

Tips to Effectively Transition to a More Online Federal Depository Collection



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More and more government information is migrating to the web. The reality is that all depository libraries are, to one degree or another, transitioning to a more electronic collection. The following tips offer ways to assist depositories as they continue to incorporate online government publications into their services and collections.

- **Examine your Federal depository collection and its usage.**
 - Analyze formats, subjects and trends in usage of the collection.
 - Examine your library profile to select an electronic format for items you currently receive in tangible format, and then deselect the tangible item if the electronic version satisfies user needs.

- **Analyze resources available to provide access to the electronic collection and evaluate any savings or trade offs of “going virtual”.**
 - Analyze how the library is currently managing and providing access and services to online depository and non-depository resources.
 - What changes in the workflow would have to be made?
 - Are there any tasks (like processing) that can be reduced or eliminated?
 - Are there any personnel and/or training needs for reference service, cataloging, or technical support in an online information environment?
 - Review existing equipment and workstations used to provide public service/access to online depository and non-depository materials.
 - Are there enough workstations to accommodate more users as your online collection grows?
 - Is there a plan in place to regularly upgrade or replace equipment as necessary?

- **Revisit your Collection Development policy.**
 - The acquisition of electronic resources for government information must reflect the analysis of your library collection and its usage.
 - Weed tangible copies according to the substitution and superseded guidelines. Recognize that your institution may desire to retain, maintain, and provide access to a tangible collection. Consider off-site selective housing agreements.

- The depository coordinator is encouraged to seek input for selections. Suggestions should be solicited from depository staff, other library personnel (reference staff, collection development staff, etc.), and users.
- Cooperative collection development and interlibrary loan can also provide access within a local area to tangible copies of rarely used items.
- **Consider starting with a pilot or a small virtual collection.** It is often easier to start with a small change that proves successful and gains acceptance than to begin with a major undertaking.
- **Modify your profile.** All depositories should select or provide electronic access to titles from the "Basic Collection" found on the FDLP Desktop at: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/basic-01.html
- **Work with your regional librarian.** Your regional librarian can assist with discards, substitutions, and superseded titles. They can also help you balance local, state and program needs.
- **Network.** Pursue contact with those who have built electronic collections and have provided quality services in their use.
- **Enlist the support of library administrators and other staff in the transition process.** A successful transition requires the support of administrators, librarians, and support staff to make it happen.
- **Promote the newer electronic formats to users and library staff.** They offer instantaneous access to a broader spectrum of users, are easier to use in some cases, and are available 24/7/365.

Building a more online federal electronic depository collection in no way lessens the importance of tangible materials your library chooses to retain.

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