



May 4, 2009

Honorable Charles Schumer
Chair, Joint Committee on Printing
313 Hart Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Sent via fax: (202) 228-3027

Honorable Robert Brady
Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Printing
206 Cannon House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510
Sent via fax: (202) 225-0088

Dear Chairman Schumer and Vice Chairman Brady:

On behalf of the American Library Association (ALA) and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), we are writing to express our strong support for a project that will digitize our nation's historical public domain government works and make these broadly available to the American public. The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) will soon seek the approval of the Joint Committee on Printing to undertake this important public access project at *no cost to the government*. We request your strong and immediate support of this initiative.

For over 140 years, the GPO, through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), has made government information available at no cost to the public. In order to ensure that there is effective, permanent, no-fee access to these valuable government documents in electronic formats, GPO is working with other entities to digitize the legacy documents collection. This collection of over 2.2 million documents once digitized will vastly improve public access to these historical and cultural resources of our nation and importantly, preserve this deteriorating resource. Many of the volumes in this legacy collection are brittle due to age and publication on acidic paper. It is our understanding that GPO will receive from the awardee of this no-fee contract, the unaltered digitized files that GPO will then preserve and use to create access files within GPO's Future Digital System (FDSys).

Today, the vast majority of public domain resources in the FDLP are not as effectively accessible to many members of the public as they are in print or microform – formats no longer preferred by users. More importantly, these resources are distributed geographically throughout the U.S., oftentimes at great distances from the user. This initiative will open the doors of the institutions housing these paper documents to the public without regard to where they live.

These resources cover virtually every facet of U.S. history, government policy, and administration. This will allow members of the public the ability to understand their culture and history in new, meaningful ways and encourage greater civic engagement. It will foster new educational applications such as building new web accessible educational materials not currently possible in print

format. Importantly, this means that educators and students will have access to needed materials previously unavailable without regards for geographic location or financial limitation.

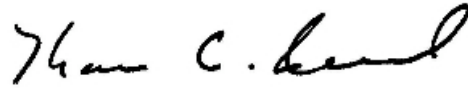
We applaud GPO and the awardee for collaborating to make government information available without restriction and with no cost to the public during these uncertain economic times.

We encourage you to quickly approve this GPO request so that these valuable resources can be made accessible to the public as soon as possible. Please let us know if there is additional information that we can provide.

Sincerely,



James Rettig, ALA President
Boatwright Memorial Library
University of Richmond



Thomas C. Leonard, ARL President
Kenneth and Dorothy Hill University Librarian
University of California, Berkeley

CC: Rep. Michael Capuano, Rep. Dan Lungren, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, Rep. Susan Davis, Sen. Patty Murray, Sen. Tom Udall, Sen. Bob Bennett, Sen. Thad Cochran