

Unveiling a Hidden Collection: The Allen County Public Library's FDLP Inventory – Transcript of audio

Welcome to the third and final day of the 2022 fall federal depository library conference in the last presentation for meeting room B. My name is Helen NIMH you support library that the U.S. government publishing office GPO. I will be the MC for the RAM today. Donald is providing tech support if you need the assistance. The presentation is unveiling a hidden collection. Allen County Public libraries inventory. From Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne Indiana. Please add your questions into the chat and send them to all participants or all panelists. I will monitor and facilitate questions at the end of the talk. This presentation is being recorded and will be made available shortly thereafter. Take it away Nate and Jacob.

Hello and welcome to our presentation. Jacob and I are happy to be here with you today. As was mentioned we are here to talk about our inventory process with our large document government collection. To celebrate we have both won the appropriate documented tire. From our last in person conference. I am ready to go. What we hope to talk about today and what we hope that you will get from this is who our library is as an institution and what our values are and what we do. The size and scope of our inventory and the process surrounding it. The efforts we are putting in to preserve the collection and why the project is important to us as a library. Also for the national collection of the United States. My name is Nate Bernard. I am the main library manager. I have been with the library for a little over 20 years. I started as a children's environment library. It is a great journey. With me here is Jake up.

I and a senior librarian. I have been here about two and half years. I moved from New York a couple years ago. I was well prepared for the bureaucracy involved. I have been in the library field since I was 16. I feel at home here.

About our library, the county library is centered in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We encompassed the entire area surrounding us. We have 14 branches including the main library facility. Our collection size is 3.4 million circulating items. It does not include our digital holdings in the holding in our federal documents collection and many others. We serve 365,000 residents of Allen County. We are a national collection and resource for our genealogy collection. Our special collections [Indiscernible]. It is the largest one and is available to access for free. It gives our library a unique perspective. Which will you will see later in the program. Our history as a federal depository, we have been a federal depository for a long time. Our library is unique. Our community and library size do not match the scope of our federal document collection. In the 1890s when we begin as a federal depository [Indiscernible] was bigger than Indianapolis. We were the original depository. The state library took over and we became a selective. With a large number of selections. We have gone through several library innovations over the years. The collection had to be moved off-site. It was returned to the facility when we reopened in 2007. There is interesting history with that. The movers did not understand [Indiscernible] to the extent that we wished they did. When we have a collection it is estimated to be somewhere around 800,000 items. You can imagine the dismay. We have had our work cut out for us. That has led us to the last couple years. We are working to meet an increased need from many other parts in the library. Our genealogy collection, we need to make room for their expanding holdings. We need to take into account and put it in order and get it shelf red.

As far as the scope of the inventory goes the collection is estimated to be 800,000 to 1 million documents. This is based on linear feet and the average number of documents per shelf. That is the card catalog we are working out of. There's 177 drawers that are full of cards we are working with. Little of it is catalogued online. We estimated about 10% when we first started this project. We may be at 15 %. This is a systemwide project. We are working with librarians in support and service staff. They are doing most of the literal heavy lifting downstairs in terms of the inventory. We are also working with preservation experts. As far as the inventory process goes I want to preface by saying this is all done in line with the federal guidelines. As well as with the state agreement that we have with the state library in Indianapolis. We are going one drawer at a time. We are making good progress. You can see that in the picture we have different colors on the cards. I will explain how that works. In accordance with our agreement with the state have to keep everything published before 1976. That was the year we became [Indiscernible] depository. Anything after that is fair game to be discarded. If anything before 76 we want to get rid of there are exceptions regarding duplicates. We do have to submit those to the state library database and then we go from there. You will see in the picture anything published after 76 is marked with the purple dot. Anything before 76 is marked with a green dot. Anything that is missing on the shelf that card is marked with a yellow dot. The reason we decided to go with the coloring scheme was to keep it simple. This process was developed with the input of several people. I want to give them credit and a shout out to Denise Davis. She has been working with government documents before. Her help was invaluable. Helping us look at the process and see what we need to do to keep it efficient. All of these cards, who knows how many are missing. Many are out of order. A variety of things we need to consider. We needed to have quick visual cues that could let our services staff to the bulk of the visual processing. While they are doing this process, will tip any of the purple items on the shelf. I can quickly see what is eligible for discard. Anything that doesn't have a card will also be pulled off the shelf. I have an ongoing Xcel Spreadsheets that anything that is missing a card. Otherwise I have that spreadsheet going. The catalogers know it is on the shelf. I want to point out you will see in the picture the pink tag that sticking out of the shelf. That is for the oversized items. As far as the items without cards and how they go we have 1800 items that do not have cards. All of those are on the spreadsheet. So far we have gotten through 23 drawers. We are making good progress. We still have quite a ways to go. Here is a picture of one of the Excel sheets that I keep. If these items had a card they would be in drawer six. I print this out and I stick this in the drawer.

