

SOPAG Memorandum to University Librarians

September 16, 2003

TO: University Librarians

FROM: John W. Tanno
Chair, SOPAG

RE: Task Force on Government Information: Final Report

The Final Report of the Task Force on Government Information (hereafter referred to as the Task Force) dated May 2003 was discussed at the joint ULs/SOPAG meeting of May 23rd. The University Librarians gave tentative approval to the first three recommendations of the report and asked SOPAG to give the report wide distribution for review and comment. SOPAG distributed the report to the All Campus Groups and LAUC. Comments have been received from the Collection Development Committee (CDC), the Heads of Technical Services (HOTS), the Resource Sharing Committee (RSC), and from the Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Diego, and Santa Cruz Divisions of LAUC, LAUC president Esther Grassian, and the NRLF and SRLF. In addition, SOPAG members from Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, and San Diego submitted comments on behalf of their respective libraries.

The comments were generally very positive and supportive of the recommendations of the Task Force. There is broad consensus for moving forward with the first three recommendations that were tentatively endorsed by the University Librarians:

1. Develop Shared Collections of Government Information, housed at the Regional Library Facilities, upon which campuses can rely for permanent retention in order to make local decisions on the retention of materials. Material to be stored should focus initially on significant runs of serial materials and large sets of low use.
2. The Task Force recommends the establishment of a small steering committee to implement the Shared Collection. The committee should be empowered to work directly with SOPAG, to seek advice and assistance from the All Campus Groups, and to consult with interested parties such as the UC/Stanford Government Information Librarians.
3. Begin with existing RLF collections as the core of the Shared Collections.

With regard to the second recommendation, SOPAG asked the Task Force to draft a charge and recommend the membership for a steering committee to implement the shared collection. The Task Force's draft charge for the steering committee is attached for your information. With the approval of the University Librarians, SOPAG will appoint the steering committee and transmit the complete texts of all of the comments received to inform the steering committee's discussions and planning activities.

While there was broad endorsement of the Task Force report and its fifteen recommendations, there were also a variety of concerns and issues raised that will need to be addressed. Paramount among them are the following:

1. **Cost Analysis and Funding.** Most respondents raised the need to do a careful analysis of the costs for sharing government information and how these costs could be funded for the campuses and the RLFs to implement the shared collections successfully.

2. **RLFs.** Concern was expressed regarding the lack of resources for the RLFs to assume responsibilities for the handling of shared collections, both in terms of establishing them with the attendant technical and operational processes required and the provision of service.
3. **Bibliographic Control of Government Information.** Several respondents called attention to the lack of full bibliographic control of government information and the necessity of gaining better bibliographic control in order to provide reliable and consistent access to these shared collections. It was recommended by several groups that HOTS become heavily involved in addressing the bibliographic control issues.
4. **Public Service Issues and Expertise in Government Information.** There was a general concern as to how public service will be provided for shared government information collections. Several comments suggested that care be taken not to lose the expertise in government information currently provided by government information librarians, many of who are near retirement. How will this expertise be provided in the RLFs, and what kind of training can be provided to maintain a high level of expertise at the campuses?
5. **Preservation.** Another common theme was the conflict between the needs for access and use of shared collections with the needs for preservation of archival government information. Can both needs be met with a single copy, or should more than one copy be kept? How will materials be reviewed to be certain that the shared collection copy or copies are complete?
6. **Formats of Materials.** A number of respondents raised questions as to what format of materials should be considered for shared government information collections, e.g., serials, maps, microforms, superceded reference tools, etc.
7. **International Documents.** Concern was also raised as to whether international documents should also be considered in addition to federal and California State documents.

It is expected that these issues, and others raised in the comments received will be addressed by the steering committee as part of their planning efforts.

On the basis of the comments received, SOPAG recommends that the steering committee be appointed and charged, as the next step in moving towards shared collections of government information. The steering committee would be asked to prepare a report within six to nine months. We look forward to your response to this recommendation.