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GPO ACCESS REPORT TO CONGRESS DESCRIBES “DRAMATICALLY DIFFERENT SERVICE”

The Government Printing Office (GPO) has released the second Biennial Report to Congress on the status of GPO Access, its award-winning online information service found on the Internet at www.access.gpo.gov/su—docs. The report states that GPO Access “is a dramatically different service than it was at the time of GPO’s last update to Congress. It has grown in size, scope, and usage through the addition of new databases, search enhancements, locator applications, and a nationwide series of training sessions and demonstrations.”

The report is required by Public Law 103-40, the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993. Since the last Biennial Report in January 1996, searches on GPO Access increased 1,178 percent while retrievals of information increased 319 percent. Currently, the public is utilizing GPO Access to retrieve approximately 8 million documents per month.

GPO Access now provides free public access to more than 70 databases from all three branches of the Federal Government, including such core Government publications as the Congressional Record, the Federal Register, the Code of Federal Regulations, the U.S. Code, Supreme Court decisions, and the Commerce Business Daily. In addition to these official databases, the service provides access to the Federal Bulletin Board, several locator tools for accessing Federal electronic information, and GPO’s Sales Product Catalog, which enables users to locate and purchase Government information products for sale by the Superintendent of Documents.

The Biennial Report discusses plans for the future of GPO Access, including the provision of permanent public access to its Government information databases at GPO and through deposits at an electronic storage facility and a distributed networked system of partner institutions nationwide.

The Biennial Report also demonstrates that GPO Access has been far less expensive to produce and operate, and with far greater performance, than was originally expected.

In the committee report accompanying the legislation that launched GPO Access, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected that creating and operating the system would cost about \$6 million over the first 5 years. The CBO also estimated that an additional \$2 million to \$10 million per year would be needed to provide online access to Federal depository libraries with out charge, the only recipients originally designated to receive free information services from the system.

As the Biennial Report shows, however, total operating costs for the system since it began in June 1994 have been less than \$6 million. Moreover, since December 1995, GPO Access has been provided without charge to all users.

The Biennial Report indicates that GPO Access continues to be recognized for its contribution to promoting citizen access to Government information, earning awards from Internet user groups and publications of the computer, business, and legal communities. In 1997, the National Performance Review, under the leadership of Vice President Gore, presented a Hammer Award for its effort in making the Commerce Business Daily available on GPO Access.

For a free copy of the 1998 Biennial Report to Congress on the Status of GPO Access, contact GPO's Office of Congressional, Legislative, and Public Affairs, on 202-512-1991.