



# National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications: Initial Planning Statement

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# **I. BRIEFING TOPIC: National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications: Initial Planning Statement**

## **I.1 SETTING THE STAGE**

Over time the U.S. Government Printing Office's (GPO) Cataloging and Indexing Program has become a catalog of the publications distributed in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). This erosion of comprehensiveness has resulted from several factors, including fugitive documents not available to GPO, the rise in digital publishing, and ongoing constraints on program fiscal, information technology, and human resources.

It is GPO's goal to develop a comprehensive and authoritative National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications that meets the full extent of the statutory requirements, to increase the visibility and use of Government information products, and to develop a premier destination for information searchers.

By law the GPO is charged with preparing and publishing a "comprehensive index of public documents," including "every document issued or published ... not confidential in character." In order to facilitate public discovery of the body of U.S. Government public documents the scope of the National Bibliography must comply with the full extent of the statutory requirements. The legal definition of the cataloging and indexing program, codified at 44 U.S.C. §§1710-1711, does not specially address digital publications. However, the changes in the Government information environment require that the National Bibliography address digital publications. GPO's cataloging authority in the electronic arena is derived from 44 U.S.C. §4101(a), which directs the Superintendent of Documents to maintain an electronic directory of Federal electronic information.

Typically a national bibliography covers works published in or about a specific country and generally is compiled and published by a country's national library. GPO's National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications is narrower in scope than a full national bibliography, in that its focus is entirely upon U.S. Government unclassified publications in all formats.

Today the nearest approximation of a national bibliography for the United States is contained in OCLC's WorldCat online catalog. GPO has contributed in excess of 337,000 records for U.S. Federal publications to this catalog since 1976, and other OCLC member libraries have contributed many additional thousands, resulting in a de facto national bibliography for U.S. Government publications being embedded in WorldCat. However extensive WorldCat is as a resource, there are several concerns with it. Among these are lack of visibility of Government information to users, inability to focus only on U.S. Government publications, multiple records representing the same resource, a general lack of holding or location information from depository libraries for Government publications, variations in cataloging level and application that have occurred over time, and the lack of unrestricted, no-fee public access to WorldCat.

## **I.2 NEW INFORMATION**

*The National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications: Initial Planning Statement* was developed and released for public comment on June 18, 2004. The original deadline for comments, July 30, was extended to September 7, 2004.

Since the planning statement was released for comment, GPO discontinued the use of the "accession number" based SuDocs classification that was applied to online resources in favor of a fuller SuDocs number that is more readily applicable to tangible versions of the same content.

GPO began assigning LC Classification numbers to congressional materials beginning October 1, 2004.

### **I.3 MICRO RECAP**

GPO intends to develop a comprehensive and authoritative National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications that meets the full extent of the statutory requirements of 44 U.S.C. §§1710-1711, §4101. The NB will contain descriptions and locations of U.S. Government unclassified publications in all formats.

GPO's initial planning statement on the National Bibliography examines ways to improve the comprehensiveness of our cataloging and metadata programs, to enhance the usability of GPO's bibliographic products and services, to operate a standards-based national library quality program, to demonstrate GPO leadership in the bibliographic services arena, and to enhance the public's ability to identify and locate U.S. Government publications.

GPO considers that information in scope for the National Bibliography is any information product, regardless of form or format, that any U.S. Government agency discloses, publishes, disseminates, or makes available to the public, as well as information produced for administrative or operational purposes that is of public interest or educational value. Publications represented in the National Bibliography will be those acquired from official sources or sites, and not subject to official use or security classification restrictions.

The National Bibliography will cover an expanded range of current and future Federal publications. In addition, the National Bibliography will also expand in historic depth, as GPO acts to include bibliographic data for legacy U.S. Government publications.

Given this overview, GPO seeks your advice and guidance based upon questions surrounding these issues that we have been asking ourselves that need to be considered and evaluated as the agency moves forward on the planning and implementation of the National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications.

### **I.4 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The June 18, 2004 draft of *The National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications: Initial Planning Statement* is available on the FDLP Desktop at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/about/reports/natbib0604.pdf>.

