

What Will the Future of the FDLP Look Like?



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Good afternoon. Before I gaze into my crystal ball I want to thank the ALA Washington Office for inviting me to participate in this discussion on the future of the Federal Depository Library Program. I also want to thank ALA's Committee on Legislation and GODORT's Legislation Committee for devoting their valuable meeting time to this topic.

INTRODUCTION

This is an opportune time for this meeting as GPO has embarked on very different yet related activities: development of a strategic plan for the FDLP, revitalization of the inspection program into public access assessments, as well as continuing work on the study of regional depository libraries for the Joint Committee on Printing.

Charles Darwin said that it is not the strongest or most intelligent species that will survive but the one that can best adapt to change. Similarly, organizations that adapt to change while at the same time retaining their core ideology are the most successful and lasting. As we near 2013, the bicentennial of the roots for the FDLP, GPO wants the Program to continue to last and be successful. I believe this is what you all want as well. In order to have a sustainable FDLP, we need to be transparent in our exchange of ideas with each other. We need to work together as a FDLP community, not as separate entities. Recognizing that while we will never agree 100

percent of the time, we need to work to reach consensus and build coalitions with each other, in order to make sound decisions for the FDLP of today and tomorrow.

What will the future of the FDLP look like? That is the \$64,000 question.

GPO's A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century, issued in December of 2004, includes a goal to develop a new model for the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), which increases partner flexibility. The Depository Library Council's September 2006 paper, Knowledge Will Forever Govern: A Vision Statement for Federal Depository Libraries in the 21st Century, supports this direction as well. These two documents have guided the direction, initiatives, and priorities of Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) at GPO for administering the FDLP, along with Title 44 of the U.S. Code.

ASSUMPTIONS

As we look to the future, there are several assumptions that we can make about the depository library program of tomorrow:

- ◆ Developments in the larger library world are informing the future of the FDLP;
- ◆ Fewer Federal depository library professionals will be steeped in the FDLP or in Federal resources;
- ◆ Depository libraries must be allowed to adapt to technological and Program changes to perform their roles;
- ◆ Competencies to lead and manage the Federal depository of the future will be different than those of the traditional depository library;
- ◆ Collaboration and cooperation are essential;
- ◆ Government agencies and the private sector will continue to independently develop tools and resources to locate government information;
- ◆ Partnerships between the government and the private sector will continue to develop and increase;
- ◆ GPO needs to promote depositories, its resources and tools outside of the FDLP;

- ◆ An enhanced system is needed to ensure the persistent identification and description of Government information products available via Government electronic information services;
- ◆ A primarily electronic FDLP offers opportunities to make more information locally available to the public, with enhanced functionality; and
- ◆ As an unintended consequence of technology, the trend to shift costs from agencies to the user or to libraries will continue to occur.

IT IS ALL ABOUT ACCESS

It's all about access. The statutory mandate, the foundation, and our reason for being, is to provide no-fee access to the Government's information. This has not and it will not change. The core ideology behind the Federal Depository Library Program can be summed up with these five principles of Government information:

- ◆ The public has the right of access to government information;
- ◆ Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its information;
- ◆ Government has an obligation to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of its information;
- ◆ Government has an obligation to preserve its information; and
- ◆ Government information created or compiled by government employees or at government expense should remain in the public domain.

The American Library Association, American Association of Law Libraries, other library associations as well as the Office of Management and Budget have principles of Government information as did the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. While they may not all share the exact wording, the intent is the same — the Government must make its information available to the public in order to have a more informed citizenry to participate in the democratic process. This belief dates back to our Founding Fathers and will not change with time nor will the principles of Government information.

GPO's vision of the Federal Depository Library Program is to provide Government information when and where it is needed. And the mission of the FDLP is to provide for no-fee ready and

permanent public access to Federal Government information, now and for future generations.

