Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library
University of North Texas Libraries’ Nomination for Depository Library of the Year

Nominated Library Contact Information

Nominated Library
Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library
University of North Texas Libraries
Depository Library 0608A
1155 Union Circle #305190
Denton, Texas 76203-5014
940-565-5870

Submitter Contact
Roberta Sittel
Government Information Librarian and Head, Eagle Commons Library
940-565-4150
roberta.sittel@unt.edu

Dean of University of North Texas Libraries
Dr. Martin Halbert
940-565-3025
martin.halbert@unt.edu

Preamble
The University of North Texas Libraries became a congressionally-designated selective depository library in January 1948. At the time of designation, the college served a student body of 4,668 with 265 faculty and 14 librarians. Today, the University of North Texas serves over 36,000 students with 6,700 faculty and staff, including 57 faculty librarians. Though our mission of free public access has remained constant throughout the 67 years since we joined the depository program, our services and collections have evolved and expanded to meet the burgeoning, ever-changing needs of the students, faculty, and staff of the UNT campus and the surrounding community; through our collections in the UNT Digital Library we have even been able to serve individuals and communities across the nation and throughout the world.

The UNT Libraries’ nationally recognized Government Information Connection has long been committed to promoting awareness of and access to government information, both online and in tangible formats. In 2014, the UNT Libraries dedicated the Eagle Commons Library as a resource center for the community. With the Government Information Connection serving as anchor, the Eagle Commons Library was transformed into a resource hub to support UNT research and creative activity, promote civic engagement in the local community, and nurture the development of budding small businesses and nonprofits. At the Eagle Commons Library the federal and state government documents, as well as the business, law, political science, public administration, and geography collections, have been combined with Foundation Center resources and the value-added service of GIS to create a new, unique kind of “town commons” — a gathering place where the UNT and Denton area communities, with their differing
needs and assets, can come together synergistically to build social capital, share ideas, and solve problems.

Through this recent reorganization, we have been able to continue cultivating our superior collections and service to UNT’s students and faculty even while we better engage the community at large. Whether it’s a local nonprofit pursuing grant funding, an entrepreneur researching a business startup, or a resident with questions about voting and elections, the Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library is ready to meet their information needs, boasting seven full-time paraprofessionals backed by over eighty years of combined experience with UNT’s government documents collections, plus a Depository Coordinator Librarian, a Business Librarian, a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Librarian, and a Social Science and Community Engagement Librarian.

Article I. Promotion of the Depository Collections and Services
Promotion of the collection in a variety of ways has always been a priority of the University of North Texas Libraries. The examples below illustrate the focus and attention given to the collections and services of the Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library. Partnerships forged with departments on campus and in the UNT Libraries—as well as with other libraries and librarians across the region—insure robust offerings to the campus and the broader communities.

Section 1. Resources via the UNT Government Information Connection
In 1994, as part of GPO’s initiative to expand access to online information, the University of North Texas was designated a GPO Access Gateway Library. As technology evolved and GPO realized the Gateway Project was no longer needed, UNT made the commitment to keep and expand the GPO’s model of promoting and providing access to online government information and services. In 2001, UNT registered Government Information Connection, the name of UNT’s portal to online government information, as a protected service mark.

In the early days of the Internet, the Government Information Connection supported other libraries in creating their own Web presence by providing a Web page template and guided new depository librarians through a list of Eight (formerly 21) Things to Do When Assuming Responsibility for a Depository Library. As the Internet evolved and access to online information became ubiquitous, the Government Information Connection proactively responded to users’ needs by curating and providing access to relevant information via various subject portals: the Business Portal, Elections Portal, and Civic Engagement Portal. Since the dedication of the Eagle Commons Library as a community-focused resource center, the Government Information Connection has continued to maintain its online presence even while expanding its in-person offerings through increased participation in reference, outreach, workshops, and engagement in both on-campus and community-based activities.
Section 2. Constitution Day Activities
Each September, the Government Information Connection staff joins forces with the UNT Political Science Department and the Political Science Subject Librarian to put a pocket constitution in the hand of every student in the introductory American Government class. Other programming has included distributing pocket constitutions at the local Barnes & Noble while promoting UNT’s government documents collections and services; coordinating with the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution to provide constitutions to area 5th graders; offering constitution quizzes; and, most recently, cosponsoring a Constitution Day address delivered by Judge Royal Furgeson, founding Dean of the UNT College of Law.

