

Suggested Responses to Frequently Cited Reasons for Leaving the Depository Library System



Compiled by the Depository Library Council & the DLC Operations Committee, Subcommittee on Attrition and Retention (SOAR)

General responses

- The FDLP is in the forefront of technology, and it pushes member libraries to aim for the forefront, also.
- You may not be able to keep the FDLP collection if you drop depository status. The collection is not the property of the library.
- The permanent public access to government information that your library depends on is predicated upon the existence of the FDLP. The program must be kept healthy.
- If you drop status, you will have less access to technical assistance from agencies, which provide more attention to depository libraries than to non-depository libraries.
- Being a member of the FDLP enhances the status/prestige of an institution because membership:
 - Enables the institution to provide greater service and become a resource for the entire community. In the case of Regional libraries, this is true for an entire service region.
 - Enhances the political good will of the institution's Congressional delegation.
 - Obliges the institution to maintain a publicly available collection of government information and a staff of knowledgeable people to serve that collection.
- Should your library leave the FDLP, it will be a time consuming process if the library should wish to return. Designation as a Federal depository library is a Congressional prerogative.

General GPO requirements issues

Sample complaints:

“GPO's requirements are too stringent.”

“I don't like the inspection process.”

“GPO's minimum technical requirements are too stringent/expensive.”

- Dispel mistaken ideas about the FDLP.
 - “Even if we drop status we can keep the publications we've already received through the program.”
 - Your regional will specify what you will have to do to drop status, and this may include giving up your depository collection.

“GPO requires that we stamp/mark/process depository items in ways that are very labor intensive.”

- Some of the processing requirements that you are using could have been passed down through generations of documents workers in your library. They may not be listed as required in the “Instructions to Depository Libraries” or the “Federal Depository Library Manual, Supplement 2: Guidelines For the Federal Depository Library Program.” Re-read these materials, if you need additional clarification then contact your Regional or Depository Services.

“If an FDLP inspector finds anything wrong, I can automatically lose status.”

- GPO will not throw you out of the system for a minor violation. It will recommend changes to your processes and then follow up that you’ve implemented them.
- GPO has only put 4 libraries on probation in the last two years. Rumors to the contrary are just rumors.

“The FDLP inspector insulted my personal library skills.”

- The inspection process is not meant as a personal critique of the depository librarian/coordinator.

“GPO requires a certain selection level.”

- See the GPO statement on selection level policy.
<http://www.access.gpo.gov/gpoaccess/fdlp/coll-dev/expl-ave.html>

“The GPO recommended staffing levels are too high.”

- The old Shearer measure is no longer included in the Instructions. See section on “Staffing Issues:”
http://www1.access.gpo.gov/gpoaccess/fdlp/pubs/instructions/in_ch5.html

- GPO’s Minimum Technical Requirements are designed to help your library stay up to date with your technical acquisitions, as well as to insure that your library can access electronic government information for the public.
- The Guidelines and Minimum Technical Requirements can be valuable tools in making a case with your administration for upkeep of the depository collection.
- Managing the processes that will be involved in withdrawing from the FDLP will take up to a year of staff time. It’s better to weed and downsize your selection rate than to withdraw from the system.

Budgetary problems

Sample complaints:

“It’s too expensive to be a depository library.”

“We’ve experienced budget cuts.”

“We don’t feel that we are getting a good return on our investment in documents.”

- Libraries extend their book budgets through membership in the FDLP because they automatically receive publications that may be difficult to obtain otherwise, either due to price or availability.
- The FDLP supplies materials that support various curriculum areas.
- The FDLP provides information and free training for librarians, with programs such as the Interagency Seminar and the Depository Library Conference.
- Are there resource-sharing activities that might cut down on the amount of funding needed for support of the depository collection?
- Have you considered a thorough weeding of the collection to cut down on the expense of housing/servicing the documents?
- Have you considered transitioning to a solely virtual depository? There would be less processing, therefore less cost involved.
- Have you considered how vital depository collections are to the business (especially the small business) community? Economic statistics are available freely in a depository, whereas businesses not served by a depository library would have to pay for access to this information—some of which may not be available at any price.
- Did you know that only 19% of the material issued by the FDLP is available for sale?
- Have you considered the value that your institution derives from the depth of information (especially historical information) provided via participation in the FDLP?
- Have you considered the cost your institution will bear in withdrawing from the FDLP? There will be about a year's worth of staff time involved in managing the outflow of the depository documents and scrubbing your ILS of the related bibliographic records.
- Have you considered that if you take the money you spend on the depository collection and attempt to stretch it to develop a separate collection, it won't go nearly as far? Factored into this equation is the cost of training your librarians to access the new collection. GPO provides free training opportunities for depository libraries.
- Have you considered that the cost of locating and buying federal government information products title by title is prohibitively expensive? The FDLP provides a centralized process for locating, acquiring, cataloging, and disseminating information produced by the various government entities.

