**The Federal Government Information Environment of the 21st Century:
Towards a Vision Statement and Plan of Action for Federal Depository Libraries.
Discussion Paper**

Prepared by the
Depository Library Council

September 2005

In 1993 the passage of the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access
Enhancement Act (P.L. 103-40) was a landmark in the transformation of government
information dissemination from print to electronic media. It also spawned the first
discussions of the future among government information professionals at the Dupont
Circle and Chicago meetings, and by the Depository Library Council (DLC).[1]

Within a few years, the Web, Google, the Internet Archive, Yahoo, and other tools and
services began challenging the Government Printing Office (GPO), government
information librarians, and, indeed, all libraries and librarians to redefine their roles in
information provision. Two years ago, 300 depository librarians from all types of
libraries joined newly appointed Public Printer Bruce James in Reno, Nevada, to envision
the future of federal government information and their role in it. From the one and a half
days of discussion the DLC distilled goals shared by the library community and GPO,
including changes necessary to move forward. Goals identified in Reno included:

- GPO, in partnership with federal depository libraries (FDLs), meets the needs of the
  public for no-fee access to official government information.
- GPO and FDLs should retain the best aspects of the existing system while
  incorporating new technologies and services to provide a higher degree of dispersion
  of government information to the public.
- A more flexible Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) must be developed.
- GPO should become an aggregator for federal information
- Partner libraries should become facilitators in the federal information dissemination
  process rather than repositories of printed government publications.
- The traditional library role of facilitator to no-fee public access to federal information
  remains key.[2]

The GPO over the past two years has outlined and begun implementing its vision for
operating in the changed environment of the 21st century.[3] Libraries need to envision if
and how they fit. Some FDLs have already answered this question for themselves by
dropping out of the FDLP. But all libraries, not just FDLs, now have an opportunity to
shape a vision of the government information environment of the 21st century with
themselves as contributing participants.

The current information context raises questions in four key areas:

1. developing new roles for libraries in the non-exclusive government information
   environment;

2. managing collections and delivering content;
3. deploying expertise; and
4. adding value.

This paper is intended to stimulate debate and thoughtful consideration of these four areas in preparation for a fourth major discussion of the future of government information and the role of libraries in that future. After discussion at the DLC meeting in Washington, D.C. in October, Council members will revise this paper to reflect both a vision and an action plan for U.S. libraries in response to the Federal government information environment of the 21st century.

I. Library Roles in the Non-Exclusive Environment

<u>Context</u>

FDLs are no longer exclusive locations for access to government information. Two significant facts illustrate the extent to which the relative exclusivity of FDLs as locations for access to federal government information has eroded over the past decade. First, the World Wide Web has become the preferred medium through which the public seeks access to information, including government information. Second, federal government agencies view the Web as their primary publishing conduit. Arizona State Librarian Gladys Ann Wells has tied these two notions together in a recent presentation in which she noted, "Public access and publication have been conjoined."[4]

In this conjoined relation the network of servers, services, and data warehouses that make up the Web can perform most if not all of the functions traditionally in the purview of FDLs. Government Web sites are currently used to store and archive vast digital collections, Google and other search engines provide "smart" indexing to federal and state government information sites, and desktop computers allow direct access from homes, offices, Internet cafes, and libraries to this burgeoning collection of digital government publications.

As a federal agency, the GPO also uses the Web as its primary channel for information dissemination. Once dependent on FDLs and the GPO sales program as its principal means for informing the nation, GPO has increasingly depended on the Web since the statutory establishment of the *GPO Access* site in 1994 and the Congressionally mandated 1996 *Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program*. As part of that transition, the GPO is currently developing its Future Digital System (FDsys) which will store and serve all digital publications entering into the FDLP, effectively making available on the Web the collection of materials traditionally accessed through FDLs.

The Web has superseded FDLs as the primary network through which the public gains access to government information. GPO Access statistics bear this out. According to GPO, "Since its inception in 1994, GPO Access retrievals have exceeded 2.2 billion. The average number of retrievals from GPO Access in FY 2004 was 1.1 million per day.

March 2005 was the busiest month ever, with almost 39 million retrievals."[5] This count does not include the millions of visits Web users made monthly to executive agencies. Past efforts to estimate use of materials in FDLs suggest a far more modest number of users and uses, something in the vicinity of 712,000 per month in public and academic FDLs.[6] The public increasingly favors direct access to Web-based federal information over the alternative of visiting a local FDL.

