



Toby Green uncovers hidden content @TobyABGreen

Yes! It's time for another [#Scholcom](#) [#GreyLit](#) 🧵

This time a big 🙌 to
[@ocul_libraries](#) (OCUL-GIC) for organising . . .
Government Information Days 2023

Today's big ?

Making GOVERNMENT INFORMATION from around
the World EASIER TO FIND

[@godort](#) [@LibrarianshipCA](#)





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? Why did Jeff Bezos launch Amazon with books and not videos or white goods?

The image shows two side-by-side elements. On the left is a screenshot of the Amazon.com Books page from August 1994. The page has a blue header with the Amazon logo and the text 'Welcome to Amazon.com Books!'. Below the header, it says 'One million titles, consistently low prices.' and '(If you explore just one thing, make it our personal notification service. We think it's very cool!)'. There are several sections with blue underlined links: 'SPOTLIGHT! -- AUGUST 16TH', 'ONE MILLION TITLES', 'EYES & EDITORS, A PERSONAL NOTIFICATION SERVICE', and 'YOUR ACCOUNT'. On the right is a photograph of a Philips VideoCD case for the movie 'Forrest Gump'. The disc is visible, showing the title 'Forrest Gump', 'PHILIPS', 'DISC 1', and a red '12' rating icon. The case is labeled 'PHILIPS VIDEOCD'.

Welcome to Amazon.com Books!

One million titles, consistently low prices.

(If you explore just one thing, make it our personal notification service. We think it's very cool!)

SPOTLIGHT! -- AUGUST 16TH
These are the books we love, offered at Amazon.com low prices. The spotlight moves EVERY day so please come often.

ONE MILLION TITLES
Search Amazon.com's [million title catalog](#) by author, subject, title, keyword, and more... Or take a look at the [books we recommend](#) in over 20 categories... Check out our [customer reviews](#) and the [award winners](#) from the Hugo and Nebula to the Pulitzer and Nobel... and [bestsellers](#) are 30% off the publishers list...

EYES & EDITORS, A PERSONAL NOTIFICATION SERVICE
Like to know when that book you want comes out in paperback or when your favorite author releases a new title? Eyes, our tireless, automated search agent, will send you mail. Meanwhile, our human editors are busy previewing galleys and reading advance reviews. They can let you know when especially wonderful works are published in particular genres or subject areas. Come in, [meet Eyes](#), and have it all explained.

YOUR ACCOUNT
Check the status of your orders or change the email address and password you have on file with us. Please note that you **do not** need an account to use the store. The first time you place an order, you will be given the opportunity to create an account.

PHILIPS VIDEOCD
Forrest Gump
DISC 1
12
PHILIPS
PRODUCED BY PHILIPS INTERACTIVE MEDIA INTERNATIONAL
TM & Copyright ©1994 by Paramount Pictures
All Rights Reserved. Made in Germany.
Catalogue No. 811 1133



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Because METADATA.

Unlike with videos or washing machines, in 1996, [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) could easily offer "1 million" books online because highly structured, standardised, metadata - complete with a persistent and unique identifier, the ISBN, - was READILY AVAILABLE.





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? Who did Bezos have to thank for this?

Authors?

Publishers?

