
North Carolina State Documents Survey Project

Marion Shepherd

The Documents Section of the North Carolina Library Association is making a concerted effort to develop a more efficient, effective state depository system for North Carolina libraries. As a result of long-standing problems in obtaining state government publications, members of the Documents Section created the Ad Hoc Committee on the State Documents Depository System in November 1982. One of the first committee projects was to gather information on operations and procedures of other state documents depository systems. It became clear that the problem of acquiring state publications is hardly unique to North Carolina. The nationwide situation of documents acquisition and depository systems has been examined thoroughly by Margaret T. Lane in *State Publications and Depository Libraries: a Reference Handbook* (Greenwood Press, 1981). Based on the findings of Lane's study and a previous attempt to change the North Carolina depository law (G.S.147-50), the committee decided that proposed changes in legislation will have a far better chance of passing if proof is first established that the present depository laws are ineffective. This proof should be the result of a research project designed to examine methodically state documents production and distribution.

State Agency Task Force

The Committee on the State Documents Depository System organized the State Agency Task Force in November 1983 and charged it with surveying the present production of North Carolina state documents. The task force was composed of five committee members and four state agency staff members. Cheryl McLean, Assistant Documents Librarian, Division of State Library, was appointed chairperson.

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State Documents Survey Project

To accomplish the objective of the task force, the Division of State Library budgeted 1984/85 Library Services and Construction Act funds for the State Documents Survey Project. A new position was created for the project librarian whose responsibilities included administering the survey according to recommendations by the State Agency Task Force and various consultants.

The success of the project depended on response to the survey questionnaire. Following a literature search for information on administering state agency surveys,¹ the questionnaire was designed to incorporate the best features of surveys from other states and to be as brief, simple, and non-threatening as possible. It consisted of nine multiple choice questions and a request for a listing of publications produced during the 1983/84 fiscal year. The questionnaire was pre-tested before a final draft was presented to the State Agency Task Force for approval.

Questionnaire Distribution

The questionnaire was distributed throughout the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government and to the state-supported universities and community colleges. Questionnaires were issued to the people within state agencies who are actually responsible for publications rather than only to the top administrators and public information officers. Identifying these people required consulting a number of government directories and administrative charts as well as seeking the advice of departmental information specialists. The targeted survey group included 1,234 individuals.

Recipients of the questionnaire were asked to respond within two weeks. One week after the deadline for return, a letter was sent to all non-respondents to encourage response. This letter was very effective; 269 people called to explain

their delay or request information; 74 asked for additional questionnaires. If no response was received after one month, many of the nonrespondents were called.

From the 1,234 records of individuals who received the questionnaire, 209 records were later deleted, leaving 1,025 records for analysis. There were three reasons for deletions: dissolved or disbanded agencies, consolidated responses, and questionnaires issued chiefly to inform other librarians of the project. A total of 881 individuals responded to the questionnaire, yielding a final response rate of 85.95%.

Survey Administration

A project of this scope would be difficult to complete within the course of one year without the use of a computer. The survey was administered using dBASEIII, a data base management system, and WordStar, a word processing program, on an IBM PC XT microcomputer. The software made it possible to print individualized cover and follow-up letters, keep track of respondents, and tabulate results. David Bevan, Chief of Information Services, Division of State Library, and project technical consultant, planned the computer applications.

The first step was the creation of a file that contained a record for each individual who received the questionnaire. Each record consisted of 127 fields which included the individual's name, title, agency, address, telephone number, publications contact person, date of response, and the response choices checked on the questionnaire.

Data entry was handled by one person. Checks were made periodically to assure correct data entry and tabulation of results. This was accomplished by selecting samples of records to tabulate manually. After data entry was completed, a random sample of 50 records was selected by using the random unit tables in the *CRC Handbook of Tables for Probability and Statistics*. The total number of fields for the sample was 6,350. After rechecking each field, six errors were found. The percentage of fields incorrectly input for the sample was .09%. It can be assumed therefore that the results are as reliable as the information supplied by the respondents.

David Bevan designed nineteen dBASEIII programs to facilitate various project tasks. The program that printed the follow-up letters checked the file for all records that included a blank field for the date of return. When the computer found these blanks, a follow-up letter to the

nonrespondent was printed. One month after the deadline for return, another program was run that produced a list of all nonrespondents who were then telephoned by the survey specialist.

Finally, a program was designed to tabulate results. The program counted the number of respondents who checked each choice, the number of titles produced, and the number of copies printed. Ten hours were required for the computer to complete these calculations. The tabulation program was later modified so that it could be used to compute the results for subgroups within the survey population. For example, a separate tabulation was performed for all the respondents who indicated that they distribute their documents to the Division of State Library on a regular basis. It is interesting to examine how this subgroup compares with the base group. An analysis is presented in the final report of the project.

