



November 17, 2004

Mr. Daniel C. Barkley  
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee to Define Criteria for Disposal Prior to a Five-Year Retention  
University of New Mexico  
Government Information/General Library  
1 University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-0001

Dear Dan:

I am writing to express my appreciation to you and the other members of the Ad Hoc Committee for your efforts to define criteria that GPO could establish in lieu of the current statutory mandate for selective depository libraries to retain all tangible items for a minimum of 5 years.

As you know, as part of its FY 2005 appropriations request, GPO sought a technical amendment to 44 U.S.C. Sections 1911 and 1912 to rescind the five year rule and provide the Superintendent of Documents with the authority to establish criteria for disposal. The House and Senate legislative branch appropriations bills were reported July 1<sup>st</sup> and July 15<sup>th</sup>, respectively, without the technical amendment, so the five year rule will remain in effect.

Nevertheless, I asked GPO staff to carefully review the recommendations in the July 9<sup>th</sup> report from the Ad Hoc Committee to determine which recommendations could be implemented without the requested statutory change. This letter conveys the results of that review.

The reply to each recommendation is based upon what we believe GPO can do given the fact that the five year rule was not rescinded and the rule offers little or no flexibility.

**Near term recommendations included four proposals.**

The Committee recommended that GPO work with the FDLP to implement and facilitate the following recommendations:

1. Committee Recommendation. Material with negligible relevant information content and/or format would be eligible; examples include bookmarks, posters, brochures, and folders or notebooks. With the exception of posters, it is currently difficult to identify the depository item numbers associated with the above categories of material.

Often these items are distributed under a "General Publications" item number and thus cannot be easily identified and separated.

Reply. The current selection system contributes to retention issues since many ephemeral items are distributed as general publications of an agency. GPO is willing to create separate item numbers for bookmarks, brochures, and other ephemeral material, as we currently do for posters. As noted below, GPO is examining new methods of selection and expects to release its recommendations for community comment before the 2005 Spring Council meeting.

2. Committee Recommendation. Material that has been identified by GPO to have an equivalent electronic version and has been archived by GPO with a presumption of guaranteed permanent public access. One possible solution that we ask GPO to consider is an indication on Depository Shipping Lists that will identify this category of material.

Reply. The FDLP Guidelines on Substituting Electronic for Tangible Versions of Depository Publications are available at: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/subguide.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/subguide.html). Under the guidelines, "a depository is permitted to replace tangible versions with electronic equivalents provided the electronic version is complete, official, and permanently accessible," provided the library has received permission from its regional library. As noted below, GPO is updating and simplifying both the Instructions and Manual. We will reexamine these guidelines as part of that process.

3. Committee Recommendation. Material distributed under an item number that has been dropped from a depository's item selection profile but has been in the collection for less than 5 years. We recommend that GPO develop a mechanism to ensure that the Regionals are consulted before disposing of this category of material.

Reply. Title 44 requires selective depository libraries to keep material for five years after receipt unless it is superseded or available for substitution. The fact that a library changes its selection profile and ceases to receive comparable material does not effect that requirement.

4. Committee Recommendation. GPO should update and re-issue the Instructions to Depository Libraries and the Federal Depository Library Manual to reflect any changes in depository procedures and process, including the proposed withdrawal criteria.

Reply. Although the recommendation is outside of the scope of the charge, the recommendation has merit and is consistent with our FY 2005 goals, which include the task of updating and simplifying both the Instructions and Manual. To improve understanding and appropriate application of the instructions and manual, web tutorials using interactive media and conference programs are being planned in FY 2005. Proposed revisions to these documents will be made available for comment by the community before implementation.

## **Long-Term Recommendations included three proposals.**

The Committee made the following long-term recommendations:

1. Committee Recommendation. Develop a new method of selection, replacing the item number scheme, to improve the ability of participating libraries to select specific material. Suggested options include:
  - a) title-based selection (approval plan model) [Preferred solution]
  - b) category-based selection (elect not to receive posters, bookmarks, etc, regardless of subject or agency)
  - c) return to Item Survey method, allowing libraries to choose item numbers before material is distributed

Reply. GPO is examining new methods of selection and expects to release its recommendations for community comment before the 2005 Spring Council meeting.

- a) GPO will increase opportunities for title-based selection through its Print on Demand initiative. An approval plan is impractical because costs would be incurred by the FDLP for producing and distributing materials that were subsequently returned. In a commercial environment, the distributor has the ability to return unsold merchandise to the publisher or to absorb the losses as a cost of doing business. We do not have such options.
- b) As noted above, GPO is willing to separate item numbers for bookmarks, brochures, and other ephemeral material and will evaluate that as part of its overall review of new methods of selection.
- c) Item surveys are only possible when GPO receives significant advance notice for series or serials. It is not practical for individual monographs. In most instances, GPO receives notice only in the form of an SF-1 submitted to order printing and the ride decision must be made immediately.

2. Committee Recommendation. Provide depository staff with additional educational resources and appropriate tools to perform collection evaluation and weeding. Suggestions include:
  - a) Provide instructional material in using tools such as Documents Data Miner 2 to assess distribution history of a particular item number.
  - b) Reformat Superseded List to draw attention to general guidelines for material not specified by SuDoc number in the list.
  - c) Devote additional resources to assure new and existing titles are regularly reviewed and added to the Superseded List as appropriate.
  - d) Provide training opportunities for item selection process immediately before item selection cycle.

Reply. Educational programs are planned for FY 2005 to include sessions at the spring Council meeting and the fall Federal Depository Library Conference on item selection

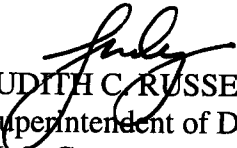
and the use of the superseded list and application of the substitution policy. We are also working on web tutorials, including one on depository library collection development.

3. Committee Recommendation. Mandate consistent disposal guidelines and standards by the Regionals. Suggestions include:
  - a) Ensure that guidelines developed by the Regionals are reviewed by GPO for consistency with established program requirements.
  - b) Promote alternative methods for the actual disposal of material by selectives, such as on site review by Regional librarian.
  - c) Initiate regular oversight of Regional activities to insure that consistent advice is given to selectives and that established procedures are being followed.

Reply. GPO will work with Regionals to develop consistent disposal guidelines and standards within the limitations of the five year rule and to determine appropriate oversight by GPO to ensure that regionals provide consistent advice regarding disposal and follow established procedures.

Thank you again for your efforts. I am grateful to the Committee for its work. GPO will incorporate these suggestions with others that we have received as we develop new policies, procedures and instructions for the FDLP. If you need to discuss any of the items in this letter, please feel free to contact me by phone at (202)-512-0571 or e-mail [jrussell@gpo.gov](mailto:jrussell@gpo.gov).

Sincerely,

  
JUDITH C. RUSSELL  
Superintendent of Documents  
U. S. Government Printing Office

CC: Charlene Cain, Louisiana State University Law School Library  
Gary Cornwell, University of Florida  
Michelle McKnelly, University of Wisconsin River Falls  
Aimee Piscitelli Quinn, University of Illinois Chicago  
Kevin Reynolds, Sewanee, The University of the South  
Marianne Ryan, University of Maryland, College Park  
Bill Sleeman, University of Maryland School of Law  
Geoffrey Swindells, University of Missouri-Columbia Libraries  
Arlene Weible, University of North Texas  
Cindi Wolff, Univeristy of California, Berkley