
BY THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

**Report To The Chairman,
Joint Committee On Printing**

**Government Printing Office's
Depository Library Program**

GAO reviewed the operations of the Government Printing Office's Depository Library Program at the request of the Joint Committee on Printing.

GAO found that improvements have been made in the program and that depository libraries are generally able to meet customer needs for federal publications. Opportunities exist, however, to improve the program's efficiency by developing better policies and procedures for selecting, classifying, cataloging, and distributing publications.



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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT DIVISION

B-214852

The Honorable Frank Annunzio
Chairman, Joint Committee on
Printing
Congress of the United States

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This report is in response to the Committee's February 10, 1983, request for a comprehensive audit of the Depository Library Program (DLP), as administered by the Superintendent of Documents of the Government Printing Office (GPO) under title 44 of the U.S. Code. (See app. III.) Other requests made in the Committee's letter were addressed in an earlier report (AFMD-83-89, Sept. 30, 1983) and in a meeting with the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) (Oct. 12, 1983). We also performed a survey of all 1,382 depository libraries and summarized our findings in a report (AFMD-84-50, April 9, 1984).

The mission of the DLP is to make publications (and other documents) of federal agencies, with some exceptions, accessible to the public free of charge at designated libraries throughout the country. Exceptions include those publications restricted for national security reasons, those for internal use only without public interest or educational value (for example, personnel policies), and cooperative publications which must be sold to be self-sustaining (the cost of which may be shared by private funders as in the case of many Smithsonian Institution publications). For fiscal year 1983, the DLP, including depository distribution and cataloging and indexing, had a budget of \$24.7 million.

While the mission of the program is simple and direct, the task of distribution--32 million copies of 62,000 publications (72 percent on microfiche) to 1,382 depository libraries in 1983--is complex. Some depository libraries are designated by law (such as land-grant colleges, federal agencies, and law libraries) and others by congressional members. Fifty are regional depositories that receive all publications; the remainder select the types of publications they want.

GPO must first receive publications from the federal agencies that generated the publications, then classify them, catalog them, convert some to microfiche, and, finally, distribute the publications to the libraries which requested each type of publication. Through surveys, the DLP determines what types of publications each library wants to receive routinely and maintains this information to produce mailing lists. GPO also sends the libraries the Monthly Catalog which should list all federal government publications, even those not available through GPO. (It is not used for ordering publications from the DLP.)

Our review of the program, conducted from March through November 1983, was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. The review included GPO's policies and procedures and discussions with program personnel. Our findings in each of the areas we evaluated are based on samples of GPO records and activities. Because the records were often not available in a manner which facilitated statistically-based selection techniques, we generally exercised professional judgment in selecting the sample records and activities included in our evaluation. The methods used to select these non-statistical samples were structured to be as fair as possible under the circumstances. Our sampling results, unless specifically stated otherwise, are not projectable to a universe. The basis for selecting specific samples is explained in the respective sections of the report. The review also included discussions with personnel from 20 federal agencies and a survey of all 1,382 depository libraries to obtain their opinions on the effectiveness of the program. We received responses to the survey from 90 percent of the libraries. Further details on the scope of our work are included in appendix II.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

We found that GPO has made a significant improvement over prior periods in the operation of the program by reducing the backlog of documents to be classified and cataloged. GPO has also expended substantial effort to distribute documents as microfiche instead of in hardcopy form. We believe its efforts have increased program efficiency. We also found that program personnel are generally dedicated to providing a high level of service to the depository libraries. In our survey of depository libraries, we found that the services provided by the program generally meet their needs as well as the demands of the public for most government documents.

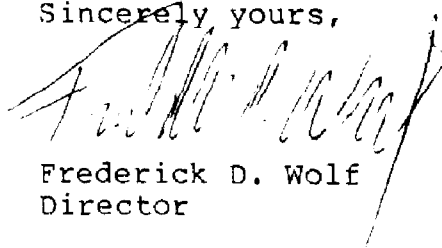
However, we also found a number of activities where program efficiency and effectiveness could be further improved. Specifically, we believe that more attention should be given to identifying agency publications for inclusion in the DLP, GPO needs to further reduce its backlog of publications awaiting classification and cataloging, and steps should be taken to

improve the timeliness and accuracy of GPO's processes for distributing publications to libraries. We believe these areas should be considered in some detail by GPO because they represent opportunities to improve DLP operations. The details of our findings are discussed in appendix I.

