

# Preservation Steward

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### **1. What is a Preservation Steward?**

Because materials distributed to libraries through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) remain the property of the U.S. Government, depository libraries have always been entrusted with and have accepted responsibility for the careful management of their depository collections. This stewardship has included maintaining the collection so that it is accessible to users for as long as possible. With regional depository libraries this also has meant, for the most part, not being able to withdraw materials from their collections. Preservation Stewards make a commitment to retain specified depository resources for the length of the agreement. They also take on additional responsibilities for preserving depository materials that are preservation copies of record. This includes preventive preservation, or activities that prevent (or delay) materials from degrading or becoming damaged. Examples of this are binding, basic book repair and rebinding, using acid-free boxes or folders to support fragile or damaged materials, environmental control, supportive shelving, and having a disaster response and recovery plan. Responsibilities also include conservation or retrospective preservation, which reverses degradation or damage to materials, if there is such a program in the library. De-acidification, mold remediation, hand- rebinding, repair of historic bindings, and the encapsulation of posters and maps are examples of conservation activities.

### **2. Who can serve as a Preservation Steward?**

Both regional selective Federal depository libraries are able to serve as Preservation Stewards. GPO also welcomes the opportunity for discussions and partnerships with interested parties from beyond the FDLP.

### **3. What are the obligations of a Preservation Steward?**

As a Preservation Steward, a library agrees to:

- Provide GPO with an item level inventory of the title(s) they are preserving, including the condition of the item, which should be good or better.
- Ensure the item(s) are cataloged. This can be a minimal level record.
- Identify the item(s) as preservation copies by adding a note to the cataloging and possibly stamping the items with a Preservations copy stamp provided by GPO.
- Include the item(s) within the scope of library's collection care programs if the library has preservation or collection care programs.
- Notify GPO immediately if the condition of any of the titles changes due to user damage or a

disaster and if there are location changes for any of the titles.

- Conduct a condition assessment at least every 3 years using a random sampling of titles. GPO will provide guidance and assistance to Preservation Stewards when it is time for the 3 year assessment.

**4. Four geographically dispersed Preservation Stewards are required for regional discard. Will the GPO allow more than four Preservation Stewards per title, or will GPO stop recruiting after it reaches that minimum threshold?**

Yes, GPO will allow more than four Preservation Stewards per title. Redundancy is good! Four is the minimum number we will have before regionals are permitted to discard.

**5. Do preservation copies of record have to be volumes distributed through the FLDLP?**

Publications within scope of the Superintendent of Documents Public Information Programs are eligible to be preservation copies of record. That is, the corpus of official Federal Government information dissemination products, paid for with Federal funds regardless of format or medium. Materials that are classified for reasons of national security or that have privacy concerns are not included within scope until such time as they are declassified or privacy considerations expire. Therefore “fugitive documents,” though not distributed through the FDLDP, can be a preservation copies of record. If the publication is a reproduction, there are additional considerations. If it is a GPO printed copy purchased through GPO’s U.S. Government Bookstore or a print-on-demand copy made from a digital copy that was created from a GPO printed original, it would be acceptable, as would publications produced under contract with a Federal agency and paid for with Federal funds. Commercial reproductions cannot be preservation copies of record.

**6. What titles need a Preservation Steward?**

Below are just a few titles for which GPO is seeking Preservation Stewards. However, we are really interested in having Preservation Stewards for all titles in the FDLDP.

- Bound Congressional Record
- U.S. Serial Set
- Congressional hearings
- U.S. Reports
- Federal Register

**7. My library has publications that will be retained and for which we would like to serve as a Preservation Steward, but there are no digital versions on GPO’s govinfo. Can my library still be a Preservation Steward?**

Yes, your library can still be a Preservation Steward. Content being on **govinfo** is not a requirement or condition for becoming a Preservation Steward. If a regional or selective depository library, Federal agency library, has tangible publications for which they would like to be a Preservation Steward, the library should contact GPO through the [inquiry form](#) on FDLDP.gov. By taking on the role of storing and

preserving physical copies of Government publications, Preservation Stewards become GPO partners. Four geographically dispersed Preservation Stewards are required for **govinfo** content in order for regional depository libraries to be able to discard materials. Resources covered by a Preservation Steward agreement can be on **govinfo**, but they do not have to be.

**8. Are depository libraries required to become Preservation Stewards or must we become one to be a depository library?**

Depository libraries, whether they are regionals or selectives, are not required to be Preservation Stewards. Participation is voluntary and totally the library's choice to make.

**9. Is there a binding agreement for Preservation Stewards?**

Yes. GPO developed a template for a [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) that the library will enter into with GPO that, among other things, delineates obligations of Preservation Stewards.

**10. What if my library wants to be a Preservation Steward, but doesn't like, or cannot do, something in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) template?**

If a library wants to be a Preservation Steward but has objections to something contained in the MOA, GPO will work with the library to try to reach an agreement that is acceptable to both parties.

**11. If a library enters into a Memorandum of Agreement, is it forever? What if the library's circumstances change?**

The MOA will be reviewed every three years for continuation. Additionally, there is a provision that allows for the termination of the agreement by either party, with prior notice.

**12. Is the library required to make any material in the Preservation Steward collection non-circulating and house it in closed stacks?**

No, the appropriate housing and circulation status of the material is determined by the library. Some Preservation Steward collections are housed in off-site storage or closed and are a limited to in-library use only, while others are housed in open stacks and circulate.

**13. If a regional is a Preservation Steward and they choose to make the materials non-circulating, will they need to make sure there is another tangible circulating copy in the region they serve?**

No, the regional does not have to make that assurance. The stipulation of the Joint Committee on Printing is to have four tangible copies throughout the FDLP. The tangible copy that is non-circulating can be used within the library or the regional can send a copy of the digital file through ILL.

**14. In the draft MOA it states, “Have guarantees in place for replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged materials.” Can you please explain what this means?**

If copies circulate and are used for ILL, the risk of wear, tear, damage, and potential loss increases. These are risks that are too great for a preservation copy of record. For this reason the stipulation, “Have guarantees in place for replacement of lost, stolen, or damaged materials” was included in the Memorandum of Agreement. There are several options that will provide that guarantee, for example:

- Have a second copy for access and circulation.
- Use the digital copy for access and ILL a copy of the digital file version.
- Make a tangible facsimile from the digital version.
- Have an agreement with a selective to provide a replacement copy from that library’s collection if needed.

**15. As time passes and there is staff turnover in depository libraries, how can we be assured that succession planning in these libraries includes awareness of obligations such as those that will come with being a Preservation Steward?**

Cataloging records will have a retention note and the piece will have a stamp that indicates not to withdraw. These indicators will be seen if a library attempts to discard these materials. Additionally, GPO currently reaches out to new depository coordinators. Obligations that come from formal agreements and partnerships, such as those of Preservation Stewards, will be become part of a GPO briefing or training for the new coordinators, and administrators can be included in the briefings as well.

**16. What incentives are there for becoming a Preservation Steward?**

Though regional depository libraries have received all, or mostly all, that has been distributed through the FDLP, there are some resources that are more valuable to the users of the libraries and communities they serve. These are materials that the library will most likely retain. GPO has the responsibility to ensure at least four copies of tangible materials are preserved. As it is the depository libraries that have the collections, GPO plans to provide services to support this effort. For example, GPO is paying postage for shipping materials to the Preservation Stewards from other libraries. Other support services GPO is considering are: assisting with cataloging, inventories, condition assessments, and contracting for conservation services.