

Summary of the Regional Meeting October 2003 – Arlington, VA

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Prepared by The Regional Planning Committee for the Fall 2003 Regional Meeting

In October, 2003, Regional librarians, their representatives, and representatives from states currently without a Regional depository library met in Washington, DC. The Regional Planning Committee, Vicki Barber of the USGPO, Dan Barkley (University of New Mexico), John Phillips (Oklahoma State University), Susan Field (University of Georgia), Sandee McAninch (University of Kentucky), and Bill Sudduth (University of South Carolina), developed a program that focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) in the Regional library program.

In the course of the 2.5 days of meetings, the participants worked through a series of exercises that reviewed the various components of services and duties performed by Regional librarians and their libraries. While there are a myriad of issues facing Regional libraries, the participants concluded that the following issues, highlighted and addressed below, will be pivotal in strengthening Regional depository libraries and the services they provide to their constituencies. The list and narrative developed will assist in redefining Regional libraries with respect to partnerships with GPO and their role in the 21st century.

Weaknesses Into Strengths

Monetary Support

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has been the cornerstone of no-fee

access of Federal Government information to the American public since 1813. However, the burden to provide no-fee access to government information has, over the years, fallen on the hosting institutions and less on the Federal Government to a point where constructive measures must be taken to relieve this burden either through the appropriations process or with grants. In these times of shrinking library budgets along with more government information being made available in electronic products and formats, Regional libraries will need to foster economic relationships with the public and private sectors that will provide funding necessary to continue the investment already made. These relationships are crucial to assist the hosting institution's ability to defray costs it absorbs through the variety of services provided (e.g., space, staff, maintenance, purchasing of ancillary print and electronic bibliographic tools). It is also imperative that GPO, in partnership with Regional libraries, work to provide financial assistance; either from Congressional appropriations or other means realized by GPO through cost savings measures that might be implemented.

Retrospective Cataloging

The lack of retrospective cataloging impedes access to historical information to the American public. It also inhibits access to a significant part of a Regional collection. It is imperative that Regionals, Selectives and GPO collaborate in joint cataloging ventures

that make the information in these historical and important collections easily accessible. GPO, in partnership with Regional libraries, should provide access, support and expansion to these historical and important collections. Given the number of cataloging records available from various retro-conversion cataloging projects that have been conducted by Regional and selective libraries, GPO must engage and promote partnerships with Regional and selective libraries that have downloaded records into public bibliographic databases such as OCLC.

GPO's expertise in cataloging and the provision of complete cataloging records are well established; creating a national catalog of historic government documents should be a primary goal of the GPO/FDLP within the next five years. The product produced must be widely and freely available in national bibliographic databases, adhere to current and future cataloging standards. Emphasis should be placed on converting all pre-1976 collections currently available in Regional libraries. Additionally, methods to enhance the search capability of historic government information should be explored, and other projects that highlight and enhance the pre-1976 collections should be created.

Retrospective cataloging of the pre-1976 collections is integral to the success of the FDLP. Regionals and GPO should form a partnership to catalog these historical collections. Digitizing the Monthly Catalog and creating a Union List for a national collection will improve public access to the information contained in these historical documents. A five-year goal is a reasonable approach; planning should begin immediately with the appropriate personnel so as to reach this goal.

Training

The GPO must cooperate with Federal agencies, experts in the field, and the

depository community in providing training utilizing the latest technologies in order to educate all government information users of the products and services available to them via the FDLP. Rapid changes in electronic information technology have increased the need for training so as to effectively and efficiently access government information.

There is a growing body of literature as well as tangible evidence that librarians new to the profession, in particular, government information librarians, are in need of more specialized training. As in other areas of librarianship, Regionals are faced with the "graying" of the profession and many librarians are well within retirement range. Many of these librarians have dedicated their professional lives to providing public access to government information and have done so in libraries that have provided separate space from other housed collections. This landscape is changing as libraries are combining their public service units and fewer library school graduates are specializing in government information. The results are that there is a shortage of well-trained and knowledgeable government information librarians to replace those who have recently retired. This trend has and will continue to have a detrimental impact on the services provided to the American public. This trend will not subside.

