

## READY REFERENCE RESOURCES

The following represents a wide range of selected online government information sites that are particularly suitable as ready reference resources. Libraries will need to choose the reference resources most suitable to their populations and patron base. Also visit the GODORT website Frequently Used Sites Relating to U.S. Federal Government Information at [www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/](http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/) for good ready reference links by subject.

### ***Search Engines and Portals***

- USA.gov, the “U.S. Government’s Official Web Portal,” is more than just a search engine. It searches government and military websites as well as state government websites. Patrons can find the latest news about the U.S. government, links to government information by topic, and answers to frequently asked questions about government services (e.g., contacting public officials, getting or renewing a passport, applying for government jobs). Topics are also organized by specific user groups, such as kids, parents, seniors, and veterans. ([www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov))
- Google U.S. Government Search is a standard search engine that searches .gov and .mil websites. Federal, state, and international government websites, as well as some nongovernment websites, are included in this database. To narrow search results to government sites, either add .gov to the search keywords or click on the link “Search Government Sites.” For example, using taxes and .gov as search terms produces websites for the IRS as well as the Vermont and Oregon tax departments and the Ministry of Taxes in Azerbaijan. An advanced search feature allows users to limit searches in many ways, such as by language, region, or specific web page. The Google U.S. Government Search homepage also includes links to latest government news, the *Washington Post*, the White House, *Government Executive* magazine, and the American Armed Forces Information Service. ([www.google.com/ig/usgov](http://www.google.com/ig/usgov))
- Science.gov is a searchable and archived portal for government science information and includes government information arranged by topic (e.g., Astronomy, Earth and Ocean Sciences, Health and Medicine, Science Education). Websites of current interest are featured, such as the website for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) disease. A Special Collections area links to National Science Portals, Science Conferences, and Taxonomies and Thesauri. (<http://science.gov>)
- Regulations.gov is a portal where patrons can comment on federal regulations and search for regulations by agency, document type, or keyword. ([www.regulations.gov/search/index.jsp](http://www.regulations.gov/search/index.jsp))

## ***Documents/Websites Arranged by Subject***

There are several websites (often maintained by depository libraries) that arrange online government documents/websites by subject. Libraries may want to bookmark these sites on their reference desk computers.

- Browse Topics. This website is a partnership between the GPO and Oklahoma State University. Topics are available alphabetically, from “Accounting and Auditing” through “Zip Codes.” ([www.browsetopics.gov](http://www.browsetopics.gov))
- Government Databases by Subject. Maintained by Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. ([www.ulib.iupui.edu/subjectareas/gov/dbsubject/](http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/subjectareas/gov/dbsubject/))
- Government Documents. Maintained by The City College of New York, Government Documents Division. ([www.ccnycuny.edu/library/Divisions/Government/GOVPUBS.html](http://www.ccnycuny.edu/library/Divisions/Government/GOVPUBS.html))
- Government Information on the Web Subject Index. Maintained by St. Mary’s University, Austin, Texas. (<http://library.stmarytx.edu/acadlib/doc/us/subjects/submain.htm>)
- Subject Indexes to Government Information on the Internet, by Stephen J. Woods. Maintained by Idaho State University. Links and brief description of the subjects indexed on various library websites. ([www.isu.edu/library/documents/subinst.htm](http://www.isu.edu/library/documents/subinst.htm))
- Government Information on the Internet by Subject. Maintained by the University of Idaho Library. (<http://db.lib.uidaho.edu/govdocs/index.php3>)
- Frequently Used Sites Related to U.S. Federal Government Information. Maintained by GODORT, hosted by Vanderbilt University. This searchable resource site lists popular resources by topic and agencies by level of government. It includes resources for government information librarians such as blogs, electronic discussion lists, indexes, and citation guides. ([www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/index.shtml](http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/romans/fdtf/index.shtml))
- Documents Center. This central reference and referral point for local, state, federal, foreign, or international government information, maintained by the University of Michigan Library, provides a searchable reference and instructional tool for government, political science, statistical data, and news. ([www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/](http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/))

## ***Citing Online Government Documents***

Once patrons begin to use online government documents as part of their research, they will need to know how to cite them in bibliographies.

