Report of the Depository Library Council to the Executive Working Group of the Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronically Based Federal Depository Library Program

November 1995

I. INTRODUCTION

A cooperative study to identify measures necessary for a successful transition to a more electronically based Federal Depository Library Program, as outlined in the conference report (House Report 104-212) to H.R. 1854, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act of 1996, is currently underway, at congressional direction, by the Government Printing Office. The study is to be completed by March 1996 and is to include a strategic plan which will serve as the basis for GPO's FY 1997 budget submission.

Wayne Kelley, Superintendent of Documents, serves as chair of the study. Judy Russell, Director of GPO's Office of Electronic Information Dissemination Service, is chair of the study's executive working group. The Depository Library Council is among the organizations that make up the study's advisory group.

This report of the Depository Library Council to the executive working group is based on input gathered at the fall 1995 meeting of the Depository Library Council, held October 16-18, 1995, in Memphis, TN. More than 150 depository librarians and other members of the depository library community attended this meeting and participated in the discussion sessions on the GPO study.

II. PLANNING ISSUES FOR A MORE ELECTRONIC FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY PROGRAM

Electronic information technologies present tremendous opportunities for improving public access to government information, as well as potential efficiencies and cost savings which may result from the utilization of these technologies for producing, disseminating, and accessing government information. The Depository Library Council strongly believes that, in planning for the transition to a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program, factors relating to public access and use of the information content must be the primary considerations in any determination of the format of information products and services. Further, the Council believes that the benefits of any potential cost savings cannot be realized and effected without a thorough, system-wide evaluation and technical analysis of the costs and capabilities of producing, disseminating, and servicing electronic government information.

Any examination or revision of U.S.C. Title 44 and related Federal information policies must sustain and enhance public access to government information. Government information products and services should be defined as broadly as possible, and should be made available to the public unless agencies can show that the information is inappropriate for dissemination. A system of geographically dispersed libraries, based on congressional districts which focus services on constituents and which integrate all formats of information, will continue to be essential to best meet the local government information needs of the American public. Public information must be accessible at no fee through these libraries in the format that is most useful to the user as well as most cost effective to the public. And the Federal Government--

including executive, legislative, and judicial branch agencies, the National Archives and Records Administration, and the Government Printing Office--must recognize the government's responsibility to preserve and provide ongoing public access to electronic information, and must work to enact legislation that ensures the integrity and long term access of all formats of Federal Government information.

Council believes that the migration to a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program will create new opportunities for the Government Printing Office and depository libraries in servicing the public's government information needs and fulfilling the mission and goals of the program. GPO will need to move beyond its traditional role as printer and distributor of information products, and must integrate itself into all aspects of the life cycle of government information. As the central coordinating agency, GPO is strategically positioned to work with Federal agencies in the development of appropriate and usable information access and delivery systems and applications (e.g., online systems, standardized software, etc.). GPO's cataloging and indexing responsibilities and expertise will become even more critical as formats change and dynamic information sources are developed. Depository librarians and other program partners providing public access to government information will look to GPO increasingly for training, instruction, and support in the use of Federal information products and services. Agencies, libraries, and networks that provide extended or gateway access to government sources will rely heavily upon GPO to coordinate these activities and to communicate new developments in a timely way. And, working with other Federal agencies and program partners, GPO will need to develop comprehensive strategies to ensure long term access to electronic government information.

Depository libraries must continue to prepare for and adapt to the challenges presented by electronic information and its accompanying technologies. Council believes that every depository library must be able to access local and remote electronic information sources (e.g., CD-ROMs, online systems, WWW sites, etc.) in order to adequately service the government information needs of the public. Council also believes, however, that the public's needs will be best served if planning for the transition to increased utilization of electronic technologies takes into account libraries' electronic capabilities, the appropriateness of the information format, and user expectations and behavior, when evaluating the effects on public access. For example, while depository libraries have made significant progress in preparing for electronic dissemination, approximately 60 percent of depository libraries cannot yet provide full (graphical) World Wide Web access for their patrons, and roughly 30 percent of depository libraries presently have only a single Internet workstation for the public to access all government information products and services. Council endorses the development of grants and other support programs to assist libraries in the transition period.

Depository libraries participate in every stage of the government information life cycle, and they must continue to work with GPO and other program partners to extend these roles in the electronic environment. Library and user input will be critical to the creation, development, and evaluation of information products and services. Libraries must work with GPO to develop strategies for identifying and locating information sources in all formats and wherever they may reside. Libraries will continue to act as the principle agents in facilitating and providing public access and use of government information in all formats. Libraries traditionally have helped to guarantee long term access to government publications through their collections, and must cooperatively work to develop mechanisms to ensure long term access to electronic information.

