

# Government information

## A guide to governments here and abroad

by Sandra da Conturbia and Xiaodong Li

Government documents include a wide variety of publications by and about governmental agencies on the local, state, national, and international level. The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) is by itself the largest publisher worldwide. In recent years, the Web has made it much easier to obtain timely information in any domain, but the proliferation of Internet resources makes it more and more difficult to choose among electronic pages that provide similar and often overlapping information. This bibliography contains a selective list of useful Internet sites, electronic journals, and mail lists that represent the authors' preferences. In addition to comprehensive government sites, additional sources with more specific federal, state, and local, and international information were selected.

### Comprehensive government sites

- **InfoSpace: Government Guide.** Self-described as the "ultimate guide" to government information, this Web site organizes government resources by four levels: federal, state, county, and local. For government sites at the federal and state level, links are divided into three government branches. For county and local entries, an organizational listing of each county or city government is presented. Users can also search for information about government officials at different levels by name or title, or browse an alphabetical list of foreign embassies in Washington, D.C. for phone and fax numbers, URLs,

and mailing addresses. *Access:* <http://206.129.166.101/categ/bluefed.html>.

- **Governments on the World Wide Web:** A comprehensive list of sites from some 200 countries maintained by Gunnar Anzinger in German and English. It includes parliaments, ministries, offices, law courts, embassies, and city councils. *Access:* <http://www.gksoft.com/govt/>.

- **GOVBOT.** Developed by The Center for Intelligent Information Retrieval of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, this powerful search tool indexes over 840,000 Web pages from U.S. government and military Internet sites with some state and foreign sites. It supports both straight keyword searching and field searching by title and URL. *Access:* <http://eden.cs.umass.edu/Govbot/>.

- **Resources of Use to Government Documents Librarians (GODORT).** Developed by the University of California at Berkeley Library and the Government Documents Round Table, this page provides a variety of useful resources for government documents librarians. In addition to information from and about GODORT, this site also includes links to depository administration tools and Internet resources via GPO; fact sheets; laws and legislation; mail lists, e-journals, and professional associations. *Access:* <http://library.berkeley.edu/GODORT/>.

### Federal information

- **GPO Access.** GPO Access, the Superintendent of Documents' homepage, is the pri-

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**GPO Access** many source for federal information. Links are provided to the Online Databases, New/Noteworthy Products from GPO, the Federal Bulletin Board Files, the Products for Sale by GPO, the Directory of Depository Libraries, and the Federal Depository Library Program Administration. Access: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/).

• **GPO Pathway Services. Browse Topics** arranges government information by detailed subject topic in alphabetical order. It is



**Pathway Services**

based on *The Subject Bibliography Index*. Even

though there is no search option, this list covers a remarkable number of government agencies. Entries in the list are well-annotated. Access: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/dpos/pathbrws.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/dpos/pathbrws.html).

• **GPO Pathway Indexer.** This Internet search engine uses the Harvest software to search for government information on "over 1,350 official U.S. federal agency and military Internet sites." Users can conduct simple keyword searches or perform advanced searches by customizing either search or result display options. Access: <http://gather.access.gpo.gov/Harvest/brokers/Pathway/query.html>.

• **POTUS: Presidents of the United States.** Compiled by the Internet Public Library, POTUS provides biographical information on all 43 Presidents of the United States. It also includes election results, cabinet members, notable events, inaugural addresses, and some points of interest on each of the presidents. Access: <http://www.ipl.org/ref/POTUS/>.

• **Thomas: Legislative Information on the Internet.** Hosted by the Library of Congress, this is an excellent starting point to search legislative and legal documents, such as bills, public laws, and the *Congressional Record*. Both full-text bills and the *Congressional Record* go back to 1989 and are search-



able or browsable by keyword, bill number, or type (for bills). Thomas also has a collection of public laws by law number from 1973 to the present. Access: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

• **CAPWEB: The Internet Guide to the United States Congress.** As one of the best, most comprehensive directories for Congress, this site provides easy access to the information on each member of Congress by name, state, committee, and party. The record for each senator or house representative covers detailed information including Washington



and district contacts, URL, party affiliation, picture, personal information, committee assignments, ratings, and staff members. Access: <http://www.capweb.net/classic/index.morph>.

• **Federal Judiciary.** Maintained by the Administrative Office of the U.S. courts, this page is designed to "function as a clearinghouse for information from and about the Judicial Branch of the U.S. government." In addition to general sections, this Web site also features a clickable Map of Circuits, which allows users to reach the homepage of the federal courts. Users can also search the contents of all the publicly available online documents at this site via an interactive search form on the front page. Access: <http://www.uscourts.gov/>.

• **Migrating Government Publications.** Designed by the University of Memphis Library, this site lists the federal government publications that have been converted to electronic format. Each publication is listed by Superintendent of Documents number and by title, and the service also indicates if the print format is still available. The site is well-organized and frequently updated. Access: <http://www.lib.memphis.edu/gpo/mig.htm>.

• **U.S. Depository Libraries WWW Home Pages (GPO and Patent and Trademark Office).** Compiled and maintained by Lily Wai at the University of Idaho Library, this site includes links to all the Depository Libraries homepages. Libraries are listed in alphabetical order by state. Access: <http://drseuss.lib.uidaho.edu/govdoc/otherdep.html>.

