Government Documents Roundtable of the Iowa Library Association

GODORT News

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New GODORT Officers

Congratulations to the new GODORT officers for 2011:

- Suzanne Vesely (Maharishi University of Management), chair
- Brett Cloyd (University of Iowa), vice chair/chair-elect
- Marianne Mason (University of Iowa), secretary-treasurer

“Holding Your Congress People Accountable in Hard Economic Times”: Report from the GODORT Program at the ILA Annual Conference

Dave Levinthal, communications director at the Center for Responsive Politics, was the speaker at the GODORT-sponsored program at the 2010 ILA Annual Conference. Levinthal’s talk focused on the importance of transparency in lobbying and campaign donations. The Center for Responsive Politics helps to increase this transparency by operating the Web site OpenSecrets.org, which takes information about money in politics from a number of government agencies and makes it freely available in an easier-to-understand fashion for the general public.

Levinthal spoke about the types of campaign donations and lobbying expenditures that are affecting both Iowa politics and the political debate around library-related issues. A few key facts from Levinthal’s talk:

- Iowa’s two Senatorial candidates, Chuck Grassley and Roxanne Conlin, have raised approximately two-thirds of their campaign money from out-of-state donors this election cycle.
• The American Library Association spends about $500,000 annually on lobbying; in 2009, the biggest spender on lobbying, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, spent $144,496,000.

Even though the American Library Association is outspent more than twenty to one on lobbying, Levinthal said transparency still gives library interests some power: being able to see who was lobbying and donating to politicians allows librarians to “know thine enemy” and to shame politicians who receive donations from competing interests.

GODORT Summer Workshop Report

The GODORT workshop this summer, “How Free Government Resources Can Help Your Library and Your Patrons Survive the Economic Downturn”, was a lively affair that combined information related to government resources with government resources. The conference was hosted by the then vice chair of GODORT, Kari Weaver, in Vogel Library at Wartburg College, Waverly Iowa on July 16, 2010. Ms. Weaver announced at the opening of the workshop that she was leaving to become the coordinator of library instruction at the University of South Carolina Aiken and that we needed a replacement. Suzanne Vesely, the treasurer, continued as vice chair and Marianne Mason became treasurer. Julia Bauder, the chair of GODORT, had organized the publicity for the event and Suzanne Vesely, then treasurer, had arranged for the keynote speaker, Joe Brisben, an investment counselor from Coralville, Iowa. Mr. Brisben writes a regular column in The Iowa Source and a radio program on Kirkwood Community College’s KCCK: “Mid-Day Business News.”

Mr. Brisben created a groundwork for the meeting, diagramming the way that cycles work in the economy. Using a cycle of inflation and deflation, Brisben suggested that the economy had a good chance of entering a period where inflation was low and investment was a good option. He emphasized that this time the cycle was being driven by consumer buying habits, which had gotten more conservative, rather than by government regulation. Additionally, China and India are new buyers of raw materials that could bring back a surge of economic growth. The reality for Iowa, however, is that since it still depends on agriculture rather than on industry, we are not likely to be affected much by an economic upturn except by osmosis. Therefore, Iowa Libraries can also expect to continue to meet challenges.

Knowledge is power, and Tom Keyser of the State Library of Iowa offered a valuable finding aid. It includes links to state organizations that can help businesses make decisions, iowa.gov, which includes live support from the State Library of Iowa, county information for local budgets, state agency reports and strategic plans. Under “services,” there are links for businesses to get licensing, a clearinghouse for business requirements, Unemployment insurance services, and two job finding sites. Look under related links for Iowa business facts. Things change rapidly on the state government website: stay in touch with
Mr. Keyser for updates. Contact Gary Krob for specific information related to the State Data Center of Iowa.

In Records and Statistics, according to Keyser, there are the most useful links for ordinary citizens. The Education link in the State Treasurer’s site also offers good resources, and the Great Iowa Treasure Hunt is also in the Treasurer’s site. You might find unclaimed property in your name.

Some important things are not easily accessible: for instance, there is a hidden link to an overview of the data center, and not advertised in Health and Human Services are links to vital statistics, data links, and resources. The Iowa board of Medicine lists filings against doctors, searchable by town and specialty. The attorney general’s office has links for investigating bad products and scams. The department of Agriculture has a feature allowing searches for livestock brands, searchable by letter or character. Look for organic produce on the Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Grower’s page. Want to buy a lot? Make sure first that you won’t get saddled with a tank that might leak and cause environmental damage and headaches: go to the Iowa DNR page. The department of Labor offers free career planning information by investigating the current status of occupations—very up-to-date.

Julia Bauder, Data Services Librarian for Grinnell University and the current Chair of Iowa GODORT laid the groundwork for her presentation on “Career Planning with Free Information from the Department of Labor” by showing the grim statistics on job availability. Although the number of people searching for jobs has leveled out, there are still many more people looking for work than in 2007. Government career planning has greatly improved. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov, offers the Occupational Outlook Handbook online, worth looking at, but also databases that help find occupations by education level and projected growth at http://data.bls.gov:8080/oep/noeted/empoptd.jsp and occupation and wages by area, http://data.bls.gov:8080/oes/search.jsp?data_tool=OES. The Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, http://www.doleta.gov, are key tools for job searches. DOLETA offers:

**O*NET**, which contains very detailed information about the skills, physical capabilities, and personality types best suited for a job. Use the advanced search to set limits for skill level and more.

**Career OneStop**, which can redirect students to the local library.

**Employability Checkup**, a reality check for students to objectively evaluate their employability.

**Skills Profiler**, which goes beyond the Occupational Outlook Handbook to find out what kinds of jobs a student is suited for.
Kari Weaver showed how the census department has changed and improved. “Print has been history since the 1996 census,” says Weaver, “and therefore http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html is an essential tool for every librarian.” Besides the ten-year survey, there is now an ongoing annual survey replacing the long form that targets larger metro areas. There is a list of community and response rate for larger metro areas such as Iowa City, Ames, Quad Cities, Des Moines, West Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Cedar Falls. There is also a three year estimate for 20,000 or greater: Weaver demonstrated ways to generate graphs based on this easily accessible information that can be transferred to a student’s term paper, answering questions such as “are there a lot of people of Irish ancestry in Wartburg?” (There are 15.5%; significant but not huge). Weaver concluded that it is now easier to see trends and plan ahead.


In Iowa, Iowa State sponsors the Iowa Energy Center, which offers information from state government initiatives such as alternative energy loans; explore http://www.energy.iastate.edu/. The Iowa Office of Energy Independence also has information on grants for green projects; see http://www.state.ia.us/government/governor/energy/. See also the Iowa Power Fund, http://www.state.ia.us/government/governor/energy/Power_Fund/about_IPF.html


Vesely noted an abundance of non-government sites that use government information in creative ways to create resources on greening the economy, such as Center for Sustainable Communities, Des Moines, http://www.icosc.com/, IRENEW at http://www.irenew.org/, the Iowa Wind Energy Association at http://www.iowawindenergy.org/, but also a website put together by a student in Maharishi University of Management’s Sustainable Living who is a single mother: “Green on a Shoestring,” which mulls over the best use of food stamps for organics, raising goats, and more at:
http://www.greenonashoestring.net/. Other states and the indigenous tribal sites are not to be overlooked in using government documents for creative green approaches. Vesely suggested that adding such sites might offer a new way of looking at documents in this age of easy access to government resources.

For more information, please see the GODORT website newsletter archive, http://www.iowalibraryassociation.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlebr=7.