## **II. REVISED ASSUMPTIONS**

- II.1 The Integrated Library System assists GPO in building the NB. A 21<sup>st</sup> century NB cannot be operated on GPO's legacy information technology (IT) platforms.
- II.2 GPO will continue to contribute records to OCLC.
- II.3 Initially, GPO's core NB database format will be AACR2 cataloging records in MARC21 format. As cataloging standards and metadata schema evolve, GPO's use of metadata schema and cataloging formats will also evolve.

- II.4 Other bibliographic formats may be ILS/NB system inputs or outputs. Possible system input or output formats include, but are not limited to:
- a) MARC21
  - b) ONIX
  - c) GILS
  - d) Preservation metadata
  - e) Dublin Core
  - f) COSATI
- II.5 When GPO performs original cataloging the default level of cataloging applied to U.S. Government publications, regardless of format, will be equivalent to OCLC “Full” level. Following applicable standards, GPO will apply different levels of cataloging in some cases, such as when converting records for older materials without the described publication in hand.
- II.6 NB cataloging records will come from multiple sources, including:
- a) GPO original cataloging
  - b) Record imports
  - c) Conversion of pre-1976 GPO bibliographic records
  - d) COSATI-MARC conversions
  - e) Harvested metadata
  - f) Metadata from content originators
  - g) Records contributed by depository libraries and other partners
  - h) Preservation metadata from legacy digitization projects
- II.7 The NB will provide public access and location information for all items in the National Collection of U.S. Government Publications.
- II.8 GPO cataloging policies and procedures will be documented and communicated proactively.
- II.9 GPO will continue its participation in the LC Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) Programs. These include:
- a) NACO (name authorities)
  - b) SACO (subject authorities)
  - c) CONSER (serial cataloging)
- II.10 GPO will continue to assign Superintendent of Documents classification numbers to publications made available to Federal depository libraries.
- II.11 No fees will be charged to search the NB or to link to publicly available data described therein.
- II.12 No fees will be charged to depository libraries to download bibliographic records from the NB.
- II.13 Location information in the NB includes persistent links to online resources and a mechanism to identify the depository libraries that hold tangible publications.

### **III. QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL, WITH COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

#### **III.1 QUESTION: Are there any standards initiatives that GPO is not presently involved in, but should be?**

##### **DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

It was suggested that we look at Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) as a community. It was also suggested that GPO be involved in open access initiatives.

#### **III.2 QUESTION: Should GPO attempt to pull everything into the NB database, or use federated searching to provide access to disparate sources?**

##### **DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

There was consensus that in the best scenario GPO would have all the resources to bring everything into its database and under its bibliographic control. If this isn't possible, the next best thing to provide access is to use federated searching. There was also a word of caution about "bad" cataloging being searched in this manner and an expectation that, when such records are discovered, GPO would bring them into the NB database and edit them to standard.

#### **III.3 QUESTION: Is National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications the right term?**

##### **DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

While some Council members didn't dislike the term, it conveyed a different meaning to them than the meaning that GPO was applying to it. Another contingent's thinking was that GPO is not doing anything new; the functions are the same, and changing the name implies GPO is doing something different. They preferred using "catalog" or "comprehensive catalog." Others thought something "flashy" is needed when trying to develop a premiere destination for information searchers. Yet another view was that the name is part of marketing, just calling it a catalog is underselling it. Others liked the use of the term "National." No consensus was reached.

#### **III.4 QUESTION: Can the item number system be eliminated? Or should it be refined to support something?**

##### **DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

The item number system currently supports the selection and distribution processes for GPO. It is the way most libraries load their bibliographic records; create labels and brief shipping list records; and most libraries have tailored their workflow processes around this selection process. There was strong agreement that the item number system cannot be eliminated without much discussion from the depository community. It was pointed out that this topic had been discussed at the small/academic library breakout session and was tabled for later discussion at a broader forum. Council chair indicated that there was

sufficient interest in GPO developing a more detailed proposal for possible discussion at the Spring Council meeting. With that, discussion was tabled.

**III.5 QUESTION: GPO has defined the scope of information products to be included in the NB. Does Council agree with the scope?**

**DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

GPO defines materials in scope for the National Bibliography as “any publication, regardless of form or format that any U.S. Government agency publishes, disseminates, or makes available to the public, as well as publications produced for administrative or operational purposes, that is of public interest or educational value. Publications represented in the NB will be those acquired from official sources or sites, and not subject to official use or security classification restrictions.”

