



**Condition Assessment of PR 32.4 Documents at
Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University
Pilot Project 1**

May 17, 2022
For External Distribution

Table of Contents

Contents

Introduction & Background.....	3
Project Staff	3
The Condition Assessment	3
Preparing the Collection for Digital Imaging.....	7
Recommendations.....	9

Introduction & Background

Library Services and Content Management's (LSCM) Pilot Project Initiative provides GPO with an opportunity to extend the reach of services to Federal Depository Library collections. Data and experience from the various pilot initiatives will allow GPO to determine the feasibility of providing these expanded services to depository libraries, and to assist in building the National Collection of U.S. Public Information found in the more than 1,100 libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program. The first pilot opportunity asked Federal Depository Libraries to fill out a questionnaire, describing the collection they would like GPO to focus on. Jen Kirk, the Coordinator at the Merrill-Cazier Library at Utah State University applied for a cataloging and assessment of the library's PR 32.4 Su Doc class publications and was accepted. Due to the small size of the collection, under 1,000 publications, the project was scoped to include cataloging, a collection inventory, condition assessment, digital imaging, and collection care.

Project Staff

The following staff from GPO and USU worked together to conduct the condition assessment.

- Melissa Fairfield, Project Lead (GPO)
- Jen Kirk, Government Information Librarian (USU)
- David Walls, Preservation Librarian (GPO)
- Manuel Dennis, Digital Conversion Specialist (GPO)
- Devin Greener, Preservation Lab Coordinator (USU)
- Shelley Doney, Library Assistant for Government Information (USU)

The Condition Assessment

The PR 32.4 class publications are located within the Government Information Collection at the Merrill-Cazier Library. The collection is located on compact shelving and is open for browsing by the public. PR 32.4 class publications comprise approximately 3 and a half shelves.

The Assessment Method

The GPO Team and the Library Coordinator reviewed the collection on the shelves and made general positive observations about the shelving condition and library environment. Since the collection is housed in compact shelving, the GPO Team decided to remove the publications from the shelves and assess one shelf at a time. Publications were put on a book truck and taken to a nearby workroom in the Government Information Department.

GPO's Preservation Librarian conducted the condition assessment, selecting an item from the book truck and reviewing its physical condition as "Fine, Good, Fair, or Poor" according to the established preservation criteria found in the *Visual Condition Assessment Guide*. Additional condition elements were noted such as the binding type, or whether the item is unsupported and any visible mechanical damage.

In addition to the condition, the call number, title, and other bibliographic data was called out and recorded by GPO's Digital Conversion Specialist on a spreadsheet prepared for the project. The Preservation Librarian also photographed the title page and other relevant bibliographic data to be used later to catalog each item. Due to the fact that many of the publications consisted of different titles bound together under an agency group, many titles, bibliographic data, and photographs needed to be recorded from a single bound volume.

To assist with this work, the Preservation Unit at the Merrill-Cazier Library helpfully provided book wedges and weighted bags to hold the pages of the publications open for the assessment.

Data from the camera and the spreadsheet were copied (backed up) at the end of each working day. The Pilot One Project Manager conducted a quality assessment, downloading each of the photos and matching them to the bibliographic information recorded on the spreadsheet. Omissions in photos or incomplete bibliographic information were corrected as needed.

The Overall Environment:

The Government Information Collection occupies the lower level of the library that was renovated in 2005. Volumes of the PR 32.4 collection are shelved on metal power-driven compact shelving. The collection is open to library users. Though Jen Kirk, the Library Coordinator, said that the volumes for the project had been vacuumed, all of the collection shelving was well organized and exceptionally clean and free from dust. The overall Government