GPO, in its capacity as the aggregator and disseminator of government information, along with professional associations such as the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association (GODORT), develop and implement adequate training programs that will address the aforementioned issue. There is a timely and useful amount of training materials currently available from GODORT and other library associations and organizations. GPO should aggressively engage in the collection and re-dissemination of these materials to provide information that addresses the needs,

questions, and the "how-to's" of documents librarianship.

The training component should emphasize the continued importance of the Regional and the FDLP. GPO must take the lead and, with the support of the Regionals, investigate current and future training tools and opportunities that will provide for government information literacy. Resource sharing is becoming the norm in the field and there is little reason why GPO and the Regionals should not fully invest themselves in current technologies and knowledge that will enhance the FDLP while continuing to serve the American public.

Better Service to Selectives

It is increasingly evident that selectives are beginning to feel the neglect of Regionals who are overwhelmed at their respective institutions. Historically, a fundamental role of a Regional was to provide advice, service, and leadership to the selective depository libraries in their state or geographic area. With the advent of electronic dissemination, shrinking staffs, loss of expertise through retirements, and a host of other situations, Regional service to its selectives varies from state to state, institution to institution.

In order to provide better service to selective libraries that choose to remain in the FDLP, Regionals, with the assistance of GPO, must work in tandem to provide the service that was once fundamental to a Regional. At the very minimum, Regionals must take a more pro-active role in leadership by producing a state plan in consultation with selectives, engaging in more frequent visits to the selectives, developing better communication with each selective, and providing regular and timely training. These are all fundamental services that Regionals must provide. In order to do so, Regionals must have the full support of their administration along with GPO's assistance.

GPO must assist in providing training through a consultants program as well as surveying the needs of selectives in today's electronic environment. Most importantly, the GPO must revise the disposal and administrative requirements that Regionals and selectives must adhere to. This administrative change, implemented as soon as possible, will create an environment whereby selectives will be able to perform better collection development (e.g., item selection) activities. In turn, these much needed and requested administrative changes will reduce the burdens of selectives to discard unwanted/or unneeded materials, free Regionals to devote more time to other issues, such as training, and overall provide GPO with some financial relief due to less printing of ephemeral materials.

Further, GPO should capitalize on the best practices of education by providing videoconferencing for GPO-sponsored meetings (e.g., DLC), developing and enhancing Web-based tutorials as well as other training tools. Additionally, GPO might do well to examine the current state-based Regional configuration to determine if a geographical configuration would be a better alternative.

However, the most important cornerstone, naturally, is the Regional librarian. That librarian must make a commitment to provide the best service possible to the selectives served. Whether it's creating a listserv to enhance communication, visiting selectives as much as possible, hosting training and meeting sessions, or ensuring that their administration fully understands the role and mission of the Regional library and librarian, the Regional librarian must assume responsibility for leadership in that Regional's area. It is an understatement in acknowledging that every Regional librarian has a full plate, but it is also equally and vitally important that the Regional librarian make the time in order to provide service to the

selective depositories. Regional librarians must fully avail themselves of every opportunity to provide the services selectives need in this rapidly changing environment.

GPO must clearly articulate GPO expectations, including those outlined in 44 USC 1911-1912. GPO has to begin to enforce the statutory guidelines, develop enforcement measures and, in some cases, step in and assist a Regional whose performance has not been acceptable to the selectives served. In some measure, selectives are withdrawing from the FDLP today because of poor Regional service. It's time that GPO interceded where appropriate, assisting the Regionals in meeting their obligations, and where necessary, looking for other institutions to host the Regional.

Space Constraints

Regardless of the hosting institution, every library today faces space constraints. Regional and selective depository libraries are all bursting at the seams because of the finite space a walled library presents. Library directors are also pressed to provide more space for other aspects of their collections and services that libraries now provide to their constituents. Directors are examining means by which they can curtail or even eliminate paper collections. The Regionals are being scrutinized.

Regionals look forward to more information becoming available in electronic formats because physical space will become less of a concern. The corollary to this, however, will be the need for electronic storage that will proportionally increase. As GPO and other FDLP libraries explore digital concepts of information storage, retrieval and dissemination, Regionals will need to examine their practices and adjust accordingly.