One Council member remarked that the scope was appropriate, but wondered if it is achievable. Other comments included the need to incorporate declassified documents into the NB; metadata should remain in the NB with tracking information; concern that limiting acquisitions to official sources or sites would result in the loss of a lot of Web content.

Making agency information available that was not intended for public dissemination even though it may be of public interest or educational value was questioned. It was pointed out that this goes directly to the statute, 44 U.S.C. §1902. There are numerous instances (diving manual) of agencies producing something they view as intended for a limited or internal audience but it is of substantial public interest or educational value and thus it meets the statutory definition for being in scope and ought to be included in the NB, and by extension, in the National collections. Depository libraries have received these materials over the years.

The library community has fought to preserve the broadest possible interpretation and to protect that part of Title 44 that says even if this was prepared for internal use, it should be disclosed if it has educational value and public interest. The other statutory facet of the scope is GPO’s cataloging and indexing mandate, which presumes, much as the Committee on Categorization of Government Information is assuming, that we will want to identify and bibliographically control even things that are not being distributed, because there needs to be interagency communication and a record of the fact that those things existed.

**III.6 QUESTION: Should GPO continue its current practice of describing multiple formats on a single bibliographic record?**

**DISCUSSION BY COUNCIL**

Cataloging standards are flexible enough that either approach is correct. This is another area that needs discussion by the broader depository community. Many find the current practice confusing, as it depends in large part on timing and when GPO receives or identifies a version.

## **IV. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL ADDRESSED AT THE MEETING**

**IV.1 QUESTION:** How is GPO going to make the federated search process available to the community?

**RESPONSE:** GPO procured Ex Libris' MetaLib federated search service with a sufficient number of concurrent users to support depository libraries and public access.

**IV.2 QUESTION:** Isn't there a whole section of GPO that does marketing? [in the context of NB being the right name]

**RESPONSE:** Yes.

**IV.3 QUESTION:** What does the Item Number System have to do with the National Bibliography?

**RESPONSE:** Item numbers came up in the context of the NB because GPO was looking at the bibliographic record and different data elements. The item numbers began having one purpose in life and over the years have had other purposes added to them, until now they are bearing a great deal of freight that they never were intended for. We can table this discussion for another time.

**IV.4 QUESTION:** Will the SuDocs Classification remain?

**RESPONSE:** The SuDocs Classification is addressed in the NB plan in the context of classification issues to explore. But there is not a definitive statement indicating that the SuDocs Classification will remain. That must have been such a fundamentally ingrained assumption that there was no need to articulate it. It will be added to the next version.

## **V. AUDIENCE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED AT THE MEETING**

The facilitator of the Council sessions accepted questions from the audience written on GPO-supplied cards. Two of fourteen questions were answered during the Council session. Those questions and their answers are summarized below. Twelve questions held to answer at a later date, either because of time constraints or the need for a subject matter specialist to provide more detailed answers, follow the questions answered during the session.

**V.1 QUESTION:** How does or will the NB interoperate with or supplement the inventories and categorizations of agencies' Government information required under the E-Government Act of 2002?

**RESPONSE:** GPO staff have had the opportunity to serve on subcommittees that have been formulating recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget which would address not only interoperability, but also the metadata and bibliographic standards for categorizing Government information products.

And one of the elements that's been really stressed in the recommendations is the whole concept of not only do future developments have to be interoperable, but they need to be interoperable with the installed base or the legacy systems, such as library catalogs with millions and millions of records. So interoperability has certainly been given a lot of strong consideration in this process.

On the side of metadata standards, what the committee has tried to recommend is that agencies should apply a core set of metadata elements to all of their Government information products and then to the extent that they individually might want to build on those, they are free to augment them, hopefully using established metadata schemes. But at least we would have a common core set of metadata and it would be searchable interoperably.

**V.2 QUESTION:** Why not use the term Federal Bibliography to distinguish from other national bibliographies?

**RESPONSE:** We can add that to the list of nominations, but the same problem would result, since there is also a Federal Government in Germany.

## **VI. AUDIENCE QUESTIONS ADDRESSED AFTER THE MEETING**

**VI.1 QUESTION:** Programmers tell us never to toss away data, so be careful with respect to eliminating item numbers.

**RESPONSE:** GPO's planning proposal for the Item Number System will include provisions for maintaining the legacy data.

