

# Introduction to the Special Issue of *Indiana Libraries* for Online Government Information

By: Andrea M. Morrison

**W**elcome to the special issue of *Indiana Libraries* focused on online government information for practical use in public, academic, school, and special libraries in Indiana. In today's environment, libraries are a major source for e-government information access and services. Students and researchers rely on this information, and, more than ever, the public uses e-government services from federal, state, and local governments. "Libraries have an increasingly significant role responding to this environment of high user expectations and need to plan for rising demands for Internet government information" (Morrison, p. vii).

What does online government information provide to libraries and library users? — much more than politics, law, and the government services we and our users need! It covers agriculture, education, energy, finance, foreign affairs, foreign country information, health and nutrition, security, transportation, and U.S. history, as well as a wide variety of many other current and historical topics. The articles of this special issue cover these topics and describe e-resources from federal, Indiana, local, and foreign governments that are suitable for inclusion on library websites and useful in library reference and instruction. Yet, these resources represent only a selection of the vast amount of online government information available for libraries and library patrons to use.

The cost of using free government information is suitable for every budget. Government information has few copyright restrictions. Whatever the format, these materials are chiefly free of charge and, because they are in the public domain, may be openly shared or copied for library users from either online or print sources without legal restriction. (U.S. Government Printing Office, Public Domain & Copyright Notice).

The benefits of online government information are many. It is authoritative and current, yet also archival and historical, and always continually updating. The content is often visually striking and interactive. Many websites and titles are provided in a variety of formats and languages, especially both English and Spanish. It is suitable for many types of library activities with audiences ranging from very young children to seniors.

In this issue, popular and practical topics of special interest to public and school librarians are grouped towards the front. These include articles on e-government resources for legal information, activities with children, cooking, and using government websites in library instruction. More specialized topics are grouped towards the back of the issue. These include articles on research using government information, special research and reference resources for energy, agriculture, and transportation; government information website design, foreign country information, and historical government information. Also included is an article on the development of a digital project for local government information: The Allen County Municipal Code. Two articles cover the history of the Indiana State Depository Program, Indiana State Library and of INDIGO (Indiana Networking for Documents and Information of Government Organizations).<sup>1</sup>

INDIGO is sponsoring this issue; it is a special interest group in Indiana for state and federal government information. Many of the authors are members of INDIGO and gave their enthusiastic support to this project. This issue meets the purposes of INDIGO to provide a forum for the discussion and exchange of ideas by librarians working with government information and to promote the education, training, and use of government information by libraries. INDIGO's home page is hosted by Purdue University at [www.lib.purdue.edu/govdocs/indigo.html](http://www.lib.purdue.edu/govdocs/indigo.html), and their newsletter,

*INDIGO news*, is a good source of information about INDIGO's educational programs, which are open to non-members at a minimal fee and include LEU credits.

If your library doesn't include government information on its website, this issue suggests many excellent resources to include — enough for a Web page dedicated to government information. For any questions raised by this issue, consult the authors, the Indiana State Library, or members of INDIGO, or attend one of INDIGO's biannual low-cost programs. There is so much interesting online government information to discover!

## Notes

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## References

Morrison, A. M. (Ed.). (2008). *Managing Electronic Government Information in Libraries: Issues and Practices*. Chicago: American Library Association.

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## About the Author

Andrea M. Morrison is an Associate Librarian at Indiana University Bloomington, Herman B Wells Library, with an interest in working with government information. In addition to writing numerous articles on the topic, she co-wrote *International Government Information and Country Information: A Subject Guide* (2004) with Barbara J. Mann, and edited *Managing Electronic Government Information in Libraries: Issues and Practices* (ALA GODORT book, 2008). She is an active member and past chair both of the state organization that promotes government information, INDIGO, and of ALA Government Documents Round Table (GODORT).