While the mechanisms for the creation, production, and delivery of electronic government

information may be increasingly decentralized, the need for a coordinating role to oversee and administer effective public access to this information remains paramount. The role of the Government Printing Office in administering a more electronic FDLP will move increasingly toward one of coordinating the support and services necessary for libraries and the public to access Federal Government information.

III. SUMMARIES OF THE DISCUSSION SESSIONS FROM THE FALL MEETING OF THE DEPOSITORY LIBRARY COUNCIL, OCTOBER 17, 1995, MEMPHIS, TN

ASSUMPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION/PLANNING PURPOSES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY PROGRAM

The following assumptions were used as the basis for discussion during the Council discussion sessions on the GPO study and strategic planning process. These assumptions have emerged in the context of the congressional Study to Identify Measures for a Successful Transition to a More Electronically Based FDLP. The assumptions are based on congressional intent and direction, technological developments, and budgetary realities.

1. The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) will be primarily electronic.

2. The law will be revised so that electronic information is clearly in scope for the FDLP. Agency participation in the FDLP will be required.

3. These factors will lead to changes in the structure of the FDLP.

4. The funding available to the FDLP from the legislative branch appropriation will not exceed the current level.

DISCUSSION SUMMARIES

The Depository Library Council devoted a considerable portion of the fall 1995 meeting to discussions centered around the GPO study and strategic planning process and the transition of the FDLP to a more electronically based program. Below are summaries of the discussion groups which focused on the following areas: Legislative/legal issues, library issues, and GPO issues. Attendees at the Council meeting participated in one of these three concurrent discussion sessions. Council wishes to express its appreciation to all the attendees of the fall meeting for their cooperation and participation in these discussion sessions, and to GPO and the executive working group for the opportunity to provide direct input to the study process.

A. LEGISLATIVE/LEGAL ISSUES

1. Are the exemptions from depository publication eligibility presently in U.S.C. Title 44 still appropriate, and should they apply to electronic information (i.e., "those [publications] determined by their issuing components to be required for official use only or for strictly administrative or operational purposes which have no public interest or educational value and publications classified for reasons of national security;" and "so-called cooperative publications which must necessarily be sold in order to be self-sustaining")?

> The consensus of the discussion group was that government information should be defined as broadly as possible in regard to format. "Government information products and services" is the key phrase, irrespective of format.

> The current language indicating that the "issuing component" should determine

whether information is "required for official use only" should be revised. The basic language should be revised to define government information eligible for dissemination as broadly as possible and to place the burden of proof on the issuing agency to show that it is not appropriate for distribution. In cases of doubt, the Superintendent of Documents rather than the issuing agency should make the determination. A committee of Congress should be identified as an appellate body to resolve differences of opinion.

It was felt that the phrase "so-called cooperative publications which must necessarily be sold in order to be self-sustaining" should be deleted from the basic definition of government information in Title 44. Cooperative publications should be eligible for distribution to depository libraries, but it was recognized that this is a complex issue that needs to be further discussed and dealt with in a separate section of the law.

2. Should agencies be required or permitted to charge user fees for information developed at public expense? Are there barriers to access and usage associated with cost-recovery mechanisms?

In the current budgetary environment, it is reasonable to permit, but not require agencies to charge for user fees. However, consistent with the language of OMB Circular A-130 and the Paperwork Reduction Act, agencies should only charge users for recovery of the marginal cost of dissemination. This is a principle to which we should adhere.

User fees do present barriers to use, as does information requiring specialized equipment, such as computers, microfiche readers, or software to access. One of the values of the depository library program is the expertise and equipment participating libraries can offer to the public. Information should be available to the public free in depository libraries, although this does not imply access to free printing or free disks for downloading.

Government information is created for and paid for by the public. There are many users of government information--from "big industry" to small business people to individual citizens. Information should be available in a usable format, free. Users might pay for "value-added" "bells and whistles."

The issue of printing is problematic. It is not reasonable to expect the library to pay for printing a 500-page document so that a library user can read it. Because of limited availability of equipment availability, most libraries cannot allow a user to tie up a terminal for a long time to browse through a very long publication and print off selected pages. This is one example of an impediment to use--that extensive documents which were once disseminated in paper and could be browsed and checked out, now must be printed out at considerable expense in order to be used. Depending upon the software used for dissemination and for printing, the resulting document may also be less attractive and less useful than its original print edition.

