



For Release: IMMEDIATE
April 16, 1998

Contact: 202-512-1991
No. 98-12

\$1.5 MILLION GAO MANAGEMENT AUDIT GIVES GPO HIGH MARKS FOR SERVICE

***“Timely and responsive services to Congress” viewed as “a universal strength;”
printing procurement services called “government at its best;” “strong support”
found for GPO’s depository library program; draft report focuses on ways to
improve GPO efficiency***

A General Accounting Office-sponsored management audit of the Government Printing Office has found “unanimous” and “universal” support for GPO’s in-house production, printing procurement, and depository library distribution services, and offers a variety of recommendations to improve these and other GPO programs, according to a draft report delivered by Booz-Allen & Hamilton, Inc., this week.

Citing congressional satisfaction with product quality and timely dependability of delivery, executive agency satisfaction with printing procurement services, and broad public support for free access to government information through depository libraries, the \$1.5 million review was conducted in response to directions contained in the conference report to the FY 1998 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act.

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees directed the GAO to “include an objective evaluation” of GPO’s documents sales program, printing procurement program, in-house production operations, personnel management activities, financial systems, and information technology programs. The GAO was specifically instructed that its work “should not be encumbered by presupposing that GPO’s current operations . . . cannot be changed.” The audit was performed between December 1997 and April 1998.

In response to the draft report, Public Printer Michael F. DiMario said, “I am pleased to see that this audit underscores the importance of GPO’s longstanding mission of service to the Congress, Federal agencies, and the public. We are in the process of reviewing these recommendations and will act on them wherever necessary to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs for the American public.”

The auditors found strong support in Congress for GPO’s in-house production operations for congressional printing, stating that GPO’s production area “consistently meets a demanding

congressional production schedule” and that “GPO effectively satisfies its priority congressional customers and meets the variable demands and outputs requested by Congress.” According to the draft report, GPO’s “production functions are geared toward rapid and consistent turnout of congressional products” and are “flexible and responsive to changing congressional needs.”

In addition, the draft report says that GPO has “developed strong and cordial relationships with their contacts within congressional organizations and offices” and that GPO’s “communication with the congressional customer is frequent and regular.” The audit reviewed the feasibility of privatizing the production of the Congressional Record but was inconclusive on any savings and suggested further study would be required. Moreover, it “found little support among congressional staff for relinquishing control of the in-plant production capability of GPO.”

The auditors found “universal support” among executive branch agencies for GPO’s printing procurement program. The draft report says “these agencies viewed this service that GPO provides as an example of ‘government at its best,’ and none of them felt that they wanted or could do this function better than GPO.”

The draft report says that GPO’s depository library program “is well managed, provides a valuable public service, and is respected by the library community.” They also found strong support for GPO to make an increasing amount of government information available electronically, free of charge, over the Internet and praised the success of **GPO Access** (www.access.gpo.gov). The draft report says **GPO Access** “is one of the Federal Government’s largest and most active web sites” and suggests that GPO seek additional funds from Congress to expand this program. In addition, the draft report says “GPO has successfully implemented new I/T [information technology] capabilities in many parts of the organization.”

The draft report contains a number of specific recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of GPO’s programs. These include recommendations for developing a strategic planning program, providing smaller spans of control for top management, improving customer communications and marketing, capitalizing on opportunities to increase revenues and reduce costs in printing procurement, improving internal communications and management information systems, expanding training opportunities agency-wide, and accelerating efforts to prepare computer systems for year 2000. Many of the recommendations address the need for investment to offset the effects of reduced spending and downsizing pursued by GPO in recent years.

The draft report also recommends extensive reorganization of GPO’s documents sales program, including the possibility of outsourcing or privatization. However, this program provides a public service that is funded entirely by revenues from sales, and the report itself notes that automation improvements scheduled for implementation later this spring “offer the potential for dramatic improvements in order processing and inventory management.”

GPO management officials are currently reviewing the report’s recommendations and preparing final agency comments.