Staffing issues

Sample complaint:

“We don't have the staff to process/provide reference service for documents due to budget cuts/attrition.”

- While the staffing requirements might seem burdensome, that burden is outweighed by the resulting rise in the library's service levels.
- Have you considered that there are resource-sharing activities that might cut down on the amount of funding needed for staffing the depository collection?
- Did you know that GPO has a number of training opportunities, such as the Interagency Seminar and Depository Library Conference, which can teach your staff more efficient processing methods?
- Have you talked to your regional about ways to streamline processing methods?

- Have you have taken advantage of the networking opportunities afforded by local depository meetings? Some of your colleagues may have tips on streamlining your processing.
- Have you considered transitioning to a solely virtual depository? There would be less processing, therefore less cost involved.
- Have you considered outsourcing some documents tasks?
- Have you considered the amount of staff time it will take for your institution to manage all the processes involved in withdrawing from the FDLP? There will be about a year's worth of staff time involved in managing the outflow of the depository documents and scrubbing your ILS of their bibliographic records.
- Have you considered getting training for all your reference staff, instead of just your depository staff, in accessing government information? As a member of the FDLP, your library is part of a community of government information professionals who understand governmental organizational structure, the information publishing practices of governmental agencies, and the multiple contexts in which these agencies produce this information. Adding to your staff's knowledge can only enhance your library's prestige.
- If you still wish to provide access to government information, you will still have to invest in training of staff. Why pay for such training, when GPO provides such training free of charge to depository libraries?

Security issues

Sample complaints:

“We need to protect our clientele by limiting access to persons exhibiting certain types of behavior.”

“We need to limit the amount of printing done on our public access computers, even those in the Government Documents Department.”

- Did you know that it is permissible to allow outside individuals access to the depository collection but not the rest of the library? It is not recommended, but permissible under certain conditions.
- Did you know that GPO will back up local decisions regarding exclusions of individuals who are violating library policies?
- Did you know that it is permissible to charge reasonable fees for printing items from government web sites? It is only necessary to ensure that the charges are comparable to those for printing non-governmental materials.

Space Issues

Sample complaints:

“We've lost space in the library.”

“We need the space we have for other collections.”

- Weeding will not require a greater use of resources than managing all the processes that will be involved in withdrawing from the FDLP.
- Have you considered transitioning to a solely virtual depository?

- Sixty percent of the publications distributed through the FDLP are now electronic—why leave the program when the space issues are going away?
- Have you examined your collection for items that might be weeded out because they are superseded? Remember, you don't have to create a discard list for superseded items—you can just throw them away!
- If space is an issue, remember that you can substitute fiche versions of depository items for the paper versions. Work with your Regional to devise ways to cut down on your space problem.
- Consider housing part of your documents collection at a selective housing site.
- As you know, GPO has partnered with several institutions, for example, the University of North Texas, to archive the electronic publications of dead agencies. You might consider weeding the older publications in your collection based upon their availability through these partner institutions.

Increasing emphasis on electronic information: “Everything is on the Internet”

Sample complaint:

“GPO is not sending us tangible products anymore.”

- Everything is NOT on the Internet. Most information pre-dating 1996 is not online.
- The rate of increase in electronic products has leveled off
- The idea that “if it's online there is no associated cost” is a fallacy.
 - If you're going to rely on the Internet for all your government information needs you'll need the training afforded to depository libraries to access and retrieve it.
 - If you're going to rely on the Internet for all your government information needs you'll need equipment of the same quality as that listed in the Minimum Technical Requirements to access and retrieve it.
 - If you're going to rely on the Internet for all your government information needs, you will have to pay to access some items to which you now have free access as a member of the FDLP.
- If you leave the FDLP, you will have less access to technical assistance from agencies, which provide more attention to depository libraries than to non-depository libraries.
- If you leave the FDLP you won't have access to items captured by GPO through special agreements with agencies. Some of these items are *Environmental Health Perspectives*, *USA Trade*, and *StatUSA*. More and more government information products will be captured through these types of agreements; if you drop depository status your library will not be able to get them.

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