



**Missouri State**<sup>™</sup>  
U N I V E R S I T Y

**BearWorks**

---

Articles by MSU Libraries Faculty

---

1979

## Documenting Missouri

Byron Stewart

Follow this and additional works at: <https://bearworks.missouristate.edu/articles-lib>

---

### Recommended Citation

Stewart, Byron. "Documenting Missouri." Show-Me Libraries 30, no. 12 (1979): 33-35

This article or document was made available through BearWorks, the institutional repository of Missouri State University. The work contained in it may be protected by copyright and require permission of the copyright holder for reuse or redistribution.

For more information, please contact [BearWorks@library.missouristate.edu](mailto:BearWorks@library.missouristate.edu).

Byron Stewart, State Documents Assistant, Ellis Library, University of Missouri-Columbia

## DOCUMENTING MISSOURI

The Missouri state documents depository system is now in its third year of operation. Thousands of documents have been sent to the 35 depository libraries across the state. Some documents, such as the *Missouri Official Manual* (SS10), retain their usefulness for several years. Others, such as "The Skylab is Falling!" (PS.Adj/Di2: Sk9), are of little use now. Thus, the question is raised: Which state documents should be retained or disposed? According to the *Missouri Code of State Regulations*, a depository library shall:

"Dispose of publications only in accordance with policies established by the State Library. Depository publications remain the property of the State Library."--6CSR 20-2.020 (2) (I)

What criteria should the Missouri State Library follow in formulating a retention/disposal policy? It is the purpose of this paper to outline some of the issues involved on this subject.

### RETENTION/DISPOSAL ISSUES

The Missouri State Library is currently drawing up a plan to provide for disposal of state documents. This concurs with most of the policies examined from other states, which leave the disposal/retention dilemma to the discretion of their state libraries or distributing networks.

One example of a more specific retention/disposal plan is the Illinois plan. In Illinois, the depository library must retain all documents received for five years. After this period, a depository

may send a list of disposable items to the State Library, which then circulates the list to other depository libraries. This policy is similar in design to the regional depository concept for federal documents disposal. Illinois does allow for superseded items to be discarded by all depositories. This includes revisions and new editions of publications.<sup>1</sup>

In Missouri, many documents are revised or superseded by later editions. *The Consumer Shopping Guide for Homeowners Insurance* (CARL2: H75) and *Consumer Credit Laws* (CARL.Fi5: C76) are examples of documents which are revised periodically. There are other documents which should be retained only in their latest editions. This would include such items as: *Wildlife Code of Missouri* (CON5: W64), *Missouri Traffic Map* (HIGH.Pla3/T67), *Missouri State Fair Premium Book* (AG.Fa7), etc. Many "directories" also fall into this category: *Missouri Hay Directory* (AG4: H32), *Missouri State Telephone Directory* (AD4: T23), and *Missouri Veterans' Education Directory* (ED4: V64).

Still another question arises with ceased journals/serials. It is probably a reasonable estimate that over 50% of all state documents fall into a "serials" classification, as opposed to "monographs." A unique feature of state publications is that funding must be appropriated annually, and, as a result, many agencies' publications either cease completely or change format. Such publications as *Missouri Environment* (NR10), *MCCJ Memo* (P.S.Cr10) or *Drug Dependencies* (MH10) fall into this category.

Should a depository library be required to retain two or three issues of a dead journal? Would the Illinois "five-year plan" be appropriate here?

Likewise, what happens when an agency or commission is abolished? Missouri has a good example of this--the Missouri Election Commission. The MEC published several documents pertaining to requirements for political parties, candidates, etc., only later to be abolished by the Missouri Supreme Court. These state documents are now obsolete--or are they? No doubt some enterprising historian will want to analyze these documents someday. But must all depositories retain this material?

## QUALITY CONTROL

Finally, should there be some "quality control" for state documents? Some documents, such as newsletters from the various agencies, are useful only for a specified date, meeting, announcement, etc. After that, they are simply deadwood on already crowded shelves. Other documents, such as *Digest* (MH.Ma110) or *Personnelities* (SOC.He8), are basically "in-house" publications, offering little more than social news. Again, these make for good public relations, but are of little value otherwise. The State Library, in its *Depository Library Handbook* (HI.Li2: D44/2), recognizes this situation: "...the State Library can exempt from distribution publications which it determines have little value. On the advice of depository libraries, several serials have been so exempted during this past year." (p. 7)

Unfortunately, setting up "standards of quality" for depository publications is not as feasible or practical as one might hope. If I were in charge of the state depository program, I would be

very reluctant to inform a state agency that its newsletter or "in-house" publication was worthless. The agency might (justifiably) be offended and the relationship between the depository libraries and that agency might well be terminated. And some librarians might cry "censorship" if quality standards were proposed.

Why should all depositories receiving "The Skylab is Falling!" retain this document when its obvious home is File 13 or Australia? Is the depository library's function archival in nature? True, the purpose of a full depository "to provide a complete research collection" differs from the partial depository's purpose to "provide ready access to... publications of broad general interest..." (6CSR 20-2.010 (1) (A,B)) But should separate standards be set up to reflect the different purposes? Should the State Library be even more "selective" in choosing all state publications--and risk incurring the wrath of political pencil-pushers? These are some of the real issues facing state documents librarians.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

While the Illinois "five-year plan" has its merits, technology has advanced to the point of providing an even better solution: microforms. Several states are experimenting with the idea of putting state documents on microfilm/fiche. Obviously, space would be saved, and all documents, from the superseded to the "undesirables," could be retained on microform. One state, Louisiana, received a federal grant and microfilmed its 1973 state documents and distributed the 28 reels to selected libraries in Louisiana free of charge.<sup>2</sup> This system also allows for other libraries, both in-state and out-of-state, which are non-depository libraries, to purchase the microfilmed documents.

Microforms are but a partial solution to the whole issue of retention/disposal of state documents. The Illinois "five-year plan" is yet another solution. These are only two of a variety of solutions for a retention/disposal policy.

There are many issues, some of which I have discussed, which must be resolved in drafting such a policy. The Missouri documents program is growing, and a good retention/disposal policy will insure its continued success.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 *Instructions to Depository Libraries for Illinois State Documents*, August 1972.
- 2 Olds, Brenda F. Shelton, ed. *The State of State Documents: Past, Present, Future*, Texas State Legislative Reference Library, Austin, November 1976, p. 12. (ERIC ED 142 174).

NOTE: The State Library has been considering an official discard policy; Stewart's article points up the problems in developing one policy to fit many situations. At this point, we are favoring a very liberal policy in the belief that each librarian knows his/her clientele and would be able to judge what should be retained. Full depositories would keep documents for five years; partials, for one. All superseded and ephemeral material could be discarded at any time. Core publications would not be eligible for discard. A list of materials to be discarded would be submitted to the State Library so that an exchange list for appropriate documents could be published. We feel that this policy would allow libraries flexibility, yet insure that all citizens would have access to state documents.

The State Library's documents department welcomes comments from Missouri librarians on the depository program or on the disposal of state documents.