**VI.2 QUESTION:** What is the plan if GPO is unable to obtain funding for digitization, National Bibliography, etc.?

**RESPONSE:** Options are being developed along with the detailed plans and funding needs. We do not have these options or estimates completed at this time.

**VI.3 QUESTION:** Our catalogers no longer believe that one record will support proper or thorough cataloging of government documents in multiple formats. We think patrons want to see an index of their format options, and are limited in their willingness (or ability) to scroll through a lengthy record of varying formats. For example, we are already creating or downloading individual records for web-based resources. A poll of depository practice could possibly be useful in making decisions on multiple format cataloging.

**RESPONSE:** GPO appreciates this feedback on the use of the "single record option," an issue that is under continuing examination. It appears that in a content management



system every manifestation of a publication (i.e., a version) may require a separate metadata record.

**VI.4 QUESTION:** I'm sorry to hear several comments against having GPO's catalog records point to copies of documents on GPO sites. There are several reasons why this would be a good idea:

1. The catalog is, for now, a catalog of documents, not web sites. The documents on a GPO server can be stable, and we can be sure the catalog record and the document match (i.e., no version problems).
2. Software such as SFX and MetaLib prefer to link to documents on a site or domain – if government journals, for example, were @gpo.gov, we might be able to link to them thru SFX.
3. The PURLs in MoCat records are not really a very efficient way to find agency Web sites, though it is a helpful result. Other parts of GPO Access, or FirstGov or Google, are better.

**RESPONSE:** 1. GPO is investigating changing its practice to have the PURL in cataloging records link to the archived copy at one of our FDLP Electronic Collection archival sites.  
2. GPO will investigate ways to enhance reference linking to digital publications.  
3. As noted, most GPO cataloging records describe publications, and the PURLs link to those publications. A few resources are cataloged at the collection or Web site level, and the links are also at that level.

**VI.5 QUESTION:** Does the term “publications” include agency databases?

**RESPONSE:** In general, National Bibliography cataloging will describe resources at the publication level. Agency databases, when cataloged, receive a collection level record.

**VI.6 QUESTION:** Keep up with current cataloging standards and practices – AACR3 is coming out! And FRBR is being implemented by many GPO partners and OCLC.

**RESPONSE:** GPO's staff routinely monitors, participates in, and is trained in such developments.

**VI.7 QUESTION:** Other standards listed need to include the Digital Object Identifiers emerging standard for dynamic data. Also consider other metadata standards as appropriate.

**RESPONSE:** Several offices in GPO are closely monitoring emerging metadata standards, particularly in the context of the Future Digital System.

**VI.8 QUESTION:** What reports do you expect to be available from the ILS? Which ones will be available to the depository community? Can we get a report of new items, sorted by item or SuDoc on a monthly basis?

**RESPONSE:** One of GPO's requirements for an ILS is to be able to produce such reports for users. Ex Libris provides numerous report options, including outputs generated from pre-defined user searches. GPO intends to make a monthly listing of new records available from the ILS.

**VI.9 QUESTION:** Can GPO set libraries' holdings in OCLC as they catalog new items?

**RESPONSE:** GPO is beginning a project with OCLC to set holdings symbols for regional depositories who desire this service.

**VI.10 QUESTION:** Will GPO add COSATI cataloging records for Department of Energy technical reports to the ILS?

**RESPONSE:** GPO expects to use the federated search capability of Ex Libris' MetaLib tool to search across Department of Energy records and other resources. This will leverage the investment in cataloging already made by other Government agencies to the advantage of GPO users.

**VI.11 QUESTION:** What progress has been made on the promise/proposal in the National Bibliography document about communicating cataloging policy (e.g., on the single record option)?

**RESPONSE:** GPO has begun development of a "National Bibliography News" Web page to convey cataloging news, policy and procedural changes, ILS updates, etc.

**VI.12 QUESTION:** Besides LC and NARA, don't forget agency libraries. For example, the Department of the Interior and the Department of Labor are the official libraries of record for their own publications. Plus they often have a print copy of MF-only FDLP publications (e.g., Open File Reports, I 19.76:).

**RESPONSE:** Agency libraries are included in the revised National Collection plan as an acquisitions source for tangible publications.