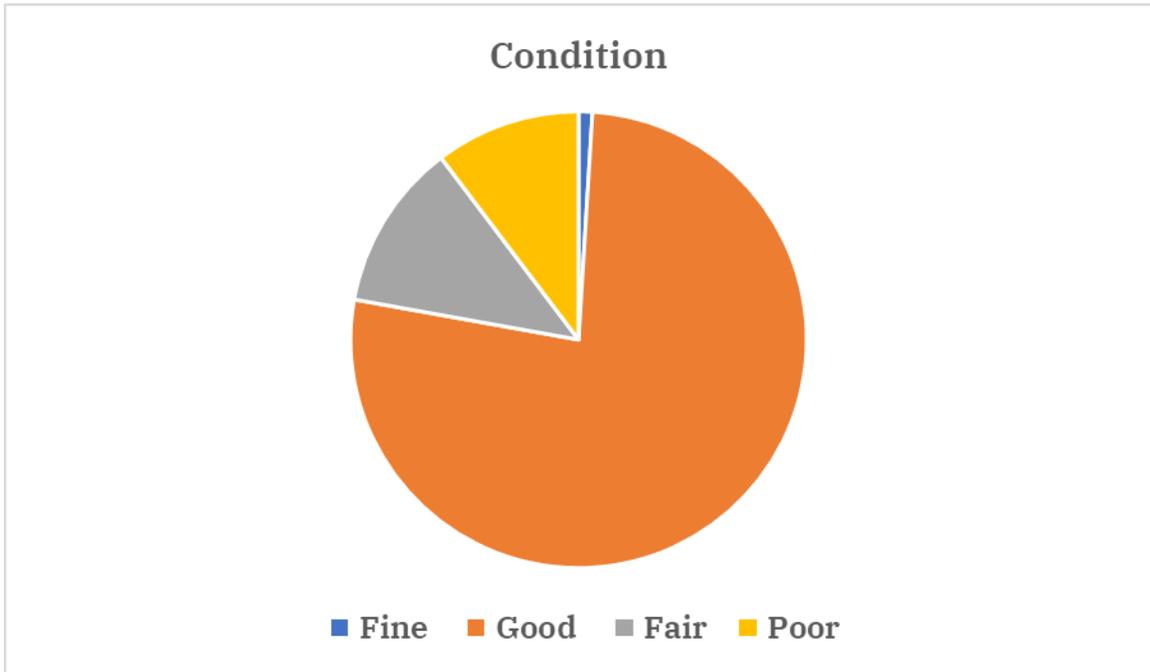
Information collection shows care and attention to organization and cleanliness.

Condition of the PR 32.4 Class Publications

Publications in the PR 32.4 class were printed between 1939 and 1948 with the majority printed during the war years of 1941-1945. A portion of the collection was acquired in the mid-1970s from another library, while publications with a Utah focus were likely acquired at the time of their publication, with others by the Government Collections section of the original Merrill Library.

The GPO Team assessed the condition of 514 publications comprising the bound-with and single titles on the 3 and a half shelves of the collection. The majority of the publications were drilled and string tied into groups by the Federal agency that published them using Gaylord pamphlet bindings. Single publications or thinner groupings were stapled and taped into Gaylord pamphlet bindings of a similar design. While this type of binding is intrusive in that the original item must have holes drilled into it for the binding cord, the overall result has been to provide a supportive and stable binding structure that protected the publications for decades. The relatively small number (53) of collection items assessed as “Poor” were frequently the result of the publications being unbound or unsupported by any type of enclosure to protect them. There are a number of items in a small newspaper format printed on ground wood pulp paper. These were the only collection items found with noticeably brittle paper.

The overall condition of the collection was “Good” with 395 items in that category and 5 publications were assessed as “Fine.” Sixty-one (61) publications were assessed as “Fair.”



Fine 5, Good 395, Fair 61, Poor 53

A few collection items had mechanical damage at their top, indicating that the shelving space was too narrow to allow the publication to be removed without contacting the shelf above it.