This brief overview could be interpreted to suggest that the Web has so diluted the exclusive role of FDLs that the curtain call for the FDLP is at hand. However, a deeper scan of the status of FDLs in the current Web-dominated information environment reveals that there are several critical functions that FDLs should continue to fill in both the near and long terms and several new initiatives they should implement and maintain over time. A major caveat is that to fill these future functions effectively, individual FDLs will make transformations involving what they do, how they collaborate as a community, and how they partner with government and private sector entities to maximize collections and services and optimally incorporate the opportunities the Web offers.

A reasonable question is what if anything does it mean to be an official FDL? All libraries already to some extent serve as government information access centers since they receive and respond to requests for government information from time to time.

GPO's proposed national digital collection represents a great opportunity for all types of libraries, whether they have been traditional depositories or not. Upon completion of the proposed collection, every library with Internet access can offer a large current and retrospective collection of federal publications. Libraries and their users will clearly benefit from this treasure trove of content.

At the same time, if GPO were to begin offering a higher level of access and services to depositories at no fee, there could be a corresponding resurgence in the number of depositories and in the services they offer. Council sees the opportunity for GPO to offer various levels of participation in the depository program. This is more than simply a matter of increasing or decreasing one's item selection rate. GPO could investigate offering value-added access or services to depository libraries as one method of retaining membership in the program. Having no-fee access to services such as the National Weather Service data could be a powerful incentive for depositories either to stay in the program or join it in the future.

In the future, libraries will be more able than ever to choose their level of participation in providing federal government information. Libraries that choose not to participate in the FDLP may still offer extensive levels of information to meet their users' needs. This could take the form of providing everything from IRS tax forms to offering public presentations on government information. On the other hand, some libraries may decide to offer minimal provision of government information because of staffing or budgetary concerns. Council urges each depository library (and furthermore, every library) to evaluate its goals and objectives for serving as a depository library and to what degree having depository status meets the need of its users.

GPO is gradually reducing the amount of oversight of depositories and the paper work required of them. While GPO gives guidance to remaining depositories, it has begun to devote fewer resources to their inspection and oversight. A much looser confederation of depository libraries will have the opportunity to work together in a variety of new combinations, such as by geographic area, type of library, type of user base, by automation vendor, by publishing agency of interest, by subject specialty, etc. These combinations, which may extend beyond the FDLP, will develop to meet library and user needs, not to satisfy requirements from GPO.

Possible futures for the FDLP

Fold:
FDLs pretty much conclude that the Web carries most of what their users need, that the obligations of being part of the program are too demanding to bother with staying, that they can purchase the handful of government publications they feel they need in tangible format, and presume that they can effectively assist their clientele in their quests for government information. The program, as a library program, is dead.

Status Quo:
FDLs continue to collect the small number of essential titles distributed in tangible format and provide local public services for these collections and on Web-based federal information resources. Council believes that in this status quo scenario the library role in government information dissemination will substantially contract and ultimately wither away. In this scenario librarians continue to treat information as though it is a scarcity, although our patrons are living in a world of information abundance.[7]

Proactive:
FDLs and the library community pull together in collaboration with the GPO, federal agencies, and other Web-based stakeholders to service the virtual FDLP collection on the Web. Some FDLs build digital collections as light archives or as LOCKSS (or alternative future technology) participants. Most FDLs contribute their government information expertise in a collaborative online user assistance program as well as continue to support their local clientele. A few libraries – possibly only light archives – continue to manage full collections of tangible publications. Libraries are active collaborators in leveraging the opportunities of the Web to extend and enhance public access to government information. It is likely in this scenario that the status of designated FDLs becomes increasingly moot; in effect, all libraries function to some extent as government information access centers. The next three sections--adding value, managing collections and delivering content, and deploying expertise--discuss the areas where FDLs can provide leadership to ensure that the proactive scenario comes to pass and reaches its full potential.

II. Adding Value

<u>Context</u>

Over the years FDLs have been full contributing partners, with the GPO, in the project of informing the nation. GPO provides the documents, while libraries provide local funding, organization, maintenance, preservation, collection development, and assist users with information from the federal government.

The collective expertise of the depository library community and the initiative of individual depository librarians, combined with the institutional resources provided by supportive library administrators, have been used to create value added services, tools, and supporting collections that go well beyond GPO's mandate and capabilities. Opportunities abound for librarians to add value by managing collections, delivering content, and deploying expertise. This section focuses on four areas where value can be added by FDLs.