Obviously, Regionals will continue to impress upon their respective administrations the need for adequate space, archiving, and preservation of their "Legacy" collections. Further, Regionals should actively pursue partnership opportunities that would allow the migration of parts of their collections to digital formats. This would allow the Regionals to surrender their paper copies to GPO for their National Collection. New concepts include the opportunity to create shared Regionals based on either the current state model or on a newly defined geographic model. Some Regionals may avail themselves of storage opportunities that may exist or engage in selective housing agreements with department or branch libraries or libraries within a defined geographic area.

Regardless, Regionals will continue to require space, whether physical or virtual, and GPO must help Regionals in acquiring that space. GPO is, obviously, limited in providing physical space to a Regional; however, it can assist that Regional when the hosting library administration requests that Regional surrender part or all of its paper collection. GPO should also provide computer storage, and equipment, as it moves to a more electronic environment. In order for Regionals to maintain their leadership positions within the FDLP, new partnerships and other creative solutions will need to be sought and GPO must take the lead and cooperate as these opportunities become available. GPO, in consultation with Regional libraries, should begin to develop a plan that will address this issue and make it available to the depository community in a timely manner.

Regionals Not Equal in Resources and Support

With the creation of a two-tiered depository program in 1967, the Regional library concept came into realization. Regional

libraries were created in order to provide a depository of last resort for each state. Within that general concept, Regionals were to provide assistance to selectives in appropriate areas to include public service and access issues, advice, and assistance in selection and disposal. Nowhere in the law was it stated or suggested that all Regionals be equal in size, collection, expertise, resources, support, or other important characteristics.

All Regionals do not have the same resources. Currently, no two Regionals enjoy the same access to the financial, physical, personnel and administrative support needed in today's environment. While many Regional libraries have strong support in some or many of these areas, in order to fulfill their current and changing missions, Regionals need more consistency and congruency to maintain and increase their viability. Due to these inherent inconsistencies, the concept of "good vs. not-so good" Regionals continues to be fostered.

For Regionals to maintain their leadership position, GPO must acknowledge that all Regionals are not equal. While a shared responsibility exists to create more congruency, GPO has a responsibility to engage library administrations in the need for the continued existence of the Regional when that administration pulls their support or other resources from a Regional. As well, GPO must recognize when a Regional is in trouble and may need to surrender its status. Working with that Regional, as well as with the selectives served, GPO must find another hosting institution within that state or geographic area to assume the Regional responsibilities. GPO should not agree to allow a library administration to keep the Regional collection without fulfilling its other duties and obligations. While surrendering a collection must be a last resort, it is GPO's obligation to inform a library administration of the consequences of its decision to

withdraw from the FDLP as a Regional participant.

GPO has recently proposed the creation of a position entitled "field consultant." As proposed, these consultants would assist Regionals in a designated area and provide training, on-site consultations and advice to selective librarians. The consultants would assist the Regionals in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities.

GPO should put forth efforts to provide training and orientation sessions for new Regional librarians. As heretofore mentioned, the "graying" of the profession will create ample opportunities in the not too distant future for younger professionals to fill the shoes of their predecessors. In this regard, GPO may want to provide assistance and articulate its expectations to the library administration when a vacancy occurs.

One of the most significant problems is the lack of adherence to 44 USC 1911-1912 by many Regional libraries. Because GPO has never developed any punitive measures in the enforcement of these statutory procedures, some Regional libraries pay nothing more than lip service to the statutes. This is an incredible disservice to the selective libraries served and enhances the "good vs. not-so good" image that exists.

GPO must enforce the requirements Regionals are required to follow in 44 USC 1911-1912. Further, it is time for GPO to develop and implement enforceable consequences to ensure Regionals fully adhere to the statutory responsibilities as dictated by 44 USC 1911-1912. Although adherence to these rules and guidelines may force some Regionals to abdicate their Regional designation, it may also create new opportunities for other institutions to host a Regional.

Lack of Preservation of Historic Collections

Given the acknowledged difference in Regionals including size, space, staffing and other resources available, it should be recognized that each Regional has separate and different means by which it maintains and preserves its historic collections. The library community and the American public would benefit greatly when GPO, in consultation with appropriate library groups familiar with preservation and archiving practices, develops training programs and guides to assist Regionals in the preservation of their collections. GPO must articulate their expectations as to how and what best practices Regionals should engage in to preserve and maintain the historic value and nature of these collections.

