Council Session: What it means to be mostly electronic–

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The presentation outlined below was focused on Federal Depository Libraries and the transition to a mostly electronic collection. Discussion was led by Robin Haun-Mohamed, Director, Collection Management and Preservation. Two handouts accompanied this session:

- Council Briefing Topic: Transition to a Mostly Electronic FDLP Collection
- Tips to Effectively Transition to a More Online Federal

Background to Presentation:

Many depository libraries are seeing the value in focusing their collection efforts on Web resources, thus freeing resources for user services. are increasingly relying on information available from the Internet. With publications available on the Web are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, users are able to access this information from their home, office, or wherever there is an Internet connection. Accordingly, several recent depository library designations have included mostly electronic depository libraries for the first time in the history of the FDLP. Recent inquiries from depository library coordinators and other librarians interested in participating in the FDLP have raised some questions and issues that relate to a mostly electronic FDLP collection that council should consider.

All depository libraries continue to share the responsibility for providing free public access to published Federal information products, regardless of format. All depository libraries must continue to select material to meet the government information needs not only for their primary constituents, but also for the local community and surrounding area. All depository libraries must provide proper maintenance of the Federal materials entrusted to individual library's care. Free access to publications means that any member of the general public can use published Federal information products in all media at the library without impediment.

Key Discussion Points:

Council reviewed and assessed 17 Key Assumptions and verbally discussed and responded to 9 questions related to the Transition to a Mostly Electronic FDLP Collection. Go to <

http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/proceedings/06spring/mostlyelectronic.pdf> to review these assumptions and questions.

Summary:

- Changes were made to the Briefing Topic Paper and the revised paper is available at <>.
- The next step in this process is to develop guidelines in addition to the handout identified above. The guidelines then can serve to assist libraries considering the transition to a mostly electronic depository collection.
- A panel presentation highlighting what other libraries have done to move toward an electronic collection should be developed in coordination with the Fall Federal Depository Library Conference and Council meeting. cts. A pilot project will be starting to digitize not only the fugitive publications currently processed, but also to proceed with systematic digitization of all published Federal information products in the Federal Depository Library Program collections.
- The following published Federal information products shown during the presentation are available in a fully searchable PDF format:

    Oil and Gas Management Plan: Big Thicket National Preserve, 2006

    Drinking Water Inspector's Field Reference, 2003 Edition

    H.R. 10499: A bill to amend the Social Security Act to liberalize benefits under the old age, survivors, and disability insurance program….

    Advice on Providing Additional GSP Benefits for Least Developed Countries

    State of the Watershed: Water Quality of Boulder Creek, Colorado

Tuesday, April 4, 2006 3:30 – 5:00

Question 1:

There has not been a requirement in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) that any Federal Depository Library retain online publications in the same manner in which they are required to retain tangible publications. The library selects an item number for an electronic-only title and the library catalogs the title for inclusion in the library's online catalog. Does the cataloging record for that title need to be retained in the library's online catalog for at least five years if there's a subsequent decision that the title no longer fits the library's profile?

Summarized Responses:

- A participant stated that he could see that this would apply if there were a digital depository program, but the dissemination of metadata is its own issue. He believes that it's mixed up a little bit because of the different language and his understanding of the definition of custodianship in the traditional depository library program.

- Judy Russell noted that in the electronic access world, with the 71 percent of publications that are only distributed electronically, the cataloging record becomes the surrogate for saying that a library considers this to be an active part of their collection. That is how libraries convey to the user that the material is accessible.

- Another participant disagreed, saying that he does not think that his library considers the electronic only publications to be a part of their collection, because the library is not able to manage this material nor provide the appropriate levels of stewardship or custodianship that they would on their collection.

Question 2:

Tangible materials received on deposit by libraries remain the property of the United States Government according to Title 44 and the libraries become the custodians of these resources. What does this mean in an electronic environment when libraries provide access to depository resources, and what would it mean if GPO were to disseminate electronic files of online publications to depository libraries?

Summarized Responses:

- One participant thinks that assuming that the electronic products are retained in the future FDsys, libraries are custodians of the access to these products, not of the products themselves. She said that the question changes if GPO is

disseminating electronic files to depository libraries for re access, which involves a different kind of agreement.

