

Remarks by Heath Martin, Director of Collections, University of Kentucky Libraries  
Putting America Back to Work During the Great Depression: Preserving and Improving  
Access to WPA Records for the Future  
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There are three primary ways the WPA collection and, by extension, ASERL's Collaborative Federal Depository Program support, represent, and further the University of Kentucky Libraries' goals when it comes to collections.

First, our participation in the ASERL Collaborative Federal Depository Program and the associated Center of Excellence model supports multiple objectives found in the University of Kentucky Libraries' Strategic Plan. So this program is moving us in the directions we want and need to go. I'll just mention a couple of those strategic objectives for the sake of illustration. First, the University of Kentucky Libraries' Strategic Plan calls for us to "share and promote the Libraries' expertise and resources through engagement in dynamic community and state partnerships." And one of the important ways the strategic plan encourages us to do that is by engaging in "collaborative resource sharing with our consortia partners." I believe the work we've done thus far as part of the ASERL Collaborative Federal Depository Program--the achievement of becoming a Center of Excellence for the WPA--contributes in a significant way to the progress the University of Kentucky Libraries is making toward that strategic goal. Another objective laid out in the strategic plan--to "build partnerships and collaborations to leverage and augment library expertise"--is similarly consistent with our accomplishments to date within the Collaborative Federal Depository Program. One of the specific strategies called for under this second objective asks us to "support inter-institutional initiatives that help the University of Kentucky build a strong local, state, national, and international presence." There's no doubt in my mind that the University of Kentucky Libraries' WPA collection and its collaborative role within the ASERL model accomplishes just that.

Another way the WPA collection and our efforts to promote it support, represent, and further the Libraries' broader collections goals is by continuing our commitment to the role of the federal depository library as traditionally conceived, finding innovative and relevant ways to develop, promote, and provide access to federal government information. One of the things I've especially enjoyed about being involved in the IMLS grant project is the way in which it has allowed the Libraries to innovate and work with ASERL and other institutions in the region to respond to some of the biggest challenges facing depository libraries today, while at the same time remaining true to the values and mission of a Regional Depository Library. About a year ago, as I was watching Sandee lead her unit through some of the more challenging innovations of the ASERL model and working with people in other units of the Libraries and other depositories across the commonwealth and across the region to implement those innovations, I came across an article from 2006 in *The Southeastern Librarian* that discussed ways to promote and improve access to U.S. government information in Federal Depository Libraries. In this article, the author Newkirk Barnes summarized what he saw as key goals for such libraries. He wrote: "The goals of depository promotion are to increase

public awareness of the wide variety of formats and types of federal government information; to increase users' knowledge of specific collections of government information within a particular depository; to provide instruction on how to effectively locate, access and use the information contained in these collections; and to expand delivery of this information to as many user groups as possible." Through the grant project's emphasis on promoting newly established Centers of Excellence, clearly identifying those institutions building authoritative collections for particular agencies, establishing subject expertise at the home institution to serve the entire region, and providing increased and sustained access through efforts at digitization and preservation, it became clear to me that--amid all the innovation--we were continuing to answer the core issues that Federal Depository Libraries have always tried to address.

And finally, I think it's clear that the University of Kentucky Libraries' leadership role when it comes to establishing the WPA Center of Excellence is consistent with the demands and addresses the challenges of the profession as a whole. Recently, in the Provosts' Report on Academic Libraries, the historical practice of focusing primarily on proprietary collections--collections developed by individual libraries for individual libraries--was identified as a primary on-campus barrier to the necessary evolution of both the collections and the services academic libraries offer to their users, their institutions, and their communities. The alternative, identified by that same report as the "preferred end-state" for academic libraries, is collaborative collections and digital access. The Center of Excellence model--through its emphases on building and preserving complete collections of federal agency documents to serve the entire Southeast region and also digitizing those collections to improve access for users across the region and beyond--that model exemplifies the movement toward both of those general goals--collaborative collections and digital access. And the University of Kentucky Libraries' WPA collection--by successfully building such a collection and rapidly achieving a significant level of digitization when it comes to the documents that comprise that collection--in turn, I think, exemplifies the ASERL Center of Excellence model. So that ASERL Center of Excellence model and the example set by the WPA collection here at the University of Kentucky helps to position us not only to participate in the future of collaborative collection development and digital information services in general, but also contributes to our efforts to play a leadership role in that future.

To summarize:

1. contributes to the goals of UK Libraries' Strategic Plan
2. allows us to innovate and build a collaborative, digitized, and forward-thinking Federal Depository Collection
3. helps to position UK Libraries in a leadership role within the profession in the areas of collaborative collection development and digital access services