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Survey Results

Although the response rate was exceptionally high, there was a wide variance in the amount of information supplied by each respondent. Many of the responses were meticulously detailed; however, some were incomplete in the listing of titles and quantity of copies printed. Therefore, the numbers quoted for total number of titles produced and total number of copies printed are very conservative.

The survey results indicate that 56,643,054 copies of 4,029 titles were produced during the 1983/84 fiscal year. The majority of state-supported agencies produce publications. A total of 87.17% of the respondents publish at least one type of publication. Most of the documents (88.68%) are free of charge. The most popularly produced state publications are brochures which are issued by 54.69% of the agencies that publish. Less than one-fourth of the publishing respondents produce nonprint publications.

The majority of agencies (64.32%) produce at least some of their publications in-house. Many choose to send their work to commercial printers (43.88%). Few publications are advertised or announced; only 23.83% of the publishers said

that they sometimes advertise their new publications. Agencies that issue lists of their publications are in a minority of 15.36%.

Although the majority of respondents (89.97%) maintain files of their publications, only 56.38% keep the older, out-of-print documents. Most respondents (82.68%) maintain supplies of new publications to distribute upon request. Another popular distribution method is the mailing list, which is used by 71.22% of the publishing respondents.

When asked about the groups of recipients on their mailing lists, the greatest number of respondents (44.92%) said their publications are mailed to other agencies. Of all the library choices, academic libraries were noted most often (22.14%). Although by law (G.S.147-50.1), the State Library should receive five depository copies of each state publication, only 20.57% of the respondents include it on their mailing lists. Ranked next were school libraries (15.89%) and public libraries (14.71%).

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, it is clear that the majority of state publications are not disseminated to the libraries or the citizens of North Carolina. Since most publications are unadvertised and available only on request, acquisition of state documents is often difficult.

The present laws concerning the distribution of documents to the State Library and other depository libraries are obviously not effective. According to the survey results, the State Library received less than 30% of the 4,029 titles produced during the 1983/84 fiscal year. Only 20.57% of the respondents regularly distribute documents to the State Library. Based on conversations with the respondents, many of them seem unaware that the depository laws exist. Others find that compliance with the laws requires too much time and effort. Changes should be made to make the laws easier to comply with and to make more people aware of the depository system.

Although many respondents maintain files of current publications, only about half retain copies of their older, out-of-print publications. An effective depository system would benefit all state organizations by relieving them of some of the burden for storage and dissemination of information. Once agencies distribute documents to the depository system, they can be assured that both current and out-of-print documents will be retained. Considerable work and expense are

involved in the publication of documents. Retaining state publications in the depository libraries assures access to valuable information by and about the state for the citizens of North Carolina.

Future Plans

The staff of the Division of State Library plans to maintain closer contact with the agencies producing state publications. One proposal is to send each agency a brochure explaining the services of the State Library and the benefits provided to state agencies by an effective depository system. The file of records created for the survey project can be easily manipulated to facilitate such a mailing. The staff of the Documents Branch plans to follow through on the survey by acquiring the documents which were not received by the State Library.

The Committee on the State Documents Depository System will use the survey results in planning changes for the depository system. The committee will also use the results of a second survey that will aim at determining which North Carolina libraries are interested in becoming depositories for state publications. The Division of State Library will sponsor the second survey project.

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For more information about the Committee on the State Documents Depository System, contact: Patricia Langelier, Chairperson, Committee on the State Documents Depository System, BA/SS, Davis Library, UNC-Chapel Hill, NC 27514 (919 962-1151).

To receive a copy of the "North Carolina State Documents Survey Project Final Report" send a self-addressed mailing label to: Cheryl McLean, Assistant Documents Librarian, Documents Branch, Division of State Library, 109 East Jones St., Raleigh, NC 27611 (919 733-3343).

Notes: The Documents on Documents Collection proved to be very useful during the literature search. The collection is compiled by the State and Local Documents Task Force of the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association. The collection is housed at Louisiana State Library and is available through interlibrary loan.

SURVEY RESULTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Eligible Questionnaires Distributed: | 1025 |
| Number of Respondents: | 881 |
| Rate of Response: | 85.95% |

Q. 1 What types of publications does your agency (department, school, office, etc.) produce? (Check all that apply.)

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of respondents issuing publications: | 768 |
| Percentage of respondents issuing publications: | 87.17% |
| Number of respondents who do not issue publications: | 113 |
| Percentage of respondents who do not issue publications: | 12.83% |

****NOTE:** The following percentages, with the exception of Question 9, are based on the number of respondents who issue publications (publishers): N = 768

