

Researching Indiana History

Reminiscences of a Retiring Indiana Documents Librarian

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In 1974, I was hired as the State and Local Documents Librarian for the Bloomington campus of Indiana University. Having studied political science, history, and library science at IU, this new position seemed like a good fit for my skills set. I had enjoyed history classes with Donald Carmony, Robert Ferrell, and John Wilz, as well as government information courses taught by Bernie Fry and Robert Miller. This article reflects briefly on my career, how research with Indiana resources has changed, and how new technologies can potentially enhance future research.

In 1974, researchers depended on librarians and libraries because they were the only way to identify and locate books, journal articles, and especially primary sources like government documents. Everything from slip laws to maps was only available in print form, with minimal holdings in microfilm. Scholars often had to travel to specific libraries to examine unique holdings. Today, however, tools like Google and full-text licensed databases from commercial vendors provide access to a vast array of primary and secondary sources. Library patrons now have resources at their service that have remade the process of doing historical research. Thus,

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both libraries and librarianship have changed greatly in the forty years that span my career at the IU Libraries.

The Indiana University Bloomington Government Publications Department, formerly known as the Documents Department and currently the Government Information, Maps and Microforms Department, was established in 1942 when government publishing exploded during World War II. I note the name changes because they reflect some of the philosophical changes in the field—an initial focus on the “documents” published by government agencies gave way to an emphasis on the “public” dissemination of items. The term “government information” reflects the decline of traditional print publishing, since today much of that information is only available through electronic or digital means.

The Documents Department was charged with maintaining an uncataloged documents collection, which was not uncommon among research libraries in the 1940s because of the large quantity of print materials that were regularly received from the government. When I arrived at IU in 1974, processing these materials and making them available to the public required the work of six librarians and several support staff. In addition to the department head, there was a librarian to oversee the U.S. Federal Depository Library Program, a librarian for international documents to manage the United Nations (UN) and European Union depositories, two librarians to work with foreign documents, and a public services librarian to oversee reference and instructional services. Staff coordinated the day-to-day operations including all technical services, circulation, and preservation activities.

I oversaw the State and Local Documents collection. Indiana University, Purdue, Ball State, and Indiana State had all received state government publications since the late nineteenth century through the Indiana State Library’s depository system.¹ In 1974, a helpful reference tool, the *Checklist of Indiana State Documents*, enabled librarians to track state documents by agency and title. Cumulative indexes were useful tools for verifying the existence of specific titles, but, unfortunately, no single resource covered the entire range of publishing activities of the Indiana state government.

The Main Library on Indiana University’s Bloomington campus, now the Herman B Wells Library, had opened in 1969 as one of the largest academic library buildings in the nation. The Government Publications

¹Through this program, the Indiana State Library disseminates state documents to research libraries free of charge and the participating libraries are obligated to make these publications available to their patrons.

Department occupied the extended second floor of the Research Collections wing, but by 1980 this space had been filled, so many government publications had to be moved into storage. The largest collections I recall consisted of the U.S. Congressional hearings, reports, and documents, as well as slip copies of the bills, which we only retained for the latest two congresses. IU documents librarians made a special effort to build a rich collection across key genres, focusing particularly on census reports, statistical abstracts, government manuals, and legislative documents. We received print documents from every U.S. state and every country around the world. There were also extensive runs of documents from the UN, including file cabinets of mimeodocs: IU documents librarians early on understood the growing significance of international organizations, and IU was one of the first U.S. institutions to systematically collect UN documents.²

Providing reference service, especially as a young, inexperienced librarian in the Government Publications Department, could be a stressful and intimidating experience. Hundreds of indexes and reference volumes were scattered throughout IUB's Research Collections, works which might hold the answer or a coveted reference. And then there were terrifying volumes of statistical tables and legislative reports that had gone through multiple title changes. The *Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*, for example, was one of the essential tools of documents librarianship. However, while this finding aid was also cumulated into an annual index, the cumulative subject index for 1900-1971 was not published until 1975. Therefore, for many queries, researchers and librarians had to consult several cumulative indexes to find the information they sought.

Working with state or international documents often meant that even basic indexes were unavailable. Reference work required browsing "publication lists" or our own manual acquisitions check-in records. I recall searching through the publications of the Department of the Interior for information about the use of off-road vehicles, only to realize eventually that I should have also been looking through publications of the National Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture. Such research always provided learning experiences and taught me to pay close attention to the organizational structure of governments and international organizations. Reference manuals like the *U.S. Government Manual*, the *UN Handbook*, or *Here's Your Indiana State Government* were essential to understanding

²One of the rare documents from these early years is the UN atlas that demarcates the Korean Demilitarized Zone in amazing detail as part of an effort to bring the Korean War to an end.

which government agency or international organization might publish on a given topic.

