



Service Issues/Guidelines for Government Information in the Electronic Environment and Depository Libraries

A Report to the Depository Library Council Presented at the Spring 1997 Meeting, Arlington, Virginia by Ridley Kessler and Dan Barkley

At the fall 1996 Depository Library Council meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, two focus sessions were held dealing with service issues for Government information in electronic formats. These focus sessions were held on Tuesday, October 22, and were led by Ridley Kessler, the regional depository librarian from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These focus groups were organized because of the ever increasing amount of Government information becoming available in electronic formats to depository libraries. These formats are offering depository libraries and the staff and citizens who use the material a great deal of flexibility and unheard of access. At the same time, the variety and sheer number of sources are having a great impact on the public services that depository libraries offer to the public. These types of information sources have brought many changes to depository libraries everywhere. Some of these impacts are:

- need for staff training in electronics or new staff to handle the increased technology demands
 - increased costs for hardware and software in order to effectively use the electronic material
 - increased demands by patrons for help in using more complicated formats
 - difficulties in providing copies of electronic sources for users
- necessity of large hard disk space for holding information
 - increased use of paper to print out material
 - need for FTP sites for extra large documents or information
 - need to provide electronic format of large documents or for documents in a non-text format

These electronic formats are causing depository libraries to reexamine the services that they offer to the general public. In many cases hard choices must be made. The purpose of the focus groups was to discuss and define what services are possible in the electronic environment, as well as which of them libraries should be expected to provide to their users.

It is ultimately hoped that these discussions will lead to service guidelines to help libraries set policy and meet the needs imposed by the depository library system.

The group first considered the most important and basic question, "What kind of electronic

services are now being offered to the public by depositories?" This question dominated both sessions and more time was spent in discussion of this topic than any other. The librarians present for this discussion started out with the importance of signs in the library to advertise library Web sites. Almost all the libraries represented at this focus session realized the importance of advertising their Web site and had made some provisions to enable patrons to find it.

Some said that they were offering telephone assistance for the Web, i.e., explaining how to telnet or dial into the system, and other reference help in finding information on the Web. Many also had handouts and guide sheets on how to do these things. Handouts and guide sheets came up constantly in these discussions and everyone was keenly aware of the importance of training and teaching about the Internet. Everyone's experience was that the general public does not know how to use the Internet to find information and must be helped along by the Documents/Reference staff. This, of course, means more work for documents staff and in some cases more training to make them more technologically able. There was also a good suggestion that Internet facilities should be made available for the public. Some libraries were already offering this service.

The topic of training came up many times during these focus sessions. Several libraries had or were creating electronic classrooms. In many cases documents areas shared a library wide classroom. There was solid agreement that libraries should have computer training facilities and that libraries should strive to have Internet training for the public. Training could be interpreted as a public access issue. In other words if the public is not familiar with the Internet then depositories should provide some training and guidance. If they don't, then they are in essence denying the public access. For those users that do not have or own computers, there was general agreement that depository libraries should maintain equipment for use by the public. All the depositories that participated in these discussions allowed public use of their computer facilities for accessing Government information. A public library felt that it was specifically a public library responsibility to provide Internet service for the public and had created a special dial network for its patrons. Another library thought that it was a problem that outside users didn't have passwords to their local network. One answer to this was a dedicated public machine with bookmarks for Government information (IRS, Thomas).

It was quite clear that most of the libraries represented in the focus groups were creating their own documents home pages. These home pages should have the documents librarians' name and address in order to encourage people to make contact. Many of the libraries present also had E-mail reference addresses. Also many of the libraries noted that their states had set up Listservers for the local documents librarians. In several of these states the Regional library was the list owner. This is certainly a role the Regional library could play. It was also suggested that the Regional libraries might be responsible for a statewide documents home page. This has some merit and would enable smaller depositories without the resources or technology to have access to a good documents home page. The Regional's home page could not only include URL addresses that they felt were important but could also include those that were suggested or requested from the selectives served.

Tangible electronic products such as CD-ROMs and floppies continue to be an important information source for depository libraries. It was noted that the menu problems caused by the wide diversity of software on these CDs continue to be a problem. They also require a high level of staff commitment and time to work with patrons because of the wide variety of documentation and levels of sophistication. Most of this type of help must be offered one-on-one. Also the sheer number of CDs is a problem in terms of the number of staff hours

needed to install and make guides and help sheets. However, all agreed that help sheets and guides were an important public service and that all depositories should strive to do this.

Most libraries present at the focus group stated that they did not try to support all of their tangible electronic products. It was estimated that for 25-40% of the CDs a conscious decision was made to not make them available except by demand. Many of the libraries said that they had a policy that they would attempt to install unsupported CD-ROMs by the next day when requested. Many of the librarians present felt that it was important to create bibliographic records for these products and analyze collective titles. These should be made available to other libraries. One library had purchased a CD-ROM recordable device and was planning to both make copies of license free CDs and download large Internet files with it. Many libraries were offering their unsupported CDs to other libraries with selective housing agreements so that they would be more accessible. A very few were offering their CDs for circulation.