Section 3. Voter Registration and On-Campus Voting
In the last year to promote civic literacy and civic engagement on the UNT campus, there was a successful campaign to register voters and bring early voting to the UNT campus. The Government Information Librarian and Political Science Subject Librarian are both deputy voter registrars and hold “voter registration office hours” as well as coordinate with student support groups such as the Pride Alliance and the Multicultural Center, as well as the local League of Women Voters, to offer voter registration at campus events and in student support offices. In the month leading up to the 2014 mid-term election over 200 students were registered to vote on the UNT campus.

The 2014 mid-term election was also the first attempt to offer on-campus voting as a service to UNT students, faculty, and staff, and Denton community members. Because this was the first time early voting was offered on campus, the Denton County Elections Administration agreed to allow it as a five-day pilot project rather than the full two-week early voting period. Voting booths were stationed in Sycamore Hall, where the Eagle Commons Library is housed. Voter turnout far exceeded expectations, with over 2000 citizens casting their vote on the UNT campus. On-campus voting is anticipated to continue during the 2016 Presidential election season.

Section 4. Outreach to Public Libraries
Because UNT is the only designated Federal Depository Library in Denton County, the depository coordinators and staff have long seen it as their responsibility to ensure that the local community has free, convenient access to government information. Promotion of the collections to staff at local public libraries is seen as vital. Local public librarians are encouraged to refer patrons directly to the UNT Libraries or to make information requests on the patron’s behalf. UNT depository staff provide reference assistance by phone and e-mail and also provide access to our tangible collections by faxing or e-mailing information to the local libraries or members of the community. To ensure that
public librarians are aware of the availability of the UNT Government Information Connection’s collections and services, the Depository Coordinator and Eagle Commons Librarians routinely make on-site visits to area libraries in Denton, Lewisville, and Frisco.

Section 5. Workshops and Training
The UNT government documents staff have also seen it as their mission to fill the training and information gap as it relates to government information and resources. Continued training is provided to librarians, graduate library assistants (GLAs), and other front-line staff to ensure that they are referring patrons to the Government Information Connection and to the depository collections. To further ensure effective referrals and use of the collections, Government Information Connection staff are collaboratively developing a set of core competencies for Government Information and Legal Resources. These will be used as training tools for our librarians, GLAs, and staff. Additionally, various community workshops have been offered over the years, both on the UNT campus and at satellite locations in the area. Topics are chosen for their intrinsic interest and relevance to the needs of the community. Topics of past workshops include the following:

- **Energy 101: Explorations in Information**, taught by former OSTI librarian Tim Byrne
- **Economic Census Data for Small Businesses**, offered by Census Bureau Staff and hosted in conjunction with Southern Methodist University
- **Treasures from the National Archives Southwest Region**, taught by Jenny Sweeney, Education Specialist with NARA Southwest Region in Ft. Worth
- **Numbers You Can Use: Exploring Demographics to Grow your Business (or Nonprofit)**, taught by Robbie Sittel and hosted by the Denton Public Library
- **Grant Workshop Series**: Three-part series exploring funding opportunities, demographics and mapping, and grant writing, taught by UNT Librarians and hosted by the Denton Public Library

