

**American Library Association Midwinter Meeting
San Diego, CA
Saturday, January 10, 2004**

Presentation by U.S. Superintendent of Documents Judith C. Russell

We are coming to the end of a long morning during which you have already been given many interesting things to think about and I am about to add some more, without apology since I think the things that are happening right now at GPO and in the community are so exciting that you will all be sitting on the edges of your chairs (and not because you are ready for lunch or a bathroom break).

I will try to keep this brief so we can have as much time as possible for questions from the audience. We have brought a handout, which should anticipate many of the “frequently asked” factual questions, so you may want to pick one up if you do not already have it.

I very much appreciate Howard’s [Lowell] presentation on the National Archive’s strategy for electronic records, including the partnership between GPO and NARA. We value that relationship highly and see the partnership as a critical part of fulfilling the goal of permanent public access that our two agencies share with the depository community.

I was also very struck by Janet’s [Coles] comments, which Jill [Vassilakos-Long] presented on her behalf, about the problems facing the California state depository program. The issues are certainly very similar to ones that we face at the Federal level.

That is a very good background from which to turn to a discussion about what is happening currently at GPO and in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and the effort that we are making to plan for a long and stable partnership for public access to government information.

GPO Reorganization

When Bruce came to GPO as Public Printer just over one year ago, he immediately began discussions with the middle and senior managers at GPO about how to reorganize to accomplish our short terms goals and position GPO for the future. From the beginning he said that he was seeking an interim organization and that he expected that the planning process, which we were beginning at that time, would result in another reorganization within a few years. The interim organization that he announced several months later continued the three main GPO operating areas, establishing managing directors of the printing plant, a consolidated customer service/printing procurement area, and the Superintendent of Documents organization, identified functionally as information dissemination. He also created for the first time a Chief Information Officer and a Chief Human Capital Officer and restructured the position of Chief Financial Officer. Of those six senior management positions, I was the only one already in place. The other five

positions have now been competed and filled, so we now have a full management council to work with Bruce, and the Deputy Public Printer, Bill Turri, on day-to-day operations and planning for the future.

Bruce also created an Innovation and New Technology group to help GPO reach out to other organizations to learn about new technology that is on or over the horizon, so we can incorporate that knowledge into our planning. INT, as we call it, has kept us busy with opportunities to talk to a wide variety of companies, universities and other organizations with an emphasis on future applications in one or more of the three major areas that Bruce has asked them to emphasize: Authentication, Version Control and Preservation/Permanent Public Access.

SuDocs/Information Dissemination Reorganization

Bruce asked each of the six managing directors/officers to follow a similar process for reorganization of our own areas of responsibility, and as you know, we announced the reorganization for the SuDocs/information dissemination staff last June at ALA. We have spent a number of months planning the lower levels of the organization and developing the necessary job descriptions. We have now filled two of the four senior management positions. I am delighted to announce that Ric Davis has accepted the position as director of Program Development and Sheila McGarr has accepted the position as director of Collection Management. Offers are pending for the directors of Program Planning and Coordination and Library and Customer Relations and should be announced shortly.

Perhaps as early as the end of next week, but certainly by the end of the month, we will post the next tier of managerial positions. There are 12 positions: 2 under program development, 3 under program planning and coordination, 3 under library and customer relations, and 4 under collection management. As the handout indicates, these will be posted so that the positions are open to applications from "all sources," not just current GPO employees or current and former Federal government employees, which are the other two common options in Federal recruitment. I will post the announcements to a number of lists as I did with the senior management positions – and I hope you will forward them onto to other lists or individuals who may find the positions of interest. We are hoping to attract a wide range of excellent candidates. Once those positions are filled, we believe that the other positions will move very quickly. We are not likely to meet our goal of completing the reorganization by April 1, but we are working to complete it as quickly as we can.

Fact Gathering and Planning

GPO has been working hard this year to get our costs under control and put an organization in place that can both manage the current operations and prepare the agency for the future. The agency was "in the black" with a small, positive cash flow in October and November (I haven't seen the December numbers yet). That is a major achievement since GPO lost about \$38 million in FY 2002 and \$32 million in FY 2003. My staff has been doing its part to bring losses from the Sales Program under control by such actions

as closing the bookstores, consolidating the two Laurel warehouses into one, and using the retirement incentives to reduce staff.

At the same time, Bruce and I (among others) have spent a great deal of our time out talking to agency publishers, libraries, and others to gather input for our planning process. We have also been discussing the future with our employees and unions and working with the General Accounting Office (GAO) on the report that Congress requested on our behalf. Bruce has labeled this our “fact gathering” stage and it should be completed by early March when we receive the GAO report.

Meanwhile, we are continuing to gather facts from the Depository Library Council (DLC), the regional depository libraries, the major library associations, and anyone else who wishes to contribute. We are expecting reports from the DLC and from the regional libraries shortly based on the meetings that were held last fall. We hope that ALA and GODORT will be submitting something and we will certainly carry back ideas gathered in our conversations here, as we have done from all of our meetings over the past year.

