

Future Tangible Distribution to Depository Libraries

SETTING THE STAGE

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) is in the eighth year of a transition to a primarily electronic program. Data show that we have reached a point where 95% of the new titles coming into the program are disseminated online, whether or not they are also distributed in tangible form. This FDLP transition to a more electronic environment mirrors a similar transition across Government as more and more information is published electronically.

All of this change in Government publishing necessitates that decisions must be made regarding formats for distribution through the FDLP. The Dissemination/Distribution Policy for the Federal Depository Library Program (SOD 71) sets forth the guidelines for this decision process. SOD 71 acknowledges that there are certain essential titles that need to be distributed in tangible form, as long as the publishing agency continues to publish in that form. SOD 71 also recognizes that maps and other items, for which there is no current useful electronic format, need to be distributed in tangible form, even when they are not on the list of essential titles.

The initial list of essential titles was developed in 2000 in consultation with the Depository Library community and an effort is currently underway to update that list. Earlier this year, GPO modified the list of essential titles to include additional Congressional materials. With the addition of these item numbers, the expanded list of essential titles now includes approximately 25% of FY 2004 print titles distributed to depositories and used 40% of the estimated FY 2004 printing dollars.

GPO recently reaffirmed that it will continue offering microfiche as an alternative format for items currently available for dual distribution in both print and microfiche.

NEW INFORMATION

GPO is currently updating SOD 71. When the proposed changes have been reviewed with the library community, SOD 71 will be reissued as ID 71. It appears that the most substantive changes are in the second, fifth and sixth guidelines of SOD 71.

SOD 71 (January 2001)	Proposed Revision to be ID 71 (April 2005)
2. When a product is only available in tangible format, then LPS will distribute it in a tangible format.	2. When a product is only available in tangible format, ID will create an electronic version to be substituted for tangible distribution if it is not an essential title and one or more of the following conditions exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The cost of printing and distributing the tangible product is prohibitive due its characteristics. b. Digital conversion results in better functionality of the product. c. The digital copy is an official representation of the original. d. The publishing agency does not fulfill the requirement to provide sufficient copies for tangible distribution.
5. When a tangible product is to be distributed, the product will be distributed in the format issued by the publishing agency, except that a paper product will be reviewed for suitability for conversion to microfiche. If suitable, it will be converted; if not, it will be distributed in paper.	5. When a tangible product is to be distributed, the product will be distributed in the format issued by the publishing agency, except for essential titles that have been identified for conversion to microfiche as a dual distribution option. Electronic dissemination will be utilized for publications that meet the conditions in number 2 above.
6. LPS will not convert products that are issued solely in tangible print format to electronic format. This approach may be reevaluated as circumstances warrant. The costs of the conversion process and the official status of the resulting online or tangible electronic version are important factors.	6. In order to place electronic versions of all in scope documents in the FDLP Electronic Collection for preservation and dissemination, ID will convert from tangible to electronic format, if an electronic copy cannot be obtained. The costs of the conversion process, suitability of the material, and the official status of the resulting online or tangible electronic version are important factors.

ESSENTIAL TITLES

GPO recently conducted a survey to obtain recommendations from the depository libraries on which titles should be added to the existing Essential Titles list, either for all Federal depository libraries or for specific types of depository libraries. A total of 794, or about 63 percent of the 1,270 libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program responded to the survey. Respondents recommended and ranked up to 10 titles from lists of the 100 titles most selected by their library type as of March 2005. Only titles in tangible format in the List of Classes were included on the lists. Respondents were allowed to “write-in” up to three titles not included on the list for their library type.

GPO now needs to determine how to move from the survey results to decisions on specific titles for tangible distribution to all or specific types of depository libraries. Results for each type of library are included in the registration packets, showing the top items recommended. Complete results are online at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/essential/statistics.html>.

The list of Essential Titles developed in 2000 included primarily items selected by over 1,000 depositories. In contrast, the highest number of recommendations for a single item in the recent survey was 373. This seems to represent less of community consensus on the recommendations than for the existing essential titles. In fact, there are many items not on the essential titles list that have higher selection rate than the level of recommendations, either in aggregate, or by library type. It is surprising that more of the highly selected items were not recommended as essential titles.

ASSUMPTIONS

- 95% of new titles coming into the FDLP are available online, whether or not they are also distributed in tangible form.
- The transition to a primarily electronic FDLP was an incremental process and it is nearly complete.
- Federal agencies are publishing more “born digital” documents and increasingly relying on the Internet, rather than print, as the primary distribution for agency publications.
- Federal agencies play a significant role in determining whether their publications are published in electronic or tangible form.
- SOD 71 will become ID 71 and will continue evolve as the basis for access and dissemination to U.S. Government information through the FDLP.
- Essential Titles will continue to be distributed in a tangible format.
- Maps and other items, for which there is currently no useful electronic format, need to be distributed in tangible form.
- Tangible titles include products that are disseminated in either print, CD/DVD, diskettes, video, or microfiche.

QUESTIONS

- Does Council agree with these assumptions?
- Does the proposed revision of SOD 71 to ID 71 adequately provide for this evolution?
- With limited fiscal resources what criteria should GPO use to determine tangible distribution? Or is everything covered in ID 71?
- What criteria should GPO consider in updating the Essential Titles list?
- How can GPO most effectively utilize the survey results in this process?
- Are there other elements of tangible distribution that GPO should be considering?

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