Currently, the variety of formats and software associated with government information presents impediments to use. Librarians may not have updated equipment with sufficient storage capacity to run CD-ROMs most efficiently. With such a variety of interfaces, it is difficult to develop the expertise to assist

with each and every database.

There may be insufficient machines for all of the users. Where once twenty users could simultaneously use twenty different print titles or issues, a small depository library may be limited to one or two terminals to access those twenty information resources when available solely in electronic form. Information should be available at access points appropriate to the level of use of the product, and the number of users in the congressional district.

3. Who should pay for depository CD-ROMs or other electronic information products and services not produced through GPO (e.g., agencies, GPO, other)?

CD-ROMs ought to be treated like other publications.

The major cost of CD-ROM products is associated with development of the information product and the pressing of the master. The subsequent production of disks is done at a nominal cost. Agencies could pay for the additional cost of disks to be distributed to depository libraries, unless it is determined that this would result in a reduction in the amount of information distributed.

The cost of producing CD-ROMs may include licensing costs for software. Agencies should keep this in mind when developing information products and provide for the cost of the software licenses to depository libraries. Whenever possible it is desirable for agencies to work with GPO in developing products in order for agencies to make use of standard software interfaces available through GPO.

4. Should the current structure of selective and regional depositories be changed to reflect open access to electronic information? If so, how?

Depository libraries are essential in this transition period from print to electronic sources. A relatively small proportion of the population have their own computers, or the expertise to access online sources of information. Geography is an important factor now, and will continue to be. When there is universal access to the Internet for all citizens, then depository libraries will continue to serve an important service role--assisting the public to locate and use electronic information resources. For now and the foreseeable future, there will continue to be a value to a congressional district-based system which focuses on services to constituents.

In an electronic environment, the number of participating libraries in the depository library program could be expanded, so that many more libraries could assist users with electronic information resources. Even citizens in rural areas would not have to travel a long distance to use the services of a depository. In order to expand the depository library program to include many more libraries, we need to make connecting libraries to the Internet an important priority. The concept of universal service should be preserved. Currently, access to the Internet is fairly low-cost. In the future, as the private sector becomes dominant in development of the NII, costs may be much higher, yet another reason to connect all libraries to the Internet and to preserve the principle of no-fee access in the depository libraries.

Regionals are defined by service responsibilities, not by constituents. Title 44 should be amended to make the requirements for regionals more flexible.

5. What are the responsibilities of depositories, issuing agencies, GPO, the National Archives, and/or other partners in preserving electronic government information?

Both long-term access and preservation are key concerns in government information. In the past, libraries have maintained access to government information long after the issuing agencies disseminated the information. The public has been able to access long runs of information in the depository libraries. Although NARA technically provided the preservation, depository libraries provided usable access.

Ultimately, the National Archives and Records Administration should be given the authority and appropriation to both preserve government information in electronic formats and make it accessible.

Agencies also have a responsibility, in the development of information plans and products, to consider long-term access for the information products they develop. The Government Printing Office serves as an important model for access to electronic products. Through electronic storage sites, GPO plans to ensure access to information in its custody. Users will be able to access current information in an online mode on GPO Access and the GPO bulletin board. Older information can be accessed "near line" from the storage sites, although the interface may be seamless to the user.

Other models are developing. Library consortiums and other institutions may develop cooperative projects with agencies to make information accessible.

Redundancy is highly desirable in preserving and continuing to make electronic information accessible, precisely because there are few or no print counterparts preserved.

6. How can users determine if they have "official" information? Can or should electronic information be authenticated?

There was insufficient time to discuss this topic. The audience briefly responded that authentication was highly desirable. In later open discussion during the meeting, it is apparent that the legal profession needs to move to accept electronic formats as the "official" edition.

This question is also related to that of access and preservation. Speakers indicated that it was essential to be able to access historical editions of constantly updated works, for example, in order to determine what law or regulation was in effect at a given time.

B. LIBRARY ISSUES

1. How will depository libraries cope with the following administrative, service, and cost burdens that will likely accompany an increasingly electronic FDLP?

(a) Technology - the need to procure, install, and maintain additional computer

equipment, telecommunications services, and software.

Libraries will have to cooperate with other units on campus or within agencies to plan for increased telecommunications capabilities, more phone lines, etc. With increasing reliance on the Internet as a source of government information, workstations will become multi-use, i.e., patrons will be using these workstations for e-mail, etc., in addition to locating government information. This will put more pressure on the resources and might force libraries to restrict use of the facilities. Public libraries especially do not have access to the systems support that many academic libraries have. One benefit of the electronic depository is that libraries will not have to negotiate site licenses individually; access to electronic resources will be provided through the depository system.