<u>Serving Customers Where They Are</u>

If government information professionals truly want to be where the action is they need to establish a presence on popular Web sites such as Google, Yahoo, Firstgov.gov, and the Internet Archive.

Currently Google UncleSam[8] only searches .gov and .mil domains for federal government information and .us domains for state and local government information.

- What if it also searched pages linked to and from the American Library Associations Government Documents Roundtable (ALA/GODORT) Government Information Clearinghouse & Handout Exchange Web site?
- Government information librarians should convince Google to expand and enhance the UncleSam search to include government information Web pages of a selected number of FDLs.
- Government information librarians should partner with federal agencies and GPO to include guides and finding aids on the federal agency .gov Web pages, thereby enabling Google UncleSam to search them.
- Currently the Browse Topics page, a partnership between GPO and Oklahoma State University (OSU) is hosted on OSU servers with an Internet domain of .edu effectively preventing Google UncleSam from searching it. Could GPO host similar and future partnerships on their .gov servers?
- Government information library should partner with FirstGov.gov to author Web guides to government information sources with .gov Internet domains.
- Government information professionals should convince Google UncleSam of the value of providing a link to the Government Information Online (GIO) reference project.
- Government information professionals should lobby government agencies to provide links to government information portals and services like Google UncleSam, Firstgov.gov and Government Information Online (GIO) services.

If government information librarians were successful with any of the previous initiatives would they be able to cope with the success? Deploying their expertise via Google for instance will require not only the commitment of the institution to acknowledge and support the extension of services beyond traditional clientele but will also require:

- Coordinated staffing among participating libraries
- Logistical support from participating institutions.
- Continual revision and updating of Web guides and pages.
- Creation of an administrative infrastructure to interact with commercial partners.
- Fiscal commitment on the part of participating institutions.
- Recognition and support from GPO, the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other federal agency partners.
- Coordination among participating libraries on the content of searchable Web pages to ensure quality and reduce duplication.

Metadata and the Organization of Information

Cooperative cataloging efforts in the depository library community have always been essential to helping GPO fulfill its mission to provide intellectual access to government publications. With the explosion of Web publishing by government, the amount of material that would benefit from some kind of value added description has only increased. That said, the world of bibliographic control has changed. New metadata standards serving specific user communities are being developed as we move from closed catalog systems to the open systems of the Web. During this transition, there is a demand for the more traditional approach to metadata creation as well as for new and innovative approaches, and for ways to integrate and translate between emerging metadata standards.

The opportunities for FDLs are numerous. For example, the "Arizona Model" modifies the archivist's finding aid approach for organizing and providing access to collections by assigning descriptive metadata from a controlled vocabulary to each item and by sorting search results into subject and issuing agency categories to facilitate the user's evaluation and selection of relevant full-text materials.[9] Coupled with a depository library's understanding of its own community's regional or geographic concerns and information needs, the creation of such finding aids for specific electronic collections would provide a powerful tool for government information discovery and access.

Another opportunity lies in a cooperative effort among FDLs to ensure interoperability across retrieval tools, databases, and digital collections developed at different institutions.[10]

Fugitive Government Information

One unintended outcome of the digital revolution has been the apparent increase in fugitive documents, those agency publications that should have gone through GPO but did not. Particularly at risk are born-digital publications that may be accessible at an agency Web site for a time but then are overwritten by subsequent versions or removed

without an archival copy having been saved. Depository librarians typically have intimate knowledge of agencies, resources, and information dissemination patterns. Their involvement is especially necessary for the identification of publications of regional agencies, labs, experiment stations, and the like and for the cultivation of professional relationships with regional agency staff. The FDL community has been stalwart in its identification and reporting of fugitive documents, but a more systematic, coordinated effort is needed.[11]

We offer here one example to suggest the kinds of action that can be undertaken. To explore the possibility that depository librarians might become engaged in addressing the problem of fugitive documents, one former DLC member, Michele McKnelly, and one current DLC member, Walter Warnick, teamed to perform a simple proof-of-principle pilot. A number of years ago, Michele took on a project to identify FEMA Web sites in an effort to help GPO bring FEMA Web sites into the GPO electronic collection. At the time, the results of Michele's effort could not be pursued. Recently, Walt, who directs the Department of Energy's Office of Scientific and Technical Information, arranged for information technology experts to develop a full-text searchable database of the Web sites on the list. It was an easy task, resulting in a full-text keyword-searchable database of about 150 formerly fugitive sites.

