

Maurer School of Law: Indiana University

Digital Repository @ Maurer Law

Articles by Maurer Faculty

Faculty Scholarship

1978

Book Review. Federal Information Sources and Systems: A Directory for the Congress

Colleen Kristl Pauwels

Indiana University Maurer School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub>



Part of the [Legal Writing and Research Commons](#), and the [Scholarly Publishing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pauwels, Colleen Kristl, "Book Review. Federal Information Sources and Systems: A Directory for the Congress" (1978). *Articles by Maurer Faculty*. 2492.

<https://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/facpub/2492>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by Maurer Faculty by an authorized administrator of Digital Repository @ Maurer Law. For more information, please contact rvaughan@indiana.edu.



LAW LIBRARY
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

outstanding government publications, but still there could be more attention to the image projected.

Finally, journals in library science might also exercise some influence by regularly reviewing annual reports as they did sixty years ago. In the meantime, the *Annual Report of the Librarian of Congress* should remain required professional reading for all of us.

JOHN V. RICHARDSON, Jr
 Doctoral Candidate,
 Indiana University,
 Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.

Combined Retrospective Index Set to Journals in History, 1838-1974. With an Introduction and User's Guide by Evan I. Farber. Washington: Carrollton Press, 1977. 11 vol. \$985. (ISBN 0-8408-0181-5).

Historians have long faced the difficult task of assembling various guides to periodical literature before launching any type of research project. Some of the reference aids survey publications from a particular time period and others catalogue printed sources on a particular area of study, but rarely do these guides offer more than a partial listing of materials. The post-war "information explosion" has facilitated the birth of so many new historical journals that existing indexes cannot accommodate them all. The appearance of an eleven-volume *Combined Retrospective Index Set to Journals in History, 1838-1974* will undoubtedly help alleviate part of this problem by providing a single guide to 243 English language journals in history. Described as "the Great Leap Backward," the set extends its coverage back to 1838 and will remain current with the publication of annual supplements.

Beyond its ability to index such a large number of titles, *CRIS* utilizes a single coding pattern which cites the article title, author, year, volume, journal title, and page number where the article begins. Researchers therefore need to familiarize themselves only with this consistent coding pattern rather than deal with the conflicting arrangements of a number of other guides. Thus both undergraduate students and advanced researchers will find it a useful and convenient tool. An additional facet of providing an alphabetically-arranged

"keyword index" will also make cross-disciplinary searches easier.

The first four volumes are devoted to World History categories, Volumes V-IX to United States History, and Volumes X-XI serve as "Author Indexes" to indicate what has been written by a particular historian. Three of the United States volumes assume a chronological or topical arrangement, but Volume VI offers a "Biographical and Genealogical Index" and Volume IX presents parallel treatment for the Presidents. Two similarly conceived *CRIS* sets on journals in Political Science (1886-1974) and Sociology (1895-1974) are already on the market and will also prove useful to historians.

Despite the obvious contribution of these sets to historical investigations, one must keep in mind that they do not provide panaceas. They fail to list monographs, government publications and documents collections so crucial to primary research. Furthermore, the 243 journals cited represent only a fraction of those produced around the world, including the important foreign language journals not sampled here. Thus while the *Combined Retrospective Index Set to Journals in History, 1838-1974* offers a convenient departure point for scholarly investigations, it should not be viewed as the final answer to periodical indexing.

MICHAEL L. TATE
 Assistant Professor of History,
 University of Nebraska at Omaha

Federal Information Sources and Systems: a Directory for the Congress. (1976 Congressional Sourcebook Series). U.S. General Accounting Office, Office of Program Analysis, 1976. GPO stock # 020 000 00139 9 GA1.22:In 3. Price \$5.15.

Federal information sources and systems; a directory for the Congress is the first of three volumes planned for the 1976 Congressional Sourcebook Series. According to the responsibilities set forth in Title VIII of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Comptroller General was directed to establish and maintain a current inventory and directory of sources and information systems containing fiscal, budgetary and program-related data and information. The purpose of this

and the other volumes in the series is to provide the Congress with accurate information relevant to their budget control and oversight responsibilities.

The directory describes more than 1000 Federal sources and information systems in 63 agencies. The information was gathered through an inventory taken in 1975 by the Comptroller General, whose objective was to develop an understanding of the information capabilities in the executive agencies.

In order to maintain some uniformity, the guidelines included the definitions for sources and for information systems. Sources include "publications (e.g., catalogs, directories), activities or organizations oriented to centralized processing and dissemination of information (e.g., libraries, clearinghouses, . . .) and information systems, was defined as including organized collections of procedures and data bases used to store, manipulate and generate information for specific purposes and functions." (at 1). The directory is organized into two segments: the citation section and an index section. The citation section consists of a variety of elements arranged by agency. Included here is the title of the source or system, an accession number, the budget function or subfunction, an agency contact if additional information is needed, a source if it is available to the public and an abstract of the objectives and content of the item.

The index section is divided into three parts: subject index, agency index and budget function or subfunctions index. Each of these lists the titles of the items under its appropriate heading along with the accession number which leads to the citation and abstract.

The directory brings together valuable information that was difficult, at best, to obtain previously. In most cases, the abstracts are clear and contain useful basic information regarding the content of the system, and the inclusion of the agency to contact for additional information is an invaluable resource. The index is set up in a pattern that enables the user to find the needed sources easily. However, the accession numbers which lead from the index to the citation contain nine digits which invariably requires the user to refer to the number more than once while finding the citation. Although this is not a serious flaw it is an inconvenience.

It is also necessary to note that by its own admission the directory is not a comprehensive source. Each agency was asked to submit only what it thought was appropriate. Consequently, there is a lack of uniformity in both the detail of the information and the comprehensiveness of the content.

It has often seemed like an insurmountable task to dig through the bureaucratic jumble in order to find if information even exists on many subjects, let alone if it is available to the public. This source exemplifies what hopes to be a trend of making invaluable information systems of federal government agencies known and useful to one another. Although the directory is primarily designed for use by the Congress it is essential as well to the researcher and an important acquisition for all academic libraries.

COLLEEN K. PAUWELS
Public Services Librarian
Indiana University School of Law
Bloomington, Indiana