This is achieved through:

- ◆ Organizing processes that enable desired information to be identified and located;
- ◆ Expert assistance rendered by trained professionals in a network of libraries;
- ◆ Collections of publications at a network of libraries; and
- ◆ Archived online information dissemination products from GPO Access, Federal agency Web sites, and partner Web sites.

Collections, services, and communication support each other and provide or facilitate the means for access. Additionally if we are to achieve the mission, the FDLP must exist in a collaborative and flexible environment.

Collections. Options for building depository collections will increase. There has been a paradigm shift in preservation of depository materials. Regional depositories have the responsibility for permanent public access in the tangible publication environment. In the online information environment GPO has assumed primary responsibility for ensuring content availability and permanent public access, the requirements for which are included in GPO's Federal Digital System. We have asked the developers of this system to also enable the capability to push preservation or access level derivative digital files to depository libraries. Collaboration and partnerships with libraries and agencies for digitizing and permanent public access for depository content will be the norm. Just last week GPO announced the launch of a "new and improved" Registry of U.S. Government Digitization Projects (<http://registry.fdlp.gov/>), from which one can determine digitization projects that are completed, in process, or identify potential digitization partners. We are also leading an effort to release a request for proposal for the mass digitization of the FDLP legacy collection of documents.

Services. In the FDLP of the future, GPO will continue to support depository libraries as they provide access to Government information to the American public through traditional services as well as through enhanced or new services made possible by the digital age.

GPO has developed a marketing plan, portions of which already have been implemented. If you haven't already, you can take a look at the plan on the FDLP Desktop and you can see some new promotional materials at the GPO booth here at the conference. GPO is continuing its authentication activities so users will have a visual clue to the authenticity of the online resources depositories advertise. We must continue work with Federal agencies, so they likewise authenticate content at the point of creation, to establish the official nature of content throughout the information lifecycle.

As most of you probably know GPO procured OPAL (online programming for all libraries), a Web-based training service. We have facilitated depository community use of OPAL. The most recent program was “The Conservation Kitchen: Basic Tools for Any Preservation Recipe” presented by the Washington State Library. One of the strengths of the FDLP has always been the dedication and expertise of the depository coordinators and the staff of depository libraries. Librarians are striving to serve users with content and/or help at their point of need. Depository librarians have a presence in Second Life, Facebook, Myspace, and other social networking applications. GPO sent staff to the Consortium for Federal Virtual Worlds Expo at the end of April in Washington, D.C., and we are now brainstorming on how GPO and the FDLP might have a presence in this 3-D space. To leverage the network and expertise of Federal depository librarians, GPO recently entered into a partnership with Government Information Online: Ask a Librarian (GIO), a chat and Web-based e-mail reference service.

Communication must exist between and among GPO, depository libraries, other Federal agencies, and the public and communities served by depository libraries. Among GPO's planned efforts to foster communication and collaboration, are creating shared working spaces and discussion forums as well as other Web 2.0 social networking applications on the FDLP Desktop. Depository librarians are creating wikis, blogs, and rss feeds. Examples of these communications are Free Government Information (FGI) and the University of Alabama's rss feed of recently cataloged titles.

GPO is actively communicating and collaborating with other external stakeholders in the standards and government information policy arena. We participate in CENDI, the National

Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program (NDIIPP), Government Information Preservation Working Group (GIPWOG), and others.

In today's online environment change is happening at such a rapid rate that a "blur" is created. The blur is described by Davis and Meyer, in their book by the same name, as the convergence of speed, connectivity, and intangibles that create indistinguishable lines between products and services and buyers and sellers. Let's put this in the context of the FDLP using the example of the National Atlas of the United States of America. In the tangible world the National Atlas is a book of maps; online it is more. It is a service that allows users to download data into GIS applications. It also allows users to create customized maps by choosing which elements to include and the elements can come from multiple agencies; the user becomes the creator/publisher.

It is not business as usual. A different model or perhaps multiple models are required for the FDLP. The future of the FDLP can be depicted as a pyramid. Services, collections, and communications each are represented as a face of the pyramid and the base or foundation of the pyramid represents access. As one "climbs" the pyramid the distinctions between collections, services, and communications blur. Necessarily collaboration and flexibility encompass and permeate the entire pyramid – no one library can "do it all".