The next slide is really important.

I want to give a thank you to everybody in MSS. They do a lot of hard work. They are down there every day going through this. One thing they hate, those of the cards that have 100 items on them. They very carefully Mark every single item.

With that being said it's great. It gives our showers material support and logistical staff. To learn new skills in the sense that Sue doc is not something everybody knows. You can take it with you to other libraries. That is a technical skill. It gives it variety on the job. We had a decrease in our physical circulation. This is a great way to reallocate our staff resource. Their help has been great. We cannot do it alone.

After they marked the cards that's when they give me the finished drawer. I will go ahead and start the meeting. I will assess the material for retention or [Indiscernible]. I mostly looking into historical value and not monetary value or anything like that. All of our documents, it has kept them up very well. Anything that is D succession gets recycled. During that any preservation concerns will be noted on any

of the items. I have another Excel sheet going on. Collection is growing slowly. Most likely that space will not be taken back up again. Certain departments are making more room for growth.

You will see when Jacob gets to show the examples of why we are waiting. It may be another sizable loss in terms of shelf space. It has been something we have been able to work through to make sure we are keeping a valuable stuff for this. Almost all of that was duplicated in the collection or available online as a PDF or something that someone could access. It is benefiting us to make the room for other parts of what the library is doing. We are focusing on making sure we keep the important information.

We do not want to weigh down the collection with a lot of updated material.

As I'm going through the reading, I am keeping all those cards every once in a while. Those items will turn up later in the collection. Right now we are going through the department of education. In the energy department. They have been a mess. Those call numbers are so similar. Just quick things at the bottom. We have weeded about 19 drawers and gotten rid of 754 thousand records. We got permission from the state to get rid of just about all of those. The only thing we kept were supplements. We got rid of 1400 CDs. The collection does not circulate. In the next couple slides you will see some of the materials that were taking up space. On the left here is a pamphlet published by the Commerce Department. It tells you what kind of exercise you can do. You should not do these exercises after smoking. Stuff like that has not aged too well. On the right we have a pamphlet advertising the DHS tape. It is hosted by Bill Cosby on how to avoid child snatchers.

That is why we weed. You have to say no anti-drug wrap. I'm upset I cannot find the 45 that went with this. At least I have the lyrics. On the right we have a pamphlet from Walter Reed. This says smoking is not necessarily prohibitive but is discouraged at the hospital. With the cataloging there has been work with this. Before Jacob talks about the process issue it has been a part of the process where we have worked with other staff within the library. Specifically our catalogers. They have helped Jacob and beginning to take all of these items from card catalogs or online catalogs. And linking them to digital copies.

This is all done one drawer at a time. I will pass it off to our technical services staff. They will get to work on cataloging that. I have that sheet of paper with any of the items that did not have cards. They can catalog those as well. Most of the catalog they are doing is copy cataloging. We can take the numbers from the GPO catalog as well as from [Indiscernible] and copy those right into our catalog system. A lot of that is based on pre-existing records. Were not looking to reinvent the wheel. The most frustrating thing we have come across in terms of cataloging is fixing a lot of Poll numbers. I do not know who this was. [audio-cut out] I do not know how they managed to do that. We have been trying to get those changed over. Most importantly what we are doing what we are cataloging is including electronic versions window as possible. We only link to those sources because they have to meet certain standards that researchers like. You know the links will be good for a long time.

