Finding Government Information

Sara Butts
Information Services Research Assistant
University Libraries
October 13, 2017
Overview

We will be finding …

- Government Documents in the Library
- Government Agency Websites
- Statistics
- Bills & Laws
Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP)

- Established by the Government Publishing Office (GPO)
- Exist to make government info. accessible to the public
- Ablah Library became a Federal Depository Library in 1901. It is 1 of 18 in depository libraries Kansas and 1 of more than 1,300 in the U.S.
- A full map can be found at https://www.fdlp.gov/about-the-fdlp/federal-depository-libraries
Locating Government Documents in the Collection

- Government Maps
- Microform Reader for microfiche
- Some DVDs kept at circulation

About ½ of the print collection & folios (oversized documents)
Locating Government Documents in the Collection

Lower Level

- The remaining ½ of the print collection
- Microfiche, microfilm, CDs, and DVDs
First Floor (Public Access)

Lower Level (Employee Access)
Locating Government Documents in the Collection

• Use the **Online Catalog** to find specific documents (after 1976 mostly)
  – Basic Search: limit results to “government documents.”
  – Advanced Search: select “government documents” from the location drop-down menu.

• For older documents
  – Find the call number.
  – Search the shelves to see if we have it in our collection.
  – Ask for assistance if needed.

*Ask for compact shelving items at circulation*
Superintendent of Documents Classification System

C 3. 186/22: 999
Superintendent of Documents
Classification System

Basic Rules:

• The SuDoc system is not a decimal system. Numbers are represented as whole numbers.
  
  D 1.1: (one)
  D 1.35: (thirty-five)
  D 1.135: (one hundred thirty-five)

• Years / Letters / Numbers (in that order)
  
  EP 1.23:A 62
  EP 1.23:91-44
Finding Documents Online

- **Fdsys & GovInfo** (in beta)
  - official publications from the three branches of government
- **GPO.gov** and **Beta.GPO.gov** (see “Explore and Research”)
- **GPO Catalog**
  - a catalog of documents published by the Government Publishing Office
- **Hathi Trust Digital Library**
  - archive of scanned government documents, mostly at universities
- **Internet Archive**
  - The Way Back Machine is a snapshot of websites at specific dates and times, even those that are not currently active.
When searching Google for information from government agency websites, type the following:

   Site:gov “search terms”

For example:

   Site:gov “secondhand smoke”

Might provide results from …

   – cdc.gov
   – cancer.gov
   – smokefree.gov
   – surgeongeneral.gov

The same strategy can be used for other extensions. For example:

   Site:edu “common core”
   Site:org “donate blood”
   Site:com “concert tickets”
Government Agencies

Finding Aids

- **USA.gov** (federal)
  - Find information about government agencies, listed A to Z
  - Find information by topic

- **Publications.USA.gov**
  - Federal Citizen Information Center – answers questions about consumer problems and government services

- **KSLib.info** (state)
  - Kansans → Kansas Government Information Online Library
Statistics

Websites
- Census.gov (Topics & Data)
- American Fact Finder
- Statistical Abstract of the United States (1878-2012 online)
- USA.gov/statistics
- CIA.gov – World Fact Book

Databases (for WSU students, staff, and faculty)
- Historical Statistics of the U.S.
- Sage Stats
How a Bill becomes a Law

All U.S. laws start out as bills in Congress. For a bill to become a law can be a lengthy process, and many bills don't make it through. Of the approximately 5,000 bills that are introduced each year, only about 150 actually become laws.

1. Anyone can come up with an idea for a bill. For example:
   - A member of Congress
   - Constituents (the voting public)
   - The president or the Executive Branch

   You may have heard the word "filibuster" in connection with a proposed bill. A filibuster is a tactic used by senators to delay or entirely prevent a vote from being taken on a bill by delivering lengthy speeches.

   PLEASE SIGN ME!

2. But only a member of Congress can introduce a bill. A bill can be introduced in either the Senate or the House of Representatives. This bill begins in the Senate.

   Some of the changes might include requests for government funds to be spent on improvements in a politician's local district, making him or her popular with the voters there. Such funding is called "pork barrel spending."

3. The bill is reviewed by a small committee in the Senate, which discusses the pros and cons.

4. Then the entire Senate debates the bill.

   As many as 100 amendments may be added at this stage.

5. A vote is taken, and the bill is then passed to the House of Representatives, where it is also debated and amended.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

If the president does not approve of the bill, he can veto it by refusing to sign it.

However, if two-thirds of the members of Congress agree, they can override the president.

The bill becomes law when the president signs it.

The others will be following the bill's progress on TV in their offices, so that they can make themselves available when a vote is called for.

If the House of Representatives approves the bill, it goes back to the Senate for even more debate, until both the Senate and the House agree on the exact wording.

During this phase, there may be only ten members of Congress present.

THE PRESIDENT

If the president does not approve of the bill, he can veto it by refusing to sign it.

However, the bill can still become a law.
## Tracking Federal Legislation

### Federal Laws are rules that are applicable in every state such as:

- Immigration law
- Bankruptcy law
- Social Security Income laws
- Federal anti-discrimination and civil rights laws
- Patent & Copyright laws
- Federal criminal laws such as laws against tax fraud and counterfeiting of money

### To track federal legislation, visit [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).

- Search for bills by
  - Number
  - Congress number
  - Bill type
  - Status of legislation
  - Subject policy area
  - Chamber of origin, etc.

- View
  - Active Legislation
  - Introduced Bills
  - Public laws
  - U.S. Code
Let’s Practice!

1. Open your browser and type www.congress.gov into the address bar.

2. Type in bill number H.R.321 (hr321)

3. What can you find out about the bill?
   - View the summary and skim the full text.
   - What actions have been taken so far?
   - What committees or sponsors are connected with the bill?
## Tracking State Legislation

**Federal Laws are rules that are applicable in every state such as:**

- Criminal matters
- Divorce & family matters
- Welfare, public assistance, or Medicaid matters
- Wills, inheritances, and estates
- Real estate & other property
- Business contracts
- Personal injuries
- Workers compensation for injuries at work

**To track federal legislation, visit [http://kslegislature.org](http://kslegislature.org).**

- Search for bills by
  - Number
  - Word or phrase
  - Currency (most recent)
  - Committee

- View
  - Live House & Senate proceedings
Let’s Practice!

1. Open your preferred browser and type http://kslegislature.org into the address bar.

2. Review the “Current Happenings”

3. Choose a recent bill or resolution. What can you find out about it?
   - Skim the full text (PDF) and any additional notes.
   - What actions have been taken so far?
   - What committees or sponsors are connected with the bill?
Additional Resources

WSU Research Guide: Government Information
http://libresources.wichita.edu/gov

WSU Undergraduate Research Workshop Series
http://libresources.wichita.edu/undergradresearch

Contact Information:
Sara Butts
(316)978-5017
sara.butts@wichita.edu
QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!