ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

White Paper: Strategic Directions for the Federal Depository Library Program
Association of Research Libraries
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Summary

The US Government Printing Office (GPO) is engaged in a strategic planning process concerning the future of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) believes that the current FDLP strategic planning process should lead to a flexible, sustainable, reconfigured program that reflects the needs and interests of users of government information and participating libraries; embraces the digital networked environment; and importantly, encourages collaborative network-based services while ensuring a smooth and orderly transition to a new program framework. The underlying principles of the program should continue, in particular the long-standing principle of no-fee access to government information. The specifics of such a reconfigured program require more in-depth discussion. But such discussions cannot last another 20 years. The risk of missed opportunities and decreased viability is too high.

Key elements of a new service model for the FDLP should include:

- ➢ Strategies to achieve a small but essential number of comprehensive, print, legacy collections.
- ➢ Increased development of network-based collaborative efforts between GPO and depository libraries and among the libraries themselves.
- ➢ Creation of new knowledge-management tools and resources that enable users direct and independent access to content and the ability to work with the content effectively.
- ➢ Formation of a participatory and open environment to encourage and engage new partnerships.
- ➢ Establishment of a new service model that is economically sustainable and provides sufficient flexibility for libraries and agencies to introduce new approaches to access and deliver government information.
- ➢ Development of a service model that sustains multiple preservation points for both print and electronic government information.

The paradigm of the FDLP has shifted. The program model, dating back to the mid-19th century, entailed libraries collecting, cataloging, and ensuring access to some portion of government documents. This model has depended upon the central distribution of federal agency information by GPO to participating libraries. It also depends upon labor-intensive access protocols that do not necessarily reflect current library practice in the digital environment. When the Depository Library Act of 1962 was enacted, the government information environment was entirely print-based and collaboration and resource sharing were limited. With the shift to network-based and digital technologies, libraries

now routinely collaborate electronically—sharing resources, providing access, and disseminating information to users. And importantly, like libraries, federal agencies rely upon digital technologies to accomplish their missions, publish and make government information available via the World Wide Web.

This changed environment, with its focus on online access and discovery, means that there are many more providers of government information—such as Google, MSN, Yahoo, non-FDLP libraries, as well as publisher managed e-content. Moreover, the forward movement of technology allows access from across a range of devices without regard for geography or place yet geography remains one of the key organizing principles of the present FDLP system.

This white paper provides an environmental context for the FDLP, discusses the current opportunity to reframe the FDLP, presents selected regional cooperative initiatives that demonstrate new directions for the program, and suggests that reframing the FDLP presents a unique opportunity to explore cooperative print management strategies. This white paper does *not* seek to identify or address all of the factors required in creating a new service model for the FDLP. Instead, it is designed to highlight selected issues and new directions.

ARL welcomes the opportunity to work with all stakeholders to ensure a robust and useful FDLP for the future. A 21st century model will enable more effective use of the content and the program values and structure would focus on discoverability, access, persistence, and open architecture.

There is a unique opportunity to reconfigure the FDLP to promote "good government," meet the open-government and transparency goals of the Obama administration, and ensure that the public has effective access to government information in the future. ARL's interest in reshaping the FDLP is grounded in the large responsibility and financial commitment that members have for sustaining the system – of the 50[1] regional federal depositories 22 are ARL members and the majority of ARL libraries are selective depositories, all with large depository collections.

Background

The GPO's current planning discussions with the federal depository library community build on over 20 years of conversations and fact finding regarding the program. The discussions have focused on new technological challenges and opportunities facing the federal depository libraries and federal agencies; possible reconfiguration of the program; and revision to the governing statute (Title 44) to better meet the needs of the public, participating libraries, and federal agencies. More recently, there is a sense of urgency concerning the need to reformulate the FDLP to ensure its viability and value given the enormous economic challenges facing users of government information, participating libraries, GPO, and other federal agencies. *A common theme in all of these discussions is the need to ensure that the FDLP is an effective means by which the*

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[1] Another regional FDL will change its status as of June 1, 2009.

government and libraries provide public access to government information in a digital environment.

Federal depository libraries (FDLs) have a long and rich tradition of providing public access to government information. In addition to providing access, regional FDLs preserve print and microform materials available via the FDLP. The combination of technological change (particularly the ability of individuals and organizations to quickly access and disseminate documents electronically), infrastructure pressures such as funding and space, and user expectations that favor electronic access to information, has led the GPO to engage in strategic planning.

