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## Remarks

by Mark Scully, Director, Information Dissemination Policy

In May 1987 the Joint Committee on Printing directed GPO to conduct a series of electronic dissemination pilot projects with depository libraries. The JCP's directive to GPO cited the reports and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Depository Library Access to Federal Automated Data Bases, which was chaired by Bernadine Hoduski. The Ad Hoc Committee had been established in May 1983 to evaluate the feasibility and practicality of providing access to Federal Government information in electronic formats to depository libraries.

Over the years 1988 through 1991, five pilot projects were administered by the GPO. The initial electronic dissemination project was Census Test Disk #2, a CD-ROM product distributed to all depositories in May 1989. During the following year, 1990, another three pilot projects were launched: the Economic Bulletin Board of the Department of Commerce was offered to 100 depositories, and two additional CD-ROM titles were distributed, namely, the 1985 bound Congressional Record and the Environmental Protection Agency's Toxic Release Inventory. The fifth and final pilot project was mounted in 1991 by the Department of Energy to test online bibliographic access and to assess alternative formats for full-text delivery of technical documents.

All of these five pilot projects shared a couple of basic aims: The first aim was obviously to disseminate Federal information in electronic format, either online or on CD-ROM. The second aim was to gather and assess data concerning the results of these dissemination efforts in order to answer some basic questions about:

- the ability of the Government to disseminate information in electronic formats through the depository library program;
- the integration of Government electronic information into depository libraries;
- the use and usefulness of Government information in electronic formats;
- the costs of disseminating Government information to depositories in electronic formats.

Most of the data collection involved surveying libraries and information users with printed questionnaires and, in the case of the Economic Bulletin Board, with online surveys. Government cost data were derived from agency financial records.

Our analysis of the library and user survey returns looked at responses by library size (small, medium, and large libraries) and by library type (academic, public, and others). Cross-tabulations between questions were performed where it seemed appropriate. We also tried to evaluate the survey response data in terms of the effects and benefits of the particular CD-ROM or online service on the libraries and their users. Any increase

in user capability was regarded as beneficial, while a loss in capability was considered adverse. The data collection instruments were also designed to elicit responses that would identify the positive aspects of the various electronic products and services, as well as any problems or difficulties that were experienced in the libraries.

The initial pilot project report, entitled Reading the Congressional Record on CD-ROM, was published in December 1992 and distributed to all depository libraries. Now, I know that you have all read this report, but let me touch on some of the more salient highlights just to refresh your memories:

- 43% of the libraries with equipment, that is 401 libraries, actually installed and used the Record CD-ROM during the two-month test period;
- Librarians indicated a general acceptance of CD-ROM technology for the CR and nearly two-thirds favored the issuance of future CR years on CD-ROM. At the same time, only 38% of the responding libraries would accept CD-ROM as a substitute for paper format. Paper stands as the CR format of choice for 58% of those librarians, though 57% would accept CD-ROM as a substitute for microfiche.
- Both librarians and users expressed dissatisfaction with the CR CD-ROM prototype. More than half (57%) were dissatisfied with the software.

The CR CD-ROM report contains much more in the way of facts and findings that should be of interest to many of you, and I encourage you to peruse your library's copy if you haven't yet done so.

Now, when can you expect to see the four remaining pilot project reports that are now in preparation? We intend to complete and issue the four reports during the summer of 1993 and to distribute copies to all depository libraries. I should note that three of these reports-- the Economic Bulletin Board, and the Census and EPA CD-ROM reports-- are being written within GPO and will resemble the CR CD-ROM report in their organization and format. The fifth report is being prepared by the Department of Energy and may look somewhat different.

Let me assure you that no one is more anxious to complete these reports than the members of our team who are preparing the reports. It will be a great relief for us to put this task to rest. At the same time, I can honestly say that the opportunity to work on these pilot projects has presented each of us with a considerable challenge and teaming experience. We only hope that the resulting pilot project reports will provide some useful findings and insights both to librarians and to Government decision-makers.