

# Depository Library Council

*Advisory body to the Director of the U.S. Government Publishing Office*

May 24, 2024

Hugh Nathaniel Halpern  
Director U.S. Government Publishing Office  
732 North Capitol Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20401

Dear Director Halpern,

On behalf of the Depository Library Council (DLC), I am presenting four recommendations that Council approved at our Spring Business Meeting held May 2, 2024.

In addition to those recommendations, Council would like to express our thanks to GPO for responses to previous recommendations, including the Digital Implementation FAQ and updates to the Digital Implementation Website. Council notes that a report on the Print Distribution Title methodology, mentioned in the responses, is still outstanding. We request follow-up as soon as the report is complete. Additionally, Council requests clarity on savings from the limited print distribution implementation and priorities for where those savings will be allocated.

In our discussions at our Spring Business meeting, Council touched on a few topics where we would like further communication from GPO. Council encourages GPO to consider hosting training opportunities as part of the Fall and Spring meetings, perhaps as conference tracks based on level of experience (newcomers, experienced, etc.). Council also encourages GPO to consider a conference planning committee that includes representatives from GPO, DLC, and potentially the community. Finally, Council would like additional information and proposed reporting on existing Partnerships, including a summary of data from new/completed/ongoing partnerships. Partnerships are integral to a Digital FDLP. Council requests a more complete description of the various types of partnerships, how they are administered, and what oversight GPO provides/requires.

The formal recommendations from our Business Meeting follow.

## Recommendation 1

Council accepts the following Recommendations from the Long-Term Impacts of COVID-19 on Federal Depository Library Access, Collections, and Services Working Group's 2023 Report and will share them with GPO.

- GPO should include a question about the impact of COVID-19 policies and practices in the Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries at least through the 2025 survey.
- Encourage GPO to use 2021 Biennial Survey Question 6 data for local needs and further exploration and study.

### *Justification:*

The COVID-19 Working Group was charged with assessing the long-term impact of the pandemic. Information gathered thus far has indicated a number of practices and policies that have continued

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post-pandemic and affect access, outreach and other areas of service. Continuing the COVID-19 question in the 2025 Biennial Survey will result in a stronger dataset and further indicate which trends continue and which are abandoned. Information from the 2023 Biennial Survey indicates that public access to physical collections is either being restricted or disallowed at some libraries. We are also seeing a decline in the number of staff that support depository library operations as positions are not filled or duties are reassigned. These are areas for further study, as they were initially the result of pandemic restrictions but may have additional causes, resulting in long-term policies that impact public access to U.S. government information in libraries.

## Recommendation 2

GPO staff mentioned numerous plans at the Spring Virtual Meeting and the April 29th Council Working Session. Council requests that GPO prepare and distribute a summary of the various plans (including Digital FDLP implementation, the National Collection Strategic Plan, etc.) mentioned, including a description of how they interact with each other, tentative timelines for their release, and a process for announcing delays if necessary.

### *Justification:*

Council recognizes that GPO and LSCM have been working on numerous projects to modernize agency systems and implement the Digital FDLP. What is less clear is how these projects work together in support of overarching goals. This information is important for Council to understand the larger GPO strategy and priorities. Timelines will assist Council in anticipating changes and timing Council's work to complement and address the needs of GPO.

## Recommendation 3

Council requests that GPO provide communication and talking points about the Value of the FDLP in a digital-first program, articulating the value of both digital and existing print collections. Council requests to review and provide feedback on drafts. One handout should be aimed at Library Directors (or other administrators who oversee Federal Depository Libraries). A second handout should be aimed at Federal Depository Library personnel and focus on how they can communicate the value of the FDLP to their administrators.

### *Justification:*

Historically, one of the strongest reasons to be part of the FDLP was the access to physical publications received free of charge. In moving to a digital-first model, the benefit of being an active partner in the FDLP is not as obvious. The change to a mostly digital program has led some to erroneously believe that all government publications are online, thus decreasing the perceived value of historic print collections.

Council recognizes that these two categories (depository coordinators and administrators) have multiple potential audiences. By providing this information along with suggested language, GPO will contribute to a greater understanding of the benefits of the FDLP and provide coordinators with tools to argue for the

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value of participation, including the importance of maintaining historic collections and providing computers for unaffiliated users.

## Recommendation 4

Council appreciates the opportunity to gather in-person at GPO for a series of presentations and an in-person working session during this Council year. Council recommends that GPO provide an annual two-day in-person working session for Council when funding allows.

### *Justification:*

A two-day in-person working session would foster a more cohesive Council and facilitate the onboarding of new Council members into ongoing discussion and committees. Both formal and informal activities during the two-day session would improve communication between Council and representatives from GPO. If funding allows, Council recommends hosting an annual two-day working session in an accessible location at the beginning of the Council year.

## Conclusion

Thanks to you, GPO staff, and to members of the Federal Depository Library community for the opportunity to consider and discuss the ongoing implementation of a Digital FDLP. As I wrap up my time as Chair of Council, please direct any follow-up communications to incoming Chair of the 2024-2025 Council, Susanne Caro.

Sincerely,



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*Attachments: First Report of the Depository Library Council's Working Group on the Long-Term Impacts of COVID-19 on Federal Depository Library Access, Collections, and Services (October 13, 2023)*

Copy:

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Susanne Caro, 2024-2025 DLC Chair  
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