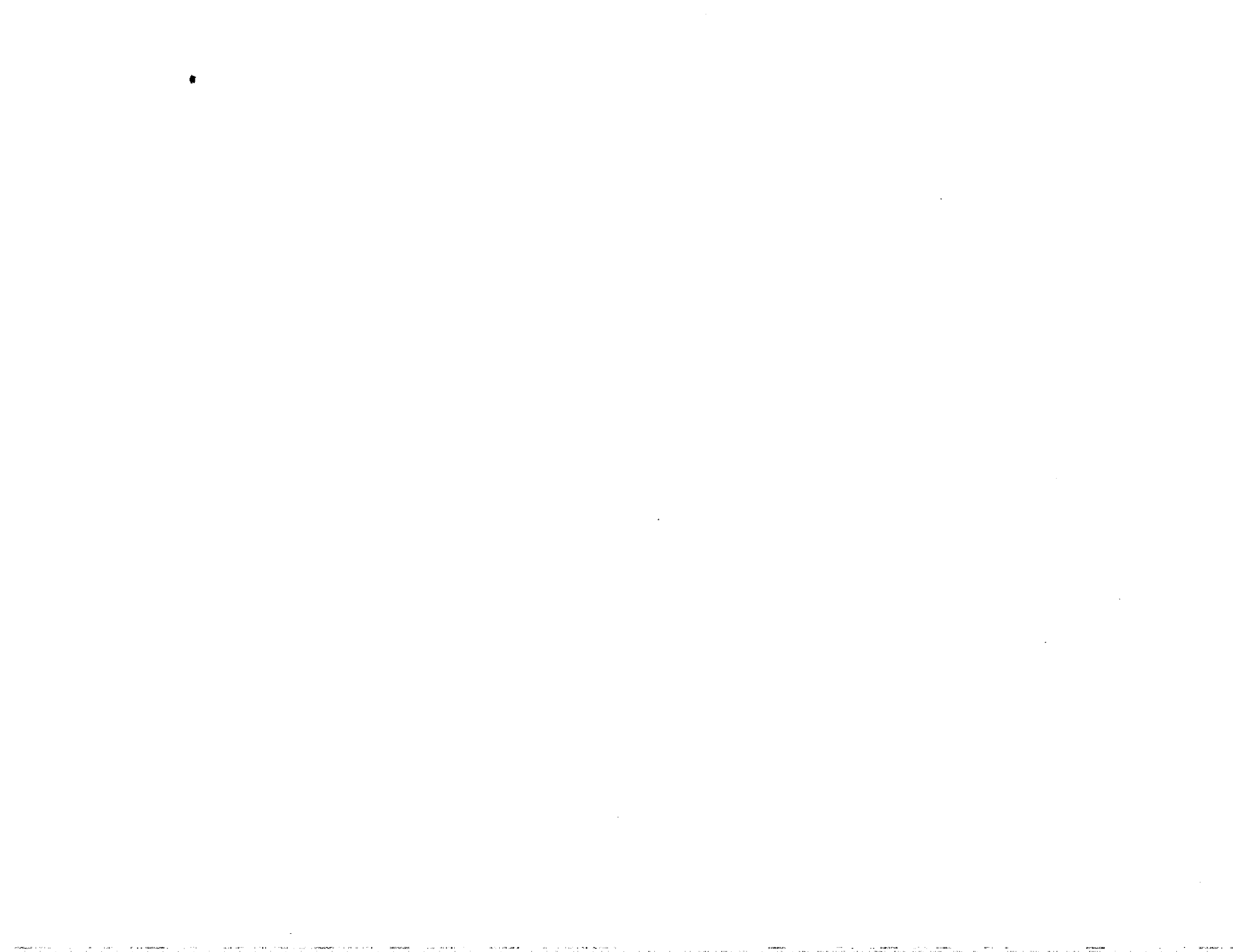
In a draft of this report provided to GPO for comment, we proposed a number of improvements it could implement. GPO agreed with some of our proposals but disagreed with others. It expressed a belief that the tone of the draft report indicated that the program's mission is barely accomplished. We modified the report to emphasize the extent to which GPO is performing its functions in an effective manner. GPO's detailed written comments were voluminous and we have not appended them to this report. We have summarized them in pertinent sections of appendix I and have included as appendix IV the letter from GPO transmitting its comments.

As arranged with your office, we are sending a copy of this report to the Public Printer. We appreciate the efforts of the Public Printer and GPO personnel in providing the information and assistance for our review.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Frederick D. Wolf", written over the typed name and title.

Frederick D. Wolf
Director



FINDINGSIDENTIFYING PUBLICATIONS
FOR INCLUSION IN THE DLP

Before GPO can fulfill its obligations under title 44, each federal agency must identify which of its publications it believes the statute requires to be distributed to the depository libraries and/or listed in GPO's complete index of government publications.

Title 44 (Sec. 1902) states that:

"Government publications, except those determined by their issuing components to be required for official use only or for strictly administrative or operational purposes which have no public interest or educational value and publications classified for reasons of national security, shall be made available to depository libraries...."

We found that in general most government publications of public interest are made available through the DLP. However, no uniform, written guidelines exist to expand on the above provisions of title 44 and assist the agencies in determining which publications should be submitted for distribution to the depository libraries. Also, GPO presently has no means of determining whether an agency has submitted all of the publications it should. Thus there is no assurance that the DLP represents a complete compendium of federal publications that should be available to the public.

In assessing whether government publications are identified by agencies for distribution by the DLP in accordance with title 44 we sought to determine whether documents the public wants are made available. We found that GPO receives requests from depository libraries for publications not distributed, indicating that some public interest exists for publications not included in the depository program. During the 10-month period, September 1982 to June 1983, when 50,000 publications were distributed through the DLP, GPO received 430 requests from libraries for other publications.

We analyzed 168 of those requests (those published by the three agencies for which the most requests were received, and a ten percent sample of the remainder) and believe, based on the nature of the publications requested, that 48 percent were requests for publications to which the public should have ready access. Requests for publications which had already been distributed represented 30 percent of the sample. Invalid requests such as duplicate orders or discontinued publications accounted for 20 percent, and the balance of 2 percent were, in our opinion, for internal use and should not have been distributed. We

could not determine definitively the exact reasons why the 48 percent were not distributed initially, but, in many instances, the agencies involved regarded them as suitable only for internal use.

While we note the 430 requests for publications are less than one percent of the 50,000 distributed, as pointed out by GPO in commenting on a draft of this report, we also believe that the requests received from libraries probably represent only a portion of the public interest in publications that are not available. Libraries cannot request documents they are not aware of and we found, based on a review of over 500 publications produced by 10 agencies since 1976, that 39 percent were not included in the DLP. When we eliminated publications published prior to 1980, our sample was reduced to 453, and the percent not included in the program was 38 percent.

Additional evidence shows that the public is also making numerous requests for government publications not distributed through the DLP and the libraries often are not filling the requests by ordering the publications from the DLP. Our survey of depository libraries reveals that 90 percent receive requests for federal government publications not offered through the DLP; 11 percent receive 10 or more such requests each month. Fifty-four percent of the libraries, however, do not forward such requests to the DLP because, as indicated by the narrative comments at the end of the questionnaire, they believe they will not be filled. Many libraries, 37 percent of the respondents to our survey, obtained government publications not offered through the DLP from a GPO sales office--an indication of confusion surrounding the designation of public interest publications distributed through the DLP.

A wide range of treatment over which publications should be included in the DLP was apparent in our interviews with some of the federal agency personnel who make those decisions. Of personnel at 18 publishing agencies, none indicated that they had written guidelines for determining which publications should be distributed to the public; two said they had lists of publications regarded as internal only; six who did not have lists gave similar examples of internal publications such as phone books, personnel manuals, or newsletters; three said that they sent everything to GPO and let it decide; three said some of their publications were just too technical for the public; several said that anything printed in-house was not distributed. In our opinion, uniform written guidelines would be helpful to assist agencies in selecting publications to be included in the DLP.

Personnel at the DLP presently have no mechanism for determining whether agencies have sent them all publications of interest to the public. Instead, they become aware of publications that should be made available when libraries forward requests for particular federal publications they would like, but

which they have not received through the DLP. If agencies sent GPO lists of all publications they have published, noting the ones they believe should not be included in the library program and the reasons, GPO could be more confident that it has provided all appropriate documents to the depository libraries.