Section 6. Marketing and Promotion
The Government Information Connection offers a variety of promotional materials to highlight the collections and services. In addition to taking advantage of the promotional materials GPO makes available to its member libraries, the UNT Government Information Librarian and staff work with UNT Libraries External Relations staff to create our own eye-catching original materials. Rack cards provide a way to impart information about the collections and services available at the library; posters and Web banners highlight featured collections; and the UNT Libraries’ award-winning LABEL ME campaign allows students and patrons to express themselves with promotional buttons specifically designed for the Eagle Commons Library.
Government Documents make gorgeous displays. The Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library is constantly creating visually appealing, quirky displays to draw attention to our vast and varied collections. A display of images printed from the UNT Digital Library collection of World War Posters has driven traffic to both the online and the paper poster collections. Monthly themed book displays highlight materials on timely and relevant topics; for example, one exhibit promoted healthy eating options during Diabetes Awareness Month. One of our most popular displays was this year’s Valentine’s Day exhibit, entitled Fifty Shades of Gov Docs Grey. Mesmerized by what would have seemed to be a drab assemblage of fifty black and white documents, students eagerly snapped photos and posed in front of this starkly monochromatic, yet startlingly glamorous montage.

Section 7. Social Media
This year, the Eagle Commons Library fully established our social media presence with departmental accounts launched on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. These new platforms supplement our longstanding UNT DocsBlog. Until recently, the blog has been one of the Government Information Connection’s main ways to share timely or unique government news and information as well as news about the Department. Blog entries have highlighted national holidays, emblems of the United States, and historic milestones such as the most recent voyage of the New Horizons Space Probe to Pluto. The blog has also been used to alert the community to practical government resources such as safety tips, recipes, and ways to save money, and has been used regularly to draw attention to important government Web sites and to the free and commercial databases available at the UNT Libraries. This year’s launch of the Eagle Commons Library Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram accounts has added four more ways for staff to engage users and to promote existing resources such as the DocsBlog.

Article II. Outstanding Reference Service and Collection Access
The UNT Government Information Connection has long been seen as a leader in providing reference assistance and access to collections. Programs mentioned above, such as Web portals, Eight Things for New Depository Coordinators, and outreach to local public libraries, evidence UNT’s commitment to providing access to assistance with government information.

Section 1. Catalog
At the end of our first year as a selective depository, UNT received 4,000 documents. Now, as a 98% selective, UNT receives well over 9,000 tangible and electronic items yearly. To ensure representation of materials in the online catalog, UNT subscribes to Marcive’s cataloging record distribution service, including the Documents without Shelves program. A dedicated current cataloger processes materials for discoverability in UNT’s ILS. During the past year over 9,700 new items were added to the catalog. In addition to current cataloging, UNT is committed to confirming
our historic card catalog is also represented in our ILS. A dedicated retrospective cataloger works to process gifts and pre-1995 materials. In the last year over 7,000 retrospective items were added to the UNT catalog, and the retrospective cataloger oversaw the removal of over 16,000 cards from our card catalog.

Section 2. Library and Classroom Instruction
The Government Information Connection is a vibrant partner to faculty on the UNT campus, offering a variety of instruction at all levels. Recurring topics include demographics and census materials, the Freedom of Information Act and Texas Open Meetings Act, the geology of Texas, and statistics. Every year sees new requests for classroom instruction; most recently, the Criminal Justice Department added classes examining historic laws and lawmaking, and the Pride Alliance—a campus support office for the LGBT community—requested a session to learn how to track legislation. Additionally, the Government Information Connection partners with UNT’s Professional Development Institute (PDI), a professional certification program that brings a group of future paralegals to gain hands-on experience with our legislative and law collections every semester.

Section 3. Local Community Patrons
It should also be noted that in spite of parking issues on the UNT campus, the Eagle Commons Library sees many local community members regularly using the collections. Some community patrons take advantage of free parking on the weekend to use our legal materials and also make a point to consult with their favorite reference specialists. For members of the community who are not able to make it to campus, staff at the Eagle Commons Library send government information directly to the requestor via fax, e-mail, and sometimes even “snail” mail.

