

**U.S. Depository Library Council
Electronic Transition Committee
Spring 2000 DLC Meeting, Newport, Rhode Island**

Report on GPO's Transition to a More Electronic FDLP

The Electronic Transition Committee has analyzed the following GPO reports:

*Completing the Transition to a More Electronic FDLP, Council Discussion
Draft, 4/12/99*

Progress Report on the Transition to a More Electronic FDLP, 1996-1999

The Committee looked at the following issues:

Are the assumptions stated valid?

Are there additional assumptions which should be considered?

What actions should GPO take to strengthen the FDLP in light of these assumptions?

Are the current activities of GPO appropriate?

What other activities should GPO undertake?

Has GPO effectively met the milestones in the *Progress Report*?

Are the reasons for activities deferred valid?

What are the next steps of the transition and how should GPO be positioning itself for a more electronic FDLP?

Introduction

The Committee is pleased with the progress of the electronic transition and encourages GPO to continue its development of the electronic program. The Committee is concerned that outside influences may restrict GPO's ability to accomplish all of its goals. For instance, GPO is dependent upon Congress for funding and if Congress does not approve additional funding, then certain projects may not be undertaken or some Atraditional@ services, including dissemination in multiple formats, may have to be curtailed. Also, the Committee understands that GPO is only one piece of the government information environment and while GPO may be successful in its transition, the entire federal government may not. Developments in technology and librarianship/archives make it difficult to plan for the future. We do not know what standards will exist for tomorrow's access.

Libraries are also struggling with managing all types of electronic information and lack a clear vision as to how information will be located and managed in the near future. Technology and Congressional politics will continue to shape GPO's ability to make a successful transition to a more electronic FDLP. GPO must operate within it Congressional authority and funding. Within these restrictions it is critical that GPO adapt to the changing technical and political environment.

1. Are the assumptions stated valid?

The Electronic Transition Committee agrees with the assumptions as stated and that they are valid.

The Committee has the following comments and observations:

#3 The trend toward decentralized Federal printing, publishing, and dissemination will continue.

a. The Committee suspects federal agencies will not consider permanent public (PPA) access of much importance unless prodded by regulations, policies, and/or public demand. Many federal agencies do not understand the concept of PPA and its relationship to NARA activities. PPA and archival activities should not be viewed as competitive but rather complementary practices to ensure access to government information.

b. There is also a role for education, raising the level of awareness among agencies about PPA issues. Agencies will need to be educated as to the role of PPA in the life cycle of information. This education needs to be targeted to various levels of responsibility within an agency. GPO can provide leadership in PPA by providing information and/or demonstrations on best practices.

c. Dissemination will vary from agency to agency dependent upon their philosophy of public access to federal information and their statutory and regulatory requirements. Dissemination of information has always varied but many within government equate Internet publishing to dissemination. GPO assisted in the dissemination of tangible products by including publications within the *Monthly Catalog* and promoting access through depository libraries. Agencies who rely on the Internet for dissemination may miss the opportunity to promote their publications through FDLP. GPO is trying to continue cataloging and locating services but in an unstructured environment and face unique challenges.

d. Internet technology facilitates wide exposure to federal information with the ultimate goal of providing access for many Americans without geographical restrictions. Not all Americans are connected to the Internet and those that are connected have varying levels of ability to access the information found there. Libraries play a critical role in providing equipment and networking to enable those without Internet capabilities to access government information. Decentralized agency Internet publishing will require new skills for librarians who must have in-depth knowledge of Internet sites and locating resources found there.

e. Decentralization is not new to the federal government, but Internet publishing, as compared with GPO publishing, compounds the problem of locating government information. Finding aids are more critical in the Internet environment but they need to be easy to use and standardized across government Internet sites when possible. GPO, with other federal agencies, needs to employ a distributed search technology that searches across a variety of sites, metadata and content resources. The search tools need to be integrated with each other. Technology should not be used to mimic the paper tools but rather to enhance access to information. The web makes it possible to merge resources and to make references to related databases or to search a variety of databases with one interface. GPO had a good start with the Pathway Indexer, however, this either needs to be further developed, merged with existing government search engines such as GovBot, or eliminated with GPO partnering with another entity to provide similar services.

#5 The number of depository libraries will stabilize around 1300 libraries; most of the

losses will be among small public and Federal agency libraries; there will be limited offsetting new designations from the Congressional redistricting following the 2000 census.