Another possible impediment to the identification of publications for distribution is the requirement set forth in title 44 (section 1903) that the issuing federal agencies shall bear "the cost of printing and binding those publications distributed to depository libraries obtained elsewhere than from the Government Printing Office." Although most government publications are printed through GPO, the Joint Committee on Printing authorizes 294 agency printing plants to print government documents, and allows agencies to procure printing commercially in other instances. We do not know the extent to which lack of funding of printing and binding costs may be a disincentive to federal agencies to send copies for depository distribution, but officials at the Departments of Labor and Energy, which have been authorized to print documents outside GPO, cited examples of publications printed outside GPO which were not distributed to depository libraries because their respective budgets could not bear the costs. Other cases may also exist.

In a draft of this report which we sent to GPO for comment, we proposed that GPO, in coordination with the JCP, develop more definitive written criteria for federal agencies to use in deciding which publications should be included in the DLP. In our view, title 44 provides general guidance but lacks the specificity needed for agencies to implement. For example, terms such as "public interest" and "educational value" could be further defined. Also, there needs to be a measure of consistency in the guidelines across government agencies. We also proposed that GPO establish procedures with federal agencies to ensure that GPO receives lists of all publications printed by the agencies, identifying whether GPO or another printer produced the publication. If the federal agency issuing the document deems it inappropriate for distribution, the reason should be cited. We believe this could be accomplished if GPO asked the JCP to request the GPO legislative committees to amend the statute. In addition, we proposed that GPO consider requesting the JCP to ask the GPO legislative committees to amend title 44 to enable GPO to fund the costs of printing and binding government publications not printed by GPO for depository distribution. Such a change would eliminate any possible disincentive for federal agencies not to distribute such publications because of the cost.

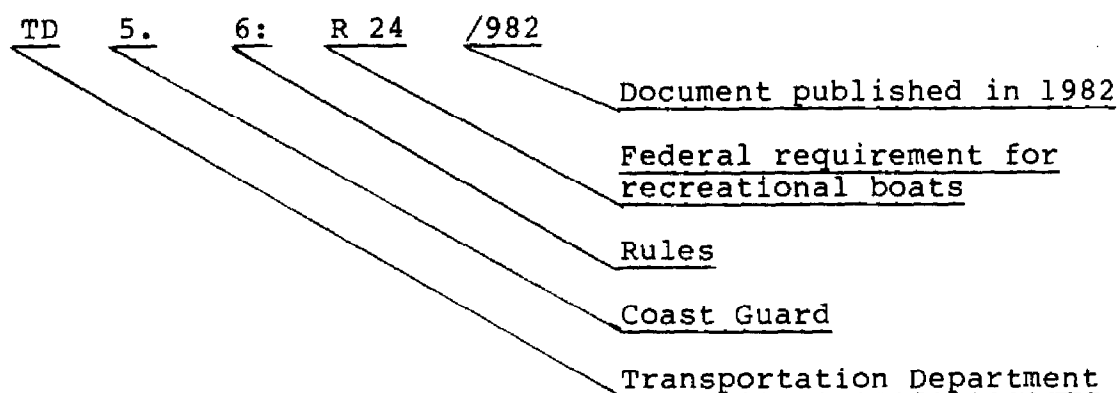
In commenting on the draft of this report, GPO stated that it believes the title 44 guidelines are clear, but agreed to assist the JCP in preparing supplemental guidelines if determined necessary by the JCP. GPO also noted that agencies, not GPO, are responsible for determining, based on the criteria in title 44, which publications should be distributed to the depository libraries. However, it agreed that the demand by

libraries for publications not initially included in the DLP indicates that the agencies are falling short in determining that such publications have no public interest or educational value.

GPO concurred with our proposal to establish procedures to ensure federal agencies provide it lists of publications they have printed, and stated that it will prepare a circular letter reminding agencies of this requirement. Regarding our proposal to have GPO fund the printing and binding of all depository library copies of government publications, it pointed out that it presently expends its funds to convert many publications printed outside GPO to microfiche for depository distribution.

CLASSIFYING PUBLICATIONS

Classifying government publications involves assigning a unique combination of letters and numbers to a given publication based on the agency which produces it and its subject matter. The classification number is necessary for both retrieval and identification by depository libraries and others. Also, GPO organizes its Monthly Catalog of publications by classification number. An example of a classification number (which always begins with letters) is shown below.



The "official" classification process begins when a publication is physically received by DLP. Employees who are trained classifiers perform this task. An employee first determines if the publication has already been received and classified--which may occur because publications are received from individual agencies as well as the GPO sales program, GPO regional offices, and the GPO main office. The employee next checks a manual card file of publications classified and cataloged, which is arranged by classification number. In doing so, the employee must tentatively determine the appropriate number for the publication before deciding whether it has been classified previously.

Once a classification number has been assigned to a publication, another employee uses that number and the DLP's List of Classes to assign the publication an "item number." This is determined by the initial portion of the classification number

called the "class stem" (TD 5.6: in the example). Item numbers are assigned to agencies in blocks of numbers and allow a single item number to include several (up to 16) class stems. The item number for the publication in the example is 0943. The DLP requires the depository libraries to use item numbers in selecting the publications they wish to receive.

In assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the classification process we noted that the DLP is generally doing a good job in this area. The rate of errors in assigning classification numbers is very low and the backlog of publications awaiting classification has been reduced. However, we believe that, because of the magnitude of problems caused for librarians when errors are detected, the DLP should institute certain quality control procedures to decrease the error rate even further, and could also improve the monitoring of the classification backlog.

Although the vast majority of publications are classified correctly, some are not. For example, in the April, May, and June 1983 Monthly Catalogs, GPO made 206 corrections to previous issues. Of those, 92 were changes in classification numbers. During the period from April 1 to June 30, 1983, GPO also made 119 corrections to its shipping lists, 91 of which were changes in classification number.

During the same time period, GPO distributed 15,000 publications, resulting in a classification error rate of about one percent. However, since the errors we reviewed were not selected using statistical sampling techniques, the result cannot be projected to the universe. While this error rate may not seem significant, as pointed out by GPO in commenting on a draft of this report, it results in a large amount of effort by GPO employees and librarians in updating files. Changes in classification number require some or all of the 1,382 libraries to revise their records and, in many cases, to reshelve the publications under the new classification number. In addition, 35 of the 119 shipping list corrections were corrections to item numbers, which meant the wrong libraries had received the publications.

