

Associate Dean Mary Beth Thomson's Remarks at WPA Celebration

Wednesday, September 5, 2012, 2:00 p.m.:

Thank you all for joining us today as we celebrate the completion of our grant to build a comprehensive Works Progress Administration collection. I am especially grateful for the presence of Interim Provost Tracy and the Archivist of the United States, Mr. Ferreiro. Your supportive comments are greatly appreciated.

My name is Mary Beth Thomson. I am the Associate Dean for Collections, Digital Scholarship and Technical Services, here at the University of Kentucky Libraries.

In our role as a research library, we've accepted the challenge of preserving our history and culture by participating in this collaborative Institute of Museum and Library Services leadership grant with our Association of Southeastern Research Libraries colleagues. We began the grant and the process of becoming a Center of Excellence for the WPA in 2009. John Burger, Executive Director of ASERL, who is here with us today, sent us a draft of an IMLS grant in hopes that we would be interested in participating. We were, and here we are three years later with complete cataloging for all of our WPA publications, almost 1,500 additional WPA pieces, a bibliography of all known WPA publications, an online guide to assist users in accessing the collection, and digital copies of the Kentucky WPA publications on our "Explore UK" website.

This work was accomplished due to the contributions of numerous staff within Collections, Technical Services, Special Collections and Digital Library Services. Through this grant, and the establishment of a Center of Excellence, we have taken steps towards finding common ground between our library and archive sides as these divisions worked together on this grant.

Our Federal Depository Unit in Collections and our Database Integrity Unit in Access Records Management were the leaders in this grant. Database Integrity staff were instrumental in contributing our records to the ASERL database created for all Centers of Excellence across the southeast. This database allows us to compare collections and acquire missing items. In addition to acquiring missing items, we've also been acquiring a second copy of each WPA title to designate as an archival copy. These copies will receive extra preservation treatment and protection from use when possible. This was done in an effort to ensure that at least one copy survives in useable condition well into the future.

Where we really began to find common ground between divisions was in the digitization of the WPA publications from the southeastern states. The Federal Depository Unit and Special Collections collaborated to identify copies for digitization. Once this was done, Digital Library Services in Library Technologies and the Cataloging and Metadata Unit in Access Records Management worked together to make the digital copies available. None of this would have been possible without the support of ASERL and the IMLS grant.

Would everyone who worked on the WPA grant project please stand? Please join me in congratulating these library staff members for their excellent work.

The grant work earned ASERL a national award from the American Library Association's Government Documents Round Table this year. The head of our Federal Depository Unit, Sandee McAninch, traveled to ALA's annual meeting this summer to join in the acceptance of this award as a member of the steering committee that guided this grant project for the last three years. In fact, this whole effort to create and preserve complete collections

of federal government publications in the southeast began at UK Libraries. In the summer of 2006, Sandee was asked to draft a proposal outlining what it would take to accomplish this task.

Our hope is that we will eventually be able to say that each of the almost 250 federal depository libraries in the southeast has adopted several federal agencies and agreed to create a complete collection for those agencies' publications. We have made a good start on this effort with over 60 federal agencies already spoken for across the southeast. UK Libraries is set to begin creating a center of excellence for the Appalachian Regional Commission.

In closing, I would just like to say again how appreciative I am of the faculty and staff who made this grant work successful. I also want to thank those staff members who planned this wonderful celebration of their colleagues' accomplishments.

I will now turn the proceedings over to Sandee McAninch, head of our Federal Depository Unit, who will moderate our panel discussion. Sandee has been at UK since 1983, a government documents librarian for over 35 years, and has served on the Depository Library Advisory Council to the Public Printer of the United States. In 2010, Sandee was honored with the James Bennett Childs Award by the American Library Association's Government Documents Round Table. This award is presented as a tribute to an individual whose stature, service, and publications record constitute a significant lifetime contribution to the field of government information librarianship.