Building the FDLP Electronic Collection

Laurie B. Hall
Judy Andrews, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC

Good morning, I'm Laurie Hall. Today Judy Andrews and I are going to talk about LPS' ongoing efforts to build the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) Electronic Collection.

This process began with the publication of Managing the FDLP Electronic Collection: A Policy and Planning Document (the Plan) in mid-October, 1998. In November, a group of LPS staff was tasked with investigating the implications of building this collection within the broader context of the goals and mission of the FDLP.

Recognizing the important work that was being carried out by the group, LPS management formed the Electronic Collection Team. The Team is a permanent working group and is tasked with building the electronic collection and recommending policies and developing procedures to make the collection a reality.

The team's efforts are guided by three important goals:

1. The need to provide for permanent public access to Government information,
2. The recognition of the reference needs of our user community
3. The importance of providing quality cataloging for Government information resources.

The goals identified follow the policies outlined in the plan and are reasonable extensions of the authority mandated in Title 44, Chapter 19, and Chapter 41, the GPO Access Law.

FDLP Electronic Collection

The Plan divides the collection into four categories:

1. Core legislative and regulatory GPO Access products which will reside permanently on GPO servers
2. Other remotely accessible products managed by either GPO or by other institutions with which GPO has established formal agreements
3. Remotely accessible electronic Government information products that GPO identifies,

describes and links to but which remain under the control of the originating agencies

4. Tangible electronic Government information products distributed to Federal depository libraries

The team's efforts are currently focused on category 2 and 3. Category 2 consists of the remotely accessible products managed by either GPO or other institutions with which GPO has established formal agreements; and category 3 includes the remotely accessible electronic Government information products that GPO identifies, describes and links to but which remain under the control of the originating agencies.

Current Focus for the FDLP Electronic Collection

- Outreach: Enlarging and Improving Communications

- Processing: Developing Transition Procedures

- Cataloging and PURLs: Evaluating Procedures

- Archive: Investigating Storage Options

The Team is moving beyond the analysis and exploratory phase of building an electronic collection. We are beginning to focus on developing new procedures and modifying existing processes to fully incorporate Government electronic resources into the FDLP.

An overview of our early investigations was presented before the GODORT Federal Documents Task Force meeting at the American Library Association Midwinter Conference in Philadelphia. Our presentation today will update you on our efforts to accomplish these objectives and introduce some new endeavors.

We will describe some of our outreach activities, our current experiments with archiving and our proposed changes to cataloging processes and procedures.

We are still in the early stages of this phase of our task, so be patient as we work through this project. This collection is unique and some of the standard techniques we have employed in providing information to the depository community in the past do not work as well as they should. We have to be inventive. And in this dynamic environment it's difficult to agree on the best approaches to take.

Outreach: Enlarging and Improving Communications (Judy Andrews)

Enhancing communications is a priority. Our outreach efforts are focused on the:

1. FDLP depository community
2. Publishing agencies
3. Peer institutions, such as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the National Libraries
4. Partners

5. Internal GPO offices

FDLP:

Communicating with the FDLP depository library community about our plans for the electronic collection is the reason we're here today. LPS and GPO actively solicit feedback through such channels as the Depository Library Council Committees, askLPS, and conferences. Your active participation in Browse Topics, partnership arrangements and other proposed electronic initiatives are always appreciated. We welcome your suggestions and comments concerning our plans for the electronic collection as outlined here.

Agencies:

Agencies are publishing Government information in electronic format at an astounding rate, as you are well aware. By establishing contacts with the agency management personnel, we can explain the importance of providing permanent public access to agency electronic resources and make others aware of the FDLP.

Recently, members of LPS staff gave presentations about the FDLP Electronic Collection and the efforts of the Electronic Collection Team to such diverse groups as:

1. Health and Human Services (HHS) Internet Information Management Council Work Group
2. Office of Chemical Environmental Preparedness and Prevention of the Environmental Protection Agency
3. The Institute of Federal Printing and Electronic Publishing

Both GPO and Federal publishing agencies share the common challenges of electronic distribution and permanent access. These presentations help to emphasize the similarities in purpose and goals of Federal Web publishers and the FDLP and allow for exchanges of ideas and information.

Agencies are encouraged to notify GPO when new electronic products become available. One method developed is the 'Internet Information Product Notification Form." We are investigating other methods to simplify this process.

Peer Institutions:

LPS staff continue to be involved with the work of the National Agricultural Library (NAL) Digital Publications, Preservation Steering Committee. George Barnum coordinates the Subcommittee of User Services for this Committee. Recently, several members of the Electronic Collection Team met with representatives from the National Transportation Library to discuss their electronic initiatives. Valuable information was exchanged and follow-up meetings are planned to discuss issues related to online transportation resources and permanent access.

Partners:

The role of partnerships in providing ongoing access to Government information is evolving. Continued dialog with present and potential partners is a focus of our work in this area. Currently, we are drafting a new model agreement in which GPO plays a more active role in identifying, "acquiring," providing access to information products, and facilitating permanent storage either here at GPO, or with an institutional partner such as a library or university. Our initial model for partnerships was a three-way agreement between an agency, a cooperating institution, and GPO, with GPO in the role of facilitator and safety net. The new model will better position GPO to offer a useful service to agency publishers and to gain the benefits of permanent access for the FDLP and the public.

