

These specifications are intended to assist depository staff in making informed purchases that will best achieve the goal of providing public access to Federal Government information in a variety of electronic formats. Computers with these specifications meet the requirements for accessing and using Federal Digital System (FDSys).

These guidelines are aimed at providing reasonably robust workstations that should provide years of service before they become obsolete, but GPO encourages the purchase of equipment that exceeds these specifications if at all economically feasible. The speed at which computer capabilities are evolving indicates that the higher the initial outlay, the longer the useful life for the equipment. If a higher end system is not affordable, look for flexibility and expandability in the system that will allow for enhancements and upgrades at a later date. As these guidelines address minimums, ensure compatibility among chosen components before purchasing.

Depository libraries must have computer equipment sufficient to allow timely and equitable public access to Government electronic information products and should allow printing or downloading information selected by the user.

3.5 and 5.25 floppy drives: If your library still has depository materials on 3.5" and 5.25" floppy disks, you must have the equipment for patrons to access these products. Alternatively, depository libraries may "substitute" floppies in their collection for online editions located at the [CIC Government Publications Task Force Floppy Disk Project \(FDP\)](#), hosted by Indiana University Library. in partnership with GPO. Check the online holdings of the FDP prior to substituting. If the FDP does not have the title you wish to substitute, you must provide access to the product by maintaining older equipment or converting these products to a new platform.

GPO works with the Cartographic Users Advisory Council (CUAC) to develop any additional specifications that support GIS applications. These are included in the recommendations with the indicator:

- FOR CARTOGRAPHIC DATA USE:

**All depositories are not required to meet the cartographic specifications.** They are meant

to assist with planning purchases for those libraries that support and provide data services using spatial data and GIS applications. The "regular" specifications will allow for basic mapping applications. Census maps will be available in multiple formats, including PDF, so large-scale equipment will not be necessary, though consideration should be given to purchasing a color printer.

Viewers versus full working versions of applications software: If viewers are available on computers to allow access to Government information in the various formats this is acceptable and the library will meet the minimum technical requirements. While providing applications software and/or staff support to help patrons manipulate data or create reports is desirable, it is optional. This position is consistent with [Depository Library Public Service Guidelines For Government Information in Electronic Formats](#)

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (August 7, 1998) amended §508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require "individuals with disabilities, who are members of the public seeking information or services from a Federal department or agency, have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to that provided to the public who are not individuals with disabilities." Federal depository libraries must provide hardware and software to allow this or accommodate users in some other manner. Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Standards; Final Rule was published in the December 21, 2000 (pp. 80499-80528) issue of the Federal Register and became effective June 21, 2001. Further guidance on these issues is available from:

- <http://www.access-board.gov/508.htm>
- <http://www.section508.gov>
- <http://www.rit.edu/~easi/index.htm>

CD-RW drives can be purchased as either internal or external drives. With a CD-RW the discs can be reused, unlike those of the CD-R that can only be used once. The other major difference between CD-Rs and CD-RWs is that CDs created from a CD-R can sometimes be read in older CD-ROM drives while those created from a CD-RW can only be read from MultiRead drives. This is something to consider particularly if you are creating circulating copies and want to meet the needs of most of your users. Be sure to check compatibility with your operating system.

GPO cannot anticipate or address every possible depository library computer scenario, and depository libraries are encouraged to adapt this menu of specifications to fit their local situations. Depositories may require multi-purpose single workstations, electronic access in

networked environments, or a combination of both. Given the large variation in the size of Federal depository libraries and the numbers of users served, GPO cannot recommend a universal standard for the number of public access workstations in any given library. However, when assessing workstation needs, librarians should consider such local factors as:

- the amount of information provided over the Internet compared with the amount from CD-ROM
- whether and how the workstations are networked
- to what extent users are permitted to perform additional information processing at the public access workstations
- whether users are experiencing extended waiting times at library peak service hours, etc.

When configuring workstations bear in mind that some government CD-ROM products link to the web to update information on the CD-ROM. This means that for the user to get the newer information and the full benefit of the product at least one workstation must have both CD-ROM capability and Internet accessibility with a graphical browser.

Additional or different capabilities may be desirable for workstations used by library staff. **Staff should have headphones and a microphone to use with their computers.** These are needed to participate in Web-based training or conferences. Some libraries may elect to add applications software, such as spreadsheet, word processing, or database software, to their public access workstations, but this is a local resource management decision.

Many depository libraries have existing computer equipment that is no longer "state of the art." These specifications should not be applied retrospectively to existing equipment, although they may assist in determining the appropriate time for replacing or upgrading equipment. Libraries should also consider keeping this equipment in order to access electronic products that cannot be read with newer hardware and software.

### Related Guidelines

- "[Depository Library Public Service Guidelines for Government Information in Electronic Formats](#) ," Administrative Notes, v. 19, #11 (September 15, 1998).
- "[FDLP Internet Use Policy Guidelines](#) ," Administrative Notes, v. 20, #2 (January 15, 1999).