In 2002, GPO published a strategic plan for the agency that included specific recommendations for the FDLP. Following that planning process, in 2006, the Depository Library Council (DLC) issued "Knowledge Will Forever Govern."[2] This report stated that to:

> ensure the continued relevance and viability of the Federal Depository Library Program, libraries must realign to meet the needs and habits of their 21st century clientele—a clientele whose information-seeking behavior increasingly bypasses libraries and their services as well as the collections they provide via the depository program. Federal depository libraries must seek new ways to provide and assist in using and understanding government information, and incorporate to a greater extent than ever before the values of innovation at the local level. The challenge is to move forward with a collaborative vision and a set of goals to make that vision a reality.

The need for change as recommended by the DLC has become ever more pressing since the report was issued in 2006. This need is well documented by surveys conducted by GPO and studies and assessments by participating libraries—all of which document the changing nature of library services, financial constraints on libraries generally and participating depositories in particular, and the need to infuse change into the FDLP if the program is to be sustainable for participating libraries and meaningful to users. Importantly, these reports, surveys, and related commentary underscore the significance of the values and principles of the FDLP. These documents focus on the need to modernize the program to ensure that it is responsive and relevant to current needs of the public, participating federal agencies, and libraries. It is important to note that Congress has regularly enacted and or updated e-government laws to ensure that executive branch programs and services remain meaningful as technology and practice evolve. With the only major revision to the law governing the FDLP in 1962, the FDLP remains in a historical model.

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[2] http://www.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/council/dlcvision092906.pdf

Environmental Context of the FDLP

*The state of the US **economy** presents libraries of all types with significant challenges on many fronts—severe budgetary reductions, service reductions, staff realignment, branch closings, and more.*

➢ It is estimated that state government budget shortfalls for fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2011 could be more than $350 billion. Fourteen regional libraries are in state libraries and thirty-three regional FDLs are in academic libraries (22 of these are ARL members), many of which are state-funded institutions. The remaining regional FDLs are in public libraries.

➢ Sixty-five percent of state-funded institutions experienced mid-year budget reductions with more expected in 2010. These institutions are addressing these shortfalls through a combination of measures: hiring, salary, and travel freezes; layoffs; furloughs; reduction of overtime; collections budget reduction; and more.

➢ Over 60% of participating FDLs are in academic institutions. Universities and colleges rely upon endowments, in part, to fund enterprise-wide operations including libraries. Endowments at universities and colleges lost, on average, 23% in value in 2008.

➢ Dissemination of print materials will be further reduced due to budgetary limitations of agencies.

*The rapidly changing **technological** environment presents new challenges to institutions.*

➢ The ubiquitous presence of Wi-Fi, handheld communication devices, smart phones, and the like will spur libraries to re-tool content for mobile users and mobile devices. Libraries will need to innovate to supply content, tools, and services.

➢ The vast majority of government information is born digital and the standard dissemination format has become electronic.

➢ In discovering information, users prefer electronic access over print and microform formats. A 2008 study of FLDP patrons found that 77% regularly used Google or another commercial search engine to find government information, while only 9% used GPO Access, and 5% used the print collections.

➢ With regards to the delivery of information users prefer the digital format due to the functionality that comes with digital -- the ability to search, repurpose, and manipulate.

➢ Leaders of U.S. law schools issued the "Durham Statement on Open Access to Legal Scholarship," which calls for all law schools to discontinue publication of their legal journals in print format and to publish them electronically with the journals accessible in stable, open, digital formats.

➢ There are hundreds of digitization projects initiated by libraries with the resources available to users in digital form. Others such as Google and the Internet Archive provide free access to vast amounts of digitized content. Google also partners with state governments to provide access to digital government information.

➢ From 1992 to 2000, the number of print documents available to FDLP libraries dropped from 70,468 to 26,994 and more than three-quarters of libraries were accepting fewer than 40% of the print titles in 2000. In 2003, 24,251 electronic titles were made available via GPO Access with 14,045 print titles shipped to FDLP libraries. By 2008, over 95% of the titles available in the program (whether or not they are also available in print or microform) were electronic.

➢ ARL statistics indicate an increase of electronic materials expenditures as a percentage of total materials expenditures, from a median of 38% in 2005 to 48% in 2007. It is anticipated that with the release of 2008 data this trend will continue to accelerate, and there will be a significant increase in the percentage of electronic materials.

*Meeting **user information needs** and **managing facilities** present new challenges to libraries.*

➢ As budgets tighten, there is increased scrutiny and pressure to examine facilities and services.   Such evaluation has been underway in many FDLs, both regional and selective.

