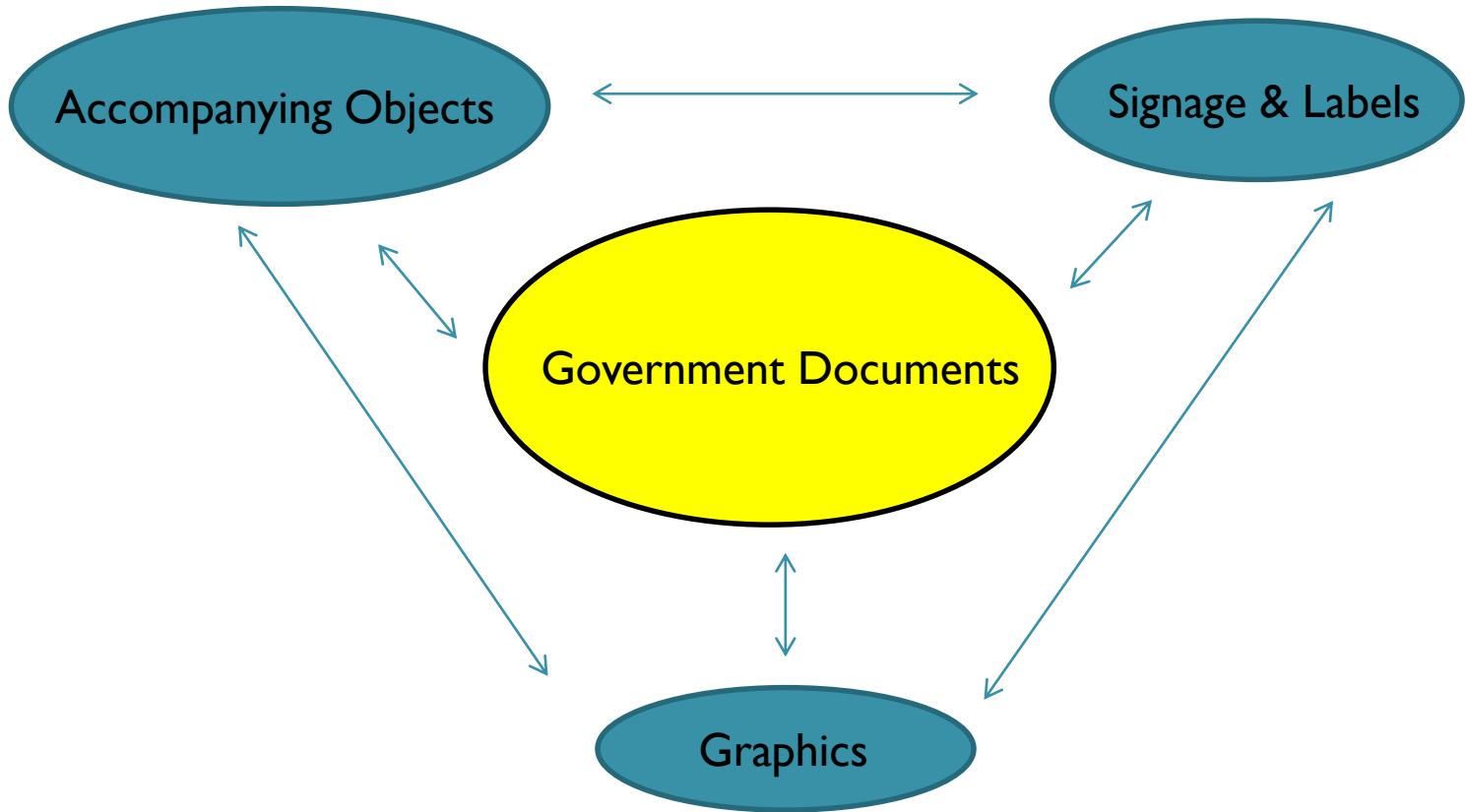
Curating Content/Resources

- Get organized! Use spreadsheets/tools to help keep track of projects
  - Some useful fields to consider:
    - SuDoc #
    - Item description
    - Agency name
  - Tools
    - Excel
    - Google Sheets: https://www.google.com/sheets
    - Airtable: https://airtable.com

Design

- Components:
  - Placement of government documents
  - Placement of accompanying items
  - Images
  - Graphic design

- Partner with co-workers if you're able to
  - Be sure to provide them with text, dimensions, and any accompanying images/graphics
  - Is there anyone on your team who does social media postings? Graphic design?

The Display

Accompanying Objects

Signage & Labels

Government Documents

Graphics

Remember…
government documents
can supplement and
complement!

