

From the Chair

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There has been recent discussion on the GODORT Steering Committee's e-mail list about the future of GODORT.

While many feel that there has been plenty of discussion concerning the future of the FDLP and the strategic vision of the GPO, some feel that there has been inadequate consideration of our professional organization's future. How to best address issues surrounding GODORT's future have been on my mind lately, and here are a few of my thoughts on the topic.

Is GODORT meeting the needs of its membership? My sense is that GODORT membership is changing, and we need to gather more information about what our members expect and need from our organization. Many libraries have reorganized their government documents operations, and the result is fewer full-time positions devoted solely to the management of government information. Librarians in positions with multiple responsibilities cannot devote as much time to consideration of government information policy issues. They also need training, hints, and tools to help them navigate the dynamic government information environment. Do current GODORT activities serve these needs? We provide such resources as DttP, the GODORT web site, conference programs, and statements and comments on policy issues, but are these activities adequately serving the needs of librarians?

In order to address these concerns about the adequacy of GODORT activities, I plan to work with committee and task force chairs to reexamine the goals and objectives of each of our major committees and task forces. We need to step up efforts to solicit feedback from members so we can ensure that committee activities are in line with current membership needs.

Another source of concern for active GODORT members is the schedule of conference meetings. The upcoming meetings at the Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio will reflect some schedule changes, such as a shorter GODORT update and staggered task force meetings. New ALA guidelines for uniform meeting start times dictated some of the changes, but we have also used this opportunity to experiment with the schedule. Changes that we hope members will find helpful include eliminating Tuesday meetings and reducing the number of conflicting meetings. The schedule will

be available on the GODORT web site by the time this column is published. We are eager to hear your feedback about the changes.

An additional issue that has arisen since the last conference is the demise of the GODORT web site's host, UC Berkeley Library's Digital Library SunSite. GODORT will have to find a new home for its web site by February 2006. The Publications Committee is currently exploring options, including the possibility of moving the site to ALA web servers. We hope to have the issue resolved by the Midwinter Meeting.

Finally, I would like to express my concern and support for the librarians who have recently been affected by the devastation caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It will likely take many months to assess the full damage, both physical and emotional, wrought by these storms. If there is anything I have learned in my years as a government documents librarian, it is that our community is extremely generous with its support and assistance for our colleagues in need. I would urge you to consider a donation to ALA's Hurricane Relief Fund, at www.ala.org/ala/cro/katrina/katrina.htm, and to do anything you can to assist our colleagues when they are able to identify more specific needs for their government documents collections. At the time of this writing, it is still uncertain if ALA's Annual Conference will be held in New Orleans. If it does take place, I think there is no better way to show support for our colleagues and fellow citizens than attending the Conference. Here's hoping we can all celebrate a triumphant return to the great city of New Orleans next June!