GPO will compile all this information and release a document sometime in the spring for review and comment. Bruce and I and others will then be out talking about that document and seeking reactions and revisions. What Bruce is seeking, before beginning the planning process, is agreement on the facts -- facts about GPO's current status, assets and liabilities; facts about the current status and expected changes in the library community and in agency publishing practices; facts about opportunities and constraints from new technology; facts about what the future is likely to offer as challenges and opportunities. Once we have agreement about the most important facts, we can begin the planning process with a solid footing. Hopefully by the time we meet again in Orlando in late June, we will have completed the validation of the facts and be ready to discuss where those facts lead us and the logical actions to take based on those facts.

Ideally, by the end of the year, we will have at least the outline of a plan. Perhaps some segments of the plan will be substantially complete – especially where there is significant agreement among the wide variety of stakeholders. Remember, we have to involve not just the library community, but also the printing and information industries, agency publishers, the Congress, OMB and other policymakers, our labor unions and employees and others with an interest in, or concern about, the changes that are being considered.

Once we have developed the plan, we have to seek agreement on the plan, much as we will seek agreement on the facts. Once we have that agreement, the plan will have to go to the Congress and Congress will have to enact any legislative changes that are required to implement the plan. Then – at the end of this long process – GPO can begin to implement the plan.

Does that mean that GPO is standing still while all of this discovery of facts, agreement on facts, planning, and agreement on plans takes place. Of course not. There are many short-term changes that we can make, and in some instances have already begun to make. Even as I talk to the library community about the future of GPO and the FDLP, I continue

to ask what can we do NOW or in the near future – without waiting for complete formal plans or legislative changes - to make things work better. As with the OMB Compact for procurement of agency printing and many of our pilot projects, there are many things that we can do within the framework of the existing laws and policies to begin to test ideas that we may wish to implement more fully in the ultimate plan.

A New Economic Model for the Sales Program

At the fall Depository Library Council meeting and conference, Bruce spoke of the need to develop a new economic model for the sales program. For many years the Sales program and the FDLP co-existed and were complimentary. Then GPO Access was launched, and shortly thereafter the paid subscriptions to the online service were dropped and GPO began to provide free public access, not just to Federal Depository libraries, but also to the general public. It has been wildly successful. As the handout indicates, we are averaging over 33 million downloads per month – the equivalent of 808 million typeset pages.

However, the results of that action – and the simultaneous changes in agency dissemination from paper publications to posting on websites – have been devastating for the Sales Program. We have dropped from revenues of over \$80 million to revenues of approximately \$30 million in 10 years. At one time we sold over 35,000 paid subscription to the Federal Register; now we sell less than 2700 copies, while customers download in excess of 4 million free Federal Register documents per month. We have improved public access, but destabilized the Sales Program, which, in the past, was an important part of the overall revenue and income for GPO, making significant contributions to GPO's overhead and its economic well being.

As Bruce stated at the conference, this change was not planned. GPO didn't develop a new model for the Sales Program in response to the vast amounts of information offered for free public access on GPO Access and the World Wide Web. The Sales Program declined rapidly, to the point where it was losing over \$1 million a month, and draining the capital the GPO needs to invest in its future.

What Bruce asked of the library community is that you help us determine the appropriate boundaries for free public access, outside of which we can try to develop a new economic model for the Sales Program that will generate \$30 to \$50 million in additional revenue for GPO annually. We are having a similar dialog with the information industry about the boundaries from their perspective, so that GPO does not compete inappropriately with commercial publishing.

I have begun to describe this using the story of Odysseus seeking to make a safe passage between Scylla and Charybdis. For those of you who don't remember Greek mythology, Scylla and Charybdis were two sea monsters dwelling on the opposite sides of a narrow strait, the personification of the dangers of navigation near the rocks and eddies.¹ I am not implying that either the library community or the information industry are monsters to be

¹ For a quick synopsis of the story, go to <http://www.ketherian.org/paxtharda/thardex/questions.htm#15>.

avoided, but rather that this is a difficult voyage that requires careful planning and for which there may be no successful outcome.

At a meeting with representatives of the library community after the fall conference, Bruce said that, as a business man and as a republican, he could not go to Congress and ask for a change in policy and funding for GPO to offset the revenue losses from the Sales Program until he had made a good faith effort to determine if it was possible in the current environment to create a sustainable economic model – acceptable to both the library community and the information industry. He and I are both prepared for the fact that the answer may be that there is no viable economic model and that GPO will have a very small Sales Program with limited revenues, or none at all. We hope that GPO can find a safe passage between the requirements of the library community and those of the information industry, but we both acknowledge that it may be a very narrow strait and one that will require careful navigation. I personally believe that there is a both a genuine need and an opportunity for a healthy sales program, but we have to structure it correctly.

