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Forte, Eric J., Hartnett, Cassandra J., and Sevetson, Andrea L.. “Fundamentals of Government Information: Mining, Finding Evaluating, and Using Government Resources” (Book Review)

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BOOK REVIEWS

Forte, Eric J., Hartnett, Cassandra J., and Sevetson, Andrea L. **Fundamentals of Government Information: Mining, Finding, Evaluating, and Using Government Resources.** New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers; 2011. 396 p. \$80.00. ISBN: 978-155570-737-8. ©

Eric J. Forte and his team have written a very useful guide on the use of federal government information resources for providing library information services. The text aims to fill the void in the coverage of government information production, publication, and access that took place during the twenty-first century. During the first decade of the new century, a paradigm shift from the print world to online occurred in rapid fashion. As the Federal Depository Library program shifted from print to online, government documents librarians around the country retired or were reassigned, and print collections were de-accessioned. New research skills and tools are needed to answer reference questions and support the research needs of public, academic, and special libraries. Classic sources on government documents went into revision to keep pace with these rapid changes.

A review of the preface is helpful for gaining an overview. Written by librarians for librarians, the book aims to provide:

- Models and techniques for discovery of government information
- Insight into the popular and research value of government publications, and
- Experience acquiring new skills in a simple, sequential manner, reinforced by exercises (p. xv)

This text endeavors to present government information as another genre of literature and literature that can be used and enjoyed every day. The goal of the three main authors and four contributing authors is to make it possible for readers to do exactly that, by sharing their years of expertise in government information in well-structured and sometimes

witty narrative. Black-and-white illustrations are scattered throughout.

The text contains two main sections with a total of fifteen chapters. Part I, "Overview of Key Government Information Resources," addresses the main sources of government information. Chapter 1, "Introduction to People's Information," sets the stage with background on and history of government information, including an overview of the Federal Depository Library program. Chapter 2, "How to Think Like a Government Documents Librarian," is a must read, filled with tips and strategies for conducting reference interviews and doing research. In this chapter, key historical textbooks on government documents are discussed, approaches to Internet search engines are explained, and documenting sources using standard citation styles is covered. Chapter 3, "Congress"; Chapter 4, "Regulations"; Chapter 5, "Law"; and Chapter 6, "The President" present concise discussions of these important sources.

Part II, "Government Information in Focus," contains chapters on the executive branch; statistics; health; education; scientific and technical information; environment and energy; business, economic, and consumer information; census; and historical and archival information. Health sciences librarians will be particularly interested in chapters on the census, statistics, and health information.

This book does more than provide an introductory mini-course on the knowledge and skills necessary to provide information services. It also includes excellent information that can be incorporated into bibliographic instruction sessions. Many librarians did not have the benefit of government information course work in library school or opportunities for continuing education in this area, but this book serves as a crash course and will be useful for ready reference. It should also be considered for courses in the library science curriculum, and chapters could be useful in academic courses that cover public policy and the legislative process. The book is indexed, and each chapter lists bibliographic citations, websites, and other sources for more information.

Chapter 9, "Health Information," is authored by Ann Glusker, AHIP, the medical librarian at Group Health Cooperative in Seattle, Washington. Glusker's contribution is recommended for newly minted health sciences librarians and others who need a quick overview of the history of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), what health-related information is available, and where to find it. An overview of PubMed, Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), and NLM classification highlights the basics. Glusker also shares helpful strategies on locating information on the state, tribal, and local levels and gives her forecast of where government health information is going in the future.

The authors claim to have written the first government information text to be conceived, written, and published in the new century, and their approach is fresh and interesting, making it accessible for all types of libraries and librarians.

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