



February 8, 2023

Dear Members of the Task Force,

Thank you for submitting your report, *Feasibility of a Digital Federal Depository Library Program: Report of the GPO Director's Task Force*, outlining the establishment of a digital FDLP with your supporting research and recommendations. Each of you brought your expertise and vision to each area of investigation, along with the engagement and inclusion of your patrons and stakeholders. Taken together, you thoughtfully responded to the Task Force's charge.

Broadly, I intend to adopt the Task Force's recommendations. There are a few instances where the recommendations endorse current GPO activities and others where we can't complete the recommendation as written, though we will endorse its spirit. The responses below account for those areas where we may diverge from the recommendation as written.

Frankly, it's remarkable that you were able to reach consensus with the Task Force's diverse geographic representation from the depository library community, library associations, and Federal agencies. This Program is complex, and there are a lot of trade-offs to consider. The FDLP is integral to GPO's vision of an *America Informed*, and it is evident that your strong relationships with the library community are vital to the Program's success.

As GPO's Director, I believe that once Government information is created for the public, it is our job to make it freely accessible. Once captured, the process should be simple. Users should be able to discover, retrieve, and utilize the information to meet their needs. It's time for us to leverage our technological capabilities to produce more information in the most easily digestible formats, allowing Americans to readily access Government information.

I appreciate the time you took to craft and compile recommendations for a digital FDLP. Below, you will see my responses to each recommendation.



As we consider next steps toward implementation, I hope we can count on you to remain engaged as stakeholders in the Federal information community.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

HUGH NATHANIAL HALPERN

## GPO Director's Response to Task Force Recommendations

Please see the Task Force recommendations numbered below with Director Halpern's response in italics.

### Ensure Access to Government Information: Users, Communities and Accessibility

1. Ensure that all members of the public, regardless of geography, ability, telecommunications infrastructure, etc., have no-fee access to Federal Government information.
  - *While national telecommunications policy is outside of the GPO's mission and authority, no-fee, permanent public access to Government information is the core of the FDLP and will remain the driving force of the Program.*
2. Collaborate with depository libraries and other stakeholders to directly engage with user communities around access needs and solutions.
  - *GPO's staff in Federal Depository Support Services work with libraries to engage with and support their communities. Expanded contact and feedback opportunities are being developed. The Depository Library Council also has a working group focused on identifying the needs of specific communities of Government information users.*
3. Develop protocols and guidelines that protect the confidentiality and privacy of individuals who access digital Government information through a digital FDLP.
  - *The FDLP's Legal Requirements and Program Regulations require that FDLs follow their state and local privacy laws and rules. In accordance with its [privacy policy](#), GPO does not track individual user activity in GovInfo and other GPO publicly accessible systems.*

### Preserve and Maintain Access: Print Materials and Legacy Collections

4. A digital FDLP does not mean the immediate discontinuation of print distribution. As long as key publications continue in print, such as congressional committee prints, hearings, and reports, the Congressional Record, the Statutes at Large, and the Code of Federal Regulations, print versions of these publications will need to remain available for FDL selection.

- *Agencies determine what materials to print. GPO will continue to provide the tools for Government publishers to make their information broadly available to the public. When a print option is chosen by the agency, GPO will continue to provide selection opportunities for some print titles.*
5. Superintendent of Documents policy should determine which specific print titles will remain available for selection by FDLs. At the same time, GPO should periodically communicate with agencies to confirm whether or not there is a need to distribute in print.
- *Federal agencies decide which of their publications to create in print. Should the agency decide to print, GPO will work with libraries to establish criteria and follow policies to determine which publications will be available for FDLs to select in print. Additionally, GPO staff are working to increase contact with agency publishers beyond receiving printing orders. Discussions about how best to distribute their information to the public will be part of this outreach.*
6. Continue to digitize legacy tangible collections, including in partnership with FDLs, and balance this work with the immediate need for FDLs to maintain the legacy print collections for access and preservation purposes.
- *GPO has dedicated resources to expand and grow digitization efforts, including preservation librarians who also support the preservation and conservation of the National Collection. We will continue to prioritize these efforts and communicate our progress to the library community as milestones are met.*

#### Ensure Permanent Access to Authenticated Government Information: Technical Issues and Implementation

7. Develop strategies and approaches that address publication permanence, such as how born-digital and digitized Government information is preserved to assure authenticity, identify version control, and exclude personally identifiable information (PII).
- *GPO is the only organization to maintain the highest global standard of excellence for digital repositories with the ISO 16363 Trustworthy Digital Repository certification for GovInfo. Certification under ISO 16363 provides assurance to the public that GovInfo is a standards-compliant digital archive in which Government*

*information will be preserved, accessible, and usable for the long-term. The certification demonstrates that not only the documents, but also the organizational structures and systems around those documents, maintain integrity. Publicly available PREMIS metadata identifies versions of documents in GovInfo. Policies for identifying and redacting PII are in place for digitized materials and will be revised and updated periodically.*

