



Substituting Electronic for Tangible Versions of Depository Publications (9/24/2008 Version)

These guidelines may be used to help depository coordinators determine if tangible depository publications may be substituted with online versions.

Background

At its spring 1998 meeting, the Depository Library Council asked GPO to provide guidance on retention of tangible publications that are also available in the [FDLP Electronic Collection](#). In response to the Library Programs Service's (LPS) request, GPO's General Counsel issued a memorandum opinion in the fall of 1998 concerning the legality of withdrawing tangible formats and replacing them with on-line electronic equivalent versions. The following guidelines are based on this opinion, the 1984 formal opinion regarding commercial on-line equivalents of depository publications, and the 1985 memorandum opinion regarding substituting microfiche for print versions.

Substitution Criteria

A selective depository is permitted to replace tangible versions with electronic equivalents provided the electronic version is complete, official, and permanently accessible. In keeping with the free access provisions of the FDLP, as required by law, Government information in electronic form must be free of charge to the user. Retention of substituted materials must follow retention rules for the given depository. For example, a selective depository may substitute materials if held less than 5 years, must offer the tangible products to the Regional, and must receive the Regional's permission to dispose of the tangible material. If permission is not granted, the selective must keep the tangible material but may apply at a later date for approval to dispose of the tangible products. If permission is granted, the tangible materials must be offered to the Regional and other selectives through disposal lists, Needs and Offers, etc., as is the practice for materials older than 5 years. Tangible products appearing in the [Superseded List](#) that are substituted with an electronic equivalent may be superseded in the normal fashion. Libraries are encouraged to offer significant superseded sets on disposal lists, Needs and Offers, etc. No library is required to substitute electronic versions for paper, microfiche, CD-ROM, etc.

Implementing These Guidelines

Depository librarians should use their professional judgment in determining titles that can be substituted. Titles appearing below are not the only titles that can be substituted; they are merely examples of the types of titles that may be substituted.

- * Any title that appears as content on [GPO Access](#); examples are the [Federal Register](#), the [U. S. Government Manual](#), [Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents](#), and the [Code of Federal Regulations](#). Note that some titles on GPO Access do not have comprehensive coverage, e.g., hearings. Wholesale substitution therefore is discouraged;
- * Any title for digitized material from content partnerships; examples are titles from the [Cybercemetery](#), the [Homeland Security Digital Library](#), [Department of State Foreign Affairs Network \(DOSFAN\)](#), etc.;



- * Any title that GPO has archived; examples include [Appalachian Reporter](#), and [Antitrust Division Manual](#) .

Depository librarians should also consider patron characteristics, usage patterns, community needs, research requirements, and their collection development policy when determining if electronic-only access is best suited for a given title. Issues to consider include:

- * Is the title better suited in another format?
- * What are its scope, purpose and intended audience?
- * Is the title authoritative?
- * What is the date range or coverage?
- * Is the information time sensitive?
- * Is the title's electronic presentation comparable to the tangible version?

Electronic-only information may require more staff time to identify, learn to use, train staff, and assist patrons. Staff levels must be adequate to do this and other required depository tasks.

Electronic-only information may limit the number of patrons who can use all parts of the collection at one time. The library must be committed to funding for future upgrades of computer hardware, printers, and software to ensure adequate numbers of computer workstations for public access to electronic Government information.

Each depository library's policies for electronic formats and Internet use must be within the guidelines established by the FDLP. The [Depository Library Public Service Guidelines for Government Information in Electronic Formats](#) and the [FDLP Internet Use Policy Guidelines](#) can be found on the FDLP Desktop.

The library should properly reference the substitution so it may be easily located and accessible to users. This can be accomplished by creating OPAC/shelflist notes or Web links.

A Regional's disposal guidelines should include cooperation among depositories to ensure that one or more libraries in a state or region still retain a tangible version. The substitution guidelines can be negotiated in a State Plan. Maintaining a viable copy of these titles in tangible format within a state or region is still a part of a Regional's mission. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Regional and another depository is a mechanism to ensure that a tangible copy is available in perpetuity.

FDLP Electronic Collection

In 1993, Congress passed the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act, P.L. 103-40, whereby it expressed its clear intent for GPO to use electronic technology to make Government information more accessible to the greatest number of people. This objective is stated in the [1996 Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program](#).

A key component of an electronic FDLP is the establishment of the FDLP Electronic Collection. GPO Access full-text databases comprise a significant portion of the FDLP Electronic Collection. GPO assumes the responsibility for determining that the GPO Access electronic version is the equivalent of a tangible version. Detailed information is found in [Managing the FDLP Electronic Collection: A Policy and Planning Document](#) . It is available in hardcopy under (GP 3.2:C 68) or on the Web.