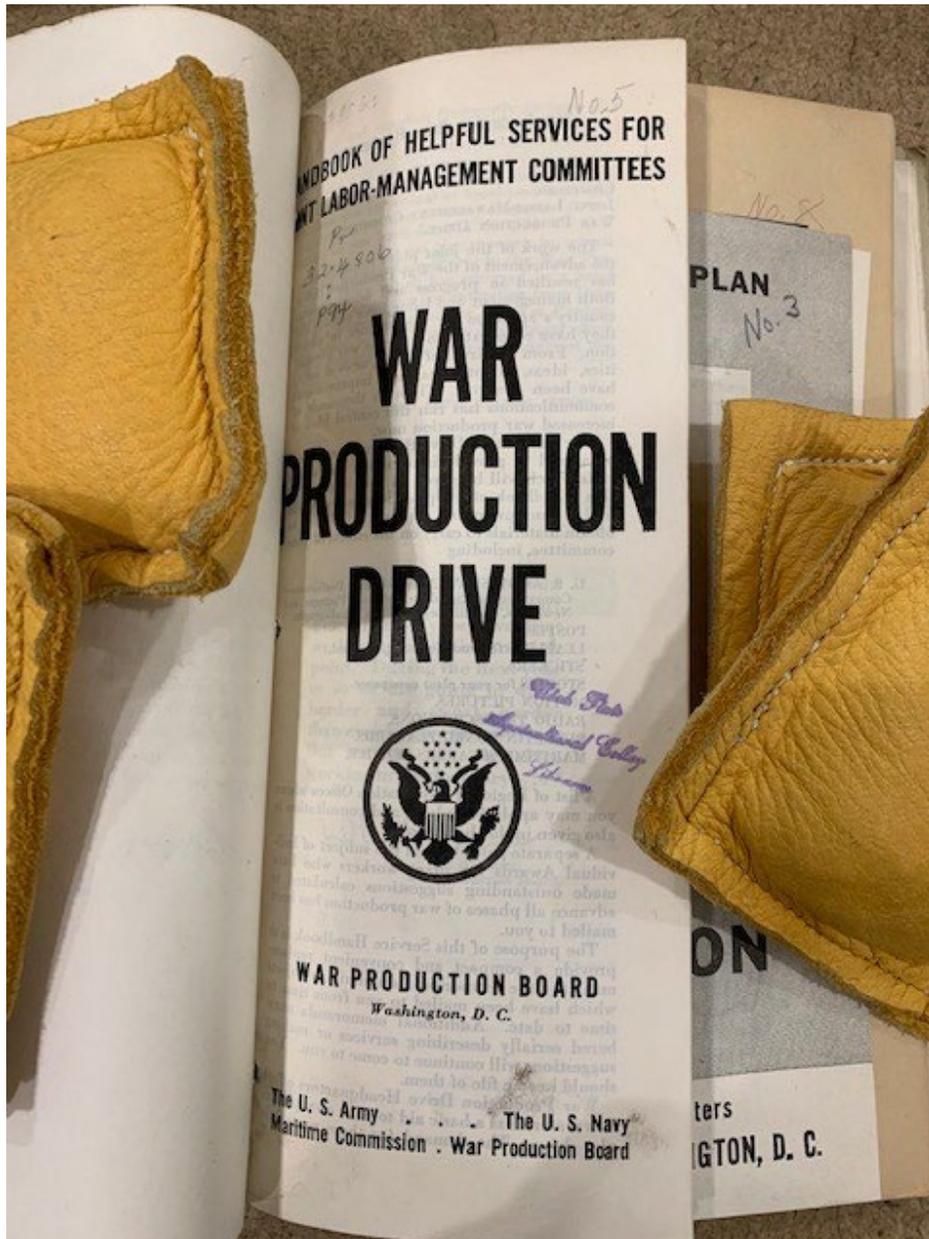


The fourth publication from the left shows damage from contact with the shelf above.

The current lack of cataloging and discoverability may be partly responsible for the overall good condition of the collection in that the majority of library users couldn't find the collection using conventional online cataloging search methods. However, this relative obscurity will change when the collection is fully cataloged.

Preparing the Collection for Digital Imaging

Unfortunately, the Gaylord pamphlet binding leaves little gutter margin. In many examples, the text of the publications disappears into the gutter margin. For this reason, the publications will have to be removed from the Gaylord pamphlet bindings to be digitally imaged. Debinding the publications will allow all text to be visible and eliminate page curvature that can affect the quality of the optical character recognition for full text searching.

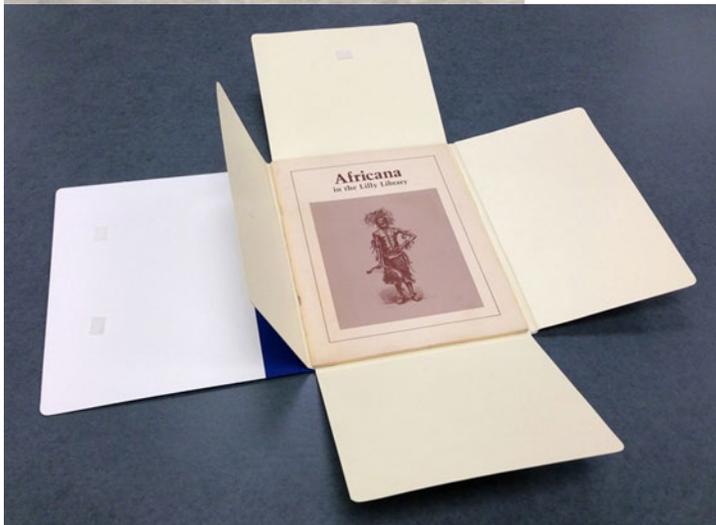


Example of the need to debind publications to ensure a clear digital image with quality Optical Character Recognition, OCR

The Depository Coordinator and the Preservation Unit Head at Library will debind the publications following recommendations provided by GPO's Preservation Librarian. When the bindings have been removed, the individual publications will be packed and shipped to GPO for regular processing through current digital imaging workflows. Packing materials and shipping labels will be provided by GPO for the Library.

Recommendations

After debinding for digital imaging, the publications will need to be supported and protected in order to be shelved and used by readers. Acid free buffered board pamphlet boxes can be used to hold groupings of serial publications. Individual pamphlets can be housed in four flap enclosures. Examples of these can be seen below.



The 514 publications reviewed for Pilot One present a unique insight into life on the American home front during World War Two. While additional work will need to be completed to determine the number of existing copies, it is presumed that these publications are not prevalent in most Federal Depository Libraries. The grouping of these publications in an almost archival format by Federal Agency and topic suggests that they could readily

be seen as a “special collection.” While cataloging the collection will provide increased discoverability, this discoverability comes with increased risks of unsupervised use and theft. The digital copy on **govinfo** will serve as the primary copy for access and provide a digital surrogate to reduce wear and tear on the original items. A special collection status for the PR 32.4 publications would provide the added security to ensure that the collection remains within the Merrill-Cazier library for current and future users.