This is important. This collection is housed in an archival space. It is not readily accessible to the public with staff intervention.

So far we have 800 items we have not been able to link to online. In the future we will refer back to the list. I will take a picture of the barcode. I will scan the barcode into the catalog and find the item online. Want to point out the subject heading we use. We will have everything in there. I am 10 to 15%.

Making progress. These are all documents published during the Cold War. It is an interesting perspective. This is one of my favorite finds from the department of agriculture yearbooks. This is another great find. This is not digitized. These are services performed by the national Bureau standard to the consumer. In this picture appear on the top that gentleman is testing to see how far it was stretch. Down on the bottom the other gentleman is testing a shoe machine to see how much where shoes can take. This is published in the 1930s. I have come across maps too. These are things I have flattened out. And I have gotten map cases for these. I will let Nate talk more.

Preservation and conservation has been a priority for this project from when we began. It is a historical collection. Many documents go into the mid-or even early 1800s. That we were able to purchase retroactively. As time has gone on in the materials begin to deteriorate, we have been doing what we can to try to take good care of it. Past practices may have not been preserved to the standard. As you can see in the picture. The tape was great at the time but not so great now. What we are trying to do with these materials that are either rare and unique, or saving for digitization. Any of the standards you would apply we are starting to put those into preservation protocols. We are very lucky in the sense because of our special collections and the generosity of Republican. We do have an archival space with closed stacked storage. Not every library has access to that. We do in one of the other benefits is these materials are able to be housed in a space that has FM 200 gas. That is better than a sprinkle system. We have been going through this and Jake has been doing a great job of choosing things out we need to put in preservation protocols and keeping the list. With the digital linking, especially, that will reduce the amount of handling these objects. We did rebind a lot of our books. For many years. Which has been great. When we do look at what we need to do for digitization or future presentation, if there's any financial value to it, that kills it. These materials are preserved in their sole purpose is what value they provide to our collection, the national collection. We don't need to worry about what would happen to the object along the way. Which has been great. A final note, this has been assisted by our genealogy materials handling unit. Utilizing our space as a team. It's been a key part of our special collections plan for a long time. Our library has a significant online collection of documents. That we have either hosted on archive.org [Indiscernible] our genealogy materials are housed there. Genealogy related family history documents that are available to scan. We have worked through our storage materials on the public service end. Things that are unique or need special preservation protocols. Or something with a physical object that is deteriorating. That way people can access these materials without having to damage the object. The library's commitment to online access. It is carried over to our work with the federal documents collection. We are lucky. Even with that, we do have an infrastructure in place and multiple partnerships within the library and staff. Who do work on digitizing items. Even if your library doesn't have that, it is not an insurmountable challenge to put into place. Digital linkage infrastructure. A record has existed online. All that takes is able to allocate the time to that. If the library has volunteers from the family search not every library needs that. You need to be able to make a commitment to find the time to link your records online. Ultimately that is where we see the future being. Physical traffic has changed. Everybody is used to an online environment where they can find something easily. Our goal, when they do the Google search they find the item and they can control half the document that we have living online and we can continue to use the collection.

We want to touch upon why this project is important. Not just to us but on the national level. First and foremost it gives us an accurate account of our holdings. I have only been a Hoosier for a couple of years now. I know Hoosiers like to know how their tax money is being spent

this gives the residents a good idea how their tax money is being spent.

When you're sifting through pamphlets that advertised jobs that haven't been open in 40 years and things like that.

We have to make sure we are giving that premium space to items that demand it.

There is no reason why a no-cost pamphlet needs to be in preservation housing. To rediscover lost or forgotten materials. I have come across a lot of histories for World War II in World War I. These are worth of gold mind. For anybody doing any kind of genealogy research. It has also given us a chance to reorganize the collection. In touch upon how it was out of order for a long time. We are hoping our catalog can supplement the GPO's. We found a number of documents that are not in the catalog of government publications. Anybody else is finding those make sure you report those. That will definitely help us.

It's really great.