Internal:

Communication with other GPO offices is essential in providing services and products that support the Electronic Collection. Team members are discussing challenges related to software for archiving, authentication and server platforms for storing electronic resources in the collection. Just recently, experimental server space was designated to store test samples of archived resources.

Selecting Material for the Electronic Collection

As our communications efforts continue, our team is also refining the guidelines for analyzing and selecting electronic resources. FDLP collection development is guided by the mission and goals as outlined in Title 44, Chapter 19, U.S. Code, Section 1902. "...Government publications... except those required for official use only or for strictly administrative or operational purposes... shall be made available... for public information."

Evaluation includes analyzing the resource to determine if it meets these basic tenets. Is it official, authentic Government information? Does it present a major activity of the agency, or is it the product of a major activity of the agency?

Once the selection has been made, the team examines the item's presentation and content. Oftentimes, we may e-mail the Webmaster or call the agency for additional information. We try to determine how valuable and useful this product is to the FDLP community, and which current locator service would best provide the bibliographic control for this resource.

Non-selection:

Most collection plans allow for the non-selection of materials that do not meet the scope of the institution. In the case of the FDLP, Title 44 provides guidance for allowing the exclusion of official use only or administrative material. The LPS team has identified some items that we will not include in the FDLP Electronic Collection. These items are: events/announcements, biographies, job announcements, some news releases, organizational charts, sales/promotional literature, posters and items of low informational content. We may expand this list as we continue to review new online resources.

Processing: Developing Procedures for the Transition

All resources selected for the FDLP Electronic Collection require processing. Staff make

decisions such as item number assignment, classification, appropriate cataloging treatment, PURL designation and/or locator service and whether to archive selected resources on the GPO Archive test site. The Team's efforts are focused on modifying existing processes and developing new procedures. We are working with Depository Administration Branch staff to identify candidates for migration from microfiche distribution to electronic access only.

Migration to Electronic Only Distribution

These candidates for migration from microfiche distribution to electronic access only are analyzed using the following criteria:

1. Are there significant differences between the tangible and online product?
2. How many libraries select this item number?
3. How does the agency present this material online?
4. Does the agency retain previous issues? For how long?
5. Can LPS provide permanent back-up issues for long term access?

Archiving

Another processing issue is archiving. The Electronic Collection Team expects the collection to be housed utilizing a combination of server space at GPO, at agency sites and at institutional partners.

Selected agency online resources that meet the criteria for inclusion are now being stored in test server space in what will become the FDLP/EC Archive. We are testing several archive software products and exploring additional archiving options.

The initial organization of archived files will be in an agency-based directory structure. Presently, we are considering having the PURL direct users to the agency version until the agency link is permanently broken and cannot be reestablished. Then users will be directed to the archived version stored on GPO servers.

You will know that you are using an archived version from the FDLP/EC when you receive a message or screen presentation, which includes the date the resource was archived. This might be an answer to part of the challenge of providing permanent public access.

Cataloging & PURLs

As LPS continues in our transition to a more electronic depository, many of our current policies and procedures that were established for tangible products are being reexamined. Two proposals concerning Availability Records and the Periodicals Supplement are being presented this week before the Council Cataloging Committee. They discuss the need to eliminate unique local practices and investigate alternative products that would better serve the depository community.

We are formalizing our PURL policy and documenting practices. As many of you are aware, PURL and URL maintenance is a resource-intensive activity for the Team. Whether to utilize a PURL or URL in cataloging or Pathway Locator services records still generates a lot of

discussion in LPS. The choice of PURL or URL may ultimately solve itself with technological advances, but we continue to investigate alternatives.

Locator Services

Our major goal is to provide the services that are easy to use, easy to manage and give the best possible access to the electronic resources in the collection. We are currently focusing on Browse Electronic Titles (BET) and Browse Topics.

BET

After hearing user input from various groups, we are working on some major improvements to the BET. Users want the ability to browse, but also the ability to search all the entries on the BET. One approach might be to create a separate database of electronic resources. However, maintaining a stand-alone database is not an efficient use of resources. A consolidated database which integrates all of the FDLP information resources regardless of format is the ultimate goal.

Browse Topics

We are also investigating additional ways to present Browse Topics. We are talking with depository librarians who currently provide a topical approach to Government electronic resources. Maintaining Topics is very labor intensive for LPS staff. The Electronic Collection Team is reviewing the use of the Subject Bibliography thesaurus and evaluating options. We are open to developing a partnership arrangement for Topics and welcome any suggestions from the community.

In Conclusion

We continue to work on a broad spectrum of issues related to building the FDLP Electronic Collection. We still have a lot of work to do. This is a very time consuming process. There will be technological innovations and possibly, policy changes that cause us to alter our course. The team members should be congratulated for all of their hard work. LPS does not do this job alone. The FDLP Electronic Collection benefits the documents community and we appreciate your contributions.

We want to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to speak with you this morning about our progress on building the electronic collection. Be sure to give us your input!

To contact us:

- Laurie B. Hall
- Judy Andrews