Concurrent to this is GPO's engagement in collecting and developing standards that will result in a national digital historic collection. The Regionals applaud GPO's efforts in this arena and appreciate their efforts. Yet it is important to note that some Regionals, along with their selectives, have began their own digitalization projects and these efforts should not be ignored by GPO. Rather than continue on a separate path, GPO must gather the information from these projects, share them with the depository community, and enlist their advice and support. This is an excellent opportunity for GPO to partner with other libraries in order to provide reasonable alternatives to privately produced products.

Lack of Support from Library Administrations

Although not widely discussed outside of Regional circles, we must acknowledge that several Regionals face increasing pressure from their administrations to curtail their operations, scale back their paper collections, or outright discontinue their presence in the FDLP. This is the time to also publicly

acknowledge these occurrences and allow these hosting institutions the opportunity to gracefully exit the FDLP. Additionally, this presents GPO and the Regional community with an opportunity to find other hosting institutions.

However, it is clear that prior to allowing a Regional to leave the FDLP completely or partially, GPO should communicate the need for that Regional's continued existence to the appropriate administrators (e.g., the Congressional District member, University Presidents and Deans, City Councils, etc.). Simple acquiescence by GPO is inexcusable, and substantial communication from GPO to the appropriate decision-makers at all levels must be fully engaged upon prior to allowing a Regional to surrender its status.

When it becomes clear that the methods suggested above have failed and a Regional library will be lost, GPO must strictly enforce 44 USC 1911-1912 and be in a position to assume responsibility for that Regional collection, whether it remains in the hosting institution or becomes the direct property of GPO. GPO cannot allow a hosting institution to surrender its status yet retain its collection.

Service to the collection is an essential function that cannot be provided once a hosting institution decides to curtail its participation in the FDLP. If there is no service, there is no access for those wanting to use the collection. Other issues such as preservation, maintaining the integrity of the collection, and the unavailability of Interlibrary Loan are also lost. Therefore GPO must insist that the collection be relocated so that there is no loss in service to the constituencies served.

Lack of Marketing

GPO has done a good job in providing a variety of marketing materials to Regional and selective depository libraries. The

provision of signs, decals, bumper stickers, bookmarks have had a positive impact on the users of FDL's. It is now time however, for GPO to develop a nation-wide marketing strategy. A national campaign will realize only positive results as it will reinforce the role of the FDLP; entice non-users to examine a depository library, and bring favorable attention to the agencies and people who assist the public in locating government information in all formats.

Many Regionals have engaged in marketing on a local or state level. GPO must assume more innovative measures, particularly those using current technology in investigating the many ways Regionals and selectives have marketed themselves and expand on those creative approaches at the national level. Additionally, GPO should work with other professional, government and academic organizations in developing national marketing plans that fall outside the Sales Program. For example, GPO might better capitalize on the use of its Web site by driving people to it in a manner similar to Google and other Web sites. GPO should investigate the best practices of other commercial and private Web resources and develop appropriate marketing strategies that will draw users to their Web site and resources.

Regionals Based on Geographic Rather than State Boundaries

Given that several Regional libraries are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their Regional status coupled with several Regionals serving multiple states, it may be time to re-examine the way Regional libraries and their selectives are currently organized. The state-based concept has served its purpose well and was designed in a time where government information was in an ink-on-paper environment. With the advent and widespread use of the Internet and electronic dissemination of government information, the

state-base concept may have reached the end of its usefulness, and it is time to examine other means by which Regionals are designated, as well as what and how they best serve their communities and constituents in the digital environment.

Several Regionals provide multi-state service. These Regionals do the best jobs possible; it is somewhat unreasonable to expect the Regional librarian to visit every library in each state. Further, the unique pressures of adherence to guidelines and laws, and in particular the disposal/weeding lists, are, if not overwhelming, very close to it.

GPO and the existing Regionals must work in tandem to examine current configurations as well as 44 USC 1911-1912 to determine if there are better means by which Regionals can continue to exist and operate functionally. Some concepts that need to be reviewed include the creation of state cooperatives that provide multiple housing agreements, the creation of shared Regional responsibilities with another large selective in a geographic region, and the creation of Regionals based on wider geographic definitions.

Threats into Opportunities

Changing Technology

As technology continues on its rapid evolution, the opportunity to provide access to a larger population increases. The advent of the personal computer and wide-spread use of the Internet have increased exponentially the amount of information available, as well as the number of people who now have access to that information. While underserved populations still exist, primarily in the rural areas of America, these populations are beginning to have opportunities to access information that once

required a site visit to a Federal depository library.