All of the depository libraries involved in these discussions had public access terminals available for patrons. A very few had a multitude of access terminals. Some offered dial-in LAN service to some Government CDs. In all cases libraries noted that downloading information was difficult but necessary. Most felt that File Transfer Protocol (FTP) should be offered to the public by the local depository. There was also a suggestion that this is a service regional libraries could offer depending upon their capabilities. Most libraries also were allowing downloading to the hard disk in order to put the information on floppies.

Printing was offered by all but not necessarily free printing. Some allowed up to 15 or 25 pages free and after that charged per page. Other libraries required patrons to go to print centers for printing. Some libraries had blocked the print.

Other services that libraries were offering were fax services. Many libraries were allowing E-mail from Netscape so that patrons could send information to themselves. Most still did old fashioned mail service. Many were concerned about the lack of computer terminals for the general public. Some suggested having computers for loan. Some schools like Wake Forest University gave incoming students a laptop computer which was included in the cost of their tuition. Many were offering GIS service to the public with the complaint that it was very staff intensive. Some depositories were downloading and printing major large documents for use in photocopying or adding to the collection.

Finally, most of the depositories present described the Internet as a great equalizer. In the discussions it was felt that for technical help academic libraries needed in-house persons or needed to call on their Computer Centers for aid, not the regional library. They felt that selectives should seek help from nearby selectives. It would appear that from the wide variety of service offered there is a need for some kind of service guidelines to give depositories goals to aim for. A beginning for this is included as Appendix A-Depository Service Guidelines for Electronic Information. Appendix B is questions and description of the open forum that were distributed at the Salt Lake City Council meeting. Appendix C is the rough notes taken by the secretary at both forum meetings.

APPENDIX A

Draft Depository Library Public Service Guidelines for Government Information in Electronic Formats [updated May 1, 1998]

1. All depository libraries should have a written policy regarding public services for

government information in electronic formats. This policy should contain provisions for no-fee access to computer workstations capable of accessing information on CD-ROMs, diskettes, and the Internet. These provisions should be consistent with or exceed the services provided by other collections of the library.

2. All depository libraries should offer access to electronic information for the general public. Attempts must be made to purchase hardware that meets the current Recommended Specifications for Public Access Work Stations in Federal Depository Libraries" as published in Administrative Notes (updated annually).

3. All depository libraries should make tangible electronic products and services (CD-ROMs, floppy diskettes) available to the general public in a timely manner. For example, if a product is not currently loaded and/or supported on a depository library's computer work station, the depository library should attempt to provide access to it within a designated time frame as determined by each library. If the depository library is unable to provide adequate access to and technical support for tangible electronic products, circulation of those products should be made available in accordance with the library's circulation policies of other non-governmental tangible electronic products.

4. All depository libraries should provide no-fee Internet access at to the general public. Access should also include Telnet and FTP capabilities to encourage downloading and/or transmission of electronic data.

5. Depository libraries are encouraged to develop world wide web home pages for government information and/or work cooperatively with other depository libraries in their geographic areas to provide links to prominent or useful sites for the general public; such efforts would be in line with Section 8-6, (publicizing the depository collection) of the Guidelines for the Federal Depository Library Program.

6. Depository library public service areas should have the capability for fax and E-mail delivery of government information to distance users in accordance with existing policies in the library.

7. Depository libraries are obligated by law to provide public access to depository receipts, including electronic government information products. Depository libraries should provide the ability to download or print electronic government information in accordance with GPO requirements and guidelines. Limits to or costs associated with printing or downloading should be consistent with other public service provisions of the library.

8. Whenever possible, depository libraries are encouraged to provide disk space on publicly available computers for temporary storage of electronic government information for patron use.

9. Depository libraries should provide appropriate reference service and help guides/documentation for tangible electronic products and the Internet for the general public.

10. Depository libraries are encouraged to offer training for the general public in using tangible electronic products and Internet resources.

APPENDIX B

The Handout for Discussions on Service/Guidelines and Electronic Government

**Information for the Depository Library Council Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah,
October 22, 1996**

**THE SERVICE ROLE OF DEPOSITORY LIBRARIES FOR GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION IN ELECTRONIC FORMATS**

Depository libraries are finding that more and more Government information sources are becoming available in electronic formats. Some of these formats are tangible electronic products, i.e., CD-ROM or floppies, others are available on-line through the Internet, or via modem from Government bulletin boards. These formats are causing depository libraries to reexamine the services that they offer to the general public. The purpose of this open forum is to discuss and define what services are possible and what we should be responsible for in the way of electronic services and not to deal so much with problems and difficulties in offering these services.