The manual process used in classification is a time-consuming procedure that is the cause of some errors. In the 6-month period from February 1 through July 31, 1983, 34 percent of the 50,000 publications processed (including duplicates of some titles) had been classified previously. For each duplicate, the title had to be reclassified before the classifier could look it up and determine if it had already been done. Although a necessary part of the process, this takes time. As a result of this manual process, the same classification number could be assigned to two different publications, or two different numbers could be assigned to one publication. An automated system, like the proposed one described later in this

report, and an increase in supervision and training, could help eliminate some errors. In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO said that it concurred with our proposal for further automation. It also said it has taken steps to improve consistency in classification by drafting a classification manual.

Striving for accuracy in classification is only a part of the challenge faced by the Depository Library Program--keeping up with the volume of work is equally important. An average of 5,000 publications (microfiche and printed) is processed through the DLP each month. We found, based on physical counts conducted by GPO, that the backlog was reduced from over 11,000 unclassified publications in January 1983 to 7,473 on August 5, 1983. GPO's efforts to monitor the backlog have been hampered by its recordkeeping problems. Before the count, GPO's records showed January and August 1983 backlogs of approximately 860 and 5,000, respectively, which were far less than the physical counts of the backlogs.

Because the date that GPO receives a publication is not recorded, we could not determine the exact age of publications in the backlog. We selected a few publications from the top, middle, and bottom of each classifier's stack of publications awaiting classification on June 23, 1983, for a total of 41 publications. We found publications had been in the backlog from less than 1 month to 6 years when the printing date was used as the benchmark. Seventeen percent were more than 2 years old. GPO personnel noted that publications may be received at any time after they are printed, thus some could have been quite old when received. We were able to determine, by monitoring the documents received, the printing and receipt dates for 95 of the thousands of publications received during our audit (less than one percent) and found GPO generally received them from 1 week to 3 months after printing. If GPO would date-stamp them on receipt, it could monitor the backlog more effectively. In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO concurred with our proposal to improve monitoring of the classification backlog. It said it has not yet fully considered whether to date-stamp publications. We do not understand GPO's reluctance to date-stamp publications when received since it would make monitoring the classification backlog more effective. In addition, although unrelated to classification, the "Guidelines for the Depository Library System" and the "Superintendent of Documents Instructions to Depository Libraries" state that the librarians should date-stamp publications received from GPO.

We also traced a sample of 87 printed publications from the date of receipt to the date of classification and found that printed publications were classified in an average of 2-1/2 working days. The sample represents a box of documents received on each of 3 separate days in June, July, and August 1983. During those 3 months, a total of 4,368 publications were received to be distributed in printed form. We also used the same method to monitor 69 of the approximately 12,000 publications which

were distributed in microfiche to depository libraries during the same period. Publications on microfiche averaged 13 working days from receipt to classification for the 69 publications. Thus, while microfiching documents has saved the DLP printing costs, the delay in classifying documents to be microfiched is longer than for printed publications. We were told that microfiched documents were generally given a lower priority than printed documents in being processed because they do not take up as much warehouse space.

In reviewing the classification process, we noted that some confusion exists because documents are "unofficially" assigned the class stem portion of the classification number by employees other than the official classifiers. Rather than wait until a document is officially classified before ordering copies to be printed, often documents are ordered to be printed based on an unofficial classification. Under GPO procedures at the time of our review, two groups of employees determined "unofficial" classification numbers as part of the process of determining the proper number of copies of publications to be printed. The ordering process takes place before the "official" classification process so that printing is not delayed. The employees ordering publications include distribution specialists who order publications printed at the main GPO plant and acquisition technicians who order those printed through GPO regional offices or individual federal agencies. The specialists and technicians are responsible for determining the proper number of copies of each publication to be ordered for the library program. Before the orders can be placed, however, the employees have to determine the publications' item numbers, which are determined by the class stem portion of the classification number. We found that the "unofficial" classifications are being done by employees having no guidelines or formal document classification training.

At the time of our review, to determine class stem for a publication, the employees used a copy of the publication to be distributed and the List of Classes, which gives class stems and item numbers. The employees then found the item number in a "distribution printout", which lists the number of libraries that have selected publications with that item number, and ordered the corresponding number of copies. We believe "official" classification should be done before the copies are ordered, to avoid ordering the wrong quantity because of a difference between class stem or item number as assigned in ordering and those assigned in the "official" process.

After the copies are printed and received at the DLP warehouse, copies of each publication are submitted to the DLP classifiers who begin the "official" classification process described previously. During the classification process, errors made by the ordering personnel in determining the class stem or item number are identified. Since these errors are not identified until after printed copies of the publications are received by the GPO warehouse, they may result in delays and other problems in distributing the publications.

For example, errors in determining class stem or item number in the ordering process can result in receipt by the DLP of too many publications (which are then sold as wastepaper) or too few (which delays shipping until additional copies can be obtained). We found that errors in quantity affected seven percent of the 4,300 publications to be distributed in print form that were received by the DLP from April 1 through June 30, 1983. GPO's method for filing printing orders complicated our work, but we were able to locate the orders for 27 of the 218 titles for which too many copies were received and found that 21 had "unofficial" classification errors which resulted in the excess. Of the 67 titles received in short supply and on hand on June 6, 1983, we were able to trace the orders for 22 and found that in 17 of the cases, the shortage resulted from an initial error in "unofficial" classification.

In attempting to quantify the delay in distributing publications received in short supply, we found that for titles originally received in short supply, but for which additional copies were received between August 12 and October 12, 1983, the average delay in shipping was 37 working days, with a range of 7 to 66 days. In a subsequent sample of 119 publications still being held for additional copies in the GPO warehouse on October 12, 1983, we determined that 110 had been held from 2 to 374 working days, with an average of 65 days. We believe that GPO personnel were attempting to secure additional copies of these publications, but that the delays could not be avoided once errors were made in ordering the original quantities of the publications.

In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO noted that the DLP will be relocated into the main GPO building. (At the time of our review the DLP office and warehouse were located several miles from the main GPO building.) At that time it plans to have the official classifiers begin the classification process on receipt of the printing requisition, i.e., before printing copies of the documents for the libraries. GPO also pointed out that "unofficial classification" is a poor choice of words to describe what its personnel do in ordering publications for the DLP. It said they use an "item control book" rather than the List of Classes in determining how many copies to order. The use of the item control book was implemented after we completed our audit work. We believe it simplifies the ordering process but that the best way to reduce the mistakes in ordering publications which result in too many or too few copies received by the DLP is to have the "official" classifiers classify the publications before they are printed, as GPO is planning to do after the DLP's relocation.