➢ Twenty percent of regional FDLs indicated in a 2008 survey that the library was considering a change in its depository library status, in part due to space, financial and use concerns.

➢ The strongest cases for retaining library real estate will be grounded in data derived from user-needs assessments, and qualitative and quantitative evidence of the benefits that libraries deliver to users within these spaces.

*There are many federal **policies and laws** that support access to government information*

➢ Congress has regularly updated e-government laws or enacted new ones to ensure that executive branch programs and services remain meaningful as technology and practice evolve.   Some of these include the E-Government Act of 2002, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA).

➢ The only major revision to the law governing the FDLP was the Depository Library Act of 1962. [3] [4] [5] [6]

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[3] Deiss, K., & Petrowski, M. J. (2009). ACRL 2009 Strategic thinking guide for academic librarians in the new economy. Association of College & Research Libraries.

[4] Lowry, C. B., Adler, P., Hahn, K., & Stuart, C. (2009) Transformation times: An environmental scan prepared for the ARL strategic plan review task force. Association of Research Libraries.

[5] Shuler, J. A. (2005). Informing the nation: the future of librarianship and government information service. *Government Information Quarterly, 22,* 146-150.

[6] Burroughs, J. M. (2009). What users want: Assessing government information preferences to drive information services. *Government Information Quarterly, 26*, 203-218.

Opportunity to Reframe the FDLP

For the FDLP to be meaningful in this 21st century environment, a new service model is required to meet the information needs of users and the operating context of libraries while maintaining the underlying principles of the program. A new framework for the FDLP would entail a refocus on the roles of GPO and participating libraries. The new service model would:

- Allow for multiple access points to government information, as the primary focus will be digital.
- Cater to user preferences with sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing user needs.
- Create new knowledge-management tools that enable users direct and independent access to content and the ability to work with the content effectively.
- Foster effective participation by other entities, such as non-FDLP libraries and Yahoo, Google and other providers of information.
- Sustain multiple preservation points for both print and electronic.

GPO

With the recent deployment of GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys), the roles of GPO and participating libraries fundamentally changed. FDsys, a digital content system, permits GPO to capture, provide access to and preserve government information from all three branches of government. As a result, GPO now manages the "digital collection," and undertakes preservation and access activities associated with it. Providing access to and preservation of government information traditionally was the role of regional FDLs. In addition, GPO is reviewing proposals to digitize the legacy collections at no cost to the government. This digitization effort, if undertaken, will greatly expand access to the legacy collections and will allow researchers, students, and members of the public the ability to mine government information resources in ways not previously possible.

For access to these digital resources to be most effective, enhanced discovery will be necessary. There is no clear sense of how many pre-1976 federal documents require cataloging records. Over 30 FDLs and GPO are cataloging 2.2 million pre-1976 depository materials. This is a multi-year and costly undertaking—approximately five dollars per record. Until an overarching schema for access is developed, holdings for these resources cannot be easily identified nor made available for digitization or coordinated storage. GPO, working with FDLs, needs to develop a master plan for access that provides a clearer understanding of the universe of records that still require processing. The plan should also detail cooperative action for cataloging and/or machine-based mechanisms for providing access. The recent GPO report, "Regional Depository Libraries in the 21st Century: A Preliminary Assessment,"[7] includes a recommendation that GPO

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[7] http://www.fdlp.gov/home/about/209-studyofregionals

support "continued appropriations for GPO's initiative to create machine-readable bibliographic records for the tangible collection of pre-1976 depository publications to ensure its completion in a timelier manner." This is a critically important component of ensuring effective access to the historic legacy collections. GPO did receive some funding to catalog and index more government information. This is a positive development and these efforts should garner the strong support of the library community. It also is an important facet of a master plan for access to the collections, both print and digital.

In addition to working with members of the public and private sectors on digitization and creating bibliographic records, there is a strong value in GPO undertaking a greater role in network-based, collaborative training programs. As the 2007–08 program, Government Information in the 21st Century: Training Librarians to be Government Information Specialists demonstrated, there is a pressing need to expand the number of individuals with expertise in government information. Building on this effort, GPO could develop Web-based training modules and utilize network-based tools to supplement the current, ongoing work of regional FDLs. GPO is also well positioned to work with partner libraries on the development of best practices.

All of the efforts listed above are logical extensions of current GPO activities (and are activities that GPO has indicated a strong interest in undertaking) that reflect the changing needs of participating libraries and users in a digital environment and are appropriately, national strategies that complement local, state, regional activities already underway.