Section 4. Area Libraries
Area depository librarians see UNT as a go-to resource for depository-related assistance. As new depository coordinators come on board, or seasoned librarians face questions about the relevancy and need for depository collections, these professionals have looked to UNT for assistance and guidance. Through organizations such as NORDOCs (North Texas Documents Group), UNT has worked with area depositories to provide training and networking opportunities. In the coming year, UNT hopes to assist in the development of a Government Information Affinity Group within the Cross Timber Library Collaborative (CTLC), a consortium of libraries in the Cross Timber region. Additionally, services such as the Serial Set Inventory serve as resources to librarians and researchers across the U.S. The Serial Set Inventory allows librarians to see who might be willing to take on discards of these valuable volumes. It also drives requests for Serial Set materials to the Government Information Connection as well as to other depository collections across the country.
Section 5. Inmate Requests

Another unique service point is a letter from a prison inmate. On average, the Government Information Connection answers 30–40 information requests from inmates, primarily in Texas prisons. Indigent prison inmates are allotted five stamps per month to send letters; consequently, many of these letters are densely packed with information requests, often for state and federal case law and statutory and regulatory information. Sometimes the letters are short—maybe someone just wants simple instructions such as how to compose a hit rap song or write a bestselling novel. Depending on the length and nature of the prisoner request, it can take several hours or even days to compile the information and respond to the individual. Few libraries take such time to respond to inmate requests. The prisoners are therefore very appreciative of the attention and become repeat customers, refer us to other inmates, and sometimes even send holiday cards and other tokens of appreciation.

Section 6. Government Information Online (GIO)

In addition to the services we provide to the UNT, Denton, and other communities, the Government Information Connection is a member of Government Information Online (GIO), a reference service hosted by the University of Chicago. GIO member libraries receive some of the most difficult government-information-related questions; often these questions are forwarded from askGPO. Many of these questions involve arcane issues of statutory or regulatory compliance at the federal, state, and local levels and often require deciphering of technical jargon and cryptic form numbers and abbreviations before one can even begin to search the relevant databases or determine the government agency that is most likely to be able to assist them. Another common category of inquiry is a request for sources of financial assistance—sometimes general, sometimes for specific problems such as paying for rent, school, or child care. These requests are not as difficult to answer as the legal questions, but do often require a sensitive approach to dealing with frustrated people who are at their wit’s end after trying unsuccessfully to navigate the byzantine government bureaucracy. Often requests come to GIO for documents that are not available online for free, but which we have access to through commercial services such as ProQuest Congressional. Patrons are often so impressed at the free, fast, and convenient service they receive that they become repeat customers, addressing their new requests directly to the Government Information Connection instead of to GIO. UNT’s Government Information Connection staff answer over 150 GIO questions per year.

Article III. Well Curated, Nationally Recognized Tangible and Digital Collections

Currently a 98% selective, the University of North Texas is the largest government documents collection in the North Texas region. UNT’s tangible and digital collections along with our expert librarians and paraprofessionals serve as a resource to a large network of libraries and researchers.
Section 1. Space for the Tangible Collection
In the coming year, the UNT Libraries will implement a plan to bring all federal and state documents—as well as supporting materials and items from related subject areas such as geography, business, political science, and law—to the Eagle Commons Library. At a time when many libraries are discarding large portions of their tangible documents collections or making them less accessible by moving them offsite, UNT will be a unique example of a depository library making a full, browsable collection available to its patrons. The Government Information Connection will attract researchers to its rich collection by highlighting areas through displays, workshops, and curated digital collections, pinpointing areas in need of preservation, and planning for future digitization projects. The move of the Government Information Connection to the Eagle Commons Library demonstrates UNT’s commitment to these collections and services.

Section 2. Subscriptions to Commercial Products
In addition to acquiring materials through the Federal Depository Library Program, UNT subscribes to several commercial products, supplementing and increasing access to our depository collections. Subscriptions to products such as ProQuest’s *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications, 1895–1976* and *Government Periodicals Index* serve as finding aids to obscure materials and assist in cataloging historic government documents. Even with library collection budgets flat or decreasing, UNT recognizes the importance of supplementing free federal resources with paid commercial services.