The Committee sees implications to this assumption. The number of libraries will probably decrease, but the number of libraries who access federal Internet sites will increase. Libraries will not need to be a depository library in order to locate and use federal information. Some may view this development as negative but the implication that all libraries can benefit from the FDLP is significant and should be viewed as a positive development. GPO needs to develop resources with the idea that every library provides the public with government information.

2. Are there additional assumptions which should be considered?

- a. The trend to shift costs from agencies to the user or to libraries will continue to occur. While this may be the unintended consequence of technology, it is important to realize that libraries will struggle with different issues such as printing, formatting, archiving, and instruction on technology in addition to the required knowledge of the government information environment.
- b. Depository libraries will not be able to individually preserve (refresh and migrate, download from web sites, etc.) electronic publications for PPA in the way that they have for print-based publications. GPO's electronic archive, although valuable, falls short of capturing all of the publications that would have been preserved in the print environment. Likewise, NARA will continue to suffer from adequate resources to keep up with the flow of publications in need of processing for PPA.
- c. Government agencies and the private sector will continue to independently develop tools and resources to locate government information. These development efforts will take different tacks, requiring knowledge of the methods employed by the most used tools if *GPO Access* is to be aligned to provide the most authoritative results for those users.
- d. Partnerships between the government and the private sector will continue to develop and increase. The partnership between NTIS and NorthernLights serves as an example. Internet competition is intense and government budgets are tight. When agencies and private companies have an opportunity to develop services that are beneficial to both, they will create partnerships. While partnerships may be beneficial in providing increased access to government information, they can be viewed negatively if restricted to a certain segment of the population or if citizens are charged twice - first for the creation and second for the access to government information. For partnerships to be successful, they must improve services or access, and must maintain free and unobstructed public access to government information.
- e. Intellectual property law will continue to be murky and unsettled and will complicate access to government information disseminated through public/private partnerships.
- f. GPO may at times compete with other government agencies for funding and authority yet also collaborate with other government agencies for the greater good of increased access to government information.
- g. GPO needs to promote its resources and tools outside of the FDLP. GPO should market itself to all libraries in order to build a broader base of support for its mission. Particularly,

GPO should market electronic publications that are available on their server to libraries. Typically, librarians do not consider GPO as a key access point to federal information. Librarians will use the White House or the Library of Congress web sites first. Building on the slogan "Official Federal Government Information At Your Fingertips," GPO should undertake a marketing project in order to sell itself to librarians as one of the first sites to consider when searching for government information.

3. What actions should GPO take to strengthen the FDLP in light of these assumptions?

- a. GPO needs to further develop marketing efforts. This may require additional travel and conference funding as well as increasing marketing skills of GPO staff. Marketing initiatives must be directed to the wider library community, not primarily to depository librarians. For instance, GPO should consider advertising in library journals.
- b. GPO and Congress should consider revising the definition of a depository library or perhaps adopt new language that includes all libraries. . The definition is tied to Congressional directives and it may not be possible to expand Title 44. However, the opportunity for outreach may be possible.
- c. GPO needs to develop tools and resources with the needs of all libraries in mind. The current resources are developed specifically for FDLP or they assume a working knowledge of the depository library system and the federal government. Libraries with new staff, and non-depository libraries, may not be familiar with such resources as BET or even the *Monthly Catalog*. Clearly, many of the resources on *GPO Access* and in the FDLP Electronic Collection benefit all types of libraries and enable disintermediated use by a growing segment of the public. The Committee recommends that GPO build upon the success of their relationship with depository libraries and expand their relationship to the greater library community
- d. GPO needs to develop services which are beneficial for all citizens; not just depository librarians. Current finding aids and resources assume knowledge of the depository program and structure of the federal government. A layperson accessing online services may not understand the legislative process, the *Monthly Catalog*, or BET, nor why they are organizationally separate pages and not easily found on *GPO Access*. Resources need to be clear as to their purpose and integrated into the *GPO Access* web pages. Involving citizens in the advisory process of development or in feedback groups may provide some insights into how tools are used.
- e. GPO needs to develop training activities that reach a wider audience than depository librarians. Training modules may include the fundamentals of government publishing, governmental and commercial finding aids, and how to use GPO online services. The training modules should be created so that they may be used at many points: training for depository librarians, training by depository librarians, and "point-of-need" instruction for the public or librarians. Modules and tutorials could be either interactive or easily downloadable so they could be integrated into local training programs or used for self-teaching. Depository librarians would likely serve as a resource for GPO in providing input to assist in developing resources for all libraries.
- f. To increase training opportunities for all libraries, the role of the inspectors could evolve to include that of trainers. Or, GPO may develop trainers specifically assigned with responsibilities to conduct training beyond *GPO Access*. Training which is now conducted for *GPO Access* could be integrated into a seminar for locating and using government

information. Inspectors could provide training for the trainer for depository librarians that would assist depository librarians in their outreach efforts. GPO would need to develop a comprehensive plan to use GPO staff and depository librarians to conduct training throughout the U.S. The Depository Library Conference is an excellent example of GPO coordination and depository librarian expertise in providing training and examples of best practices.

