



# Essential Titles

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May 2006

## Proposed Revision of the Essential Titles List

*“A core group of publications has been identified which must remain in the FDLP in paper, even if they also are published as either tangible or remotely accessible electronic information products ... as long as they are published [by the agency] in paper”<sup>1</sup>*

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As directed by Congress, the primary method of making publications available through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) is in online format. Certain titles, however, will continue to be made available in paper (or other tangible format) unless the agency ceases to publish them in that format. The Essentials Titles List and SOD 301, *Dissemination/Distribution Policy for the Federal Depository Library Program*, dictate which format depository libraries will receive.

### BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the transition to a more electronic FDLP, GPO has recognized the need for certain publications to remain available to depositories in paper or tangible format, so long as they are published by the agency in that format. The original “Essential Titles List” was contained in the *FDLP Information Dissemination and Access Strategic Plan, FY 1996 – FY 2001* and included in GPO’s 1996 Report to Congress. The 24 titles on the list were, and still are, viewed as containing information that is vital to the democratic process, critical to an informed electorate, supporting the public’s right to know about the essential activities of their Government, and essential to the purpose of the FDLP.

GPO has always viewed the Essential Titles List as a fluid list to which titles could be added or removed when no longer produced in tangible form by the agency or depository library

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<sup>1</sup> *Study To Identify Measures Necessary For A Successful Transition To A More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program: As Required by Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996, Public Law 104-53: A Report to Congress.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996. (Supt. of Docs. no.: GP 3.2:EL 2/3/FINAL)

preferences change. In 2000 GPO reviewed the list and, in consultation with the depository community, additional titles were included on the list. The criteria for inclusion evolved to incorporate important reference publications.

In early 2005 GPO added several titles were added to the list. The depository community was subsequently surveyed to identify any other titles for inclusion with the aim of tailoring the list to more accurately reflect the selection preferences of the different types of depository libraries in the FDLP. Survey respondents were directed to a list of 100 of the most popular tangible item selections for their library type, excluding those items already on the Essential Titles List, and asked to recommend and rank up to 10 items (3 could be “write-ins”) for inclusion on the list.

Nearly 800 depository coordinators completed the survey and submitted suggestions. Survey results can be found on the FDLP Desktop at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/essential/>. The results were presented and discussed at the spring 2005 Depository Library Council meeting. At this meeting the Depository Library Council convened a task force charged with identifying essential titles using a different methodology because the community had concerns about the methodology of the survey GPO conducted.

In January the task force recommended that GPO conduct another survey of the depository community during the spring/summer of 2006. They proposed that depository coordinators select 25 from a list of 185 item numbers distributed in paper in the last three years and selected by more than 500 libraries. Additionally they could add another 10 items of their choosing. Council’s recommended survey methodology did not allow for differentiation by library types.

Because of the high response rate with the Spring 2005 survey, GPO believes that no significant information will be gained by doing another survey. This, coupled with the time, staff, and financial resources required, makes conducting another survey unreasonable. Therefore, after discussing the proposed survey methodology with Council, an alternative proposal was developed

## **PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR IDENTIFYING ESSENTIAL TITLES**

### **ESSENTIAL TITLE DEFINED**

Titles are to be considered “essential” when they contain critical information about the activities of the U.S. Government or are important reference publications for libraries and the public. Additionally for a title to be “essential”, a preponderance of depository libraries must elect to receive it in tangible form through the FDLP.

### **APPLICATION OF THE ESSENTIAL TITLE DEFINITION**

- Selection profiles for tangible items will be used to determine “preponderance”.
- To be essential for all depository libraries, a title must be tangible and selected by 85% of depositories (currently 1,076 libraries).

- To be essential for a type of library, a title must be tangible and selected by 85% of depositories within a specific type (law, public, etc.).
- Titles deemed essential and available in tangible format to one type of library, may not be available in tangible format to other types of libraries.
- Congressional reports, hearings, documents, and prints will remain on the list of essential titles if they meet the above criteria. However, Congressional publications (Y 1.1/2: - Y 1.1/8: ; Y 1.2 – Y 1.2/8: ; Y 1.3s; Y 1.5: ; Y 4s ; Y 7.1: ; and Y 10s. ) will continue to be made available for paper selection under the provisions of Superintendent of Documents policy SOD 301 (formerly ID 71), *Dissemination/Distribution Policy for the Federal Depository Library Program*.