## State and local information

• **State and Local Government on the Net.** This is the most comprehensive, well-

organized, and up-to-date guide to state and local government information on the Internet. It provides an extensive listing of government Web sites for states and territories of the United States. Under each state or territory, links are categorized into ten sections: state home page, statewide offices, legislative branch, judicial branch, executive branch, boards and commissions, regional, counties, cities, and other. Links are also provided to multi-state sites, federal resources, and national organizations. *Access:* <http://www.piperinfo.com/state/states.html>.

• **StateLaw.** Organized by state as the State and Local Government on the Net, this site emphasizes legislative and legal information. Within each state, resources are listed under the headings home page; legislative informa-

**State Law**  
State govt. & Legislative Info

tion; courts; statutes; state agencies; congressional delegation; miscellaneous; and historical documents. *Access:* <http://lawlib.wuacc.edu/washlaw/uslaw/statelaw.html>.

• **State and Local Governments.** A resource of the Library of Congress, this Web page contains basically two sections: "Meta-Indexes for State and Local Government Information" and "State Government Information." The first section is an index to indexes and is of use to those who want to expand their search using different resources. The second section classifies the information of each state into categories, such as state government, local government resources, and city government. *Access:* <http://www.loc.gov/global/state/stategov.html>.

• **StateSearch.** Unlike the above three sites, this Web page arranges Internet state government information first by subject category and then by state. Designed and maintained by the National Association of State Information Resource Executives, it covers more than 2,100 entries in 23 categories, such as auditors, criminal justice, education, employment, energy, executive branch, judicial, governor's offices, information resource management, state homepages, state legislature, and tourism. For users conducting a topical research on state information, this site is an excellent finding aid and a good place to start. *Access:* <http://www.nasire.org/ss/>.

## International information

• **World Fact Book 1997.** Prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Web version of the *World Fact Book* provides the best and most comprehensive coverage of worldwide country information. Using a frame structure, this site places the alphabetical index in the left window and the contents of each country in the right window. For each entry, detailed information on geography, people, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues is provided. *Access:* <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>.

• **International Organizations.** Maintained by the International Documents Task Force of GODORT and Northwestern University Library, this Web site features an extensive list of links to Web pages of more than 100 international organizations in alphabetical order. For some major organizations, such as the European Union and the United Nations, subdivisions are also listed in hierarchical order under the main headings. The list is also made available in ASCII format for easy downloading. *Access:* <http://www.library.nwu.edu/govpub/idtf/igo.html>.

• **World Constitutions and International Treaties.** While constitutions may also be available in the government homepages of some countries, this site developed by the Texas A&M University General Libraries includes easy alphabetical access to the constitutions of some 137 countries with links to other Web sites that also index world constitutions. The second part of the site includes a subject list of international treaty resources available on the Internet. Entries in this section are categorized into the following topics: general sources, historical treaties, arms



## World Constitutions and International Treaties

control and rules of warfare, cultural protection and intellectual property, human rights, trade and commercial relations, environmental and wildlife protection, and biological diversity. *Access:* <http://library.tamu.edu/govdocs/workshop/index.html>.

• **Foreign Government Resources on the Web.** Developed by the University of

Michigan Library, this site includes a rich collection of links to foreign government information on the Web. Countries are organized by geographic area with a vast array of Internet resources including country background; biographies of officials; foreign policy; human rights; national symbols; constitutions, laws, and treaties; embassies; foreign news sources; and statistics on demographic, economic, health, and military. Access: <http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/foreign.html>.

• **Address Directory for the Politicians of the World.** Want to contact directly the head of state of a specific country? This is where you can find the mailing addresses, phone and fax numbers, e-mail and URL addresses (if available) of every nation's leaders and most provincial governors. The site also contains a LobbyistTools/Linx Page and an address directory of Environment Ministries worldwide. Check out the pointer View Visitors Comments to see how users like this unique and excellent site. Access: <http://www.trytel.com/~aberdeen/>.

### Electronic journals

Two electronic journals **Federal Times** (Access: <http://www.federaltimes.com/>), and **GovExec.com: A Service of Government Executive Magazine** (Access: <http://www.govexec.com>) are geared toward federal employees and contain information relating to their work and life.

As for the *Journal of Government Information* and *Government Information Quarterly*, the two leading journals of government librarianship, only the table of contents is presently available on the Internet. Access is provided through Auburn University at: <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/madd/docs/giq/title.html> and <http://www.lib.auburn.edu/madd/docs/jgi/contents.html>.

### Mail lists

• **GOVDOC-L** is a discussion forum about government information and the Federal Depository Library program. Most subscribers are librarians, but many private and public information producers, including the staff of GPO are represented as well. GOVDOC-L utilizes the computing facilities of Pennsylvania State University and is moderated by a group of librarians from institutions all over the United States. Access: <http://www.staff.uiuc.edu/~raeann/what.html>.

• **Law-Lib.** Unlikely GOVDOC-L, the Law-lib list is unmoderated, but you do have to be a subscriber to post messages to the list. Most of the subscribers are law librarians and the topics of discussion include legal reference questions, interlibrary loan requests, job announcements, and policy discussions. Access: <http://home.olemiss.edu/~noe/llfaq.html>.

**Ed. Note:** An expanded version of this article with links may be found at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/c&rlnew2.html>. ■

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