Number and Percentage of Publishers Issuing Each Type of Publication

| Type | Number | % |
|--------------------|--------|-------|
| Bibliographies: | 85 | 11.07 |
| Brochures: | 420 | 54.69 |
| Catalogs: | 153 | 19.92 |
| Directories: | 190 | 24.74 |
| Manuals: | 257 | 33.46 |
| Maps: | 66 | 8.59 |
| Newsletters: | 372 | 48.44 |
| Pamphlets: | 220 | 28.65 |
| Periodicals: | 83 | 10.81 |
| Plans: | 84 | 10.94 |
| Reports: | 388 | 50.52 |
| Rules, laws, etc.: | 208 | 27.08 |
| Statistics: | 116 | 15.10 |
| Other: | 114 | 14.84 |

Q. 2 Does your agency issue nonprint publications? If Yes, in what form?

| | |
|---|--------|
| Number of respondents issuing nonprint publications: | 187 |
| Percentage of publishers issuing nonprint publications: | 24.35% |

Number and Percentage of Publishers Issuing Each Type of Nonprint Publication

| Type | Number | % |
|---------------|--------|-------|
| Films: | 36 | 4.69 |
| Filmstrips: | 24 | 3.12 |
| Microfiche: | 19 | 2.47 |
| Microfilm: | 7 | 0.91 |
| Slides: | 108 | 14.06 |
| Videotape: | 99 | 12.89 |
| Tape or Disc: | 65 | 8.46 |
| Machine Read: | 12 | 1.56 |
| Other: | 14 | 1.82 |

Q. 3 Where are your publications produced or published?

Number and Percentage of Publishers Who Use the Following Printers

| Printer | Number | % |
|-----------------|--------|-------|
| In-house: | 494 | 64.32 |
| State Printer: | 196 | 25.52 |
| Prison Enterpr: | 152 | 19.79 |
| Commercial: | 337 | 43.88 |
| Univ Graphics: | 229 | 29.82 |
| Other: | 64 | 8.33 |

Q. 4 Are your publications advertised or announced? If Yes, where? (List title of newsletter, journal, etc.)

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of respondents advertising publications: | 183 |
| Percentage of publishers advertising publications: | 23.83% |

Q. 5 Does your agency publish a list of its publications? If so, how often?

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of respondents producing a list: | 118 |
| Percentage of publishers producing a list: | 15.36% |

| Frequency | Number | % |
|---------------|--------|------|
| Monthly: | 4 | 0.52 |
| Quarterly: | 3 | 0.39 |
| Semiannually: | 4 | 0.52 |
| Annually: | 52 | 6.77 |
| Other: | 46 | 5.99 |

Q. 6 Are your publications kept on file? If Yes, does the file include current publications? Out-of-print publications?

| | |
|--|--------|
| Number of respondents maintaining files of their publications: | 691 |
| Percentage of publishers maintaining files of their publications: | 89.97% |
| Number of respondents maintaining files of current publications: | 635 |
| Percentage of publishers maintaining files of current publications: | 82.68% |
| Number of respondents maintaining files of out-of-print publications: | 433 |
| Percentage of publishers maintaining files of out-of-print publications: | 56.38% |

Q. 7 How are your publications distributed?

Number and Percentage of Publishers Who Utilize Various Distribution Techniques

| Type | Number | % |
|---------------|--------|-------|
| Mailing List: | 547 | 71.22 |
| On Request: | 635 | 82.68 |
| Other: | 185 | 24.09 |

Q. 8 Which of the following groups are regular recipients of your publications? (Check those which are on your current mailing list.)

Number and Percentage of Publishers Who Distribute to the Following Recipients

| Type | Number | % |
|-----------------|--------|-------|
| Other Agencies: | 345 | 44.92 |
| Businesses: | 207 | 26.95 |
| Schools: | 273 | 35.55 |
| Citizens: | 334 | 43.49 |
| Govt Officials: | 283 | 36.85 |
| Acad Libraries: | 170 | 22.14 |
| Sch Libraries: | 122 | 15.89 |
| Pub Libraries: | 113 | 14.71 |
| State Library: | 158 | 20.57 |
| Colleges/Univ: | 311 | 40.49 |
| Other: | 366 | 47.66 |

Q. 9 How would you rate your attempts to acquire publications produced by other state agencies?

Number and Percentage of All Respondents
Describing Acquisition Success

| <i>Descriptor</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|----------|
| Successful: | 478 | 54.26 |
| Sometimes: | 192 | 21.79 |
| Rarely: | 5 | 0.57 |
| Unsuccessful: | 2 | 0.23 |

Q. 10 List the publications issued by your agency within the last fiscal year (July 1, 1983 - June 30, 1984).

| | |
|---|----------|
| Number of titles published: | 4029 |
| Number of copies printed: | 56643054 |
| Average number of titles produced per publisher: | 5.25 |
| Average number of copies printed per publisher: | 73753.98 |
| Number of free titles: | 3573 |
| Percentage of free titles: | 88.68% |
| Number of titles for sale: | 456 |
| Percentage of titles for sale: | 11.32% |
| Average price per issue of publications for sale: | \$8.55 |

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