Libraries
Libraries of all types are evaluating existing services, collections and branch libraries. Many research libraries, for example, are consolidating multiple service desks and print collections, consolidating and/or closing branch libraries, and then repurposing the library space to meet user needs. This is particularly evident in the sciences. In the case of government documents collections, as of 2007, 82% of depositories' reference services were part of the library's main reference desk, not a separate service. For regional FDLs, 75% of the depository library staff train other library staff about reference sources and government information. And, as GPO notes, another indication of change is that most depository librarians are "no longer responsible for only depository operations. " Importantly, in reconfiguring these services, libraries are retaining the subject expertise and integrating this expertise with other services.

In addition to reevaluating services locally, libraries utilize technologies to access and share distributed resources. In the last several years, regionally based consortia have initiated a number of government-information related projects that advance new strategies for collective action. These activities point the way for new service models for the FDLP. Increased and enhanced library collaborative initiatives are a natural outcome due to a number of factors including:

- ➢ New technological capacities.
- ➢ The ability to better meet user information needs through collaboration.
- ➢ The need to be responsive to the economic realities of library budgets.
- ➢ Interest in reducing redundancies to deploy resources to new service areas.
- ➢ The opportunity to realize new benefits due to economies of scale.
- ➢ A deep understanding that new opportunities are possible with regional collaboration.

What distinguishes these activities in the FDLP context is:

- ➢ The truly *regional* nature of the activity vs. the FDLP use of the term "regional," which historically is state-based.
- ➢ A history of collaboration on library and related issues.
- ➢ The need to address selected issues within a geographic frame.
- ➢ Common needs and interests that are likely to be more addressable on a regional level vs. a national level.

Regional Cooperative Initiatives

Select projects that enhance access to government information and that illustrate regional collaborations are described below. Collectively, these activities demonstrate the movement to new collaborative efforts that are state and regionally based, exploit digital technologies, tackle a particular facet of the FDLP and build on long-standing relationships. A reframed FDLP should build on the successes of these new regionally based initiatives.

Government Information in the 21st Century (Gi21)[8] was a continuing education program that trained reference and public service librarians in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming in the use of electronic government information. Key to the success of the program was the reliance on the expertise of government information librarians, and the use of digital technologies. Gi21's outcomes are impressive:

- ➢ Forty-seven government information professionals engaged in training, online components for 22 subject modules were developed, and over 900 library professionals were trained in the use of electronic government information.
- ➢ The number of library professionals with expertise in electronic government information resources in those states involved in the project was greatly expanded.
- ➢ The ability to meet the information needs of user communities was increased.
- ➢ A new model that supports the training of participants in FDLs in the five-state region was proven and could be extended nationally.

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[8] http://www.webjunction.org/gi21

The **Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL)**[9] is engaged in a number of activities to both expand access to government information and extend the expertise of government information librarians within the southeastern US. There are over 250 FDLs within ASERL. One ASERL project involving regional FDLs focuses on enhancing cooperative training, outreach, service, and collection analysis in order to improve public access to government information.

Another strong interest of ASERL members, working within Title 44, is the establishment of a discrete number of comprehensive collections of US government information from each federal agency. These collections would build upon the collections of regional and selective FDLs within ASERL. ASERL foresees the need for at least five centers of excellence for each federal agency. This number would ensure a sufficient amount of redundancy allowing for timely delivery and preservation of government resources. This effort would improve intellectual control and access to the legacy collections, entails significant preservation and cataloging activities, and involves ILL/document-delivery agreements within the consortium.

The **Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA)**[10] is engaged in an initiative to identify, digitize, archive, and provide long-term access to pre-1975 federal technical reports. The Technical Report Archive and Image Library (TRAIL)[11] is a cooperative project led by the University of Arizona with the Center for Research Libraries. The technical literature of the National Bureau of Standards is the focus of a pilot project. The high interest in these reports—more than 2,000 citations in the Web of Science—indicates the need to make these digitally accessible.

Another collaboration that includes government information is the Western Waters Digital Library (WWDL),[12] which is focused on providing access to water-related resources of the Trans-Mississippi region of North America. Resources include classic water literature, government reports, legal transcripts, water project records, personal papers, photographic collections, and audio/video materials associated with the major river basins of the western United States. This project is a joint regional project with 12 participants in eight western states. One can see the value added by including government information in these types of projects.