Depository libraries will continue to facilitate access to the American public. GPO working actively with depositories will ensure accessibility, findability, and usability of government information dissemination products. GPO will ensure permanent public access to, provide version control of, and authenticate digital content. GPO will also notify depository libraries of content availability and changes to content when made by our Government.

TITLE 44 AND THE FUTURE

GPO will administer the FDLP in a manner that allows depository libraries the most flexibility within the mandates of Title 44, United States Code. The current law has served us well over the past decades. It is a tremendous challenge, however, to operate in today's environment under legislative directives designed for a print-on-paper based world. While the GPO Access Act and

the movement to a primarily electronic FDLP created many opportunities to enhance access and services to Government information dissemination products, there have not been corresponding revisions to Chapter 19 to provide regional and selective depository libraries the flexibility required to operate in an online and networked environment.

The Joint Committee on Printing (JCP), in the same letter which directed GPO to conduct the study of conditions in regional depository libraries, asked that GPO recommend any legislative changes that would improve the Program. The narrow time frame required to present findings and recommendations to the JCP did not allow the opportunity for GPO to undertake discussions and deliberations necessary to make informed decisions and suggested revisions to Title 44. This is not a process to be hurried, which is why GPO recommended continued dialog with the depository community, a more in-depth study of the FDLP, and if necessary, have the outcomes of these activities drive Title 44 revisions.

GPO does not intend to open the door to sweeping revisions of Title 44 or Chapter 19. As the Depository Library Council wrote in their *Knowledge Will Forever Govern*, “Current regulations governing the FDLP should be changed only in consultation with participating libraries. For libraries, the costs and benefits of federal depository status are a careful balance. The impact of any regulatory changes to the FDLP should be thoroughly reviewed by the library community”.

I have followed the Title 44 discussion on GOVDOC-L. The discussion illustrates the challenges GPO faces in achieving consensus to administer a program that must meet diverse needs. The postings were well thought out, all made very good points, and the directions proposed in the messages were varied. This is exactly the kind of discussion and deliberation we were hoping to have when, in *Regional Depository Libraries in the 21st Century: A Time for Change?*, GPO recommended:

Continuing the dialog between GPO and the depository community about the outcomes of this study and to undertake a more in-depth look at the organizational, financial, and technological issues affecting the FDLP in its entirety, not just the regional depository libraries.

During the course of the regional study GPO found that ten regional depository libraries are reconsidering regional designation and an additional three regionals are neutral on this issue. If the budget pendulum swings in a different direction or some other circumstances change, we could potentially lose 13 regionals — that's 25%. In fact one of the 10 libraries is now in the process of relinquishing their regional status.

The library community commented on the draft shared regional guidelines this time last year. GPO reviewed all the comments. Though we did not incorporate all the comments we received — if we had the guidelines would be full of contradictions — I believe we reached a very good and workable compromise. As a matter of fact, after GPO released the final guidelines, I received several calls and e-mails praising the final version. Some of those communications were from people who were very vocal about not approving of them. This is why we consider the Guidelines as having the acceptance of the library community.

CONCLUSION

There is not one correct answer to the question of what the future of the FLDP will look like or how we should get there. To be sure, the future requires flexibility and collaboration to accommodate the varied needs of our users and the varied needs of our depository libraries. I guarantee that GPO will not consider any scenarios for the future where access to Federal Government information is diminished. We are a creative community that is passionately, dedicated to our mission. Through continued open dialog, such as we are engaged in today, and collaboration we can all be winners. More importantly the public we serve will be the biggest winner.

Again, thank you very much for organizing this forum on the future of the FDLP and for asking me to participate. While I would like to stay and listen, I have a previous commitment at GODORT's Federal Documents Task Force meeting, which is at this same time. I am accessible by e-mail. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at rdavis@gpo.gov.