We can take these items that are not housed online and make them available to everyone. It is a responsibility to house a collection like this. It is historically substantial. I love going down there and looking at all of the unique and interesting books. It's the collective history of our country. To have that in our care in our building, the significance is not lost. One thing we are trying to do is help our community understand what they have. A resource nobody knows about or is underutilized is not serving anybody well. We are committed. Once we get this thing tightened up in shape to market programs and all the other stuff that comes along with it. It may take a couple years to get there. The end result will be beneficial for many reasons. You cannot kick the can down the road. The time is now to take it. We need the space and the opportunity is there to make the collection usable and visible. Hopefully if your library is considering starting something like this we are more than happy to talk about it. We would be happy to learn from you guys too. No two collections are alike. This project has happened because we have worked with many people to get there. Our coordinator has been great. Our director of special collections has been fantastic. There are too many people to name. We would love to hear from you too because we are sure there is something we can continue to do.

This is international. Our genealogy department has researchers from all across the globe.

This collection has been practically invisible for a long time. Nobody knows that we have it. Once we get it catalogued we will be able to advertise it. We just hope we can inspire other libraries to take on a project like this. Again, this is a national effort to get this catalogued and out to the public.

That leads us to our contact information. If you have any questions or comments feel free to email us. I don't know if we have questions or anything that came into the chat while we were there. We are happy to take them.

Yes, we have quite a few questions. Rather than read them in order I will group them by general topic. The first two are relatively similar. You mentioned materials and cards recycled, does that mean they go to a needs offers list?

if they are pre-76 they do. We have to offer that up to the state library. If they don't want those we put those on the needs offered database for the state. If nobody claims those we will recycle those materials.

Indiana has a agreement with the library. Anything post-1976 is housed within one of those institutions within the state.

We replacing the accession items in the catalog with online versions when available?

I am doing that with a lot of the serials that we have. It's not a small pamphlet or something. If it is a serial I have been doing that. It is in all digital record with no item attached to it.

Referring to the featured examples you showed earlier in the presentation pertaining to the things you have weeded, these are great.

I have to admit I have kept these, they are all in a drawer in my desk. Every good librarian has a shelf of shame.

Earlier in your presentation, how many items total are in those 23 drawers?

I do not know. It's hard to tell. Some of those are big serial sets. If I had to guess given by the number of shelf stocks. Probably about 100 or 150,000 would be my guest guess. That is a guess. We have only catalogued and still on the first drawer in regards to cataloguing.

The inventory is vastly outpacing the cataloguing. That is fine.

If we get the inventory done that is one step out of the way. Then that staff can go and work on other projects.

What I am doing, when a drawer is finished and catalogued I will count the cards in that drawer. At that point we will have a good estimate to how many items are currently on the shelf.

What will happen to your card catalog once the project is over?

I have no idea. I hope, I would anticipate, everybody wants that card catalog. That is the last old school card catalog our library system has. Outside of the tiny unit in the basement that is big. There would be good discussion before anything were to happen before that. The digital records are the digital records. There's so much effort put into that card catalog. Before that goes. We would have to have a serious conversation about it.

Do you know how old some of those cards are?

that has been the card catalog.

Back to more controversy. Could you please talk a little bit more about the reason your library does not want to use a vendor like Mark five to catalog your collection?

I have been contacted about. Probably a couple years ago. I looked into it. For us it would not work. Simply because we do have, we are also a public library. We have to make sure that we can attach the items to the records. We are afraid we are going to get more records than what we really need. In terms of what we are taking.

We needed to make progress on the inventory and cataloging project. To see what we could do with our own internal resource before we looked at external solutions. I would not say that is off the table. That is something we have to look at every year. What do you have in terms of people and availability? last year we had not started cataloging in depth. That is the year we dug into the cataloging. We can now go to the next budget cycle and talk with our administrators about that to see where things fit and where the pieces are.

I would not say never. If we do the timing has to be right.

Mark Wright is better suited for incoming materials and not so much for retrospective cataloging like what we are doing. We have a unique collection in terms of issues. We need to be more hands-on with cataloging.

The next are related to the logistics of your project. How many catalogers are working on the project? how long do you think it will take to complete your project, and with this project be possible without the card catalog?

I will answer the last one.