Regional libraries view these phenomena as a means to increase their visibility as well as to fulfill their mission in providing no-fee access to government information to their constituencies. In this regard, GPO shall provide assistance by developing marketing tools that assist Regionals in their responsibilities to selectives and outlying areas. The development of Web guides and tutorials by GPO and Regionals can be used for distance education purposes. It has been noted in many of the preceding categories, training from GPO and other Federal agencies is always beneficial. Flexibility with GPO technical requirements is needed, as many depository libraries are unable to meet these requirements that are dictated by technological advances. As alluded to earlier, Regionals are not equal; therefore GPO must realize that while the technological guidelines are a useful and needed approach, GPO must also accept economic realities that exist within each unique Regional library.

Privatization of Information Services

GPO must continue to remain cognizant of its historical mission--to provide no-fee public access to government information. In partnership with the Regionals, GPO must continue its role in educating Congress and the public on the value of library collections and the important role this partnership plays in the democratic process.

As is always the case, monetary assistance to Regionals, whether in the form of privately produced bibliographic tools, database access, or other means, would help Regionals fulfill their missions. While Regionals have assumed the responsibility of buying privately produced materials, as GPO evolves into the electronic milieu, appropriate GPO funds once used for paper products will

necessitate transfer to Regionals for their discretionary use.

Loss of funding

Hosting institutions are facing budgetary crises that negatively impact Regional libraries. It is imperative that GPO develop cost analysis tools and provide the resulting data to assist Regionals in convincing their administrators that hosting a Regional has numerous benefits that reach beyond simple economics. The cost analysis data can also be used as a means to induce Congress to provide increased funding to assist GPO and Regionals.

Furthermore, cost analysis data can assist Regionals, working with their administrators, in determining internal/external priorities. The data can help plan what is and what is not possible in short and long-term goal development. The data may also be useful in fund raising, educating the public about available services and the need for additional resources.

It's All on the Web

The unfortunate perception that echoes across the library profession is the assumption that all information, in particular, government information, is on the Web. While there is some degree of validity to this perception due to increased electronic publishing and dissemination practices, all agree that the perception is misleading and needs correction.

The opportunity to debunk this myth through education and training, via the Web and other avenues, can be achieved through better marketing and educational tools. Promoting the collection locally and regionally, highlighting the value of the Regional collection, and encouraging selectives to engage in more outreach are necessary for

Regionals to combat the myths surrounding this perception.

Reducing Staffing Levels

As was mentioned earlier, Regionals are beginning to realize a shrinking of staff, including the professionals who manage the Regional. Out with the old, in with the new might work well in politics, but the institutional knowledge and history of our professionals is lost with retirements. New blood is always necessary but it's important that the new professionals have a complete understanding of the past.

It is incumbent upon GPO and the senior Regional librarians to institute mentoring practices that assist the new librarians taking our place. Collaboration becomes the key component as the transition is further realized. Concurrent with this transition is the move in many libraries to combine public service desks and change workflow processes and procedures. To assist in this transition, GPO and Regional librarians must develop and engage in successful mentoring projects. (Sessions could be conducted during DLC, ALA and other national, Regional and state meetings.) It will be necessary to renew institutional support and commitments, recruit new librarians for our profession, and ensure that as the torch is passed, the knowledge base and memory is part of that passing.

Permanent Public Access at Risk

The legacy collections housed in the various Regional libraries are at risk. Although some uniformity exists in collection holdings, each Regional has, over the years, engaged in collection activities that have filled gaps, collected fugitive documents, and performed cataloging to provide access to their collections. Yet, permanent public access to these collections becomes increasingly

tenuous, particularly as more information becomes electronically available.

There is an energy existing today that provides numerous opportunities between GPO and the Regional community to work on this issue. GPO has the connections with Federal agencies, including those that have grant funding available. There is a level of expertise residing in the Regional community that in partnership with GPO can assist in projects that will realize positive outcomes in retention of these valued collections. Working with NARA, tracking fugitive publications, and facilitating better communications between Federal agencies and the library community will result in continued access to Regional collections.