A number of more sophisticated features could be provided and metadata--such as controlled-vocabulary subject headings--could be added, but, as this was merely a proof-of-principle pilot, additional features were not included in the interest of time and cost. If this pilot were scaled up to involve many depository librarians to cover all of government, it would produce tremendous benefits. Specifically, it could yield a full-text searchable database of essentially all government documents. The GPO collection could be more comprehensive than it has been in many decades. In addition, for the first time in history, the collection could be all full-text searchable and retrievable from anywhere in the country, and, for the first time in history, it could all be backed up with a world-class integrated network of subject matter experts (i.e., depository librarians) at FDLs and accessible through FDLs.

Innovative Uses of Information Technologies

Citizens in a global society require access to a wider and more diverse range of political information than ever before. Similarly, the move within the U.S. toward e-government places pressure on citizens to be informed not only about current events and policies but also about the technologies available for citizen participation. However, as we are all well aware, the very technologies that enable this access also tend to bypass the kind of environments, like libraries, where citizens can learn to make productive use of that information and those technologies. Far from marking the irrelevance of the library for democratic engagement, political literacy in the network society actually depends on how well FDLs can bring the sophisticated reference and educational structure of the library to the network itself.

A blogger responding to the initial outline of this document wrote that "Libraries are often hotbeds of experimentation. If you look at the early days of the Internet, Virginia

(CCDB), Cornell (USC), Purdue (GPO Access), Berkeley (1990 Census), Oregon State (Economic Census), Michigan (Economic Bulletin Board), and Louisiana State (list of federal agencies) - among others - took the lead in making electronic government information more usable**.**"[12] We couldn't agree more. FDLs still have a leadership role in designing and conducting innovative proof-of-concept and pilot projects that exploit new technologies as they become available.

One example is the creation of specialized subject-oriented digital libraries that bring together government, nongovernmental, and scholarly work, such as Southern Oregon University's "Southern Oregon Digital Archive." FDLs throughout the country could take advantage of the open architecture of Future Digital system by harvesting GPO metadata and metadata from other relevant digital libraries, combining this data with locally produced user tools and finding aids, and creating hundreds of information-rich, multifaceted online learning environments.

III. Managing Collections and Delivering Content

Context

As discussed earlier, the Web has superseded FDLs as the primary channel through which the public gains access to government information. In part this is due to the convenience and accessibility of the Web for those citizens with ready access to technology. But it is also critically tied to the decision of government agencies to reduce publishing costs by printing directly to the Web. The impact on the collection building programs of depository libraries is dramatic: 65 percent of the new titles made available to FDLP members in 2004 were "online" rather than tangible products[13] This does not mean a reduction in costs and effort involved in supporting depository programs at the local level; rather the investment is moving from processing and infrastructure support for physical collections to metadata and reference services. Libraries are relying on URL links within their public access catalogs to provide continuity in terms of access to government information for library users.

At the same time that the migration from print to Web-publishing is occurring, there is a dramatic growth in the difficulties associated with tracking, preserving and accessing Federal Web-based government information. A recent Mellon-funded study noted web-based government information is subject to high degrees of volatility, loss, format diversity and genre variation.[14]

GPO's Response

The GPO's strategic vision incorporates a plan for ensuring long-term access to Federal print and digital content through two interrelated efforts: the National Bibliography and the National Collection. The outlines of these two programs are contained in a March 31, 2005 document entitled "Information Dissemination Implementation Plan, FY 2005-2006" made available in paper at the DLC meeting in April 2005.[15]

These two programs will be supported through infrastructure provided by the Future Digital System (FDsys). According to GPO, the FDsys will serve as the digital content management system outlined in the strategic vision:

> Content may include text and associated graphics, video and sound and other forms of content that emerge. Content will be available for Web searching and Web viewing, downloading and printing, and as document masters for conventional and on-demand printing, or other dissemination methods.[16]

Recognizing the need expressed by the FDL community for ongoing print distribution for certain categories of material, GPO has identified some ways in which the FDsys can support this program as well, including a print-on-demand option and potentially a more granular selection program.[17]

FDL's Collecting Role: Digital

What do these changes imply for the traditional collecting role of the full range of library types in the FDLP and how will it vary from library to library? It is very clear the traditional collecting role of many depository libraries must change in some way. However a review of the community response indicates that there is a significant range of points of view on what the obvious response should be. In short, there are a range of perspectives from those who argue for eliminating local collection building from the FDLP to those who argue for retaining the current model.