Section 3. Care and Preservation
To ensure long-term access to the collections, Government Information Connection staff work with the head of the preservation unit to assess item condition and plan for preservation needs. The UNT Preservation unit provides basic training on preservation triage to staff and students. This training offers quick fixes for materials needed immediately by patrons. Having access to the training, skill, and resources of a full preservation lab offers security in knowing the government document collections will receive care for years to come.

Section 4. CyberCemetery
The University of North Texas Libraries has long been a leader in the capture, collection, and curation of digital collections. UNT’s digital collections began in 1997 with the harvest of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) Web site, the first item to be added to our CyberCemetery. UNT was designated the official host of the archived ACIR site and as a result became the second depository library in the nation to join the Federal Depository Library Program Content Partnerships Program. Since its beginnings, the CyberCemetery has grown to include the Web sites of dozens of defunct government agencies and commissions. In recognition of our ongoing work in this area, in 2006 the UNT Libraries were designated an Affiliated Archives of the...
National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Under this agreement, NARA joins the UNT Libraries and the Government Printing Office (GPO) in ensuring the preservation of these valuable records. Just recently, the partnership between GPO and the UNT Libraries expanded further, with a Letter of Agreement (LOA) designating UNT as the first non-federal library partner of the newly-formed Federal Information Preservation Network (FIPNet). The UNT Libraries and the Government Information Connection see this new partnership as an extension of a longstanding relationship with the Government Publishing Office.

**Section 5. Digital Library**

Today, the Government Documents collections within the UNT Digital Libraries surpasses 91,500 items made up of over 5,713,000 files. Totaling over 6.6 million uses, these collections appeal to a broad audience of researchers and general users. The World War Poster Collection receives frequent requests for inclusion in books, magazines, websites, and other materials. Our collection of Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports—now totaling close to 20,000—fills a gap by providing access to taxpayer-funded research that is invaluable not just to our lawmakers but to journalists, researchers, and policymakers, among others. These are only two of more than thirty collections to which the Government Information Connection and UNT Digital Libraries provide access.

**Section 6. Needs and Offers Project**

In recent years it was decided to make an all-out effort to engage the Government Information Connection in an ambitious Needs and Offers project, accepting discarded collections from numerous libraries such as Fort Worth Public Library, Texas A & M Commerce (formerly East Texas State University), and Southern Methodist University. Accepting these discarded materials enables UNT to fill major gaps in our existing collections and to acquire duplicate documents for our future digitization efforts.

Going forward, the UNT Digital Libraries and the Government Information Connection will continue to make new collections available, looking at materials at high risk of loss or destruction, continuing with existing partnerships with NARA and GPO, examining collections that complement or supplement existing collections, and considering materials that fill an existing need for research or scholarship.

**Article IV. Partnerships**

Throughout this narrative is evidence of the Government Information Connection’s commitment to partnerships. Here are a few highlights of existing partnerships and potential future partnerships:

**Section 1. Local Public Libraries**

The Government Information Connection has a longstanding relationship with the Denton Public Library as an information provider. Staff at the Denton Public Library are encouraged to refer patrons to the Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library for all their government information needs. We have also relied on the Denton Public Library to provide a convenient and friendly space for programming and resource promotion. Knowing a college campus
can be intimidating or inconvenient for some community members, the Government Information Connection sees the public library as a natural partner for programs and networking opportunities. In the past year, the Government Information Connection extended its reach by offering four workshops at the Denton Public Library. Additionally, we are in conversation with public libraries throughout Denton County to expand our workshops and encourage information referrals from their patrons to the Government Information Connection.

Section 2. Divisions within the UNT Libraries
As with many organizations, divisions within the UNT Libraries have differing responsibilities. The Government Information Connection falls within the Public Services division, but our efforts overlap with the Special Libraries (preservation of collections), Cataloging and Metadata Services (cataloging), and Digital Libraries (curation of digital content) divisions. Partnerships with the assistant deans and staff of other divisions ensure the depository collections are adequately represented and recognized for both their intrinsic value and their value in enhancing the functions of all divisions in the Libraries. The Government Information Connection also receives significant administrative support. This can be seen in the willingness of library and university administration to maintain ongoing partnerships with GPO and NARA and by their vision of the Government Information Connection as the heart of the community-engaged mission of the Eagle Commons Library.