- Brief Guide to Citing Government Publications. Maintained by the Government Publications Department, Regional Depository Library, University of Memphis. (<http://exlibris.memphis.edu/resource/unclesam/citeweb.html>)

- Citing Online Government Information Sources using MLA (Modern Language Association) Style. Maintained by the University of Nevada, Reno, Libraries. ([www.library.unr.edu/subjects/guides/government/cite.html](http://www.library.unr.edu/subjects/guides/government/cite.html))
- “Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States.” National Archives General Information Leaflet No. 17. ([www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17.html](http://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/17.html))

### ***Budget of the U.S. Government***

- Budget of the United States Government: Main Page. Search the latest edition of the federal budget at this website and browse or search federal budgets from FY 1996 to the present. ([www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/index.html))

### ***Census Data***

- The U.S. Census Bureau website provides census data, information categorized under People and Households (e.g., state median income, poverty tables) and Economic Indicators (e.g., housing starts, new home sales, manufacturers’ shipments, inventories and orders, retail trade quarterly reports). ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))
- American Fact Finder has information, statistics, and maps about the Federal Decennial Census, the American Community Survey (yearly data on areas of 65,000 population or more), the Population Estimates Program (population estimates made between the decennial censuses), the Economic Census (taken every five years), and the Annual Economic Surveys (data derived from the Annual Survey of Manufactures, County Business Patterns and Nonemployer Statistics). (<http://factfinder.census.gov>)

### ***Charities***

- Search for Charities (online searchable database of organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contribution). Maintained by the IRS. ([www.irs.ustreas.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96136,00.html))
- Rules for Charitable Contributions. Maintained by the IRS. ([www.irs.ustreas.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96102,00.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/charities/article/0,,id=96102,00.html))

### ***Children/Youth***

- America’s Story from America’s Library, the Library of Congress’s entertaining and educational media for youth, has something of interest for all ages. ([www.americaslibrary.gov](http://www.americaslibrary.gov))
- Ben’s Guide to the U.S. Government for Kids—that’s Ben as in Ben Franklin—is maintained by the GPO. (<http://bensguide.gpo.gov>)

- Youth Education: Fun and Games. Previously called Money Central Station, these are games and activities to teach children about money, maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing. ([www.moneyfactory.gov/newmoney/main.cfm/learning/fun/](http://www.moneyfactory.gov/newmoney/main.cfm/learning/fun/))
- NASA's page for students. Maintained by NASA. ([www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html](http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/index.html))
- Teaching with Documents—Lesson Plans includes links to reproducible primary documents from the National Archives. Topics include images of the American Revolution, 1912 political cartoons, Watergate, and much more. ([www.archives.gov/education/lessons/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/))
- Toy Hazard Recalls. Maintained by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. ([www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/toy.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/toy.html))
- Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys). Maintained by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. ([www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/child.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/category/child.html))

### ***Congressional Record, via GPO Access***

- The *Congressional Record* is published every day Congress is in session and records the debates and proceedings of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. GPO Access includes a database that searches the *Record* from 1994 to the present. ([www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/))

### ***Copyright***

- The U.S. Copyright Office website contains an excellent introduction to the basics of copyright, a page of FAQs, and a list of the current copyright fees. Search copyright records from 1978 to the present and find out how to register a work or record a document. ([www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov))

### ***Countries of the World***

- *Background Notes*, from the U.S. State Department, includes information on foreign countries' political conditions, economy, history, land, people, and foreign relations, updated every few years. ([www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/))
- *World Leaders*, online directory previously known as *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments*. The CIA continuously updates this most current directory available on this subject. (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/index.html>)
- *World Factbook*. The print version of this CIA document is updated yearly, but the online database version is updated continuously. Each country's entry includes a simple map, a short history of the country, and detailed data on the

country's geography, people, government, economy, communications, transportation, military, and transnational issues. The site also includes a section on world flags. (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>)

### ***Grants and Contracts: Elementary and Secondary Levels***

- Find Programs by Title. Almost \$38 billion of U.S. government grant money was distributed in fiscal year 2006 through the U.S. Department of Education. Local schools can use this agency's website to find out what monies and programs are available. ([www.ed.gov/programs/find/title/index.html?src=fp](http://www.ed.gov/programs/find/title/index.html?src=fp))
- Grants.gov. Central storehouse of information on federal grants. Use this site to find and apply for federal government grants. ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov))

### ***Health***

- Medicare. Patrons can compare Medicare prescription drug plans, find plans in their state that match a prescription drug list, and access information about lowering prescription costs during Medicare's coverage gap period. From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ([www.medicare.gov/default.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/default.asp))
- Nursing Home Compare. This Department of Health and Human Services website contains detailed information about every Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing home in the country. ([www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Home.asp))

### ***Internet Hoaxes and Urban Legends***

False information and rumors can spread like wildfire through the Internet. Here are two reliable government sites to help you check out these rumors.

