

February 18, 2004

Daniel Barkley
Chair, Depository Library Council
Regional Government Information Librarian
Government Information Department
General Library - MSC05 3020
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Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

Dear Dan:

I would like to thank you and the entire Council for your thoughtful report: *Depository Library Council's Advice to the Public Printer, January 22, 2004*. Council has produced a very comprehensive, but succinctly stated, analysis of the topics I put before you during the fall 2003 Council meeting and suggested avenues for future action that we will look at very carefully.

As you know, GPO is already deeply involved in fact-finding and actions related to several of the items raised in Council's report. Being the guarantor of authentic Government information, both today and into the future, is a critical role for the 21st century GPO. We are poised to implement a test-bed application of the Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) as an initial mechanism for authentication.

In addition, GPO is considering a dark archive as part of our plan for the Collection of Last Resort. Council's advice on the attributes of collections to assure permanent public access to legacy collections of Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) information is being incorporated into our planning. GPO intends to ensure the establishment and maintenance an archival collection of record, which contains original and verified titles in print and digital form. By April 1, 2004, GPO will provide a draft plan for the Collection of Last Resort for your review so it can be discussed at the upcoming meeting in St. Louis.

We are also encouraging regional depositories and others to enter into new partnerships and other arrangements to establish several geographically dispersed archival FDLP collections. GPO is striving for maximum flexibility under the existing law in order to allow prototype projects to get started as soon as possible. Such arrangements could involve libraries from multiple states, and might be accomplished through mechanisms such as shared regional collections or selective housing agreements. Such arrangements should benefit participating libraries by relieving the pressure to store ever-expanding tangible collections.

Council correctly understands my belief that a revenue stream beyond Congressional appropriations is necessary to enable GPO to adopt new information technologies and improve GPO products and services. I appreciate your focus on principles, which GPO can then use to evaluate revenue-generating concepts and projects. In transforming the GPO, I want to remain true to our core mission of informing the nation. I agree with Council that the fundamental purpose of the FDLP is to assure that citizens of the United States have a source for no-fee access to information by and about their government. GPO will continue to investigate the opportunities presented by digital information technologies to advance that principle to the greatest extent possible. At the same time, it is essential that GPO develop new and sustainable sources of revenue. Your suggestion of customized digital publishing services as a method for increasing revenue is an idea that we certainly will explore more fully.

The hard work that the Council has put into this report is unmistakable, and I note especially your consultation with the library community and other information specialists on issues of digital information verification and preservation. It is only through an understanding of the interests of all the concerned parties that we can move forward in a time of rapid change and still preserve the public's right to access government information.

I truly appreciate your efforts. Please be assured that we will use the information that you provided in the Council report as GPO continues to assess problems and develop solutions. I look forward to continuing this discussion at the upcoming spring Council meeting in St. Louis.

Sincerely,

BRUCE R. JAMES
Public Printer

cc: Superintendent of Documents
Council Members