### **ESSENTIAL TITLES AND SOD 301**

SOD 301, *Dissemination/Distribution Policy for the Federal Depository Library Program*, is an internal policy statement that guides format distribution and dissemination decisions. The determination is made at the time of agency notification and product selection. If additional information regarding the nature of the publication becomes available, modifications to the original dissemination decision may be made.

In addition to titles on the Essentials Title List, SOD 301 stipulates that tangible formats will be distributed to depository libraries if:

1. The online version is:
  - Incomplete;
  - Not recognized by the publishing agency as the controlling official version of a publication, that is, the publication is placed online for informational purposes and when discrepancies exist between the tangible and online versions, the tangible version takes precedence and is viewed as the controlling official version.<sup>2</sup>
  - Very difficult to use, thus impeding access to data or content;
  - Not cost effective; or
  - Fee-based, and created, all or in part, through the use of non-appropriated funds (e.g., parts of STAT-USA)
2. The tangible product meets special conditions or needs, that is when:
  - There is a legal requirement to distribute the product in tangible format;
  - The title is of significant reference value to most types of libraries in the FDLP;
  - The publication is meant to serve a special needs population, e.g., Braille; or
  - The commonly accepted medium of the user community is tangible format, e.g., maps.

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<sup>2</sup> This situation arises most often with legal materials such as administrative and court decisions and codes. When used to meet legal requirements, the online versions should be verified against the controlling official tangible versions and the tangible versions should be used in legal citations. Titles that fall into this category include, but are not limited to, *Agriculture Decisions*, *U.S. Reports*, and *United States Code*.

Other conditions for tangible distribution are described in SOD 301, which is accessible from the FDLDP Desktop at: [http://www.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/pubs/policies/](http://www.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/policies/).

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

- There continues to be a need for certain essential publications to be made available in paper and other tangible formats for selection by Federal depository libraries.
- The Essential Titles List is not a static list; titles may be added or deleted as required to address user needs and preferences.
- Titles will be removed from the list when the authoring agency ceases to publish them in a tangible format and the agency does not provide GPO with a suitable electronic file and an authorization to reproduce and distribute the title to depository libraries.
- Using item selection profiles to determine essential titles reflects the collection development decisions of all depository coordinators.
- Important reference titles and those containing information that is vital to the democratic process will continue to have a high selection rates.
- Titles deemed to be essential may vary by depository library type.
- “Catch-all” classes such as General Publications; Handbooks, Manuals, and Guides; and Regulations, Rules, Instructions, will not be included on the Essentials Titles List
- There will continue to be titles distributed to depository libraries in paper or other tangible format based on SOD 301 that are not on the Essential Titles List.
- GPO evenly applies SOD 301 to all acquisitions to determine the manner of distribution or dissemination to Federal depository libraries.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This new methodology for determining essential titles will be implemented in phases. At present GPO does not have the systems to support implementation of essential titles lists by library type.

### **In Phase 1 GPO will:**

- Implement the aggregate Essential Titles List
- Grandfather the titles that are on the Essential Titles List as of May 1, 2006 while GPO continues the analysis of library types and selections
- Ensure requirements of future systems support the functionality of the new methodology
- Congressional hearings, prints, reports, and documents are an exception to the grandfather clause; however, they will continue to be available in tangible format per the requirements of SOD 301 even when the selection rate is below 85%

### **In Phase 2 GPO will:**

- Implement Essential Titles List by Library Type

## **IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

- Late March 2006 Discuss the concept with the Depository Library Council and prepare a draft plan for community comment
- Late May 2006 Receive feedback from Council and the broader depository library community on the proposal and revised SOD 301
- Late August 2006 Revise plan and Essential Titles List as necessary based upon feedback and new item selection profiles. Develop a project charter.
- October 1, 2006 Implement Phase 1 of the revised Essential Titles List (after next update cycle)
- TBD Implement Phase 2, Essential Titles by Library Type