1. What kind of electronic services are now being offered to the public by depositories?
 - A. Are they very different from the traditional services that we have and continue to offer?
 - B. Are the services we offer for the tangible electronic products (CD-ROMs/floppies) different from those we offer for those on the Internet?
2. What future services are depositories planning to add that they do not now offer for electronic products?
3. Should Regionals offer more or different services to the public than selectives? If so, what services?
4. Are Regionals expected to offer more services to the selectives in their region than they currently do? If so, what services?
5. In the next round of "state plans" what kind of relationships will Regional depositories and selective depositories have to redefine? What should each expect from the other? What should they both expect from the Government Printing Office?
6. As more and more Government electronic products go to the Web, how will depositories service remote users?
 - A. What would remote users need from depositories to assist them in finding Government information on the Web, or do we assume that remote access implies that individuals need less help from the depository?
 - B. How do electronic services affect bibliographic instruction in depositories, especially for remote users?
7. Should each depository library be required to provide a home page for Government information on the Internet?
8. How do electronic services affect depository library collection development policies? Is there still a need for collection development policies for electronic products, especially those available remotely?

9. What problems will hinder public services in depository libraries for electronic formats and what are possible solutions?
10. How do we organize to continue these types of discussions and institutionalize the answers?

APPENDIX C

Minutes From First Discussion Session on Service/Guidelines Issues and Electronic Government Information Held at the Fall Depository Library Council Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 22, 1996

October 22, 1996

Depository Library Council

Service Role of Depository Libraries for Government Information in the Electronic Environment

What kind of electronic services are now being offered to the public by depositories?

Post signs around the collection and library leading people to Web sites. e.g., at paper product, post sign leading to Web site.

Telephone assistance for Web. Keep statistics; statistics generate money.

Access points - Problem for outside users because they don't have passwords to local network.

Dedicated one machine to public with bookmarks for Government information. (IRS, Thomas)

Public doesn't know how to use Internet for finding useful information.

Handouts needed.

Public Library I

Dialup network for public

Public library as Internet provider for public.

Homepage for Documents with Documents librarian's name.

Included state, county, and Federal documents.

Public Library II

Library as computer training facility

We should strive to have Internet training facilities for public.

CD-ROMs

Menu problem

High level of staff commitment from staff to patron.

Support use is specific for each CD.

One depository library currently has over 1000 CDs.

Print out D file for patron and send it to them so they can determine if the information

is useful.

Working collaboratively with Computer Center for common Web help desk. Using Top of the Mind software to build knowledge base.

Create bibliographic records for products. Analyze collective titles. Make available to other libraries.

CD-ROM recordable device. (\$1000; CDs are \$10 each) Use as circulation copy. Can also be used to download large files.

Selective housing agreement. Select duplicate CDs through another library.

Public Access Terminals

One academic library has 20 public access terminals.

Offer to load software and make available in 24 hours.

Problem overlaying Netscape over CDs.

Problem with patrons using terminals to play games.

Post policy stating terminals are for accessing Government information only

Colorado Tracker Software - Tape copy of your hard drive. Reload hard drive when necessary.

Download large document which you predict will be in demand. Make them available for photocopying.

PC vs. Mac Problem

File Transfer

FTP

Download to disk

At Notre Dame, AFS University provides 50K per person on campus. Software program written by library, that allows student to log in and mount the drive as H.

How to copy portions of files? Copy to notepad. Problems with allowing patrons access to Windows and DOS.

E-mail application. Netscape has to identify a particular user. FCC requires this. You could put in a general address, but public can use it incorrectly. (Notre Dame patron sent threatening E-mail to President with "from" address of Notre Dame)

What about under-endowed libraries? (Role of Regionals)

Internet is great equalizer.

For technical help, academic libraries call on their Computer Centers, not their regionals. Computer setups are local.

Selectives look for help from other selectives.

Regionals could provide CD recorder technology.

Regionals could provide good home page.

Regionals could do analysis.

Regionals could provide thematic map services to Selectives (ArcView)

Minutes from second discussion session on Service/Guidelines Issues and Electronic Government Information held at the fall 1996 Depository Library Council Meeting in Salt

Lake City on October 22

Mega-CD; they analyze title content and annotate OPAC, Web site, hot links etc. (Yale)
NTDB, ED Stats, HCFA,

-noted Memphis migrating list.
=B-title list

% of Re. CD not supported/used = 25-40%

2 workstations (dedicated) with "Popular titles"- special loans to people.

Dial-in to LAN not working. Going back to standalone

NW has off Web page access to CD LAN.

Extended appt. For certain database...

Partnerships, not applicable any more; Some thing user must be able to do... GO software.

What kind of public service to remote users?

Some fax service
mail
download with diskette
govref@ with 24 hr turn around
e-reference with answer
locator service
Timbukto - software

What Internet can do?

Expect directions to source
old stuff not there
Internet help- hand holding
site reliability

What about people who don't have PC at home?

-PC to loan
-up tuition and gave laptop/ require PC with enrollment.
-print out stuff, pay for prints.
-ad hoc download
-library based; limiting

Policy: how much time spent on PC lessons?

-same as ref. questions.

Spend time maintaining

Policies developed. Now being developed. Now give first 25 free pages. Then off to print center. Print blocked or print to drive.