- Another attendee responded that he thinks part of this would be the authentication piece, which would ensure that those files were not altered.

- Another librarian pointed out that this is a legal question.

- Yet another participant amended the question by asking if one were to take the kind of depository program concept where there are many places that have printed pieces of information that have been distributed, and the libraries are considered to be legal repositories, plus a bargain were to be made to institute a method to ensure that those items are equivalently authoritative materials but are held somewhere else, would that resolve the issue?

- A participant replied that he thinks it would, but he is most concerned about making sure that the material does not get changed for political reasons.

Question 3:

In a mostly electronic collection, must online publications be included in a library's public access catalog, or may the library use other ways to offer access to online depository resources, such as federated searching, reference assistance, or links to resources from detailed web pages?

Summarized Responses:

- An attendee stated that libraries may use other methods, including Google. He feels that forcing libraries to put metadata into their OPACs is often not the most effective way to make the information available.

- Another participant pointed out that the key issue is the use of the most effective methods, because the trend is moving toward environments in which many will be pointing out toward digital libraries and collections of various types of metadata.

Question 4:

Anonymous access is no longer mandatory now that libraries may require patrons to show identification, and patrons may also be required to provide identification in order to access public-access computer workstations. Is mediated searching by public service an acceptable alternative if a library does not wish to allow the use of public-access workstations to its non-primary clientele?

Summarized Responses:

- A participant believes that it is a possible alternative.

- Another participant was concerned about the privacy aspects.

Question 5:

If a library prints out a copy of an online-only publication and places it on a shelf in the physical depository collection, does the five-year retention requirement apply before the document can be weeded from the collection? Do the FDLP guidelines on substituting electronic versions of depository publications for tangible versions also apply?

Summarized Responses:

- One participant replied that her basic answer is no, but there is uncertainty as to whether GPO plans to enable Print on Demand, and whether there is going to be some quantity available to everybody or everybody gets one free printout.

- Russell assumes that if the publication is printed, the five-year rule will apply.

Question 6:

If a library specializes in certain subject areas which are well-reflected in their collection development policy in the overall collection, is the library required to provide access to electronic resources that are outside that specialization? For example, can a patron access information on agriculture from a library that specializes in health services?

Summarized Responses:

- Several attendees expressed concern about specialized libraries limiting Web access to information on their specific subject area only.

Question 7:

With most publications in an electronic depository collection available only via the Internet, may libraries set a per session or daily time limit for library users of Internet-accessible workstations? For example, is one hour a day an acceptable time limit for a depository library that is mostly electronic? What other arrangements can be made to accommodate public users of FDLP material?

Summarized Responses:

- One participant pointed out that another attendee tried to use the Internet for the second time in two days at a particular depository library and was told that she was not allowed to.

- The participant in question said that the guest pass that she was issued was for one time only.

- Russell remarked that such a limited guest pass would certainly preclude general public access to a depository collection.

- The first participant noted that the limits are acceptable if they are comparable to requirements for non-depository material.

Question 8:

Must libraries select item numbers representing online publications when they may access and provide bibliographic control over them without selecting these publications without selecting them? If not, how will GPO and others in the community know the scope of the collection and be able to provide appropriate referrals?

Summarized Responses:

- One attendee believes that libraries should be strongly encouraged to select everything by the item number that they want to provide primary access for. She is not sure if she feels that they should be mandated to do so.

- Another librarian is not sure whether or not item selection process is durable as libraries transition into an electronic environment.

- Yet another participant stated that if a depository is designated as mostly electronic, they have access to all electronic publications and they select 80 percent of them through the use of item numbers.

Question 9:

Must depository libraries provide access to non-depository online resources such as Federal agency home pages, which are not distinctly included as part of the FDLP electronic collection?

Summarized Responses:

- Several participants wondered how information previously exclusive only to depository libraries would remain exclusive in the electronic world.

- One attendee concluded that a revolutionary change is about to take place, and roles will change as a result. He sees GPO as a standard-setter for pulling electronic information together and for defining the standards on how to interchange that information to library patrons.