On one of my first days on the job, Dr. Donald Carmony, editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History* from 1954 to 1975, and an esteemed professor in IU's Department of History who was affectionately known as Mr. Indiana History, appeared at the Government Publications reference desk. That specific day, he inquired about certain annual reports from the Board of Commissioners of Indiana's Sinking Fund from the 1830s and 1840s. All I can recall today is that Dr. Carmony pointed out that the reports would probably be in the *Documentary Journal*, which is comprised of the annual reports of the officers of the State of Indiana. At that moment I certainly did not grasp the importance of the Sinking Fund in the development of Indiana's transportation infrastructure but I was pleased that I remembered that the *Documentary Journal* was available on the Indiana reference shelves. The volumes were not cataloged but were accessed through lists of manual records organized by issuing agency, series, and year. I still remember the day when technology finally came along that allowed us to search text. The index to the *Documentary Journals* was the first item we digitized to permit searching, in Word at that time. Today most of the *Documentary Journals* have been digitized as part of the HathiTrust project.

Dr. Carmony was one of the regular visitors of the Government Publications Department. At the end of his distinguished career and after two decades of research, his *Indiana, 1816-1850: The Pioneer Era* was published as part of a series that provides a solid basic history of the Hoosier state. In this 900-plus-page door stopper, Dr. Carmony narrates the first decades of our home state's history. He structures the monograph with the political calendar of legislative cycles, campaigns, and elections, masterfully mining statutes, legislative reports, and many other government publications. Other well-known volumes in the series include John D. Barnhart's *Indiana to 1816*, Emma Lou Thornbrough's *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880*, Clifton J. Phillips's *Indiana in Transition*, and James H. Madison's *Indiana through Tradition and Change*.³

Reminiscing about those early days at the Government Publications Department, I wonder how Dr. Carmony would fare today as a researcher.

³Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1820-1880* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1965); Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880-1920* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1968); John D. Barnhart, *Indiana to 1816: The Colonial Period* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1971); James H. Madison, *Indiana Through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People, 1920-1945* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1982).

Would he have found his sources readily available on the internet? His bibliography was organized into general categories: state documents; federal documents; newspapers; secondary books; diaries, letters, and reminiscences; articles; and dissertations, theses, and unpublished papers. With today’s research tools, how much of his research could be done at home on the sofa instead of at a small desk in a research library?

Dr. Carmony’s bibliography lists 382 specific sources. It documents a great reliance on primary sources, with many falling into the public domain because they were published by government agencies prior to 1923 and within the U.S. and thus are not covered by copyright. So my initial prediction was that approximately seventy-five percent of his sources might be found through online sources. Strictly by the numbers, I was overly optimistic, because I only found about fifty-five percent with a quick search of standard online tools.

Table 1.

Carmony’s Bibliography Category	Number	Not Found Digital	Open source versus Licensed/Commercial Access
State Documents	43	11	33 Public Domain + 2 indexed in HathiTrust
Federal Documents	24	2	22 Public Domain with some also included in Commercial
Newspapers	98	59	40 Commercial
Books	125	77	48 Public Domain + 39 indexed in HathiTrust
Diaries, Letters, and Reminiscences	51	8	
Articles	26	1	25 Public Domain (one also Commercial)
Dissertations, Theses, and Unpublished Papers	15	12	3 Commercial
Total	382	170	

Complete chart available at: <http://bl-libg-doghill.ads.iu.edu/gpd-web/louhome/Carmonychart.xls>

The chart shows that monographs are the one category of sources that are predominately available only in print. The great majority of the journal articles that Dr. Carmony cited were from the *Indiana Magazine of History*, which has been digitized and is an open access journal. Archives of other scholarly journals are also available on the internet, but most are

accessed through commercial, licensed databases, therefore, the finding that 25 out of 26 articles were available electronically in the public domain is somewhat unusual.