To streamline GPO's process for cataloging documents, we believe the use of item numbers could be eliminated. Under current procedures, GPO also requires the librarians to use item numbers when selecting publications they wish to receive. We believe class stems could be used by libraries in selecting documents rather than item numbers. Sixty percent of the

librarians responding to our survey believe that elimination of item numbers would have a positive or no effect on them. The only function item numbers serve for a majority of libraries is to check whether a publication on the enclosed shipping list was selected by that library. GPO and the Depository Library Council have previously considered eliminating item numbers.

In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO disagreed with our proposal to eliminate item numbers. It also disagreed with our interpretation of the librarians' responses to our questionnaire. As GPO pointed out, 431 libraries disagreed with elimination of item numbers. However, 742, or 60 percent of respondents said that item numbers could be eliminated. As additional support for keeping item numbers, GPO mentioned an October 1983 resolution by the Depository Library Council recommending that no change be made in the item numbering scheme. However, the Council's complete resolution states that no change was recommended "at this time". We continue to believe that elimination of item numbers will benefit the DLP by streamlining operations.

CATALOGING CONCERNS

The cataloging of a publication entails entering the title, author (which may be a person, a government agency, a corporation under contract, etc.), subject, number of pages, and other such information into the data base known as the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). A "name authority file" is consulted to be sure that the author's name appears in the same form used on any other publications. If the author's name is not found, it is submitted to the Library of Congress for final instructions on how to record the name, but the GPO catalogers are responsible for doing the additional research. Cataloging is done by GPO librarians but can also be done by personnel at other federal agencies or by contractors. GPO librarians review this work to ensure that entries conform to GPO standards. The GPO Monthly Catalog is compiled from OCLC tapes of the publications cataloged and is required by title 44 (sec. 1711) to include all titles printed in the preceding month.

We found that GPO accurately cataloged publications and that the backlog of documents awaiting cataloging had been reduced. Over 70 percent of the librarians we surveyed responded that GPO's cataloging efforts, as found in the Monthly Catalog's subject headings, authority work, main entries, and added entries, was of good quality. GPO has taken steps to reduce the backlog of publications awaiting cataloging. As of August 1983, a GPO count showed there were 3,941 awaiting cataloging, down from 10,347 a year earlier. GPO has also improved the issue date of the Monthly Catalog. The November 1983 catalog was issued in mid-November. Two years ago, the August 1981 catalog was issued in December 1981.

However, timeliness of the entries in the Monthly Catalog continues to need improvement to meet the requirement of Title

44 that the catalog include titles printed the preceding month. We reviewed a random sample of 385 of the 13,767 entries in the Monthly Catalog of the first 6 months of fiscal year 1983 and found that no titles appeared in the catalog until more than 2 months after printing. For a subset of 262 publications which listed both month and year of publication, we found that 56 percent were listed within 1 year of their publication and 26 percent within 1 to 2 years. The other 18 percent were listed more than 2 years following publication.

To determine the extent of documents that had been classified by the DLP but had not yet been included in the Monthly Catalog, we reviewed in July 1983, a random sample of GPO's manual card file of documents that had been classified since about 1976. (This is the same card file used by classifiers in classifying.) We found that 3.65 percent (with a sampling error of plus or minus 1.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level) of the documents classified had not been cataloged. Of the 361 uncataloged documents we reviewed in the manual card file, we found that 47 percent were over 3 years old.

The delays in cataloging publications can limit the usefulness of the Monthly Catalog. Ninety percent of the librarians surveyed said they used the catalog, and a majority reported having trouble accessing documents because the catalog was out-of-date. We note that GPO is dependent upon agencies to submit, on a timely basis, copies of documents which they have printed outside GPO. However, publications are usually received for cataloging by the DLP anywhere from 1 week to 3 months after they are printed.

The reasons the entries in the Monthly Catalog are not current involve the time it takes to catalog publications and the substantial backlog which still exists. We identified steps in the cataloging process where GPO could save time and thus reduce the cataloging backlog. These include deleting personal name authority research; cutting back on time spent reviewing contractor cataloging; implementing cooperative cataloging with federal agencies; and using two copies of documents to be microfiche--one for cataloging, the other for converting to microfiche--so neither process is delayed. We also believe GPO needs to have a system to monitor the backlog to ensure that all classified publications are cataloged in a timely fashion.

We estimated that each year over 700 DLP staff days are devoted to personal name authority research (ensuring that a personal author's name is listed in the catalog in the same form as it appears on listings for any other of his or her publications) at a cost of \$125,000 (including contractor costs). Many cataloging and indexing agencies, including the National Technical Information Service and the Defense Technical Information Center, do not establish authority files for personal names. These agencies report no resulting problems in cataloging or retrieving publications. Over 50 percent of the depository libraries

receipt to distribution of 47 working days for microfiche, or nine times as long as the 5 working days for printed documents. GPO personnel told us that microfiche documents generally have a lower priority in processing than printed documents because they do not take up as much warehouse space.

GPO sometimes supplies documents to libraries in microfiche when it would be better to provide them in printed form. Often GPO provides documents in microfiche when, according to its guidelines, they should have been provided in hard copy. For example, in responding to our survey, librarians indicated three types of documents which caused them the most problems by being distributed in microfiche: serials (documents published in volumes on a recurring basis, such as monthly periodicals), publications requiring updates or inserts, and popular publications. Forty-four percent of the librarians said they had experienced problems to a great or very great extent as a result of receiving serials in microfiche that should have been in print. In some instances, certain issues were received in microfiche and other issues in print so they could not be shelved or stored together. Librarians also reported problems by receiving publications requiring updates or inserts in microfiche or in a mixture of print and microfiche. In these cases, the publications could not be updated. Popular publications in microfiche were not easily available for library users and thus were another problem for librarians. GPO guidelines stipulate that serials should not be issued in mixed formats, and popular publications and those requiring inserts or updates should not be issued in microfiche.

GPO needs to adhere to its guidelines concerning the types of publications which should not be distributed in microfiche. The guidelines also need to be made more specific by including a definition of "popular publications" so that decisions on which publications can be microfiched are more consistent. In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO said that many violations of its guidelines occur because it distributes documents printed outside GPO in microfiche at the request of librarians when it cannot obtain sufficient copies from the agency.