Why might FDLP libraries want to consider building digital repositories? What are the benefits? Richard Luce, director of the research library at the Los Alamos Nuclear Lab (LANL) in a recent presentation argues that there are six elements of the rationale that his organization uses for loading of content in its digital repository:

1. To both integrate and insure high availability of content.
2. Protect user privacy against government or personal misuse.
3. Provide capability of data-mining content in the digital repository.
4. Provide better local analysis of user behavior through the development of activity logs (anonymized to prevent privacy violation).
5. Ensure long-term archiving and preservation of content.
6. Develop new solutions and applications where marketplace solutions do not exist or are too expensive to acquire.[18]

These six points clearly apply to government information as well as to commercial and non-governmental public content. With specific reference to the FDLP, some argue that all FDLP libraries should consider continuing their collecting activity in the digital era in order to ensure their roles as primary supporters of their local communities' interests in government information as well as memory organizations.[19]

Additionally, government documents librarians have highlighted the fact that the print FDLP program protects against post-distribution government censorship through the very fact of the broad dissemination of print publications; a highly centralized model focused

upon a single government-controlled server essentially eliminates the safeguards inherent in the existing model.[20] These voices maintain that libraries can and should respond by building new infrastructures to support the acquisition and management of digital content (data) and/or cataloging records (metadata). Michael Gorman indicates cogently how this approach could solve several preservation and access problems:

> Distributing digital government documents to depository libraries makes sense as the solution to many "online-era" problems. First it prevents exclusive government control of government information, and precludes loss or alteration of information whether the loss is due to politics, inadequate funding, or agency ignorance of mandated public access. It would give us immediate file redundancy. It would allow libraries to do what we do – select, organize, and preserve – and allow the GPO to concentrate on their most useful role – identifying and cataloging government publications to be made available to the public.[21]

How should existing library organizations accommodate these new roles? Several academic libraries are developing digital repository infrastructures, most notably represented by members of the Digital Library Federation (DLF). The high costs of developing digital repositories are being reduced in some cases by collaborative cost-sharing models, such as the Aquifer project of DLF.[22] Other methods of defraying the costs of acquiring and managing digital content are consortial such as the OhioLINK Digital Media Center or the California Digital Library among others. Non-DLF academic institutions such as the University of North Texas are also developing repositories. These efforts are complemented by a whole new emerging category of "memory organizations" such as the Internet Archive, Memory Hole, and the Federation of American Scientists that focus on capture, preservation and providing public access to a wide range of Web-based content including Federal government information.

Another approach to the development of local digital collections is the LOCKSS concept in which the local investment is in the form of low-cost pc-servers running the LOCKSS application software.[23] The GPO recently initiated a collaborative project with 18 libraries to explore the utility of this program for ensuring long-term preservation and access to government Web-based information. The pilot currently involves a number of Web-based Federal agency journals previously distributed in print form to FDLs. This pilot should test whether there are low-cost ways in which FDLs can participate in digital collection maintenance.

Several in the FDL and broader community question the need for libraries to capture, manage and preserve digital content. They suggest that with the GPO developing the infrastructure to support both the national collection and national bibliography programs, the "collection" problems of assuring permanent public access in the digital era have been solved.[24] Given the network of light and dark archives proposed in GPO's strategic plans, librarians of this frame of mind believe that several of Gorman's concerns are adequately addressed, particularly managing collections beyond the immediate control of government and of assuring necessary levels of redundancy. Many depository librarians believe that their libraries should focus on serving as information centers for Federal

government information, with a specific focus on ensuring that their user communities have access to skilled, well-trained reference staff, and that the development of costly digital information architectures for managing digital content will not be supported or required by their institutions. In fact, taken to the extreme, the assumption that with GPO's programs under way, the collection problem has been solved leads inevitably to the argument that all libraries are in essence depositories.[25]

The choices that existing and potential FDLs make in the area of digital collecting will inevitably reflect local needs and interests. There is no "one size fits all" solution. A viable and dynamic vision of a digital-era FDLP must support and sustain the full range of needs reflected in the continuum above, ranging from those libraries that wish to locally load content and metadata to those that wish to rely exclusively upon a more centrally managed model of preservation and access to Federal Web-based content.