No, it would have been easier to herd kittens

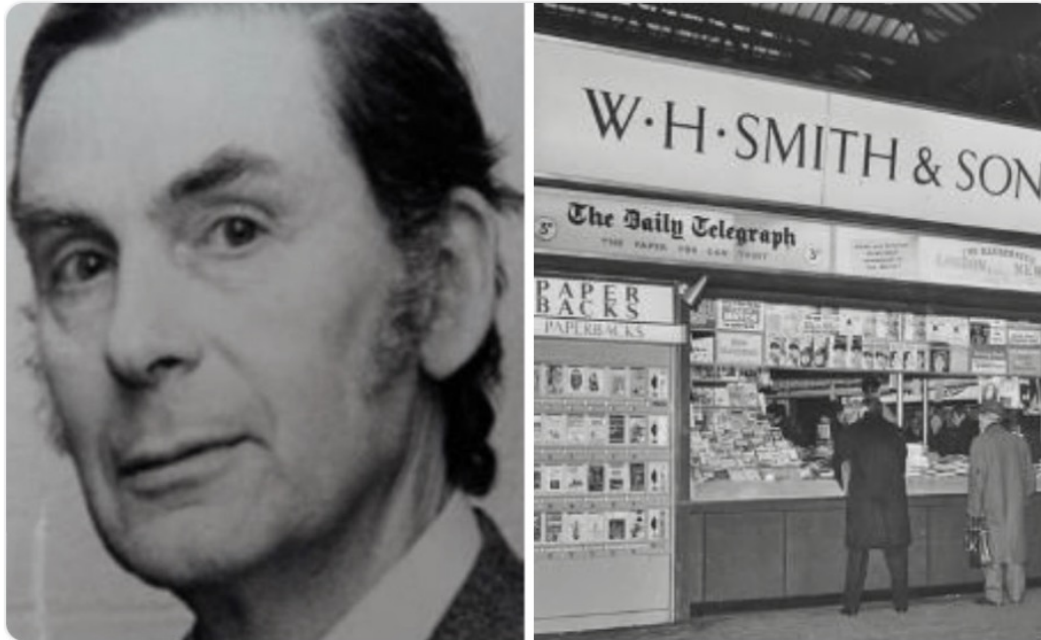




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Bezos needs to thank → Irish statistician Gordon Foster and 🇬🇧 bookseller @WHSmith.

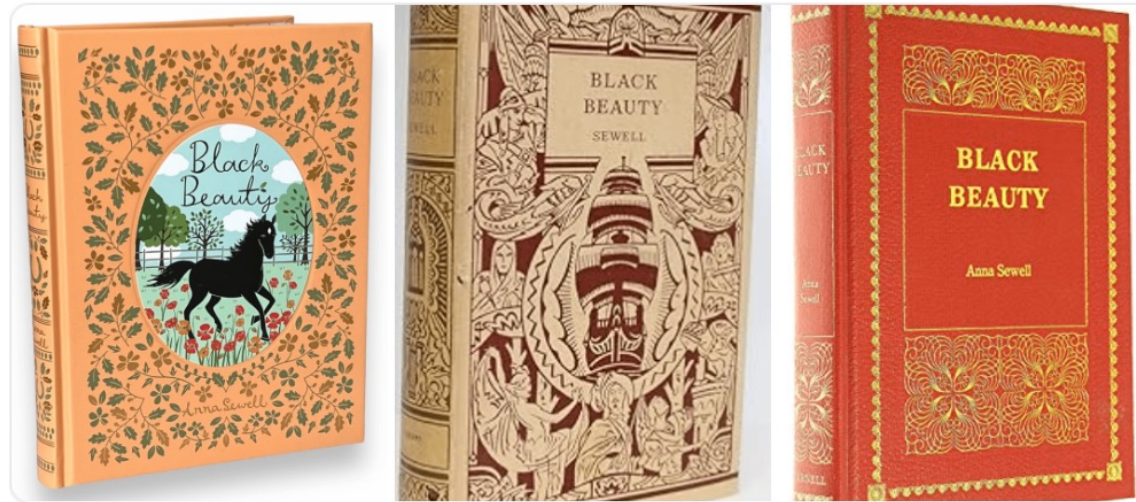
In 1965, the latter commissioned the former to create a Standard Book Numbering system for all books sold in 🇬🇧 and 🇮🇪.





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To understand why this was needed, you need to know that in 1960s each publisher used THEIR OWN book numbering system - aka a NIGHTMARE 🤪 for booksellers like W.H. Smith
Imagine having to FIND the right edition of 'Black Beauty' without an industry-wide identifier system? 🐎






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Impressed, in 1968 David Whitaker, a  publisher of book listings, and  R R Bowker added 'I'-for-international to SBN.

In 1972, ISO adopted ISBNs as a global standard.

Now you could FIND your favourite version of Black Beauty , with confidence, anywhere in the world!





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➔ Question for you.

? Is there an ISGDN - International Standard Government Document Number?

No?

So, is it any wonder that there's no big discovery service to help users FIND Gov Docs.

~~X~~ Amazon Government ~~X~~ Google Government

~~X~~ Web of Government ~~X~~ Open Alex 4 Government





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Governments are still operating like publishers in the 1960s - each has its own document numbering system.

? But why would it be cool if there was an 'ISGDN'?

It's not as if Governments have similar publications.

🤔 or do they? Here are a couple of Bills of Rights . . . 🇺🇸 🇨🇦





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... and what about transnational issues like [#climate](#) or [#education](#) or [#tax](#)?

Areas where quickly FINDING policy ideas, successes & failures so they can be easily SHARED and COMPARED might be beneficial.



