

Doc . u . ments

Report of the meeting of the Documents Section, North Carolina Library Association, Charlotte, Oct. 19, 1979

The theme of the meeting was municipal and regional documents, with emphasis on North Carolina. Mrs. Kathrine L. May, Business Librarian, High Point Public Library, described the municipal documents collection at the Library, which has only been organized since August, 1979, and for the most part is still in the formative stages. It was started because materials published by city departments were not being collected in one place by any other agency in the city and the librarians feared that much material was being lost. The Library drew up a collection policy that included publications of the city government and the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments only; it excluded the publications of the Boards of Education and Elections and similar bodies, county government, and service organizations such as United Way. The librarians convinced the City Manager of the necessity of establishing a documents collection, and he has supported their attempts by sending memos to department heads and in the regular weekly meetings of department heads, which the Head Librarian attends. The Business Librarian has held meetings with department heads to specify the kinds of documents the Library collects, and this phase continues.

The municipal documents collection is a separate collection under the supervision of the Business Librarian. The documents are classified in the Dewey Decimal Classification; but assigning subject headings and determining main entries are problems because of the local nature of the documents. The documents are prepared for shelving in various ways, depending on the format (newspapers, pamphlets, monthly reports, or larger documents that may be shelved as cataloged). Some documents might even be photocopied if few copies were printed in the first place.

The collection is used by city employees for retrieval of information from their own or other departments and by the public for finding current or historical information about the city departments to answer questions. This has resulted in an increased awareness of city government and its functions as well as of library services by city workers and residents. The effect of the project on city department heads has been very positive in most instances, both toward the project and toward the library.

In the future, the library hopes to expand its collecting scope to include publications of agencies that are at present excluded, to build up reference files on city organizations and to compile lists of publications by department. Their goals are to increase the use and awareness of the library by all sectors.

Larry C. Martin, Assistant City Manager for Administration and Budget in High Point, reviewed the situation of producing and collecting municipal documents from the viewpoint of an official of city government. In High Point and in many cities, city departments seem to be small worlds, although their common product is service to the public. In the Public Library, the establishment of a municipal documents collection was looked upon as a new opportunity for service. Local governments produce documents for many reasons: to meet legal requirements; to set goals and objectives; to help communicate needs to residents; to provide information about productivity; and to furnish information of a general nature about the city. Documents are produced by a variety of agencies and departments, the City Manager and

staff, citizens' groups reporting to the city government, consultants, and members of the City Council and commissions established by the city.

To make the most of the opportunity for providing service, libraries should continue to promote the use of documents, develop an ongoing program to sell the idea of documents use and to keep it before the public, and refer users to the documents section of the library as much as possible. There is no question of the need for a central clearing point for documents, for the volume of municipal documents will continue to grow as citizens rely on government more and more. A local documents program can succeed if it has the backing of the city manager and department heads; if the commitment is long-term; if the program begins on a small scale with materials from the city before branching out; and if its done in a cost-effective manner. We must find new ways to improve governmental services, for our citizens are going to demand more and more and be willing to pay less.

Susan MacDonald, Duke University, described the attempt to establish a municipal reference library in Durham in 1977-78. She was hired by the city of Durham as a consultant to plan and organize a library to service municipal government needs. The purpose is establishing the library would be to control city-generated reports as well as the purchase of books and periodicals used by city employees. Working with a full-time CETA employee, Ms. MacDonald conducted an inventory of library materials in city offices and departments which furnished the basis for their recommendations. They recommended that the city establish a centralized access or purchasing system for library materials, but that the collections continue to be dispersed. They also recommended that the city contract with Greenwood Press to send city documents for microfilming in return for copies of the documents in microfiche.

The report, recommending city and county cooperation in funding a municipal reference library, was not accepted by the Finance Committee of the City Council: The City Manager who had initiated the project had resigned two months before the report was presented; and the county unexpectedly came up short in its tax receipts, so it could not provide its share of the funding. One lesson learned during the project was that of working around budget constraints to provide service.

The report, *Centralized Access to Municipal Information in the City of Durham*, by Susan MacDonald et al, is available from NTIS (PB 278/734) or the National League of Cities.

Fred Sides, Regional Information Center Coordinator, Region D Council of Governments, Boone, talked about the role of the councils of government in government documents. North Carolina is divided into 18 multi-county planning regions, each with its own council of governments (COG), which is charged with operating or performing various responsibilities in relation to numerous state and federal service programs such as in aging, community development, housing, land use, and A-95 clearinghouse review. Each of these programs is required to file reports, usually on an annual basis, describing the past year's activities and the plans for the coming year; these are obtainable from the councils and contain a myriad of statistics and facts applicable to other aspects of community research and involvement. The Councils also issue newsletters, general annual reports on activities, and other reports on activities. [Reports are distributed from each Council separately, as there is no central issuing agency.—Ed.]

The Region D COG not only is a disseminator of its documents, but also maintains a library of these materials from itself an d other state, regional, and

federal agencies. COGs are perhaps an untapped source for libraries to utilize in initiating, augmenting, or completing collections of governmental materials at the local level. They should not be overlooked in this process.

Rebecca S. Ballentine, Librarian, Institute of Government, University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill, described the collection of the Library and the work of the staff. The Library has about 15,000 volumes, 30,000 reports, documents, and pamphlets, and over 500 periodicals on public administration and state and local government. It is used by the Institute's faculty for teaching, research, training local officials, and providing consulting services to local officials. Types of local documents featured in the Library are ordinances from 70 North Carolina municipalities, a growing collection of ordinances in effect in counties across the state, and numerous bibliographies and reference sources (both current and retrospective) for retrieving reports and documents of local governing bodies throughout the country. The Library maintains current copies of ordinances as a resource for faculty and local officials; superseded copies are sent to the North Carolina Collection in the Wilson Library to retain permanently. The Law Library of the UNC School of Law maintains current codes of a few of North Carolina's larger cities.

Ms. Ballentine concluded by saying that it is important that citizens have convenient access to the documents produced by their governing bodies. The preserving of such materials and the servicing of them has not been consistent in counties and municipalities in North Carolina. A suggested solution to the problem might be to have public libraries designated as the official depository of local documents for the use of the public served by the library and for researchers who may come from other localities to use those materials.

Suzanne Levy, Librarian of the North Carolina Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill, briefly described their collection of local documents. The North Carolina Collection is not actively pursuing local documents, although they will accept local documents if they are given to the collection. They do have superseded editions of legal materials transferred from the Institute of Government Library. The city from which they have the most material is Raleigh.

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