FDL's Collecting Role: Print

The increased role of the Web, including the active effort of FDLP member libraries, Google, GPO and others to digitize the retrospective print collection of US Federal publications[26] is likely to diminish the *access need* for a large number of distributed libraries to retain and manage historic paper collections. A small number (fewer than 10) of geographically-dispersed "light archives" supplied by GPO with the full range of paper products offered by the GPO might appropriately provide the ongoing need for paper products in an environment where digital versions exist for the entire publishing output of federal agencies. This would serve as a safety-net for libraries in communities that require print for their users – whether that need is due to economic challenges, technology divides or other issues – but cannot afford to acquire large paper collections.

What will libraries continue to select/collect in print in an increasingly Web-based publication world? The collecting decisions of individual FDLs have always been governed by local community needs and interests. The program has heretofore empowered local decision-making. This should continue in the future. Libraries, especially regional depositories and some other large depositories, have been maintaining their collections for many years, and many if not most intend to keep on doing that. While gradually some regionals might withdraw, and new sharing arrangements can be developed, there should not be a "top-down" mandate to reduce the number of legacy collections. Factors that would facilitate better sharing of resources can include cooperative plans for storage and preservation and the provision for scanning on demand from legacy collections, among others. Along the same lines, one of the questions for this section is whether GPO should focus the print on demand (POD) program on economically depressed areas. It is critical that in the future FDLP these program decisions continue to be made at the local FDLP level. As one librarian indicated out on the vision draft blog: "I could see some poor communities using electronic formats well and some wealthy (retiree?) communities preferring print."[27]

GPO and the depository community continue to discuss a more granular selection criteria for depositories as well as the maintaining the idea of distributing "essential titles" to depositories as long as the authoring agency continues to issue the publication in print.

Together with a POD account for depository libraries enabling them to select for their local clientele at a more targeted level, programs such as these may satisfy the need for print materials as well as save GPO some costs. A "just in time" selection for many titles, rather than a "just in case" criteria could also satisfy library administrators anxious about print shelving capacity.

The FDLP network served a *preservation need* as well as an access need. The long-term preservation need for maintenance of a certain number of collections of print-based Federal documents is clear. Paper is perhaps the most enduring information mediums ever developed. A distributed system of dark archives in which use is made only for the purpose of replenishing a light archive is a critical component of a successful strategy for ensuring long-term access to US government information. The number of such archives should perhaps be greater than the two proposed in the GPO strategic vision but less than the ten.

Delivering Content: A Reinvigorated GPO and FDLP Partnership

It is clear that GPO's strategic decisions to build a national collection and repository directly move it into assuming the role the library traditionally held in the print FDLP. John Shuler writes that the national bibliography and national collection initiatives:

> …undermine decades of mutual obligations shared between the national printing office and its libraries. Essentially, although GPO argues it is taking these actions on behalf of its depository libraries, these institutional building initiatives are actually occurring at the expense of its depository library system. A growing number of the program's nearly 1300 host institutions have begun to question the value of participation if they no longer enjoy an exclusive right to receive very expensive publications for free in return for the cost keeping them safe and organized.[28]

Are there ways in which these GPO initiatives and the FDsys that will support them can complement the continuing, critically important partnership role of FDLs in collection building and delivering content? Can a range of institutions (both libraries and nontraditional memory organizations) interested in and willing to host Federal content be given a stake in the digital FDLP program?

We believe there is a possible middle ground. GPO has already indicated it views the FDsys as providing functionality for creating new and more tailored modes of print product selection and distribution. But beyond this, the development of the FDsys can and should provide the technical foundation necessary for GPO serving as an active (re)disseminator of agency web-based content as well as metadata to those emerging digital libraries and memory organizations that desire to acquire and preserve digital government information and agree to abide by depository requirements. We believe that the development of the FDsys can complement and sustain the development of local repositories, whether they are hierarchical, digital repositories or peer-to-peer based systems such as LOCKSS.

As an increasing range of digital repositories of government content are developed, these collections and associated search and discovery tools will be of great value to the public. It is in the interest of the broader citizenry that the Federal government information content within these emerging repositories and search/discovery environments are made available without restriction to the general public. The existing Title 44 statutory requirements and FDLP implementing guidelines should be applied as seamlessly as possible so that libraries/memory organizations and clientele that benefit from the development of FDsys digital "push" services agree to the public access requirement.

