

Memorandum on the Relationship of Government Information to My Goals

I had to answer this “sort of position” I would like to apply for question recently, while filling out the practicum application for Dr. Pemberton. Come summer, I am going to be working at Information International Associates (IIa) because what I wrote was I wanted a bridge from government work to non-government work. My ideal would be something that is mostly non-government, but has government connections. Dr. Pemberton suggested IIa and I have to admit this Oak Ridge company sounds a bit closer to the mark than my current situation, that of Department of Energy (DOE) contractor (Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, managed for DOE [for now] by Oak Ridge Associated Universities). ORISE hired me because of my Air Force and Education backgrounds (seven years as an officer and two as a high school English teacher, after getting a Secondary Education degree from Penn State).

The reason I want to distance myself some from government work is that since my second year in the Air Force budgets have gotten ugly and my employment comfort level has never been optimistic. Even so, I do not think I could leave either the “public servant” work or the training angle completely behind. I enjoy information gathering, analyzing, and presentation too much to picture myself doing anything else.

Which brings us to how I think experience with government information will help me get and perform well in my ideal position. (I did notice, by the way, that you did not write “get *and* keep” such a position.) IS 534 for me will add information finding skills, that is, improve my knowledge of what to look up and where to find the material. Something the course may also help with is the networking side of government information; knowing who to call to get pointers or answers.

Those are the two areas I would like to learn about, either during this course or because of it. In a more general sense, I want to find out how much government information is online (beyond merely how huge the “.gov” domain is), how much of this online information is on the Web, and how quickly the paper is going electronic.

My subject focus, based strictly on my day job, is nuclear facility safety and training. As far as the exercise sets, the one I intend to do twelve sections from is the Scientific and Technical area, since this supplements a lot of resources I use on the job already.

You may ask, "Jeff, if government work makes you nervous about job security why aren't you planning to get away from it entirely?" Good question. Saying "because after eleven years of it, it's what I know" seems a weak reply, and it is not the whole truth either. Except for the fact that I have a family to provide for, the prospect of flitting around from job to job on federal whims does not bother me as much as it does most of my coworkers. I do not have the temperament to stay in any one position too long. In fact, the 27 months (so far) in my current slot is the longest I have been in the same job. I like the variety. I find the funding shell games oddly amusing and more depressing than distracting. And, although I am no good at the politics, they never cease to amaze me.