Section 3. Area Depository Coordinators
The Government Information Connection supports area depository coordinators in a variety of ways. By co-hosting programs and workshops, we assist in promoting libraries and depository collections throughout the North Texas region. Because of the size of the UNT collection, area depository coordinators depend on the Government Information Connection to fill gaps in their local collections. The UNT Digital Library also makes unique collections available to depository collections throughout Texas and across the country. (See Appendix.)

Section 4. Non-Traditional Partnerships
With the addition of value-added services such as GIS and the Funding Information Network, librarians at the Eagle Commons Library are forging partnerships with area nonprofits, other campus departments and services, and non-traditional organizations. These partnerships are resulting in projects that examine area health indicators and food deserts. Mapping of sites for the USDA Summer Food Service Program is a potential additional project. Other partnerships include working with the Innovation Greenhouse, a program for student inventors and entrepreneurs on the UNT campus.

In Conclusion
In our long and rich 67-year history as a member of the Federal Depository Library Program, the UNT Libraries have grown from a collection of 4,000 items to a collection of over 1.5 million items on a campus that now serves over 36,000 students. In 1948, when UNT was designated a depository, Texas consisted of seventeen congressional districts. Today it has grown to thirty-six congressional districts. The population of Denton County has swelled from 33,658 in the 1940 Census to 662,604 in the 2010 Census. The people and industries of the campus and county communities have become more diverse as they have grown. The Government Information Connection @ the Eagle Commons Library has spent the past 67 years growing and evolving with them to meet the ever changing needs of the community. No
one knows what the future may bring, but we will continue to adapt and evolve, and look forward to finding new ways and new partnerships to collect, share and promote government information.
Appendix
Letter of Support

July 21, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to support the nomination of the University of North Texas’ selective depository library as “Depository of the Year 2015.”

The government document collection at UNT, both print and electronic, has been known as the “go to” primary document collection for amateur and academic researchers in the North Texas area for many years. I have referred students, professors and community library patrons to this collection for everything from scientific technical reports to old election results – Sometimes the research need is for a school assignment, and sometimes it’s for a hobbyist researcher from the North Texas community. I am impressed that this staff is able to assist so many different interests and age groups at such a high level.

I would also like to commend this group for their work on the “Cyber Cemetery” digital collection. I have used many government documents available here for teaching information literacy in Political Science and Economics classes. Many of the professors I support are requiring more primary documents in their assignments, and the “Cyber Cemetery” has been a perfect way to highlight the usefulness of government information from the recent past.

I believe the UNT staff and this collection are worthy of consideration for this honor.

Please let me know if there are further questions.

Julia Stewart, Government Documents Librarian

Julia@smu.edu

214-768-2561

Southern Methodist University

Dallas, TX
July 28, 2015

Awards Committee
Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP)
732 N Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20401

To the Committee:

It is my privilege to write this letter of support for the nomination of the University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries for the Federal Depository Library of the Year Award. The work that Melody Kelly and Cathy Hartman began many years ago has developed into a nationally recognized federal depository library.

The federal depository library at UNT has provided leadership in the areas of preservation of online government information and digitization of government documents long before most academic libraries and many federal agencies began their efforts. UNT in partnership with GPO began a project called “The CyberCemetery” in 1997 to preserve and provide access to websites and publications of defunct U.S. government agencies and commissions. The federal depository library is also a partner of the UNT Digital Library where the public can find digitized government documents or “born digital” government information. Most recently at the annual conference of the American Library Association (ALA) it was announced that UNT will be the first entity to enter in partnership with GPO in the new Federal Information Preservation Network (FIPnet), part of GPO’s national plan for government information.

The UNT Libraries continue to demonstrate their commitment to providing and sustaining free public access to federal government information. They have emerged as a leader in exploring and adapting ways to move the federal depository library program and access to government information forward and into the future.

Sincerely,

Sinai Wood
Associate Professor & Documents Librarian
Baylor University