



What Does an Information Literate Student Need to Know About Government Information?

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What do the students already know?



- They understand the information cycle (reference books, monographs, journal articles, news magazines and newspapers, current headlines)
- They understand the places to find these resources (catalog, databases, Google, etc.)
- They know some material is NOT in these resources (“other resources”)
- They know some resources provide better, higher quality information (critical thinking)

What do I want them to learn?



- How government information can help their information needs
- When to go to government information as a resource
- The high quality of government information
- Where to access this information
- When to ask for a librarian's help

Which information needs are best met by Government Information?



- Statistics (Census, etc.)
- Current research (stem cells, Mars mission)
- Elections
- Government (Congress, Courts, Exec. Agencies)
- Laws and regulation
- Trade, treaties, commerce
- Consumer information (Social Security, Medicare)
- Natural disasters

What other disciplines are often best served by government information?



- Aerospace (NASA)
- Agriculture
- Art (Smithsonian)
- Crime (Justice)
- Education
- Environment
- Geography (GIS) and History
- Public Health
- Transportation

How is government information packaged?



- Reference books
- Monographs
- Journal articles
- Microfilm, microfiche
- Web pages

But also...



- Maps and atlases
- Speeches and/or testimony
- Treaties
- Technical reports
- Patents and trademarks
- Manuscripts (special collections)
- Pamphlets (vertical file)

Which government information needs may require librarian intervention?



- Laws and regulations
- Tracing legislation
- Court cases
- Treaties and trade agreements
- Technical reports
- GIS (mapping)

Where is government information located in this library?



- Does your library collect government information?
- Is the collection housed separately or integrated?
- How do you recognize government information in the catalog?
- Some government information may not be in the catalog (technical reports? Court cases? Uncataloged materials?)
- Are your docs cataloged in Dewey, LC, or SUDOCS? (Is the material shelved by subject or agency?)
- Which databases access government information?
- Which titles are on ready reference? (Stat abstract)



**Freeware government
web sites often find better
information than costly
databases**

Freeware, continued



- Government agency web sites take guesswork out of the internet
- Web sites are high quality, primary source, reliable research material
- Web sites are good for quick information (track hurricanes, weather, IRS forms)
- Web sites are good for statistical information
- Look for the “.gov”

As a resource, government information is...



- Highly reliable (often done at request of Congress)
- Primary source material (high level of accuracy, not second hand)
- Valuable (Specialists testify at hearings)
- Most current (remember that statistics lag behind)



But remember...

- Government information can be repackaged by private publishers (can be less accurate)
- Some material has disappeared from web sites, can be hard to find
- Check with librarian to be sure of source
- Remember you can hot link off a “dot.gov” site so always check URLs

Copyright?



- Information published directly by federal agencies is copyright free
- Information on government web sites (look for dot.gov) is copyright free
- Information republished by private publishers may have restrictions
- State government information often has restrictions



How do I cite?

- Government information, if in book, article or web site form, is cited just like other similar materials
- Special rules apply to citing court cases, legal, congressional, maps, and other types of materials.
- Your librarian can give you web sites to help with citations.

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