Lack of Preservation Activities Leads to Disintegrating Collections

Closely related to the above issue is the fact that the legacy collections are deteriorating. Regardless of preservation measures taken by each Regional library, librarians are realizing that documents produced in the late 1700's have now begun to reach the end of their life cycle. While the physical loss of these collections is devastating, opportunities exist that in many ways can preserve and provide permanent access to these historic collections.

GPO and a fair number of Regional libraries are investigating various digitizing methodologies and practices. Partnerships should be formed from the various projects now under consideration. There may be opportunities for GPO to acquire collections from selectives and Regionals that are withdrawing from the program and working with remaining Regionals in a search for storage facilities with controlled environments.

Additional opportunities include GPO digitizing and providing electronic collections of all documents regardless of age, format, or

form, and cataloging the collections, working in tandem with Regionals to develop complete sets.

Library Administration Perceives Regionals as Irrelevant

As more information becomes available solely in electronic formats, there is a new paradigm developing with library administrators suggesting that Regionals are becoming archaic and unnecessary collections. This paradigm also involves other issues heretofore mentioned such as space, disposing of paper for electronic equivalents, not filling positions when retirements or other circumstances create openings.

GPO must work with library administrators in dispelling the myth that Regionals are obsolete. A sound plan developed by and articulated through GPO will have a louder voice than the Regional facing this perception. The opportunity to remind library administrators of the collection's uniqueness, its historical significance and the various populations served are highlights that GPO should include in any communication with library directors.

Loss of Selectives

Perhaps the single most important issue GPO and Regionals face today is the continued withdrawal of selective depository libraries. While Regionals provide a host of services, advice, and training to selectives, the selectives are the cornerstone of the FDLP. Without them, the FDLP would not exist.

Measures have been developed by the Depository Library Council that is a step in the right direction. Providing flexibility to selectives with respect to collection development is needed. Allowing selectives to move to a more electronic collection is a

reasonable approach that Regionals must consider.

While the loss of some selectives is not preventable, GPO and Regionals must engage selectives long before this drastic step is implemented. Mentoring, assisting the selective in marketing and promoting its collection, and devising and developing plans to assist the selective in remaining in the FDLP are steps in which GPO and the Regionals can engage. Additionally, Regionals must be able to provide service to that area should the selective withdraw, as well as search for another hosting institution.

Obsolete/Impermanent Digital Information

As migration of information increases to more digital information, including information born digitally, GPO must make certain that standards are developed that ensure permanency of this information. Federal agencies, such as Census, have already realized problems with the integrity of their electronic information due to rapid technology changes that render earlier versions obsolete. There is a demonstrated need for the preservation of historical Government information. Technology will continue to evolve rapidly and GPO must be at the forefront of this evolution.

Partnerships with other Federal agencies and Regional libraries must begin immediately. Further, GPO must maintain current and acquire future technologies as they develop in providing permanent public access to digital information. These practices will also be essential in maintaining electronic information in usable formats.

Timelines will be dictated by the evolution of technology, its cost, Congressional appropriations, and other factors that surround this issue. GPO must also factor into the equation that they are the leaders, and

in some circumstances, the providers, in the evolution of technology. As well, GPO must recognize that partnerships will become more necessary in the storage, retrieval, access, and dissemination of electronic and digital information.

Other

There are several other categories that were developed through the course of the exercise. Staff retirements, loss of external funding which may lead to the loss of Regionals, and space have all been mentioned, and there is no need for repetition on these categories. They are important and should not be neglected.

Conclusion

As has been evidenced by this discussion, GPO, Regional libraries, and the FDLP face serious and long-term challenges as they migrate into the 21st century. Technology will drive and dictate these and other challenges that lie ahead. How the issues outlined above are resolved will either reaffirm the important role the GPO and the FDLP have in the future of government information access or cause its complete and utter demise.

Yet is it also clearly evident that as other weaknesses and threats develop, the partnership that has evolved since 1967 between GPO and the Regionals remains strong, provides a number of solutions and alternatives through creative thinking and planning, and remains the fundamental vehicle for the collection and dissemination of government information.

The history of this essential partnership is reflective of the changes that have been witnessed in society, technology, librarianship, and information collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination. This partnership is forever linked with the democratic process as envisioned by the founders of our country. It is therefore of the utmost importance that this partnership continues on its path of offering no-fee access to government information.

Thanks

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