Surveying libraries for selection of new items can be improved. When DLP has accumulated 20 or more documents which have been assigned new item numbers, it surveys the librarians to determine how many wish to receive the new types of documents. It allows libraries 6 weeks to respond and then allows 3 weeks for data entry of the new selection information into DDIS. We found that the time between surveys varied from 1 week to 2 months in the period December 1, 1982, to May 30, 1983. We also found that libraries may not receive the new publications for as long as 8 months after the survey was taken. For example, publications from only one of the eight surveys completed by May 1983 had been shipped to libraries by the end of the year, and publications from the other seven were still being held at the DLP.

GPO updates its "mailing lists" identifying the types of publications requested by each library semi-annually. Libraries, however, may send in "amendment of selections" cards at any time to request changes in their selections. GPO inputs the data into DDIS on a continuing basis. However, the mailing lists used by warehouse personnel in sorting publications for shipment have only been updated for changes in libraries' selections approximately semi-annually in the last 2 years, because the manual process of replacing the thousands of pages of listings in the warehouse takes from 1 to 2 weeks.

We found that the delay in updating the lists for libraries' changes caused many libraries to submit claims with GPO for missing publications, and caused dissatisfaction among librarians. Each library receives a complete list of all publications shipped to all libraries, even though it may receive only a few. Each library then uses the list to determine whether it received all the publications it had previously requested. If it identifies publications it had requested but not received, it then files a claim with GPO for the missing documents. Of the 87,000 claims GPO received in 1983 for missing publications, fifteen percent of a sample of 350 were for publications not sent because the mailing lists had not been updated. In addition, about 57 percent of the depository librarians we surveyed were dissatisfied with the amount of time that elapses between selection amendments and receipt of publications.

In commenting on the draft of this report, GPO stated that it has clearly enunciated to libraries its policy on making changes to the mailing lists, but that it hopes to be able to make these updates more frequently with further automation. It also notes that the lists must remain static for a period of time, or confusion would result in ordering the correct number of publications to be printed. In our view, this problem may be overcome by implementing GPO's new lighted bin system described in the next section.

PLANNED LIGHTED BIN AND AUTOMATED SYSTEMS

Congress has approved funds for a "lighted bin" system which would replace the DDIS mailing lists as a basis for distributing publications and possibly reduce or eliminate the problems described earlier. The warehouse includes 1,382 bins, one for each library. Under present procedures, warehouse personnel look at a printed "mailing list" of all libraries that have requested publications having the particular item number being distributed, and place a copy of the document in each corresponding bin. With the lighted bin system the item number would be keyed into DDIS from a computer terminal. This would cause a light to come on above each bin for all libraries that had selected that item number, and then copies would be placed in each lighted bin. The lighted bin system would use the current selection information in DDIS, thus eliminating the problem

the many government agencies that already use OCLC and follow the same standards as GPO. It need not involve much paper work or sending publications back and forth if the agencies, with GPO as the leader, would meet and agree on cataloging standards. If necessary, GPO could work with the agency librarians to reduce whatever error rate it finds in reviewing agency cataloging. Other agencies that do not participate in OCLC could share their cataloging with GPO by providing magnetic tapes of their cataloging records.

We found that the cataloging of some publications was delayed while the publications were sent out for conversion onto microfiche although a second copy was available which could have been used for cataloging. We believe cataloging and microfiche conversion can be done at the same time by using two copies of the document. In its comments on a draft of this report, GPO noted that it has modified its procedures to catalog documents to be distributed in microfiche before sending them out for filming. We believe that, although this should improve cataloging timeliness, it will further delay conversion to microfiche and subsequent distribution of publications, as discussed in the next section. GPO should instead use both copies of the publications it receives, one for cataloging, the other for microfiche, so neither process is delayed.

Lastly, DLP personnel informed us that no routine monitoring of the manual card file occurs to ensure that classified publications are eventually cataloged. We believe there is a need for a closer monitoring of the backlog of publications awaiting cataloging so that GPO can ensure that all publications classified are eventually cataloged. In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO concurred with our proposal to monitor the cataloging backlog.

DISTRIBUTION ISSUES

From our survey of depository libraries and our review of DLP procedures, we identified additional areas where changes in DLP procedures could both expedite the distribution of publications to depository libraries and improve the efficiency of the distribution process. In addition to the microfiche-cataloging problem discussed above, other microfiche procedures can also be changed to expedite distribution. Also the surveying of libraries for new items and the updating of mailing lists for amended library selections maintained on the Depository Distribution Information System (DDIS) can be improved.

As stated earlier, microfiche is sometimes delayed because only one copy of a publication is used for both cataloging and conversion to microfiche. By doing these two processes at the same time, rather than in sequence, the time between DLP's receipt of a publication and the time it is distributed to the libraries could be shortened. In commenting on a draft of this

report, GPO indicated that the sequential process is used because sometimes agencies only provide one copy for library distribution of publications they have printed outside GPO. During our audit, however, we found that two copies of a document are usually made available to GPO. In our view, the problem of receiving only one document, when it does occur, could be mitigated in one of two ways--call the agency and request a second copy or photocopy a second copy of the document at GPO. Either option could solve the problem of having only one copy of a document and allow the cataloging and microficheing of a document to be done concurrently. We also noted during our review that GPO's workload analysis committee has recommended doing these two processes concurrently.

In our review we found that publications received from agencies and distributed to the depository libraries in printed form are, on average, distributed to the libraries within 5 days after they are received at the DLP. On the other hand, publications that are converted to microfiche require much longer to process and may not be distributed for several months after they are received. For example, at the time of our review, DLP was experiencing about a 116 working day delay (over 5 months) in getting microfiched documents out to the libraries. The following table shows the amounts of time consumed at the various processing steps.

	<u>Average working days elapsed</u>
Receipt to classification	13
Classification to job offer	72
Job offer to receipt of product	16
Receipt to completion of inspection	6
Completion to distribution	<u>9</u>
Total	116

As shown in the table, the largest portion, 72 days, is for the period from classification to GPO's offer of the microfiche conversion job to a contractor. During our audit, GPO personnel told us the delay was caused by quality control problems at GPO's primary microfiche conversion contractor, which required them to contract with several secondary contractors. In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO said that it experienced continued delays in sending documents out for microfiche conversion. In addition to the aforementioned problem, the fiscal year 1983 contract expired and, due to a bid protest, a new contract was not awarded until December 1983. We were told this occurred after our audit work was done.

The two preceding situations may have been isolated problems. In its comments, GPO said it typically takes 3 days from the time a document is classified until it is sent to a contractor for microfiche conversion. We did not verify GPO's 3-day estimate; however, using GPO's estimate gives a total time from

we surveyed believed that discontinuing the personal name authority research would not affect them greatly. The American Library Association Government Documents Round Table (ALA/GODORT) and the Depository Library Council to the Public Printer both recommend that DLP consider discontinuing the research except for names that could cause searching problems. Among other reasons, they cite the fact that few authors write more than one or two books.