(Doesn't always have to
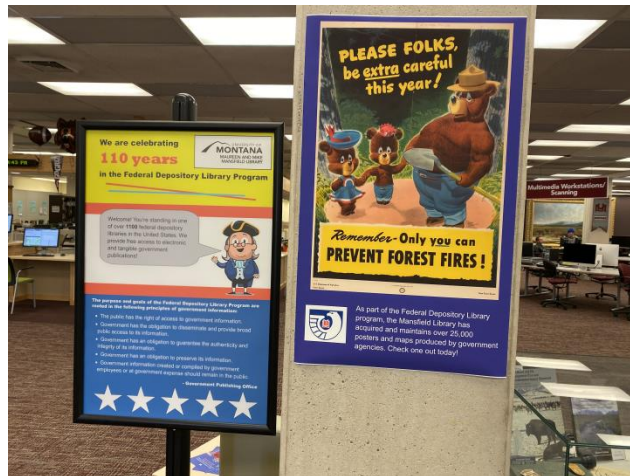be the centerpiece)

Labels & Signage

- The shorter the better
- The label is about what's being displayed
- Recognize that people typically don't read labels. How will you adjust?
- Consider angling your labels
- Use fonts clearly and consistently
  - Recommend: sans-serif fonts (i.e., Helvetica, Arial, etc.) and minimum point size of 12
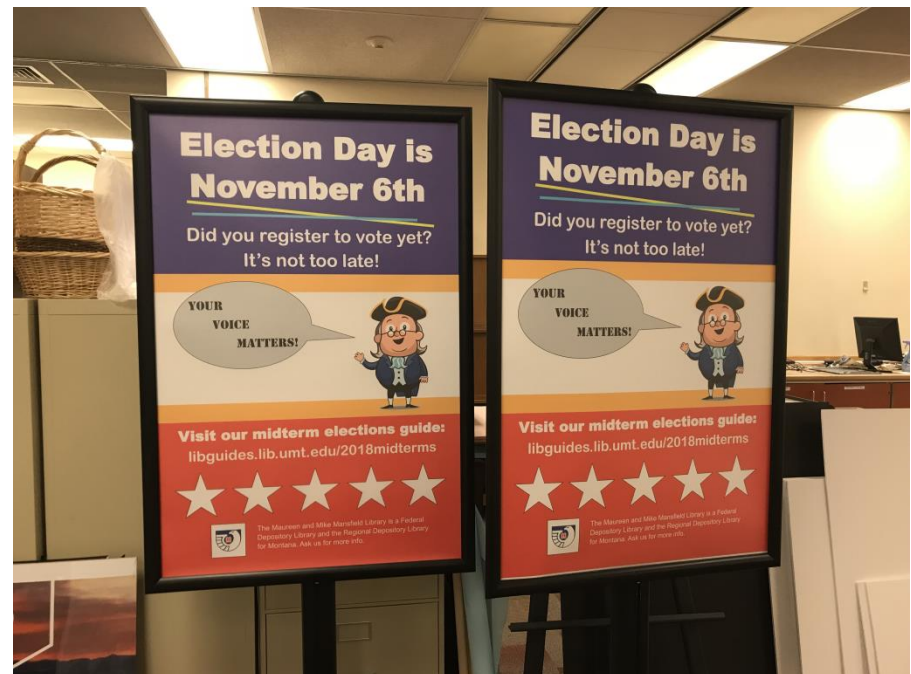- White paper and foam core

Putting it all together…

Other objects to consider…

- FDLP handouts/giveaways
  - You can freely order from: https://www.fdlp.gov/promotion/fdlp-promotional-materials-for-your-depository-library
- Activities
  - For example:
    - Ben coloring pages (https://bit.ly/3fp6lQJ)
    - Whiteboards (i.e., Constitution Day questions: "Do you feel that the federal government gives American citizens 'equal protection' under the law?")
  - Large-scale format items (i.e., posters, maps, etc.)

Design Tools

- Abode products (i.e., Illustrator, Photoshop, etc.)
- Gimp (open source image editor): https://www.gimp.org
- FDLP Promotional Toolkit: https://www.fdlp.gov/file-repository/outreach/depository-promotion/2257-fdlp-promotional-toolkit

How to Promote your Exhibit

- Bookmarks
- Floorstanding sign holders
  - i.e., 22" wide x 28" high
- Social media outlets
- Newsletters and blogs
- For academic libraries: find compatible courses and partner with faculty.

"Low Learning Curve" Virtual Exhibit Tools

- Omeka: https://omeka.org
  - A free, open source web publishing system for online digital archives. Its main focus/strength is producing websites and online exhibitions.
  - Tutorials available online and YouTube
- Open source digital humanities tools
  - Timeline JS: https://timeline.knightlab.com
  - StoryMap JS: https://storymap.knightlab.com
- Don't forget about LibGuides

Major Takeaways

- Helps advocate for your FDLP affiliation.
- Helps you learn more about your library's collection.
- At the end of the day, you're trying to tell a story with limited space.
- It doesn't have to be resource-intensive… leverage what already exists in your library!

In the horizon…

- Western States Government Information Conference: https://www.colorado.edu/libraries/libraries/norlin-library/government-information-library/western-states-government-information
  - August 5-6, 2020
  - Program related to exhibits: *This Traveling Exhibit is a Disaster!*
    - August 5, 1:45-2:15pm (MDT)
    - *"Traveling exhibits provide libraries with high-quality, pre-packaged materials on a subject. These require only setup making them an easy way to bring attractive content to library spaces. These exhibits support outreach to communities, but lack any opportunity for collaboration and incorporation of local content into the physical exhibit. Presenters are proposing a pilot project to create a traveling exhibit, resources, and an online exhibit on the broad subject of disasters where prepared content is augmented with local resources. The purpose is to create a model where libraries are encouraged to promote local government, services, collections and perspectives, resulting in a broader incorporation of geography and diverse perspectives."*
- GODORT's exhibit LibGuide: https://godort.libguides.com/exhibits

Thanks! Questions?

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