

ACQUISITIONS OF FOREIGN DOCUMENTS

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The official publications of foreign governments contain a wide variety of valuable information of interest to patrons served by many types and sizes of libraries. Foreign document users may range from a researcher doing an in-depth analysis of census data to a student who would like a foreign country's viewpoint on current events. Because foreign documents emanate from a myriad of countries, each with its own publication and distribution patterns, (not to mention the differences in language and currency), their identification and acquisition presents problems not faced by other document collections.

Smaller libraries that need information on foreign countries may therefore want to ask themselves if their needs can be met by commer-

cially produced and U.S. government issued sources. Europa World Year Book, while expensive for the 1992 edition, is an important reference work on foreign governments, useful to libraries of many sizes. Entries for most countries concisely give recent history, an overview of government, the economy, and education. A summary and discussion of the country's constitution is also often included as well as a current statistical summary and addresses of ministries, embassies, banks, publishers, and more. Other examples of useful commercial sources include The Statesman's Yearbook, Statistical Abstract of Latin America, Africa South of the Sahara, and European Historical Statistics, 1750-1975.

Libraries who serve the business community should consider

the Price Waterhouse series Doing Business in.... This series includes a separate handbook for approximately 75 countries where offices of the Price Waterhouse firm are located, and covers topics such as taxation, accounting practices, and labor laws. The publications are free to anyone on the firm's mailing list (write to: Price Waterhouse Firm Limited, 33rd floor, 1285 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019). Titles are updated periodically.

The U.S. government publishes many useful and inexpensive sources on foreign countries which are available through the Government Printing Office. The Area Handbook Series, now issued by the Library of Congress Country Studies-Area Handbook Program is a valuable source of general information on over 100 countries. Prices vary from \$7 to \$30 per volume. Each handbook typically provides information on history, culture, the environment, government and politics, national security, and includes a bibliography. The World Factbook, updated annually by the CIA provides brief statistics and facts on countries of the world. A State Department series, Background Notes covers around 170 countries.

Each 4 to 10 page report deals with topics such as history, geography, government, and travel. Maps are included and approximately 60 countries are updated each year.

World Population, a yearly Census Bureau publication, gives demographic data on countries and territories with a population of at least 5,000. Overseas Business Reports, published by the International Trade Administration of the Department of Commerce, covers background information, trade, credit, and monetary policies, investment and business procedures in many countries.

Libraries without foreign documents collections should also not forget interlibrary loan when dealing with patrons needing foreign information. Many document collections are not cataloged, including Indiana University's, so OCLC records or complete holdings records do not always exist for foreign documents. Librarians therefore need to be aware of what foreign documents collections exist and who is most likely to be able to provide help in particular areas. Indiana University, most probably the largest foreign documents collection in the state, will loan documents which are

not part of its reference collection and can provide help in identifying documents. Guidebooks such as Directory of Foreign Document Collections and the Directory of Government Document Collections and Librarians can also be of some use in identifying possible sources of help with questions.

For libraries that do want to develop their own foreign documents collections, identification of sources can be a challenge. For larger libraries an invaluable resource is the Guide to Official Publications of Foreign Countries, published by Congressional Information Service, sponsored by ALA Government Documents Round Table, and edited by Gloria Westfall of Indiana University. Although guides to official publishing exist for specific countries or regions, this source is unique in attempting to give an overview of important documents for 157 countries. The documents listed and briefly described for each country represent a core list of seventeen basic categories of documents including guides to official publications and catalogs, sources of general information, government directories, statistical yearbooks, census data, development plans and more. Infor-

mation on availability is given for each source, brief acquisition tips are given for each country, and general information on distribution patterns and lists of vendors are included in the introductory materials.