The FDLP has served a major civic responsibility in providing no-fee public access to depository materials. Statute requires that FDLs not charge for use of these materials, and Council firmly believes that this legal obligation extends to digital government information resources in the growing Web-based collection regardless of location of access. The Web is the location of the digital FDLP collection: patrons need only be on the Web to have full, no-fee access to all items in the collection. Similarly, materials GPO deposits in partner institution collections via push or comparable technology must be delivered to partners without fee. Additionally, FDLs receiving materials on deposit as part of the FDLP partnership should not impose limits on who can access depository materials in their local collections.

Digital collections made available on the Web inevitably attract reference queries from around the globe. The emerging digital libraries that could be sustained by GPO in this vision might wish to make consortial agreements for reference services around these collections with other FDL members or consortia.

What role might various memory organizations such as the Internet Archive that offer the public still another option for ready, no-fee access to government information have in a future not exclusive to the FDLs? Should select trustworthy organizations of this sort be encouraged to become FDLP partners providing both another layer of redundancy and contributing to the preservation of Web-content? We believe that indeed the future digital FDLP should attempt to formalize the increased reliance of the citizenry on non-traditional memory organizations such as the Internet Archive through encouraging these organizations to become members and accepting the role and responsibilities traditionally assigned to FDLP members.

Finally, some agencies are producing "crippled" electronic content using Digital Rights Management (DRM) software. Files are viewable but features such as downloading, searching and extraction are often disabled. The GPO should work with agencies to ensure that the standard for web-publishing is fully-enable digital files that can be distributed to depositories and incorporated and fully exploited within their local digital environments.

IV. Deploying expertise

Context

One of the most valuable assets in the current FDLP is the trained professional and paraprofessional staff at more than 1,000 participating FDLs. Through the combination of formal education, on-the-job training, continuing education, professional development activities, and years of experience, these librarians and paraprofessionals offer library customers a thorough understanding of the complexities of government information. They also serve their fellow library staff members by offering them basic training and encouraging referrals. For the purposes of this paper, "deploying expertise" refers to three activities: 1) providing references services to help customers find the government information they need; 2) offering government information literacy instruction to members of the public; and 3) training other library staff to provide reference services and instruction for the public.

Leveraging the knowledge and expertise of these trained and experienced government information specialists will be vital to any future role for the FDLP in citizens' use of government information. Many citizens, researchers, and taxpayers already use the Internet to find statistical information, regulatory information, or tax forms they need. But not all information needs are so easily satisfied and may require experience and training beyond that possessed by citizens, researchers, and taxpayers.

The future of the FDLP or any successor program will need to rely on this body of expertise. Technologies such as the Internet, online finding aids and guides, email and chat reference services, online tutorials, "smart" search engines, and the like are beginning to deploy this expertise beyond the library's and institution's walls. However, as these government information professionals are aware, "you don't know what you don't know." The public will be ill-served if this existing expertise and knowledge are not exploited in the present and ensured and expanded in the future.

The primary question is how to make this expertise more accessible to groups and individuals in need of government information. One key lies in redefining the historic partnership among the GPO, FDLs, and agencies. These partners must work together, sharing resources and skills toward the goal of making government information and the knowledge to effectively use it more broadly and deeply accessible.

This enhanced, redefined partnership among agencies, libraries, and GPO requires each partner to assume new roles and responsibilities.

Potential Federal Depository Library Role and Responsibilities

- Allow libraries to earn GPO credits for providing service, virtually and physically, beyond the institution's traditional local clientele. For example, academic libraries will need to acknowledge that staff will be serving more than just students, faculty, and staff of the local college/university community. Libraries choosing to provide services to an extended customer base would earn

credits towards, for example, staff training or print on demand that would improve and enhance services in the same way receiving publications used to enhance collections.

- Maintain staff expertise and training. A large number of government information experts have retired or will be retiring in the near future. This expertise needs to be replaced and new experts need to be recruited to the government information profession.
- Assist GPO and agencies in testing new products and resources.
- Assist GPO in working with agencies to identify and acquire fugitive publications.
- Design and give classes that meet local needs, including public, school library, and other non-depository library staff; educators; small business owners' and civic and non-profit organizations.
- Be prepared for questions from the public by being well read in current events, agency reorganizations, policy discussions, and the like.

