

Government documents

Microcomputer applications

Managing a selective government documents depository using microcomputer technology



By Ronelle K. H. Thompson

Director, Mikkelsen Library
Augustana College

Automation improves government document access at Augustana College.

Libraries that are depositories for federal documents face a number of challenges in managing the materials received under the program. Augustana College's Mikkelsen Library is a selective federal depository and currently receives approximately 28% of all published documents. In return these materials must be organized, maintained, and made accessible to the residents of the community.

Most of the materials we receive become part of a separate federal documents collection organized by Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) number. Serial publications appearing in periodical indexes owned by our library are included in the periodical collection. Titles consulted frequently by staff and patrons are cataloged by Library of Congress classification (LC) and added to the reference or circulating collections.

Our goal has been to have documents processed and available to the public within four days of their arrival in the library. However, this goal was impossible to achieve using a manual record-keeping system. For the past two years we have used an

IBM microcomputer and Professional File (previously PFS File) software to manage the inventory records for our documents collection.

Software design

Professional File software offers several advantages for creating and maintaining an inventory record system such as that needed for government documents. A menu-driven software, Professional File can be used by library staff members and work study student assistants without extensive training. We use the software on an IBM personal computer with a 20 megabyte hard disk. Both the software and the government documents inventory data have been loaded on the hard disk.

Unlike many similar programs, the design feature of Professional File allows fields to be designated anywhere on the screen, not just down the left-hand side. Each of the designated fields can then be searched for retrieval purposes. Figure 1 is an example of the screen design used at Augustana.

Processing procedures

The government documents screen was designed with the item number (ITEM NO) in the upper left-hand corner to facilitate rapid retrieval of individual records. The MORE field allows a "y" tag to alert staff that an item number has more than one SuDocs classification number and that there are additional screens to consult.

A statistics field has been included to expedite the compilation process. By assigning a number to different statistical categories (i.e., periodicals) records can be printed in an order that groups categories together.

The SH field indicates any special handling instructions, such as periodicals (PER), cataloging (CAT), or referring to documents supervisor (DOCSTAFF). The department (DEPT), agency (AGENCY), and series (SERIES) fields allow a means to record this information and also to retrieve records based on any of these fields. The YEAR field is set to the current calendar year. The SUDocs field represents only the stem of the Superintendent of Documents number. The remainder of the number is placed in the SD field at a title-specific level.

The NOTES field allows for messages specific to individual item numbers; for example, it might relay the message that an item is received via direct mail.

When an item is processed, only three fields need to be completed: SD, for the remainder of the SuDocs number; T, for the title; and R, for the date received.

As government document materials are received, the shipping list is checked against the List of Item Selections (LIS) to insure that each item received has indeed been selected by the Augustana Library. The computer inventory is then searched to find the appropriate record via item number. All item numbers have been entered to provide a four-digit number/letter/two-digit number sequence. For example, Item 42 A 1 has been entered, 0042-A-01.

When the record with the requested item number is located, the SuDocs stem is checked. If the SuDocs number does not match, the next form is retrieved. When both item and SuDocs numbers match, that portion of the SuDocs number following the colon is typed in the SD field. An abbreviated title is added to the T field, enough to distinguish the item being processed from other issues or publications in the series. The date received is added to the R field.

The computer record is coded to indicate if special handling is required and what type, with specific instructions included in the note field. For example, an item that is cataloged, such as *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, would have the LC call number included in the note field.

For items that are on microfiche, an "equals" sign is used after the date followed by the number of pieces of fiche, to facilitate the number gathering for statistical tabulations. For example,

```
ITEM NO: O577-A-OO          MORE:      SH: per  STAT: 3  SUPER:
      DEPT: National Archives      AGENCY: Federal Register
      SERIES: Weekly Compilation of Presidential D  YEAR: 1988
SUDocs: AE 2.109:          MF:
NOTES: Arrives direct mail
```

SD 23/50	T: December 21, pp. 1519-1541	R 1/14
SD 23/51	T: December 28, pp. 1543-1559	R 1/21
SD 24/1	T: January 11, pp. 1-14	R 2/1
SD 23/Index	T: Fourth Quarter Index, Oct-Dec	R 2/8
SD 24/2	T: January 18, pp. 15-46	R 2/8
SD 24/3	T: January 25, pp. 47-79	R 2/15
SD 24/4	T: February 1, pp. 81-152	R 2/17
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R
SD	T:	R

FIGURE 1

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8/10 = 3 would indicate that the item was received on August 10 and was a three-piece microfiche set.

There are fourteen lines available for adding new titles on each screen. When all are filled, the form is printed, the items included on the form are counted for statistical purposes, and the form is filed in a permanent shelflist, arranged by SuDocs number. The titles are then deleted so the record can continue to be used. Forms are created in the data file when new classes are added or when new items are selected. When notified that an item has been discontinued, a notation is made of the effective date and a paper copy of the record is printed and filed in the permanent shelflist. The record is then deleted from the computer file.

Reports

Twice each year a complete printout is generated of documents received. When the printouts have been made the corresponding shipping lists are discarded and the printed forms are added to the permanent shelflist.

Various lists can be produced from the records, including all documents cataloged in the LC collection, documents requiring special handling, documents published by a specific governmental department/agency, or documents published on microfiche. We do not use the program to provide an index to our documents collection as some depositories do. Rather, we use the computer for inventory control of documents as they are received. We currently have over 3,100 records in our documents database.

Summary

The change from a manual inventory system to a computerized method has had a dramatic impact on our ability to manage our government documents collection in a timely and efficient manner. Our goal of four days from the time of arrival until documents are available for use is routinely surpassed. Documents requiring special processing are readily identified and routed to the appropriate persons, improving our collection control as well.

The ease of use of the system has been demonstrated on several occasions as we have made transitions in staff within the government documents area. We are convinced that the improvements we have made in managing our government documents collections could not have been made apart from computerization.

We do not, however, view this as our final level of automation for documents. We are in the process of installing an integrated automation system in our library using the PALS software and Unisys equipment. After the initial modules—public access, circulation, and interlibrary loan—have been installed, we will evaluate how best to incorporate the records for our depository materials in the database to allow a fully integrated approach to the entire library collection. ■ ■

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