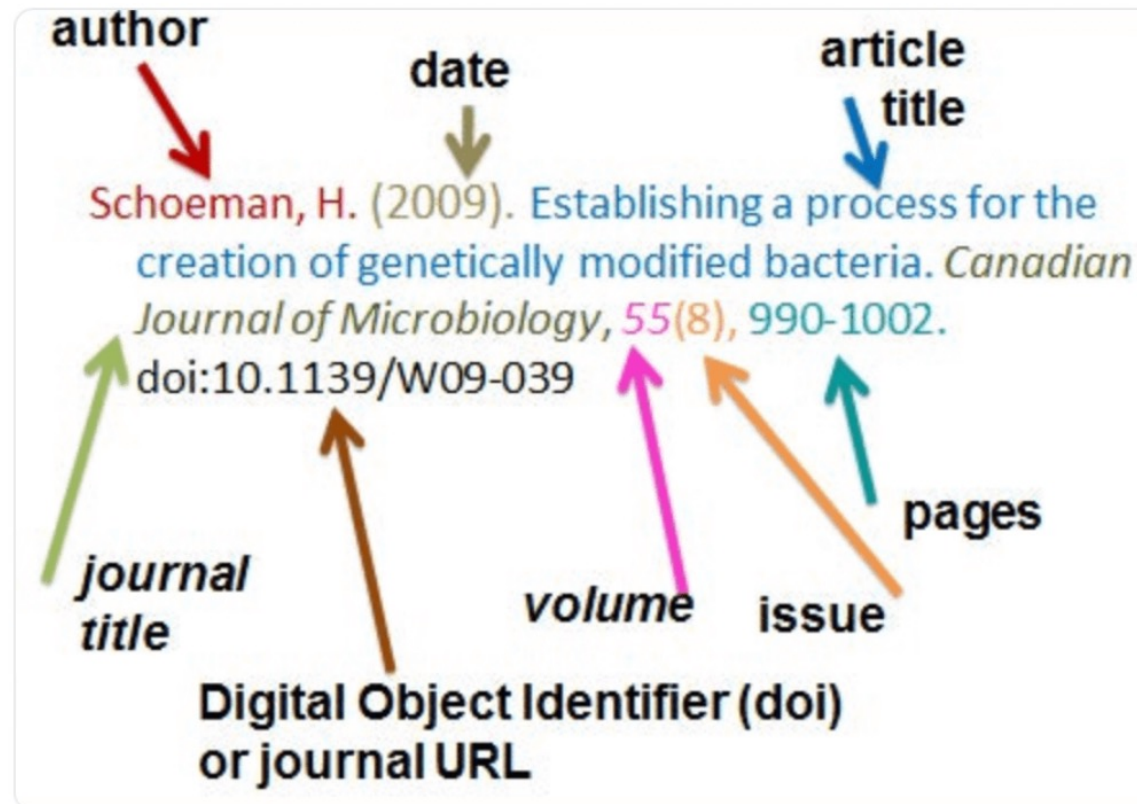


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After all, that's what happens in laboratories and universities the world over.

Researchers share their research ideas, successes & failures using a common system.

Standardised citations & links make it easy to FIND and CITE documents - wherever they originated.