One coping mechanism which transcends providing equipment for government information in electronic resources is the trend for some academic institutions to require students to provide their own laptop computer. This is not a solution for public libraries, school libraries, or even most academic institutions.

It would be useful if GPO were a coordinating agency which would coordinate standardization of software used for all government information products. If recognized standards such as Z39.50 and HTML were used for government information products, it would simplify access by the public.

> (b) Human resources - the need for additional technically skilled staff to operate electronic facilities in the library, and to assist users with electronic information services.

Adequate technical support staff is critical. Right now, many librarians are being called upon to learn and perform many technical and operational maintenance skills formerly unrelated to librarianship, which further stretches their time. Some librarians are resisting this trend. New output measures need to be developed for service such as the number of hours spent trying to reach certain URLs, etc.

Librarians are becoming consultants and the organizers of information, creating local home pages, etc. With the increased use of electronic resources and its labor intensive instructional needs, library personnel will have to be reallocated from other areas to public services, including providing assistance with accessing government information.

Should Congress be assisting with training and development of depository staff's skills in support of the electronic environment? Perhaps GPO should become more of a training agency. It might become, along with librarians, more of an educational service rather than an information service. GPO might train staff from libraries in how to access electronic information and they might also coordinate training for agency publishers in how to publish their data so it is useful to the general public.

> (c) Local printing expenses and reader services - as printed documents give way to electronic media, libraries will face rising costs and administrative burdens in order to meet users' needs and demands for hard copy.

Issues raised included the dilemma of providing the paper to print documents in electronic format; should this service be provided free or do libraries charge for it?

> (d) Loss of selectivity and control - the inherently expansive nature of Internet

access could, in effect, make every library a "regional" for electronic information. The transient state of some information on the Internet complicates access and bibliographic control, and undermines the concept of reliable access to materials not selected by a library.

Participants echoed the issues identified above and did not provide any real ways to cope with this situation. Some felt that having access to "everything" enhanced services by giving users the ability to make their own selections. At the same time, the function of developing a focused collection that meets the needs of local users is a strength of libraries, as well as an efficient use of time, skills, and resources.

2. If electronic information is "free" over the Internet, what would motivate a library to become or continue as a depository?

Economics is still a driving force for many libraries to retain depository status. Depository libraries will still have "free" access to databases that private users will have to pay for. Librarians also were caught up in intangibles such as the prestige of being a depository library. Some also felt depositories would continue to serve an archiving function. Libraries serve as a clearinghouse for government information.

3. What are depository library obligations when the Superintendent of Documents (SOD) points to information freely accessible at Federal activity sites?

We did not address this issue.

C. GPO ISSUES

Before any thoughts as to how to answer these questions can be attempted, an underlying philosophy of the depository library program must be established. No fee access to government information must be guaranteed. Access to government information is for the "common good," and this principle should be emphasized and not forgotten. Additionally, GPO must have the regulatory authority to make agencies comply with Title 44 and provide information to depository libraries. 1. What is the role of the SOD with respect to electronic information freely accessible at other Federal activity sites?

These sites should be pointed to; the Pathway project is an appropriate role to undertake.

Interagency agreements should be worked out, a contractual agreement. A legal framework will make the process (information exchange) work better (Dept. of Energy as an example).

Electronic information must be defined. Does it include e-mail among agency employees or electronic discussion group archives? The business of government may be seen in snippets of electronic communication. These have not previously been seen as documents for distribution to depository libraries. This might be internal from the agency's view, but should actually be publicly disseminated.

Identify what the public and the user community want and need and go after that information. Recognizing the limited number of personnel at GPO, information needs could be prioritized based on community information needs assessment.

GILS will facilitate identification of agency electronic information resources. NARA may also use GILS to identify agency material not archived.

GPO should have a centralization role. Identification of and referral to electronic information should be a major responsibility of the GPO/SOD.

2. What arrangements can or should GPO make to obtain free access for depositories when an agency or its non-government agent charges?

First it must be identified as to whether or not an agency has an exemption from providing information for inclusion in the depository library program.

Agencies must be educated as to their responsibility to provide information for inclusion in the Depository Library Program. Just because agencies charge for information does not relieve them of their responsibility to provide access to depository libraries.

Examples already exist where the SOD pays for information to be disseminated to depository libraries. This option should be explored further.

