

Appendix F
Site Visits to Three Federal Depository Libraries and
Interview Questions

Site Visits to Three Federal Depository Libraries

Libraries Visited

McKeldin Library
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland
(*Regional Federal Depository Library*)
Date visited: July 30, 1998

Washington College of Law Library
American University
Washington, D.C.
(*Selective Federal Depository Library*)
Date visited: August 11, 1998

Rockville Regional Library
Montgomery County Public Libraries
Rockville, Maryland
(*Selective Federal Depository Library*)
Date visited: September 9, 1998

Interviewees

Linda Spitzer, Acting Head
Government Documents and Maps

Joanne Zich, Chief
Government Documents and Media
Services
Patrick Kehoe, Library Director

Judith Horowitz, Documents Coordinator

Interview Questions for Site Visits to Federal Depository Libraries

Date of Site Visit _____

Contact Name _____

Title _____

Library Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

Background Information

1. How long have you been in your current position?
2. Describe range of duties related to Government documents?
3. How long has this institution been a Federal depository library?
4. Who are your primary and secondary users of Government information products?
5. Do you know what mediums patrons tend to be more comfortable using? (e.g., paper, CD-ROMs, Internet, diskettes or does it matter?) What about what formats they prefer to use? (text and graphics)

Accessibility for Users

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|--|
| <p>6. What key issues or concerns do users have about accessing Government electronic information products? Have you conducted any user surveys or focus groups to determine the needs of patrons who use Government information products and services?</p> |
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If they do not mention these issues, probe for them:

- Bibliographic and findings tools to identify and describe online and electronic Government products
- Problems with changing URLs
- Charging user fees (specify types of fees: printing costs, fees to access products)
- Copyright restrictions (can you give an example?)
- Downloading large files from the Internet
- User guides and documentation
- Providing reference and other public services to people with disabilities
- Other (specify)

Concerns about Services and Resources

7. What are <i>your</i> concerns about providing access to electronic Government information products?

If they do not mention, probe for:

- Are you notified that a product is available through electronic and online storage? If yes, how?
- Are you currently notified that a product has been removed from the Internet? If so, how?
- Is there a better way to inform the depository libraries of additions, discontinued products, or modified products? If so, what are your recommendations?
- What about retention and preservation of Government electronic information products in the future?

(Hardware and software issues to probe for:)

- What do you think about the latest minimum recommended specifications for public access workstations?
- Is your library able to keep pace with these minimum specifications?
- Do the current recommended minimum specifications accommodate current online and electronic Government information products?
- Other hardware/software issues

Recommendations for Improving Access

8. Within the last three years, have you or your predecessor conducted any formal or informal studies (i.e., surveys, observations) of your users to identify specific needs or concerns they have in using Government electronic information products?

9. If yes, could you please briefly describe what you found and what, if anything, you did to make adjustments in your services or resources?

10. If you were given a pot of money (say \$25,000) to improve access to Government electronic information products, how would you spend the monies, in priority order?

11. If you had unlimited resources, what would you do to improve public access to online and electronic Government information products?

12. Are there other issues or concerns you would like to share with us about the transition to a more electronic FDLP that we haven't already covered?

NCLIS Assessment of Electronic Government Information Products

Summary Notes for Site Visits to Three Depository Libraries

1. What mediums do patrons tend to be most comfortable using? (e.g., paper, CD-ROMs, Internet, diskettes)?

- **Paper and microfiche; Internet a close second.**
- **CD-ROM is the least preferred medium (by librarians and patrons).**

2. What key issues or concerns do *users* have about accessing Government electronic information products?

Accessing Electronic Resources

All three librarians expressed major concerns about the problems in using Government-produced CD-ROMs that are not standardized:

- **The search and retrieval software is different for each CD, often they come with no installation instructions or user documentation, and they are not user-friendly.**
- **Librarians must call in a computer technician to load the CDs and show librarians or users how to access the information.**
- **Two of the three libraries have significantly reduced the number of CD-ROM titles they select because of the above-mentioned problem. The third librarian indicated that they have a ton of CD-ROMs that are not used due to the problems with loading, accessing, and using them.**

Users are still intimidated by electronic mediums and computers. Most users ask librarians to help them search for materials on the web.

Since most Government websites only contain the most recent information, all librarians expressed concerns about users accessing retrospective Government information on the web. Two selective depository librarians often send their patrons to the regional depository to use their paper files for some historical Government information.

3. What key library issues or concerns do *you* have about providing access to electronic Government information products?

Charging Fees

Two of the three libraries do not currently charge fees for printing materials from the Internet or CD-ROMs. One library was planning to change its policy beginning in September 1998 because it cannot continue to fund this expense. The second library is also contemplating changing its policy after installing the next generation computer system.

Hardware issues

- **Patrons expect the library to have state-of-the-art equipment and expect librarians to know how to use it. Although all librarians felt their libraries had state-of-the-art equipment, they were concerned about how they could meet rising user expectations for the “best” computer hardware.**
- **Users do not have access to enough workstations, so the libraries must impose a time limit on computer use.**
- **Costs of hardware, telecommunications, and access to electronic information have increased dramatically. For example, one library reported spending \$60,000 on these services and equipment 10 years ago; now they spend about \$270,000 on hardware including maintenance agreements.**

Training Issues

All librarians expressed concerns about finding time and money to train librarians and staff, especially on the use of CD-ROM products, but also on downloading files, effectively searching the Internet for Government information, and creating and maintaining web pages.

4. If you were given a pot of money (e.g., \$25,000) to improve access to Government electronic information products, how would you spend the monies, in priority order?

- **New CD-ROM server; an 18-disk CD changer (3 responses).**
- **More staff training (2 responses).**

5. If you had unlimited resources, what would you do to improve public access to online and electronic Government information products?

- **Form partnerships with GPO and a Government agency to put some retrospective Government information on their server so it will be accessible to users in the future (2 responses).**
- **Provide outreach to public schools, community centers, etc., to educate students and adults about the wide variety of valuable information available from the Federal Government (2 responses).**

Other Comments:

One librarian expressed strong feelings about the need for Congress to provide long-term financial support to Federal depository libraries so they can provide permanent public access to digital media.