Yet, historians and researchers of Indiana history can approach research today with the confidence that many of the primary documents are available online. For instance, some archives are digitizing important collections of “unpublished papers” that can be found on the internet. Researchers who want digital access to secondary sources like newspapers and journals will probably have to visit or arrange access with a library that subscribes to the electronic versions of these publications. Books, especially those published between 1923–2010, largely remain in print, although services like Amazon.com, WorldCat, HathiTrust and others do provide some access to tables of contents and indexing, allowing researchers to review and search contents online. Even electronic versions of some dissertations and theses are available through the licensed database ProQuest Dissertations (formerly UMI). The chart below, though not comprehensive, provides links to what this librarian considers the most standard electronic sources for researching Indiana history.

Table 2

Carmony's Bibliography Category	
<u>State Documents</u>	
Indiana Memory (Indiana State Library)	https://digital.library.in.gov/
Road to Statehood and other collections (IUPUI)	http://ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/ISC
HathiTrust	http://www.hathitrust.org/
Indiana State Digital Archives	http://indianadigitalarchives.org/
Indiana State and Local Government Archive (post- 1997)	http://libraries.iub.edu/indiana-state-and-local-government-archive
Indiana History Online	http://www.in.gov/library/3126.htm
<u>Federal Documents</u>	
Library of Congress American Memory	http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html
ProQuest Congressional and Executive Branch	http://congressional.proquest.com (Licensed)
Hein Online	http://home.heinonline.org/ (Licensed)
HathiTrust	http://www.hathitrust.org/
<u>Newspapers</u>	
Newspaper Archive	http://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/Indiana

America's Historical Newspapers	http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive (Licensed)
Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers	http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/
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<u>Books</u>	
WorldCat	https://www.worldcat.org/
HathiTrust	http://www.hathitrust.org/
Inspire	http://www.in.gov/library/inspire/ (includes print and e-books)
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<u>Diaries, Letters, and Reminiscences</u>	
Inspire (Lives & Perspectives Collection and Biography in Context)	http://www.in.gov/library/inspire/info.html
<hr/>	
<u>Articles</u>	
Indiana Magazine of History American Periodicals Online 17th century to present	http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/imh/ http://search.proquest.com/americanperiodicals/index? (Licensed)
Periodical Archive Online	http://search.proquest.com/pao/socialsciences/ (Licensed)
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<u>Dissertations, Theses, and Unpublished Papers</u>	
ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database	http://search.proquest.com/pqdtlocal1005857? (Licensed)
<hr/>	
<u>Other (not mentioned elsewhere)</u>	
IU Libraries Digital Projects (including Indiana Historic Maps, Brevier Legislative Reports, and Indiana Authors)	http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/
IUPUI Digital Collection	http://ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections
Ancestry Library Edition (ProQuest)	http://www.ancestrylibrary.com/ (Licensed)
IN Harmony	http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/inharmony/welcome.do
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While the above-named sources are invaluable for research, I think some people underestimate the value of “full-text” searching, especially in monstrous databases like the HathiTrust. Some are discouraged when they find that because a work may be protected by copyright, the full-text is not instantly retrievable, but they overlook the fact that everything can

be searched. Researchers have yet to relish this capability, but I have found that citizens, public history buffs, and genealogists find it incredible. For example, I searched a specific family name the other day and found baptism records from the United Kingdom for the person's great-great grandfather in 1693. Verification that the information exists in some source has always been more important to me than actually locating the source, which I view as just a bibliographic challenge. Yet, for those who are not happy with full-text searching, finding the book to read the complete story is still easier. Today the public database WorldCat, which serves as a union catalog identifying which libraries own an item, allows researchers to submit an interlibrary loan request if not owned by their local library.

In IUB's Government Information, Maps, and Microforms today there is only one librarian focused on government information. Today's information environment no longer requires manual acquisition and management, processes that allowed me to become familiar with our collection's content and organization through day-to-day handling of the print volumes. By not handling every publication, today's librarian is much less apt to remember seeing a specific photo or reference. Therefore, I despair when I cannot recall what source contained a specific statistical table about the number of child abuse cases by county. Instead, an information librarian's job is much more dependent on knowing full-text search strategies so we can effectively use resources like Google and the array of licensed databases from commercial vendors who have made a market of providing electronic access to primary and secondary literature.

Researchers of Indiana history now have easier access to many important sources that preserve Indiana's documentary heritage. In addition, by working with projects like Indiana Memory and the HathiTrust, they can influence which library holdings will be digitized. Thus, in a way, research has become a reciprocal process in which researchers and research technology shape each other.

As I reflect on forty years of work as a librarian, I have come to the conclusion that the art of being a librarian has not changed, but that technology has revolutionized the tools at our disposal and enhanced the capabilities of libraries in general.