The cataloging staff member varies. Jacobs trained in cataloging and does some of that. It's anywhere from one to three catalogers spending a day a week. That's the resource we have available right now to help us out. That has fluctuated as staff come in and out. How long it will take, if I had to ballpark it I would say given where we are at, it will probably take 4 to 5 years. Maybe less if we are able to get more staff and resources available. That is okay. The catalog part can happen at its own pace. The important part is the inventory in the collection management once that is done, then Jacob can assist with the catalog of that. That will make that speed up too. Tentative ballpark is four years. It could be less or more, depending on where were at with staff. That is my conservative guests. They will be down with the inventory within a year or two. That will be a great day.

As far as with this be possible without the card catalog? we know there was no way we could do this without that. If we were only doing cataloging maybe, but the fact is we are trying to get a hold on what materials we do have. We have so many materials that are missing that show up in the card catalog. Vice versa too. It makes weaning a whole lot easier as well. We can keep track of how much is taken out of each drawer. We can throw cards out along with the items.

We mentioned earlier with color coding and that sort of thing. Anything you can do to make a fast a visual cue will speed up the process.

Would you consider offering the older items nationally? especially small items that often get lost.

Yes, that would be something we could consider. Everything has to first go to the state with her agreement.

We are not looking to throw away the historic documents.

Everything that has been weeded his post-1976. We talked to our state and regional coordinators. Our special collections director. We had a sit down on what is the future of our collection and where does it

need to live? we have to get through seeing what we have. Then the next steps Weatherbee digitization are moving to another more appropriate housing space. That will happen in time.

I there is very little we have gotten rid of. They have all been offered to the state. We are keeping all the historical stuff in the collection.

Have you found any printed catalog cards from the superintended documents that were included in the materials distributed from 1904 from December 1905?

I have not. Now that you mentioned that I will be on the lookout for those.

Next question, are you using a shelf list and not a public catalog?

for the inventory or for the display? Jacob essentially is using the card catalog with his Excel spreadsheet. For the public view, it ends up on the catalog. That is not what we use internally. Once it is done with the card catalog it ends up moving to the online pack.

Switching gears, what kind of materials have you given to your genealogy department? any specific titles or agencies or publications?

I cannot think of any specific titles. Some things from the State Department we have given. It was a book of maps of Japan after World War II. We had about five or six copies of that. I kept five copies and gave the sixth copy to genealogy. They do not get rid of anything.

There is a lot of crossover too. If they need to access something they can come down to the space. More importantly is them knowing what is in the collection that can support their work. Anything that helps tell a family's story. We are keeping that in the collection. If we have a duplicate of something like that, they may get set up in genealogy.

It is not an un-trafficked place.

Speaking of trafficking, next question. What government documents are commonly used or requested at your library's reference desk?

we get a lot of questions about patents. People were request to see those. We can pull those from down in the basement. People know that we have them. Eventually they will be catalogued and can link to those online as well. The other question we get asked, about the interstate commerce reports. Some of those volumes there is a valuation tables. For the railroad. A couple researchers that we had often request those. That in the United States reports as well. We have those housed upstairs. We get those quite a bit.

We have plenty of time if you want to add additional questions into the chat. If we have any last minute questions, for each of you is there anything else you would like to elaborate on more during this talk

this project seemed incredibly daunting when I first started at the main library five years ago. I started as the manager of the building. Okay, and you have this too. Wait until you see what is in the basement. We had been without a government documents library for a couple of years at that point. We had a clerk who was keeping it in maintenance mode. When you look at it, the shock of seeing Oh my gosh

where do we even begin? that can feel insurmountable. It does not mean that it can't be done. We have taken incremental steps. To build the momentum to turn this and finish it. From there once we have the infrastructure in place we can begin the process. Of taking bite-size chunks a day at a time. It's not something that will get done overnight. We are cognizant of that. It's to the benefit of the library in the community in the nation to get it done.

I would like to add this isn't something you can be prepared for ahead of time. You just get thrown into this. I took a catalog class in grad school. We went over the Dewey decimal system and we went into depth with those two systems. Professor said there is this thing called Sue dock. We will go over that in about five minutes. I had no idea.

I skipped cataloging in college altogether.