g. GPO needs to make PPA a constant drumbeat in their communication with, and education of, federal agency publishers.

h. GPO needs to be active in standards development in areas such as cataloging and digitizing in order to keep pace with technology and to have an influence over the development of those standards.

i. GPO needs to develop a workforce that is technologically savvy and can adapt procedures as the environment changes. To accomplish this effort, recruitment standards may be altered to include technology skills. Some existing GPO staff may need retraining or additional training to enhance their existing skills.

j. GPO needs to conduct a comprehensive review of their current finding aids/tools to see if they are relevant and meet the needs of the users. (Recommended by Council, Fall 1999)

k. GPO needs to develop finding tools including a search engine that will simultaneously search databases and web sites. A comprehensive and easy to use search engine is critical in promoting access to government information and to the marketing efforts of GPO. Excellent and easy finding aids will promote GPO's services and enhance GPO's visibility.

l. GPO's internal structure is organized around the production of print. Providing printing and dissemination services to Congress and federal agencies is still a fundamental mission of GPO. However, it is clear that new information dissemination patterns would benefit from new models of organization. The Committee recommends that GPO broaden its sights and begin to explore ways to focus the agency on managing the information product through its entire life cycle, whether it be in print or electronically disseminated.

5. Are the current activities of GPO appropriate?

a. The Committee recommends that GPO define Asuperseded@ under the scope of archiving.

b. The Committee commends GPO for the positive development of *GPO Access*, however, it is not clear even to depository librarians the relationship between the GPO web site, *GPO Access*, and GPO LPS web pages. The Committee views the GPO page and the *GPO Access/SuDocs* pages as separate pages. The Committee recommends that GPO reevaluate their web site and try to simplify the organization and the language of the site.

5. What other activities should GPO undertake?

The Committee recommends that GPO take a strong training role. It is likely that there will be fewer depository libraries but an increased usage of government information. GPO needs to expand their focus beyond depository libraries to all librarians.

6. Has GPO effectively met the milestones in the *Progress Report*? (#1-24)

The Committee agrees that GPO has met the milestones.

#8 Continue to monitor the technological capabilities...

GPO needs to evaluate the readiness of depository libraries and continue to advise librarians on the appropriate equipment necessary for a depository library. (Council recommendation, Fall 1999)

7. Are the reasons for activities deferred valid? (#25-28)

The Committee agrees that deferred activities are appropriate.

- a. The Committee recommends that GPO continue to press for appropriations to complete the electronic transition. Specifically, the Committee recommends that additional funding be secured for technology grants. The grants may be the initial step in developing partnerships for PPA activities.
- b. The Committee concurs with GPO to not monitor costs for online services. Most libraries assume these costs for all online services and it is recognized as overhead costs or costs paid for by the user.
- c. The Committee acknowledges scanning activities as cost prohibitive, however, this is an option which may be considered in the future. The Committee recommends GPO continue to monitor this possibility.

8. What are the next steps of the transition and how should GPO be positioning itself for a more electronic FDLP?

The Committee has addressed this question under #3.

Conclusion

The Committee appreciates GPO's commitment to an electronic transition. The dynamic, highly competitive nature of the electronic information environment will continue to challenge GPO and FDLP activities. Budget restraints, Congressional directives, and internal philosophical differences may prevent GPO from achieving all of desired results of the FDLP community. The Committee realizes that GPO is not able to undertake all the initiatives and suggestions stated in this report. GPO is not entirely in control of its own destiny. GPO must depend upon Congress for funding and legislative direction, and on agencies for cooperation. The Committee is willing to work with GPO in identifying the most critical needs and assisting in articulating these needs to Congress. The Committee believes that GPO has achieved significant results and is on the correct path to continued success. The Committee recommends that GPO continue to build upon its traditional roles and emerge in the electronic environment as a more proactive and technologically savvy information provider. The Committee is confident GPO will play a vital role in the dissemination of government information in the electronic information environment.

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