Government Printing Office Role and Responsibilities

- Provide FDLP partners with a reliable, user-friendly referral system.
- Train library partners in new resources and products.
- Proactively recruit FDLP library partners to test new services and products provide for public access.
- Recognize and reward innovation on the part of library partners in providing technological or service improvements in the provision of government information.
- Partner with various Internet organizations to create systems like a "Google/Uncle Sam Plus" portal to market a government information link and resources in a memorable way for the general citizenry. This portal can be another "entry point" for users to attain government information and be referred to specialists or experts.
- Provide model training classes that can be adapted and used by local libraries.

Agency Role and Responsibilities

- Design user friendly Web sites, databases, and other information products.
- Consult with government information specialists and general users when designing new information products.
- Proactively recruit FDLP libraries and partners to test new services and products intended for public access and use.

Library and Information Science School Roles and Responsibilities

- Provide specialized courses in government information and incorporate information about government publications and resources into core courses and electives when appropriate.

- Train new information science professionals in information architecture and the skills needed to simplify information retrieval
- Work with government agencies and FDLs to offer internships for students
- Foster a system of education and training that builds a network of experts

As the partnership among the GPO, government agencies, and libraries evolves opportunities should be seized to enhance and extend government information expertise. Pilot projects such as the Government Information Online email and chat reference service have already combined FDL expertise and vendor (OCLC) technology to market government information services to a wider audience. Below are several other possible expanded service scenarios. Several agencies, in particular the Census Bureau, have long-standing productive partnerships with GPO and depository libraries, and offer models to emulate. In this digital era, the possibilities abound, and we only need to follow through on them.

- Build a national online chat reference that combines FDLP members and trained library staff from public, academic, and federal agency libraries. A central authority should coordinate this effort using standard software that can push information to users and provide referrals to more expert help. In essence, this would be an enhanced and extended version of the current Government Information Online project being conducted through the Illinois State Library and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

- Implement the proposed GPO Consultant projects proposed prior to FY 2005. Several of these projects focused on depository library outreach and training to public libraries and school library media centers particularly at the secondary school level (grades 6-12).

- Establish formal/informal relationships between current FDLP libraries/staff and other libraries. FDLP libraries would earn credits for creating local government information service networks. This relationship would involve the FDL providing training and reference referral services to the extended service centers. GPO and agencies would provide training modules/programs on how to use and access information sources. Agency library or public affairs offices would accept referrals for specific information requests.

- Recruit "partner libraries" to become locally and regionally oriented government information portals. These libraries agree to train designated staff to provide excellent assistance for complex government information inquiries. These "partner libraries" would serve their public, business, and education users by providing a responsive up-to-date and locally oriented resource for their community. This opportunity would be open to all libraries. The primary target will be public libraries which can make government information more accessible and usable for the general public with minimal investment. These libraries will be linked to specialty resources such as a "mentoring" depository library to easily "notch up" the level of in-depth resources available.

Conclusion

These are indeed challenging times for FDLs and their traditional roles in providing government information. The succinctly stated goal – GPO, in partnership with federal depository libraries, meets the need of the public for no-fee access to official government information – states only a partial truth in the 21st century information environment. To ensure the continued relevance and viability of the Federal Depository Library Program libraries must realign to meet the needs and habits of our 21st century clientele. Federal depository libraries must seek new ways to provide government information and incorporate to a greater extent than ever before the values of innovation at the local level and project work into their professional practice. And all information professionals, especially federal depository librarians, must continue to act as vocal advocates for no-fee access to federal government information.

While this discussion paper may fall short of the comprehensive "vision" statement to which DLC initially aspired, it represents the necessary first step on the journey toward an agreed-upon vision statement and an accompanying action plan. Members of the Depository Library Council hope we have succeeded in our attempt to 1) define the current situation; 2) suggest new and reinvigorated roles for federal depository libraries; and 3) challenge others to do the same. We look forward to our discussions at the fall DLC meeting. We very much hope that out of those discussions and other input we will be able to formulate a vision statement and plan of action that will ensure the continuing relevance of the FDLP to the public's ability to get and use federal government information.

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Notes and References

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12. For this and other comments, see the DLC Vision Outline Blog at http://dlcvisionoutline.blogspot.com.

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