3. What are appropriate criteria for converting paper products for direct electronic access or to physical electronic format? What should be the mix of media formats (e.g. CD-ROMs, diskettes, etc.), and what types of files should be available (e.g., ASCII, system-formatted, PostScript, etc.)?

GPO should establish focus groups to determine user needs. GPO should not make this decision alone. User needs and usability must be a high priority when determining conversion to electronic format.

A list of titles that should never be available solely in electronic format must be established.

Cost savings cannot be the sole reason for converting to electronic format.

Is the material appropriate for electronic format? There must be a policy statement for conversion of information to electronic format.

Accessibility to electronic information by depository libraries must be in a usable format. Recognizing that agencies create data sets and other electronic files for their needs, depository library users may have other uses for these data. Is a new role for GPO a software development role? Should GPO provide depositories with software enabling them to access information not now accessible (e.g., the climatological data CD-ROMs recently received)?

Software for products must be useful to the public user. A common software, open and portable formats should be a goal. 4. What should be the modes for direct electronic access to information storage and retrieval sites (e.g., Internet, modem, etc.)?

GPO must recognize that multiple modes of access will be required because of the varying technological capabilities of depository libraries.

Should GPO pay for Internet Access? In some cases the infrastructure is not there for Internet access. Congressional assistance is needed to establish an infrastructure. Satellite receivers could be placed at libraries.

Regionals could serve as gateways for selective libraries. Recognizing that not all regionals are able to do this, GPO could help support them so that they may carry out these responsibilities.

GPO should explore partnerships with state library networks.

Although some libraries may withdraw from the depository library program, others may join as electronic depositories.

A network of technologists is needed to provide assistance and training to depositories.

Is archiving included in "information storage and retrieval"?

GPO Access Act established the electronic storage facility. This should be used by GPO and other agencies for archiving. Preservation should be negotiated at the same time accessibility is negotiated, through interagency agreements.

5. What criteria should be used to determine the availability and method of delivery of electronic files at SOD sites?

If GPO points to data stored by agencies from Pathway, then there must be a contractual agreement between GPO and the agency to provide for continued access should the agency disappear (e.g., OTA) or the agency no longer sees a need for the data.

Interface options are within the control of GPO. FTP, Bulletin Board, WWW are all options. A protocol that supports the file format in which the author intended the document to look must be one of the options.

The cost of delivery to libraries must be considered. How long will Internet access be free? If the cost of delivery does not remain free to the library, it must still remain free to the user.

Free public access must be defined. Does this mean copies at the user end?

6. What is the responsibility of GPO/FDLP in providing access to electronic files not immediately available online?

What is appropriate for immediate online dissemination must be defined.

A bibliographic record should identify and confirm existence of data as well as indicate how data may be retrieved.

Retrieval should be seamless to the user, Pathway should point to data and retrieve, whether online or stored.

Another option would be to press data to a CD-ROM and distribute to depository libraries when the data is no longer available online.

Mirror sites should be established.

Provisions for distributed preservation of electronic data (in portable electronic

formats) are necessary.

A role for GPO is to ensure that electronic information is preserved and able to be refreshed, somewhere.

Libraries should inform GPO of any preservation activities for government information they are undertaking. GPO should make this information available to other depository libraries. By knowing what is being preserved, we will also know what needs to be preserved. (This actually led into discussion about subject-oriented depository collections. If a library was committing money, staff time, and space to preserving materials, they would have the subject expertise to provide subject-specific reference or ILL services).

At least three virtual government information libraries could be established around the country. They would act as storage facilities as well as being able to provide accessibility to data (separate entities, like the bookstores).

SUMMARY (GPO Issues)

The basic philosophy of the Federal Depository Library Program remains the same in an electronic environment, that is, no-fee public access to government information. For this to be maintained (or strengthened) GPO must have regulatory authority to enforce an agency's participation in the FDLP. As agencies provide more electronic information, GPO must have a mechanism in place to identify what is "out there," Pathway will meet this need. The information must be accessible via a number of different modes (WWW, dial-up, etc.) so that libraries without state-of-the-art technology will still have access to information. Beyond identification, GPO must enter into interagency agreements that will allow depository library access to an agency's electronic information. These agreements should be contractual and should include elements of dissemination and preservation.

GPO will have to take on new roles in the electronic environment. Possible additional roles include software development, so that agency information will be transferred to the depository library in a usable format; conversion of format of information, this may mean not just riding agency production orders; and training librarians in the use of electronic information and educating agencies in the production of information for public users.

Source: v. 16, no. 16, Dec.5. 1995 issue of *Administrative Notes*