Librarians must be aware that publishing patterns can vary greatly from country to country. As mentioned above, there are some guides written specifically about countries or regions. Examples of regional guides include: Official Publications of Western Europe, edited by Eve Johansson (2 vols.) and Official Publications on the Middle East: a Selective Guide to the Statistical Sources, by C.H. Bleaney. Examples of country guides include: Directory of British Official Publications: a Guide to Sources, compiled by Stephen Richard and An Introduction to Japanese Government Publications, Tsutomu Kuroki. An older source, to be used with caution, is An International Survey and Review of the Role, Organization and Principles of Official Publishing, by J.J. Cherns. This source includes surveys of government publishing for 20 countries, some of which still have no other guide. While these titles are just a sampling of the guides that are available, there are many countries,

including most Latin American and many Asian countries, for which there are no guides available.

As Gloria Westfall described in the introduction to the Guide to Official Publication of Foreign Countries, countries can in general be divided into two groups based on their document distribution patterns. "Countries in the first group possess: 1) an official central distributor of government publications, 2) individual agencies responsive to direct requests for their publications, and/or 3) a well-established book trade."¹ Countries in the first group may have one or several official publishers and publications may be available directly from their agencies as well. In some of these countries, a commercial publisher has been designated as the official distributor of government documents. Documents from the first type of country can often also be purchased through a well known vendor.

Countries in the second group often have no centralized distribution system for their government publications and individual agencies often don't respond to direct requests. These countries may have vendors who handle their documents but they are usually less well known special-

ized dealers, many of which are listed in the Guide to Official Publications of Foreign Countries, or are known to area specialists.

Because of the variety of government publishing patterns, it is difficult in a brief article to give even an overview of the various methods that must be used to acquire foreign documents. Standing orders with vendors or government agencies, deposit accounts with vendors or government printing offices, and blanket order plans with specialized dealers are a few methods which can be used. For example, in acquiring documents from Great Britain, a country in Gloria Westfall's first category, IU uses a variety of tactics including a deposit account with the vendor UNIPUB for Her Majesty's Stationery Office publications, a standing order with Readex for parliamentary papers, and letters sent directly to agencies requesting free publications. For African countries, which generally fall into the second category, IU uses specialized dealers such as Hogarth, letters sent to issuing agencies, and in the case of South Africa, a deposit account with the government printer.

Identifying foreign documents to order or request requires

searching in a variety of sources including government bibliographies, government printer or agency publications lists, Library of Congress accession lists, and general indexes such as Population Index and PAIS International in Print (a merger of PAIS Bulletin and PAIS Foreign Language Index). Vendor catalogs such as Current National Statistical Compendiums (Congressional Information Service, 4520 East-West Highway Suite 800, Bethesda, MD 20814), or National Development Plans (Inter Documentation Co., distributed in the U.S. by Norman Ross Publishing, Inc. 1995 Broadway, New York, NY 10023) can also be useful in identifying existing documents either to order through the vendor or other channels.

Although it does take money to develop a good collection of foreign documents, with persistence librarians can find many useful documents available for free or at low cost. Letters to embassies can result in free publications and again, requests can be sent to issuing agencies once identified. IU uses standardized letters printed on aérograms for both requests for individual publications and to be put on mailing lists for serials. The

letters are printed in French, Spanish, and English and are carefully worded asking the agency to send only items which are available at no cost. The success rate of these inquiries will vary from country to country (the Guide to Official Publication of Foreign Countries helps identify for which countries this is a suitable approach).

In a bibliography appearing in this issue, I have identified a small sample of foreign documents which are likely to have a broad appeal and which are fairly easily obtained. Many of these are also free. In addition, I have included examples of sources which are useful for identifying or acquiring other foreign documents, some of which I've discussed here. The wealth of information available from other countries of course makes this only the smallest tip of an enormous iceberg. The diversity and complexity of foreign documents publication makes it imperative that librarians in Indiana rely on each other for expertise and advice as well as for sources.

REFERENCES

1. Gloria Westfall. Guide to Official Publications of Foreign Countries. Bethesda, MD: Congressional Information Service, 1990. xvii.

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