Everything I know about the system I learned since I started this job.

You can start your career with puppets and babies and still do this.

We do have last-minute questions. Can you give more detail about how you judge historic nature? how to determine what is or may not be a historic value?

usually we are looking for something that has a narrative to it. History has a narrative. Anything that is a historical outline of a particular agency or a place. There is a lot of stuff that are pamphlets and things that don't have that historical value that would not be useful to a researcher. If it's something more in depth about a particular agency or even a national park, that is something we could definitely keep.

Nobody needs a seatbelt diagram. That is not something our public here will utilize.

It's a different depending on the scope of other libraries. We are a library that happens to have a tremendously large collection of government documents. Our focus is on the historic documents and not do documents. There are better mechanisms in place in the state and government to handle the distribution of that information. The historic items we have, that is unique to us. We will continue to look for ways to maximize those. You do all the stuff as a librarian and you look at the condition of the material or anything notable, is the subject matter important in historical context in comparison to others? does it matter more to your local community versus another community? is there something distinctive about the items like the Civil War maps we have? there is a lot of neat things. You can look at it and say we have the complete problem of communism magazine. We will keep the whole thing because we have a and completion. The completeness of the object is also a thing.

It will depend on what your library does or what kind of research you have. It will be different for everyone. We kept quite a bit in the department of agriculture. We have a big farming economy out here in Indiana. Those are things that would be important to the local community.

What tools are you using to figure out Sue dock number corrections?

the catalog of government publications is very helpful. It's not always complete. Otherwise we have been going to world cat. You can look up the item there. Usually there is another library somewhere in the country that has a catalogued with the Sue dock number attached. We rely on other libraries

cataloging efforts to get that done. Otherwise if there is no number that would be something we could submit.

it is unreported publications. We do not say the F word anymore. Unreported publications.

It's all good.

I learned something new today too.

Do you have any other plans for promoting the collection or areas of the collection? for example Facebook or twitter?

yes. Are special collections has a really robust social media presence. That will be our best bet to maximize this in the future. We have displays and things going on. One of the benefits of having world-class geology collection and staff as they have a programming infrastructure that weakly brings in multiple hundreds of people for their virtual programs multiple times per week. It is really awesome. We can slap that in immediately. A lot of exposure and get the collection exposure. I Facebook and YouTube and all the stuff that goes along with that. We have made the move in the last couple of months to start folding our government documents collection and staff. I think in the next year or two we will see a lot of movement on the promotion.

You want to tell people. We do not want to brag about a collection that is inaccessible.

What about your circulation guidelines? do you check out all documents based on the year and condition et cetera?

it is a entirely referenced collection at this point. Even the items that get sent to genealogy, those remain a reference as well.

We are pushing hard to digitally link our documents. They are housed in a staff only access space and not publicly accessible. We need to preserve them. We want to make sure that the accessibility happens for as many people as possible. They do not need to check it out. They need to click a link. At the time the project is done they need to basically fix the circulation issue for us.

Another question for clarification, referring to the drawers is a shelf list: border or is it a public card catalogued by author, title and subject?

it is all by Sue dock number. When I first started we had two card catalogs. One with cereals and one with non-serial items. The cereals got enter filed Internet for the sake of the inventory.

We have one last question. A follow-up to the one you mentioned earlier about figuring out Sue dock number corrections. Do you keep up with the corrections in the old admin notes? numbers or four letters or letters before numbers?

We do letters before numbers. I am not sure exactly. I don't know if we have gotten this far in depth yet.

We are learning too. If you want to post the link or if you have more information about that, that will probably help us.

Administrative notes or admin notes or add notes? was the newsletter that laid out all the changes and so on?

I have the supersede list and that cover some of it.

How did you get started? did you pick by department or document type or by the card catalog?

We were in order by the card catalog. We started with A you will get to the end at some point.

Thank you for an excellent talk Nate and Jacob. We will email the presenters your questions that were answered and get back with you shortly. This talk has been recorded and will be made available soon. Up next closing in meeting room A. Hop over next-door to attend the closing session of the fall Federal depository library conference. It will begin at 4:45 PM Eastern time. Thank you.