

Locating and Citing Government Documents

An often overlooked resource for information about government documents is the constituent services section or person in the local offices of your U.S. Senators and/or U.S. Representatives. Major cities generally have local offices for those officials.

It's quite easy to track down details of the Code of Federal Regulations online. But when it comes to Acts of Congress or Senate Resolutions, finding an APA-compliant reference can be a challenge. Whenever I have needed that kind of information (and a number of other services, too), I have found that staff members in my U.S. Representative's local office are extraordinarily accommodating and helpful.

Another helpful resource is the nearest library. I happen to live in the same city as the University of Oregon, and its library is one of the official depositories for government documents in this state. The specific librarian in charge of that section of a library is generally called the Government Documents Librarian, but librarians with expertise in that area also work under other titles. If you don't know which library is your state's official depository, any reference librarian can no doubt aim you in the right direction.

Once a student had piqued my curiosity, I spent some time playing around with my browser and found a couple other useful resources.

"Thinking Like a Government Documents Librarian" is aimed at librarians, but it has good advice for researchers, too. Pointer #1, for example, is "Ask yourself, 'Which agency of government would deal with a question or problem such as this?'"
[<http://www.lib.niu.edu/ipo/il9804199.html>]

The Federal Depository Library Directory [http://www.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdldp/tools/ldirect.html] led me to my favorite part of the directory: the **Clickable map of Federal depository libraries** [<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html>]. At that site you can locate a Federal Depository Library, where publications and other information are available for free public use. I also learned that "trained librarians are available to assist in their use."

Another person who can help you find the nearest depository is a regional librarian. The February 2005 list of Regional Depository Librarians below was retrieved April 7, 2005, from www.access.gpo.gov/gpoaccess/fdldp/pubs/regionals2005.pdf.