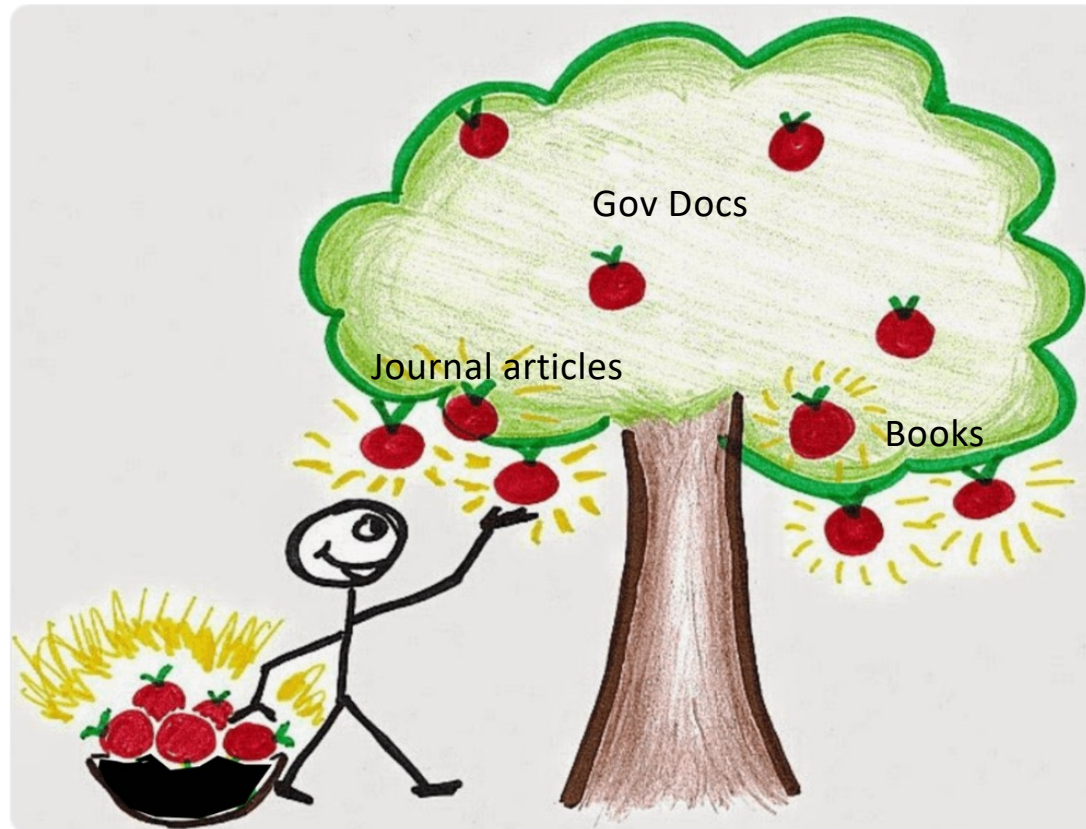


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Talking of citations, Michelle Lake told us that Gov Docs share of citations is falling 🤯.

Helene LeBlanc thought that might be because journal articles are 'low-hanging fruit', i.e. they're much easier to cite than Gov Docs.

I think she's right.





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Why are BOOKS & JOURNALS easier to cite?

Because METADATA.

Did you know that one of the main reasons papers are rejected is because of poor references?

Scholars know. So are they MORE or LESS likely to wrestle metadata-less Gov Docs into their Reference Management System?





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📖 Books are identified ➡ ISBNs 🐎

📄 Journal articles ➡ DOIs

Both integrate easily with Reference Management Systems and the links won't break.

😬 It's kinda ironic that Google's top-ranked page on how to cite Government Publications online uses an example with a broken link 🤖

Citing Government Publications

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION – ONLINE

The following report issued by the National Park Service of the Federal Government was made available at the agency's website and was last updated in 2002. The report was entitled *Decorating the White House: Tips from Dolly Madison and Other First Ladies*, and was retrieved on March 22, 2008.

APA

U.S. National Park Service (2002). *Decorating the White House: Tips from Dolly Madison and other first ladies*. <https://www.nps.gov/tips.html>

MLA

Decorating the White House: Tips from Dolly Madison and Other First Ladies. U.S. National Park Service, 2002, www.nps.gov/tips.html. Accessed 22 March 2008.

TUR.

U.S. National Park Service. *Decorating the White House: Tips from Dolly Madison and Other First Ladies*. <https://www.nps.gov/tips.html> (accessed March 22, 2008).



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As with book publishers in the 1960s, the challenge, of course, is how to herd governmental kittens to create a common IDENTIFIER that matches existing STANDARDS





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If, in the 1960s, the solution for books was provided by a publisher-related aggregator . . .

. . . maybe what's needed today is a policy-related aggregator to provide the solution for gov docs . . .





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Introducing @Policy_Commons World Governments . . .

. . . where we are starting to create STANDARD METADATA for GOV DOCS from all over the world.

JOIN US in making GOV DOCs as easy to FIND and CITE as Black Beauty 🐎 and journal articles 📄

The screenshot shows the Policy Commons website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search" and an "Advanced" button. To the right, there is a "COHERENT DIGITAL" logo and an "Upload" button. Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "Organizations", "Publications", "Topics", "Tables", "Lists", and "Modules". The main content area features a large banner with the "World Governments" title and a search bar. Below the banner, there are tags for "climate change", "sanctions", "armed conflicts", "trade", and a plus sign. A "Learn more" button is positioned above a QR code. At the bottom, there are two statistics boxes: "2,045 Organizations" and "3,057,042 Publications".