



# Government Depository Library Information



---

*from LSU Middleton  
Regional #222*

**Things I Wish I Had Known Before I Became a  
Regional Librarian:**  
*Modeled After the Classic Self-Help Manual  
with a “Power of Positive Thinking” Approach*

- 
- That I would need to be able to explain to “civilians” just what a Regional Library actually was. This, of course, would require that I knew the specifics myself.
  - Solution: Take a look at the proper chapter in the new *Federal Depository Library Handbook*:

**Chapter 12**  
**Regional Services**

*Describes the general responsibilities of FDLP members designated as regional Federal depository libraries, the specific responsibilities of a regional depository library and coordinator, the legal requirements of regional libraries and coordinators, and how to locate a regional depository library*

---

- 
- That I would have to understand the SUDOC system more fully. Being in a smaller selective that integrated its depository materials into its main collection (LC classification) meant that I never really had to know the finer points of SUDOC classification. Thank heavens for a regional staff that knows it forwards and backwards. I was (still am) awed!
  - Solution: Peruse the "Explanation of the Superintendent of Documents Classification System" found on GPO Access. See URL below.

**An Explanation of the Superintendent of Documents Classification System**

[Principles of the System](#) | [Author Symbols](#) | [Subordinate Offices](#)  
[Series Designations](#) | [Related Series](#) | [Class Stem](#) | [Book Numbers](#)  
[Special Treatment](#) | [Boards, Commissions & Committees](#)  
[Congress](#) | [President](#)

[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/pubs/explain.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/explain.html)

---

- 
- That I would need to be familiar with the history of some of the federal agencies that had come and gone or morphed into new agencies, leaving a trail of abandoned SUDOCS in their wake.
  - Solution: Browse through the *United States Government Manual* and the *Guide to U.S. Government Publications* (Andriot's). The *Manual* can give you the historical perspective of agencies, as is noted on the site of its electronic version, "the volume contains agency organizational charts, a list defining commonly used Federal abbreviations and acronyms, and a detailed section on Federal agencies that have been terminated, transferred, or changed in name since March 1933." Andriot's does a pretty thorough job of cross-referencing SUDOC classifications, old and new.
-

- 
- That I would need to understand the basics of the sometimes complicated automated systems used by all of the libraries in my region. Fortunately, most of the libraries in LA are in a consortium and use the same ILS (SirsiDynix Unicorn); however, individual libraries have customized features that are not always clear to those outside of their own institutions.
  - Solution: If you attend conferences at which vendors present their products, take a moment to visit booths and review the various options represented. Although you may not fully comprehend each ILS's functions, you will at least be familiar with more than your own in-house ILS.
-

- 
- That I would need to take seriously the methodology of discard lists and policies.
  - Solution: Realize that even if you were a "discarder" before, you did not have a clue about how important it is to know and follow best practices for handling all of the reams of discard/disposal lists you will receive now that you are a "keeper." Have a State Plan in effect and follow it; more importantly, make sure every one of your selectives knows what it says about discard/disposal procedures. At the same time, be aware that no matter how clearly your plan explains those procedures, you will still receive disposal lists that do not conform to the format required; and you will still be asked by some of your selectives how long it will take before they can discard items that were not requested by another depository. Patience and good humor will serve you well.
-

- 
- That I would be drawn into many more organizations and committees than I ever believed existed. Being a regional librarian means being involved with GPO, FDLP, and your national and/or local professional library organizations at levels you had not expected.
  - Solution: Make time in your schedule to keep up with listservs and other communications with Docs colleagues. Organizations can include ALA GODORT, your local state library association's GODORT, your local/regional documents group (e.g., LA has a Louisiana Federal Depository Library Council that meets twice a year; and each LA regional librarian is automatically a voting member of this body), and other miscellaneous policy-making bodies.
-

- 
- That I would be called upon to sympathize with, empathize with, and occasionally provide a shoulder to cry on for my selectives. While not every state has a disaster as prominent as the one Louisiana experienced not so long ago, each region has its own stressful issues and concerns that affect its libraries.
  - Solution: The ability to be tactful and reassuring is vital to your success as a Regional Librarian. If these traits do not come naturally to you, work on developing them as much as possible. Keep in contact with your selectives; let them know you care about their well-being and success. Don't be a pest, but make sure they know they can count on you to support them.
-

- 
- That, like the Queen Mother, I would serve in the capacity of “figure-head” for the Depository Program in my region.
  - Solution: Once again, tact and diplomacy (and a smile on your face) go a long way when serving as the image of FDLP to your region’s library community. You really are seen as the most local representative from the “Mother Ship,” as I like to think of it. Because of that role, you will want to express a positive attitude about the Depository Program and GPO as much as possible. Even if honesty requires that you occasionally have something not so positive to say, say it with an optimistic tone, implying that it will eventually turn out better. Bitterness and rancor solve nothing and can come back to cause you greater trouble in the future.
-

- 
- That I would spend an incredible amount of time traveling, either visiting selectives or attending conferences and meetings.
  - Solution: Technically, there is none. Being able to travel when necessary is part of the gig. Of course, you can look at it like it is an adventure (which I do); but if you are doing your job effectively, you will have to get used to the idea of not always being in your own office in your own library getting your own projects done. If you are fortunate to have a large enough and dedicated enough staff (again, which I do), learning to delegate can help.
-

- 
- That no matter how hard I worked, I would never feel as if I had done enough.
  - Solution: Loosen up. You're probably right—you cannot do enough in one lifetime, so don't make yourself ill obsessing over what you haven't done. Take pride in your accomplishments; the people who hired you had faith in your abilities, so you are probably doing exactly what you are expected to do. This kind of perspective is most difficult for those of us who see the Depository Program as an important component of civic duty and freedom of access to information. You will feel better if you realize that every small thing that you do to help make government information available to your community serves as a part of the larger picture, and we are all working together toward the same goals. As a friend and colleague of mine once said, “It takes a village to provide government information to the public.” I'm not entirely sure what she meant by that, but it sounds impressive.
-