- Internet Hoaxes: Identifying Hoaxes and Urban Legends, from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Defines and gives sample Internet and e-mail hoaxes and urban legends. ([www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/general\\_1165337828628.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xcitizens/general_1165337828628.shtm))
- Hoaxbusters, formerly sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy, Computer Incident Advisory Capability (CIAC), as of 2007 is no longer affiliated with any U.S. government organization. (<http://hoaxbusters.org>)

### ***Small Business Sites***

- Business.gov (Doing Business with the U.S. Government). Maintained by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The U.S. federal government is the largest purchaser of goods and service in the world, and you don't have to be a huge corporation to do business with it. For small businesses, the Small Business Guides site is a great place to start. ([www.business.gov/guides/](http://www.business.gov/guides/))

- SBA Programs. Maintained by the U.S. Small Business Administration. The Small Business Administration is set up specifically to offer help and assistance to small businesses. This site links patrons to available SBA programs. ([www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/index.html))
- Small Business/Self-Employed Virtual Small Business Tax Workshop, maintained by the IRS, offers a small business/self-employed online classroom with step-by-step information about federal tax obligations. ([www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=97726,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=97726,00.html))

### **Social Security**

- Social Security Claims. Maintained by the Social Security Administration, allows user to apply for and check application status for retirement/disability/spouse's benefits. (<https://s044a90.ssa.gov/apps6z/ISBA/main.html>)
- Benefit Calculators, by the Social Security Administration. Calculator for social security retirement benefits. ([www.ssa.gov/planners/calculators.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/planners/calculators.htm))
- Retirement Planner, by the Social Security Administration. Detailed information about social security retirement benefits under law. ([www.ssa.gov/retire2/index.htm](http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/index.htm))
- *Online Social Security Handbook*, by the Social Security Administration. A basic guide to the benefits and programs. ([www.ssa.gov/OP\\_Home/handbook/](http://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/handbook/))

### **Statistics**

- The National Center for Education Statistics is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education. Its website offers data, fast facts, and tools such as a school, college, and library search tool. (<http://nces.ed.gov>)
- National Center for Health Statistics website, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/))
- *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, by the U.S. Census Bureau. The website of the *Statistical Abstract*, the annual national data book produced since 1878, is the best megasite for statistics generated across the U.S. government. Patrons can find everything from public high school graduates by state to federal drug seizures by type of drug or details on congressional campaign finances. The bicentennial edition, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, is also available online. For further information, users can check the detailed and copious references. (<http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2878>)
- Zip Code Statistics, provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Statistics by zip code about people, housing, the labor force, personal income, and households. ([www.census.gov/epcd/www/zipstats.html](http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/zipstats.html))

## ***Student Aid***

- Federal Student Aid. Higher education gets more expensive all the time. The federal government offers several student aid programs, and this website, maintained by the U.S. Department of Education, provides information on Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, PLUS Loans, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, and Perkins Loans. Patrons can also fill out the online Federal Student Aid application at this site. ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov))

## ***Technical Documents***

Some government agencies are better than others when it comes to digitizing technical and scientific documents and making them available on the Web. Two of the best are NASA and the USGS.

- NASA Technical Reports Server. Patrons can search/browse NASA documents on this website. If there is an online version of the document, the link is included in the record. (<http://ntrs.nasa.gov>)
- USGS Publications Warehouse. Patrons will find more than 70,000 bibliographic records in this database. As with the NASA site, if there is an online version of the document, the link is included in the record. There is also a link to recently published titles by month. (<http://infotrek.er.usgs.gov/pubs/>)

## ***Vital Records***

- National Center for Health Statistics. This site by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides links by state for birth, death, marriage, or divorce records. ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/howto/w2w/w2welcom.htm))