8. Establish standards and partnerships for metadata, digital preservation, and the development of best practices for digitization.
  - *GPO participates in the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, following the collaborative standards set for that program. Metadata experts will seek out collaborators in partner agencies and libraries as bibliographic and technical metadata standards evolve. GPO is a leader in standards-based digital preservation and will continue to pursue collaboration in this area, for example, by pursuing CoreTrust Seal certification for GovInfo. Digitization of print materials is done according to the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) and in collaboration with libraries and agencies, allowing best practices to be shared. Standards in all these technical areas are key to meeting GPO's goal of permanent public access and will be pursued as the program evolves.*
  
9. Develop a system to link to agency repository content via the [Catalog of U.S. Government Publications](#) (CGP) rather than continue to catalog agency publications that reside in the agencies' repositories.
  - *This recommendation will further cross-collaborations with our agency partners and streamline information sharing. It maximizes systems already in place to make information easier for users to discover and use.*
  
10. Create additional types of FDLs beyond regional and selective designations to allow for different levels of library participation.
  - *GPO's staff in Federal Depository Support Services will work with FDLs to explore what specific needs different library communities have as we move to a digital FDLP. As changes to title 44 allow, this will also further ongoing efforts to recruit more libraries into the FDLP.*

## Invest in People and Transition: Capacity Building and Training

11. Develop and provide collaborative training efforts to the FDL community to include skills specific to technologies and software for finding and managing digital publications and curating digital collections. LSCM staff will also require training resources to learn new systems and techniques as they become available. Creative staffing solutions at GPO and in LSCM will be needed to manage the transition to a digital environment (e.g., an organizational transformation consultant).

- *GPO's first step will be to identify and engage a consultant to assist with implementation planning and change management. By designing a phased approach, we can better plan for collaboration with libraries, facilitating sharing of techniques and best practices. GPO will also continue to provide expert training to Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) staff and will work to expand on both content and requirements. A continuous improvement mindset is at the core of everything we do.*

12. Secure and provide dedicated resources for infrastructure modernization and increased capacity to digitize legacy collections.

- *GPO is exploring ways to expand our limited staff managing digitization work. An increase in funding would be required for additional staff and increased digitization activities. GPO will look to build partnerships with the Library of Congress, FDLs, national libraries, and others.*

## Strengthen Collaborations: Outreach, Partnerships, and Relationships

13. Collaborate with Federal agencies, libraries, and others to work toward ensuring ubiquity of access to broadband and technologies to mitigate the multiple digital divides and disparities. These collaborations can also foster access strategies and approaches to provide access to individuals with disabilities.

- *While GPO fully supports these efforts and will continue to participate in dialogue to further their progress, improving access to broadband is not within GPO's statutory mandate. GPO will continue to add FDLP access to agency content not freely available and will collaborate with libraries to overcome these divides and disparities by pursuing alternative distribution options such as print-on-demand.*

14. Reach out to agencies, national libraries, and others to coordinate efforts to digitize historical publications, identify unreported publications, and increase preservation of and access to historical web content. GPO should foster collaborative arrangements to avoid duplication of effort and reduce costs.

- *GPO will build on existing partnerships with the Library of Congress to expand collaboration and coordination with national libraries and agency publishers. The existence of digitized agency collections is taken into consideration when LSCM sets its digitization priorities each fiscal year.*

15. Work to develop a Government-wide network of digital repositories to ensure permanent, free public access to all Government information. [GovInfo](#) will be a key component of this network.

- *By collaborating with national libraries, Federal agencies, and others, we can expand our dedicated partnerships to encourage shared standards and priorities to further this initiative.*

#### Build Support for Library Partners: Operations and Services

16. Investigate new and enhanced bibliographic record distribution services to FDLs to increase access to Government information through library catalogs.

- *GPO's staff in Federal Depository Support Services will work with FDLs to see what the specific needs of the communities are. GPO's Library Technical Services staff will continue to work on new distribution channels for library metadata.*

17. Expand the implementation of the Regional Depository Libraries Online Selection Policy to other eligible titles.

- *GPO recently made more titles eligible as preservation commitments were implemented. GPO is committed to expanding and furthering these efforts.*

#### Engage Congress to Modernize the Government Information Landscape: Title 44, Legislation, and Policy Actions

18. Build on the GPO legislative proposals from 2022 to modernize the FDLP, as the proposals alone do not fully account for a digital FDLP as envisioned by the Task Force.

- *GPO is committed to working with our oversight committees on revising title 44. GPO will continue to advocate for FDLP modernization. While GPO's proposals from 2022 were not enacted, this is an opportunity to review and enhance them in light of the Task Force recommendations. GPO plans to submit new proposals to the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and will include changes suggested by the Task Force.*

19. Develop partnerships and cooperative agreements with Federal agencies to create new ways to automate compliance with title 44, and explore other potential legislative, administrative, and discretionary options to increase agency engagement with the FDLP.

- *GPO continues to be committed to collaborations with our agency partners to identify and access born-digital information. Agency outreach could be further streamlined and leveraged throughout GPO using existing and new technologies.*