

Streamlining the Process: Disposition of Depository Materials



BACKGROUND

In accordance with 44 *United States Code* §1912, “libraries designated as regional depositories may permit depository libraries, within the areas served by them, to dispose of Government publications which they have retained for five years after first offering them to other depository libraries within their area, then to other libraries”. While this is one of the more flexible provisions of Chapter 19, it has also resulted in processes that are cumbersome and time consuming for both selective and regional depository libraries.

GPO is addressing the many disposition process concerns expressed by the depository community through various data gathering and strategic planning discussions. This is on the Library Services and Content Management list of priority projects as well as a recommendation from the Spring 2009 Depository Library Council meeting.

LSCM has taken a two-pronged approach to addressing this issue:

1. Best practices and education

The procedures vary from regional to regional and over time common practices have come to be viewed as requirements in some instances. Sharing current practices and conducting educational sessions on what is permissible, and what is not, will eliminate any misunderstandings of the requirements. Additionally it will offer regionals other alternatives, which may prove to be more appealing than their current practices.

2. Automated processes

The development of a tool that handles the workflow of the disposition process will be of benefit to all depository libraries and will make the process less burdensome and more streamlined.

ACTIONS TAKEN

1. Best practices and education re: discard procedures

- a. Began collecting regional discard procedures (06/2009)
- b. Presented best practices and legal requirements at a Fall Council session (10/2009)
- c. Conducted an OPAL session based upon the Fall Conference presentation (12/2009)

2. Automated processes

- a. Created a forum on the FDLP Community site for discussion of the requirements for an automated tool (7/2009)
- b. Solicited input for requirements for an automated tool at a Fall Council session (10/2009)
- c. Conducted an OPAL session based upon the Fall Conference presentation (12/2009)
- d. Project Web site on the FDLP Desktop developed (4/2010)
- e. Released Concept of Operations (ConOps) draft document (4/2010)

REVISED PROCEDURES

Once libraries have fulfilled their legal obligation of offering unwanted depository materials to other libraries, followed the procedures established by their regional, AND they have received permission from their regional to discard publications, and still failing to find a taker after reasonable effort, the depository publications are then to be considered abandoned by the Government. No longer considered Government property, the library may dispose of the publications in any appropriate manner. [Note: the FDL Handbook is being revised to reflect this change.]

BEST PRACTICES AND EDUCATION

What does the Law Say? – 44 *United States Code* 1912 addresses disposition of materials. This section gives regional depository libraries the authority to assist in the disposition process. The section provides flexibility by not defining how this is to be accomplished. The law states:

- [Regionals] within the region served will provide ... assistance for depository libraries in the disposal of unwanted Government publications.
- [Regionals may permit their selectives] to dispose of Government publications which they have retained for at least five years after first offering them to other depository libraries within their area, then to other libraries.

1995 Memorandum to Regional Libraries to resolve the problem that was stated as:

“This is a procedure that is onerous for depositories. Compiling lists of materials is labor intensive. It is difficult to find space for storing documents to be discarded for months until the lengthy procedure is completed.”

The memorandum grants regionals greater flexibility, more latitude, and more discretion in the weeding process. It allows regionals to:

- Permit discard of material by visiting the library and “eyeballing” rather than listing;
- Issue “needs” lists in lieu of lists of unwanted materials from selectives;
- Eliminate listing of microfiche;
- Identify materials that always need to be or do not need to be listed; and
- Permit the development of an “automatic discards” list in conjunction with and to be incorporated into the Superseded List. (NOTE: The *Superseded List* is no longer maintained; the “automatic discards” were incorporated into the Superseded Guidelines).

The 1995 Memorandum is available in the December 15, 2004 *Administrative Notes* (vol. 25, nos. 12-13) on the FDL Desktop.

Additional alternatives to discard lists:

- Visits by regional;
- Laptop and cell phone method;
- Checking regional’s OPAC (if collection cataloged);
- Reducing information provided on lists;
- Titles on list already reviewed by regional don’t have to be listed by other libraries for specified period of time; and
- Regional permits selectives to send to another regional that is collecting retrospectively

With the issuance of the 1995 Memorandum, the expectation of **retrospective collecting** by regionals is greatly reduced. Regionals are not required to collect retrospectively, however the FDL Handbook states, “the principal responsibility of a regional depository library is to ensure the comprehensiveness and integrity of Federal depository resources in the state or region”. How this is accomplished is up to the regional depository library and should be included in the state plan.

Recommended Best Practice: Regionals work collaboratively with selectives to determine what is best for the region by:

- Considering the needs of those you serve;
- Considering the resources of the libraries and the obligations of the processes;
- Implementing what is best for all depositories in the region;
- Compromising when necessary;
- Revisiting the process, evaluate its success, and revise if necessary; and
- Consulting with LSCM staff if you have any questions.