To move this dialog forward, I am planning a meeting in Washington of representatives from agency publishers (who have also expressed great interest in and concern about this issue), the library community, the information industry and perhaps some academics with good credentials in issues related to economic models in information. This meeting will probably take place in early March. My hope is that by having a discussion with a small group of "experts" we can develop a document which can be shared more broadly to seek consensus. Those of you who were at the Council meeting this fall will recognize how difficult it is to have that type of dialog with 500 to 600 people. I think it will help everyone to have a few concrete proposals to respond to, instead of the generalized anxiety and uncertainty that currently exists. We are planning to have a panel present the results at the Spring DLC meeting in St. Louis and have a discussion about it there, and will also circulate it and obtain comments in other ways.

Legacy Collections

Before I close and take your comments and questions, I want to address one other important issue that was discussed extensively at the fall conference: managing legacy collections.

One of the most exciting and encouraging things that is happening is the progress that has been made on the issue of managing our legacy collections. There are three related initiatives that are underway simultaneously.

First is a movement toward shared repositories, or shared housing agreements, that would allow two or more libraries to eliminate some of the redundancy between or among their collections. These initiatives are still in the early stages, but they are very important since they will help us move toward a smaller number of comprehensive sets that can be more readily preserved. As I said at the fall meeting, we are not going to fully preserve 1280 tangible sets of most government documents. We are not going to preserve 53 tangible sets of most documents. But we do need to decide as a community how many sets of

tangible Federal documents should be preserved and take the necessary steps to establish consolidated collections that are as comprehensive as possible, so we can actively preserve the materials. The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) will help us evaluate the options and opportunities and we will share the resulting report with the community.

Second is the decision by GPO to establish a collection of last resort. At a minimum this will become, overtime, a comprehensive collection of tangible and electronic titles that will backstop the regional collections or repositories as they are established. We will receive reports from the regional depository librarians and the Council within the next few weeks. We will incorporate their recommendations and comments into a plan, which will be circulated for review and scheduled for further discussion at the Depository Library Council meeting in April in St. Louis.

Third, and essential to the other two, is the one I want to emphasize today. That is the decision by the Association of Research Libraries to collaborate with GPO, and ultimately with the entire library community, on a national digitization plan, so that we can coordinate our efforts to digitize a complete legacy collection of U.S. government documents and make sure that the documents are available, in the public domain, for permanent public access. The ARL proposal is one of several related efforts that, together, will make it possible to accomplish this goal within the next few years. We have one regional depository library that is willing to allow its collection to be for a comprehensive digitization initiative and willing to provide space for scanners and personnel in its facility. The National Agricultural Library is interested in working with GPO and the land grant universities that are also depository libraries to digitize the entire legacy collection of USDA publications. We are having discussions with Congress and other agencies about their desire to have accessible online collections of their legacy publications. There are many exciting opportunities that will contribute to this effort.

This will be a collaborative effort. As I see it, a number of libraries will actively digitize materials, based on established priorities or local needs, while other libraries will collaborate to support the digitization specific materials. A variety of government and foundation grants and private sector partners will facilitate this effort.

GPO's roles will be to coordinate the effort, assist in the establishment and coordination of standards, serve as a trusted repository for preservation and access (in addition to any other places that the materials might be held), certify and authenticate the electronic files, and ensure that there is appropriate cataloging and metadata for the items in the collection.

As I said before, GPO will seek funding in FY 2005 to perform OCR on digitized files and output XML tagged data that can be used for access and for print-on-demand. Thus, whatever OCR scanning is done by individual libraries, we can ensure that the preservation and access collection maintained by GPO is consistently tagged, making it a true collection, not just a random assortment of electronic files. We will also continue to work with Congress, the Judiciary and Federal agencies to get them to participate and, where appropriate, to certify the files as official copies.

This is an extremely shorthand description of a complex set of actions which together will help us preserve a reasonable number of copies of the tangible artifacts as well as to create and maintain a comprehensive, digital, public domain collection for preservation and access. The availability of these tangible and electronic collections will allow all depository libraries, including regional libraries, to manage their collections more effectively, substituting electronic copies for tangible copies — if they wish to do so. And it will ensure that the legacy collections now available only in print and microform are fully a part of the electronic library collection of the future.

One immediate, and extremely useful, thing that each of you can do is help us develop the priority list of titles for digitization for the various sizes and types of libraries. We began this process at the fall depository conference, but we need to expand and accelerate it. Not surprisingly, the preliminary lists from the fall meeting indicate that the priorities are quite different among the different sizes and types of libraries. These lists are a good starting point for further discussion among representatives of each type of library - public libraries, state libraries, small academic libraries, Federal libraries, etc. Law libraries are actively working on a priority list, as are the ARL libraries. If you are willing to work with me and the Council to establish the priorities for another specific category of libraries, please let me know. The best way would be via e-mail. As you know, you can reach me on this and other issues as jrussell@gpo.gov.

Now, I would be happy to take your questions and comments.