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Jennifer Morgan
Indiana University Maurer School of Law, jlbryan@indiana.edu

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Williams was never presented, and the hearings abruptly concluded. With access to the private papers of many of the characters in this drama, it is surprising this mystery is not solved in the book.

Showdown is packed with factual information, which shows the depth of Haygood’s research, and includes many lyrical stories of race relations in the United States. It is worth overlooking a few flaws to learn interesting American history and to look into the minds of the players involved in the developments surrounding the controversial nomination and confirmation process of the nation’s first African American Supreme Court Justice, especially now, during a time of particularly troubling race relations in this country. Now, almost fifty years later, with the occurrence of an unpredicted, problematic vacancy on the Supreme Court, it is a perfect time to read Showdown.


Reviewed by Jennifer Morgan*  

The newly revised, third edition of Locating U.S. Government Information Handbook comes nearly two decades after the second edition was published, and much has changed in the world of government information.

The Handbook is organized into eleven chapters, followed by four appendices. Each chapter is prefaced with a recommended list of considerations to ponder while reading. For example, chapter 1 (“Introduction to Government and Government Documents”), which offers an introductory lesson on the structure of the United States government, the nature of government information, the Government Publishing Office (GPO), and the Federal Depository Library Program, advises the reader to consider the types of information published by each branch, to become familiar with how the GPO and depository libraries distribute that information, and to think critically about government information.

Chapter 2 (“Introduction to Online Research”) discusses online research skills and gives valuable lessons on the distinction between search engines and search directories, examines advanced search techniques such as using “site:” and “inurl:” commands, and makes comparisons between the three largest search engines (Bing, Google, and Yahoo). The chapter includes useful tables that illustrate different types of domains (e.g., .com, .edu, .org, .net, .gov, .mil), appropriate and inappropriate search examples, and a comparison of search commands and their effects in Bing, Google, and Yahoo. Chapter 3 ("Internet Directories and Portals") continues the discussion of Internet research strategies by covering government directories and information portals, such as USA.gov, FedFlix, and C-SPAN. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive table summarizing the type of information available in government Internet directories and portals.

Indexes and catalogs are discussed in chapter 4 ("Government Publishing Office Indexes"). The authors describe the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications, MetaLib (GPO’s federated search tool), the U.S. Government Bookstore website,  


and FDsys (GPO’s soon-to-be-retired online repository and content management system). The chapter includes resource tutorials that contain descriptions of search techniques, and it is amply illustrated with multiple screen captures of sample searches and comparative tables. The authors do not mention Govinfo, which will replace FDsys in 2017.

¶73 Chapters 5 through 9 focus on specific types of publications and data, with each chapter reporting on characteristics of and access to government publications such as technical report literature, maps and geographic information systems (GIS), statistics, and historical government documents. Chapter 9 (“Historical Government Documents”) discusses how the “information revolution of the late 20th and early 21st centuries transformed the accessibility of historical documents” (p.155). The chapter is particularly valuable for its detailed discussion of the United States Congressional Serial Set (what it includes and excludes), resources providing additional information on the Serial Set, and a lengthy annotated list of indexes and guides to historical documents. One notable omission to this bibliography is the annual reference work Guide to U.S. Government Publications (popularly known as Andriot).16

¶74 Throughout the Handbook, the authors focus their discussion on free government resources, giving background information and detailed descriptions of the resources, illustrated with screenshots. Quite a few of the online resources covered in the book were last consulted by the authors as far back as 2012 and 2013. Some of these resources have been significantly redesigned (and no longer resemble the screenshot or description in form, function, or content)17 or have ceased to exist.18

¶75 One of the most valuable features of the Handbook is the chapter conclusions, which include research guidelines and detailed tables. For example, chapter 7 (“Maps, GIS, and Cartographic Resources”) has a lengthy table describing “Sources of Published U.S. Government Maps and Data” (pp.137–44) and chapter 8 (“Statistics or ‘Lies, Damned Lies, and Statistics’”) has a table defining selected statistical concepts. I wish that these tables were published online in digital format, available to download for educational or instructional purposes.

¶76 Chapter 10 provides a topical guide to U.S. government information resources. Valuable features include a glossary of key terms in the section on “Budget, Spending, Deficit, and Debt” (p.197), and the section on Congress includes tables to help the reader understand Congress, the legislative process, and the various types of congressional publications. Chapter 11 provides an inventory of congressional directories, published online and in print, and other similar resources that would assist the researcher in learning more about congressional members’ activities.

¶77 The book has four “quick reference” appendixes. Appendix 1 (“Decoding Numbers and Citations”) provides an explanation of the Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) numbering system and offers a table with examples of citation

17. For example, USA.gov was relaunched in June 2015 with a new responsive web design and some altered content and functionality.
18. For example, the USA.gov index of Cross Agency Portals (described on p. 37 of the Handbook) and the Louisiana State University Libraries Federal Agency Directory (described on p. 236) no longer exist. “Open CRS,” referred to on p. 22 and p. 205, has been nonfunctional since October 2014.
format for documents from all three branches of the government. The table also includes information on what resources to use to find the documents. Appendix 2 discusses how to use the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to obtain documents. Appendix 3 has an annotated bibliography of resources that provides further information on government publications, including online resources such as GPO’s FDLP academy and annotations for classic reference works on government information.

¶78 Until appendix 4 (“Selected Commercial Resources for U.S. Government Information”), the authors focus almost entirely on free resources, paying scant attention to commercial databases, especially ProQuest Congressional and HeinOnline (the two most comprehensive resources of government documents), while entirely neglecting others, such as LexisNexis Academic, CQ.com, and Bloomberg Law. The authors explain that commercial resources “are not emphasized because their availability is limited to large research libraries” (p.155). This omission seems counterproductive because I think that this book would make a valuable addition to any academic research library’s reference collection. I also recommend this book to public libraries and law libraries.

¶79 As an adjunct instructor for two library and information science programs, I eagerly read this book to evaluate its utility as a textbook or supplement for my courses in U.S. Government Information. Given the mutable nature of U.S. government information and online resources, Hein should consider publishing Locating U.S. Government Information Handbook as a frequently updated e-book. With more careful editing¹⁹ and publication as an e-book, I would be happy to recommend this book as an authoritative textbook to my students.


Reviewed by Sandra B. Placzek*

“They chose to become lawyers when there was not even a whisper of a women’s legal movement, but their choice of career placed them perfectly to make a social revolution through the law when the opportunity arose” (p.xvi).

¶80 There are two overriding themes in Linda Hirshman’s Sisters in Law: How Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg Went to the Supreme Court and Changed the World: the modern struggle for equality and the growth of the women’s legal movement. Hirshman uses the lives of the first two women appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court and selected cases to track that fight and illustrate this


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