In commenting on a draft of this report, GPO disagreed with our proposal to eliminate personal name authority work. It noted that many librarians responded to our survey by saying that discontinuing personal name authority work would have a negative impact on them. However, over 50 percent believed it would not affect them negatively. GPO also mentioned that it would only discontinue personal name authority research in conjunction with the Library of Congress, and the Library of Congress continues to encourage it. However, we believe that, as the cataloger of federal government publications, GPO should take a leadership role in examining the utility of the costly personal name authority work. ALA/GODORT and the Depository Library Council papers list the following shortcomings of the purported benefits of personal name authority work:

- Personal name authority control by the Library of Congress reliably establishes a single form of a name only for famous authors.
- Many major cataloging and indexing agencies, such as the National Technical Information Service and the Defense Technical Information Center, as well as major periodical indexes, do not do personal name authority research, and it does not cause searching problems.
- Libraries accepting shared records without doing their own local name authority verification do not have complete authority control.
- Users often search by the form of the name appearing on the publication.
- Few authors write more than one or two books.

Currently, GPO librarians review all contracted cataloging of publications GPO has classified. The contractor prepares a worksheet with the cataloging information before it is entered in the OCLC computer terminals, and GPO reviews both the worksheet and the OCLC printout. From April to June 1983, according to GPO records, GPO librarians spent 3,232 hours (equivalent to the work of 7 people for that same period) to review 7,488 entries. A review by GPO shows that the contractor makes about 100 errors per 100 publications cataloged. Our own review confirmed the GPO finding of one error per entry. The contract for

this work specifies that acceptable work will not have more than 15 errors per 100 entries. The contractor's performance should be improved; however, the contract does not provide any sanctions less than cancelling the contract. One possible way of encouraging improved performance by the contractor is to provide a range of penalty options in the contract for unsatisfactory work. If the contractor's work can be improved, GPO could review it on a sample basis. This would free GPO catalogers, who are presently reviewing the contractor's work, to do more cataloging of their own to reduce the backlog.

In the draft report we sent to GPO for comment, we proposed that GPO eliminate the duplicative process of having the contractor fill out cataloging worksheets and then enter the data into a computer terminal, and instead enter the data directly into a terminal and eliminate worksheets. GPO noted in its comments that they have adopted this proposal. We also proposed that GPO impose penalties for contractor error rates in excess of the limits stated in the contract to gain an improvement in contractor performance, then review contractor cataloging on a sample basis, rather than 100 percent. GPO responded that it is considering ways to reduce contractor errors.

Several federal agencies catalog their own publications into OCLC. GPO, which is responsible for cataloging all government publications, subsequently reviews all the cataloging done by these agencies and makes any corrections directly into the data base. We do not believe this duplication of effort is warranted. We reviewed 10 entries made by agency libraries and found that GPO generally made only very minor corrections. DLP personnel agreed it makes many minor revisions to agency cataloging. Most of the eight agency libraries where we discussed cataloging follow the GPO standards. Presently, federal agencies that catalog their own publications do so at their own initiative. Some years ago, there was a "cooperative cataloging project" among GPO and some agencies. It was terminated because, among other reasons, too much time and effort were needed to keep track of the actual publications sent to the agencies for cataloging and some of the agencies did not do the same name authority work as GPO. Since that project was terminated, the Library of Congress has made several rule interpretations to achieve more uniform adherence to standards. We believe that the more widespread conformance with standards warrants a new cooperative cataloging program between GPO and applicable federal agencies to reduce the duplication of cataloging effort.

In commenting on the draft of this report, GPO noted that implementation of a cooperative cataloging project is a complex undertaking, and pointed out that it hopes to acquire an automated cataloging system which may have potential for expanding into a government-wide cooperative cataloging venture. We believe that it may be some time before this automated cataloging system is acquired and may then only have potential for expansion. GPO could currently institute cooperative cataloging with

of the outdated mailing lists which are now used by warehouse personnel in distributing publications into bins. The proposed system could enable GPO to distribute the libraries' most current selections and, accordingly, reduce the number of claims.

The Depository Library Program has also recently proposed an automated system to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. Library personnel have prepared a document detailing the new system's requirements and presented it to GPO's Data Systems Service. According to the proposal, the system would include a number of functions which would track publications through the entire process of ordering, classifying, cataloging, and distributing. The system would be integrated so that information would have to be entered only once and would be available throughout the DLP process.

The cataloging now being entered by the library program into a commercial data base would be entered instead into GPO's own system. The system could produce information for other data bases and for sharing GPO's cataloging in an automated fashion with libraries and other agencies. The proposed system could also automatically create identification labels for microfiche.

The automated system would be combined with the lighted bin system to improve distribution procedures. It would prepare an individual shipping list for each library, showing only the publications packed in that library's shipping box. Currently, libraries receive a comprehensive list of publications distributed to all libraries. The system would also maintain a profile of the libraries and keep track of the administrative details of managing the library program. We believe both systems would improve the efficiency of the DLP.

Because the automated system is still in the proposal phase, we could not review it in detail. However, it appears that such a system would provide GPO the ability to accept cataloging tapes from other agencies and would also greatly improve the efficiency of the classification process if GPO designed into the system the ability to report on exceptions, such as publications that were not classified or cataloged in a reasonable time. GPO could then investigate and handle exceptions more easily.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

In the draft report provided to GPO for comment, we made a number of proposals it could implement to improve the program. GPO agreed with a number of our proposals but also disagreed with some of our ideas. Of more concern, GPO expressed a belief that the overall tone and presentation of our results indicated that the program "is very poorly managed, almost to the extent that its mission is barely accomplished". We did not intend to convey this notion in our report. We have modified the report to emphasize the extent to which GPO is performing its functions

in an effective manner. We do believe, however, that there are areas where GPO's performance can be improved. These areas are discussed in this final report as they were in the draft that was given to GPO for comment.

GPO's detailed written comments were voluminous and we have not appended them to this report. We have summarized them in the pertinent report sections and have included the letter from GPO transmitting its comments as appendix IV. GPO said that a copy of its comments on the draft report had been provided to the Staff Director of the Joint Committee on Printing.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objective was to analyze the operations of the Depository Library Program (DLP). In particular, we reviewed the acquisition of publications and their classification, cataloging, and distribution. At each step, we reviewed the written policies and procedures as well as the results. Because GPO's records were often not available in a manner which facilitated statistical sampling techniques, we used a combination of statistical and non-statistical sampling. The methods we used to make these nonstatistical samples were structured to develop a picture of conditions and to be as fair as possible under the circumstances.