The **Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)**[13] has a long and rich history of collaborative endeavors that focus on the academic enterprise in addition to library-targeted projects. Several CIC projects are of direct interest to government documents specialists. The HathiTrust Shared Digital Repository[14] will archive and share the digital versions of legacy print collections from the 13

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[9] http://www.aserl.org/
[10] http://www.gwla.org/
[11] http://sites.google.com/a/gwla.org/trail/Home/
[12] http://www.westernwaters.org/
[13] http://www.cic.net/
[14] http://www.hathitrust.org/

CIC universities and the University of California. CIC is also participating in the Google Book Search Project[15] and will work with the company to digitize up to ten million volumes, which includes government documents. Finally, building on these other initiatives, CIC member libraries are considering a collaborative project to digitize and manage federal government documents collections. There are four components to the project: digitization of the print collections, access and discovery efforts, collection management, and sustainability.   The project will provide open access to comprehensive, managed collections of government information in both print and electronic formats, including a focus on the preservation of the digital files and the management of the print collections. The project seeks to enable new service models for access to and preservation of government information, building on the expertise and knowledge of the government documents community. Finally, this CIC project will be examining issues of financial and organizational sustainability and shared storage infrastructure.

Cooperative Print Management Efforts

A new framework for the FDLP will hinge on many factors. One key factor will be managing an orderly transition to a smaller number of comprehensive, print, truly regional, legacy collections. Engaging in cooperative management and the retention of print legacy collections will permit institutions to make local and regional decisions concerning collections, enhance access to government information, and allow libraries to redeploy resources to better address user information needs in the digital, networked environment.

In 2008, there were 52 regional FDLs. Since that time, one regional FDL has dropped its status and a second will follow as of June 1, 2009. In a 2008 GPO survey of directors of regional FDLs, 20% indicated they were considering a change in regional status. This survey was conducted prior to the downturn in the US economy. With regional and selective libraries leaving and/or considering leaving the program, it is important to ensure that a sufficient number of comprehensive, legacy, print collections are maintained. Thus a central element in the transition to a smaller number of print regional depository collections is the successful adoption of cooperative print-management strategies.

OCLC has been focused on this set of issues and recently released the *Shared Print Policy Review Report* by the RLG Partnership Shared Print Collections Working Group.[16] OCLC notes that "[r]egional agreements to manage print collections as a shared resource can have a transformative effect on system-wide library operations if they are undertaken with a clear view of the deeply inter-dependent collections economy and the need for programmatic disclosure of institutional commitments. Cooperative agreements that are intended to achieve or to enable truly transformative change in the way library print collections are managed should include:

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[15] http://www.cic.net/Home/Projects/Library/BookSearch/Introduction.aspx
[16] http://www.oclc.org/programs/publications/reports/2009-03.pdf

➢ A business model that acknowledges the changing value of library print resources in the current information environment;
➢ An explicit acknowledgement that effective disclosure of library holdings and retention commitments is necessary to support distributed management of print archives; and
➢ A commitment to capture, retain, and share item-level condition information so that the preservation quality of print archives may be better judged."

OCLC identified three "critical components" that are central to inter-institutional cooperative print management. These are:

➢ "An explicit retention commitment (regardless of duration) for titles committed to the shared archive;
➢ Identification of conditions under which materials may be recalled or temporarily withdrawn from the archive;
➢ Definition of terms: duplication, withdrawal, what constitutes reasonable effort to replace lost or missing items, etc."

Government documents collections present an ideal pilot due to the strong interest of the library community in developing national strategies for low demand yet high value materials, and thus in maintaining a reduced number of comprehensive print collections and adopting cooperative print-management agreements. With 50 overlapping collections and over 1,200 selective collections and active digitization and cataloging efforts underway, such a pilot would provide valuable experience to libraries of all types. With the loss of two regional FDLs and others as a distinct possibility in the near future, initiating such a project should commence quickly. Many believe that if a significant transformation of FDLP is not undertaken with all due haste, there is a real possibility of systemic collapse.

Conclusion
The reframing of the FDLP presents the opportunity to create a new service model that will substantially increase and enhance access to and discovery of government information. The framework for the future will be based on access, discovery, management of the resources and tools, and delivery of these resources to users. Emerging social software, digital technologies, and broadband networks offer GPO, participating depository libraries, and other partners new ways to cooperate as they seek to build, sustain, and provide access to the digital collections of the future while preserving the print resources of historic importance. It will be essential that, in repositioning the FDLP to a sustainable, flexible system that is not geographically defined, the best elements of the traditional print-based approaches to government documents management and access are merged with the capacities of networked services and resources.