For example, as part of our work to determine to what extent publications of public interest are made available to libraries, we:

- compared samples of at least 50 titles from each of the lists of publications issued by 10 agencies since 1976 (a total of over 500 publications) with those actually distributed by GPO over this time period, and
- examined a judgmental sample of 168 of the 430 publication requests that GPO received between September 1, 1982, and June 30, 1983 from libraries for publications that had not initially been distributed to the libraries.

In reviewing the classification process, we examined

- a judgmental sample of 110 publications held in the GPO warehouse on October 12, 1983, to determine the extent of delays in shipping caused by classification errors in the ordering process which ultimately resulted in too few publications being ordered;
- records of 67 publications received in short supply, held on June 6, 1983, and the 218 titles received in excess of the quantity needed during April, May, and June 1983, to find out how many resulted from classification errors; and
- all 206 corrections in the Monthly Catalog of April, May, and June 1983, and the 119 corrections to shipping lists during the same period to determine the extent of errors in classification.

In determining the delay, time, and cost involved in cataloging, we:

- examined a random statistical sample of 385 entries from the 13,767 entries in the Monthly Catalog for the first six months of fiscal year 1983,

- examined a random statistical sample of 9,893 cards from 10 drawers of the 720 GPO card file drawers, and
- developed estimates of the time GPO personnel and contractors spend on "personal name authority work" (researching how a personal author's name is recorded by the Library of Congress).

Among other reviews to determine the time which elapses at various stages in processing microfiched publications, we examined:

- a sample of 69 of the 11,940 titles distributed to libraries on microfiche during July, August, and September 1983,
- all 135 publications offered to contractors for conversion to microfiche on October 25 and November 15, 1983, and
- a sample of 424 of the 1,720 jobs due from microfiche contractors in April, May, and June 1983.

We also examined 350 of the 1,050 claims processed on 5 days during our audit to determine whether the claiming library was listed on DLP's automated system as having selected the documents it claimed.

In order to determine the opinions of librarians on the program, we sent a 15-page questionnaire containing 50 questions regarding the program to all 1,382 depository libraries. This questionnaire was developed by us and reviewed with GPO, the JCP, American Library Association, and six depository libraries in order to ensure the questions would elicit responses which would provide fair opinions regarding the program. The questionnaire was sent in July 1983, and we received and analyzed responses from 1,246 libraries, representing about 90 percent of the libraries in the program. The results of the survey were summarized in a previous report (AFMD-84-50).

Finally, we interviewed officials at GPO and 20 other federal agencies. The audit was performed from March through November 1983 and was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

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Congress of the United States
Joint Committee on Printing

February 10, 1983

5-151, U.S. CAPITOL
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20519
 PHONE: 224-4341

The Honorable Charles A. Bowsher
 Comptroller General of the United States
 General Accounting Office
 441 G Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Bowsher:

As Chairman of the Joint Committee on Printing I would like to request the following:

1. That the GAO perform an indepth analysis of the system of pricing documents sold by the GPO through the General Sales Program. The analysis should relate current costs being incurred to produce and distribute publications to current prices and also evaluate alternative methods of pricing publications to recover all operating costs. In addition, the study should determine the impact of price increases on revenues and sales volumes and the public's access to documents. I recommend that this analysis utilize the information being developed as part of the current GAO efforts per my request of April 16, 1982.

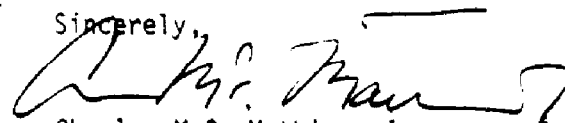
In order for the study to be as useful as possible, I request that you provide the Committee with written progress reports every 30 days, with the final report to be completed no later than July 30, 1983.

2. That the GAO perform a comprehensive audit of the Depository Library Program, as administered by the Superintendent of Documents. In addition, I request that you determine the accuracy of the figures provided by GPO on the costs of distributing certain charts and maps to the Depository Library System, and whether GPO currently has the fiscal and personnel resources necessary to implement the chart and map program.

In order for the study to be as useful as possible, I request that you provide the Committee with written progress reports every 30 days, with the final report to be completed no later than July 30, 1983. However, because of the urgency of the map/chart program, I would appreciate that portion of the study to be completed by March 18, 1983.

The JCP team will be Roy Breimon, Project Manager, and Bernadine Hoduski, who will be available to assist in determining the detailed scope of this request as the studies progress.

Sincerely,



Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.
 Chairman



United States
Government
Printing Office

Washington, D.C. 20540

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC PRINTER

MAY 18 1984

Mr. Charles A. Bowsher
Comptroller General of the United States
General Accounting Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Bowsher:

Enclosed are comments on the draft of the report prepared by GAO following its audit of the Depository Library Program.

We are certain that GAO is as concerned as we are with using accurate statistical data. While some of our comments are of major substantive concern, others merely point out erroneous figures that appear in the report. For this reason, we have chosen to respond to the report paragraph by paragraph.

We believe that this report does a disservice to the dedicated employees of the Government Printing Office (GPO) who make its programs successful, and the libraries and public that we all serve. Results of the survey of depository libraries and the statistical findings presented in the report are very favorable. Nevertheless, from the way the report is written, it would appear that the Depository Library Program is very poorly managed, almost to the extent that its mission is barely accomplished.

Your report does raise one issue of major concern to us and that is the failure of other agencies to provide copies of their documents for distribution to depository libraries. Title 44 clearly indicates that the publishing agencies are responsible for determining which documents are suitable for distribution to Federal depository libraries and providing copies of documents that were not printed by GPO. Lack of compliance with the law by other agencies presents a serious dilemma: GPO has no enforcement authority to ensure that agencies order sufficient copies to satisfy Depository Library Program requirements for documents obtained elsewhere than from GPO, nor does the law provide authorization for GPO to reprint such publications, should we become aware of them after the initial printing. Unfortunately, recommendations contained in the report provide no remedy for this problem.

A copy of our comments on the report have been forwarded to the Staff Director of the Joint Committee on Printing.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of William J. Barrett in cursive script.

WILLIAM J. BARRETT
Acting Public Printer

Enclosure

(916667)

