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CDs in a Webbed World: Implications for Federal Depository Libraries

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Abstract

Having reached the midpoint of the 1998-99 fiscal year, the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) is well into the transition to a more electronic depository program. We heard earlier this week that the resources "distributed" thus far this year is 40% electronic, 40% microfiche, and 20% paper, but less than 1% of the electronic data is in CD-ROM form. Annualization of six months data for this fiscal year indicates that for the first time since the Government Printing Office (GPO) began distributing CD-ROMs to depository libraries the number of titles will decrease. At the same time the number of Federal Government Web pages continues to increase. The obvious issue librarians are grappling with is the need for and worth of CDs when so much Government information is available via the Internet with more standardization and a user-friendly interface.

It is true that CDs provide many challenges for librarians. Various aspects of equipment, personnel, services, and bibliographic control are among the major dilemmas that must be resolved. Though some CDs can be problematic, having information in this format also provides opportunities for new services, possibilities for cooperative efforts, a means to increase resources available to library patrons, and a safety net to access information from remote locations. That much of what is available on CD is not duplicated on the Web cannot be ignored; equivalency of print, CD, and Web versions must not be assumed.

Federal agencies are still producing CD-ROMs. And according to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science's recent report, Assessment of Electronic Government Information Products, Federal agencies still view CD-ROM as a viable method to disseminate information. As long as agencies are producing CDs, GPO will distribute them to depository libraries and they will continue to be part of the FDLP Electronic Collection and have a role in Federal depository libraries. It is incumbent upon depository librarians to define that role at the local level through its policies:

   * Depository Library Public Service Guidelines for Government Information in Electronic Formats;

   * FDLP Internet Use Policy;

* FDLP Guidelines on Substituting Electronic for Tangible Versions of Depository Publications; and

    * Collection Development Policy.

CDs in a Webbed World
Implications for Federal Depository Libraries

Introduction

    * 1989 GPO General Counsel Opinion affirmed GPO's authority to disseminate electronic formats

    * 1995 Congress directed GPO to study and devise a plan for the FDLP to evolve into a more electronic depository program

    * 1998 Managing the FDLP Electronic Collection: A Policy and Planning Document was published

    * We are well into the transition to a more electronic depository library program

    * Electronic environment has enhanced awareness of and increased access to Federal Government information

Background

Electronic Government Information Environment: CD-ROMs

    * First CD-ROM was distributed to 100 depositories for a Census pilot project in 1988

    * CD titles distributed increased from FY to FY:
        o 306 titles in FY 1994
        o 836 titles in FY 1998
        o 326 titles through March of FY 1999

    * Agencies view CD-ROMs as a viable medium

    * DVDs expected to replace CDs as the standard

Electronic Government Information Environment: World Wide Web

    * GAO Report from June 1997

    * 42 Federal organizations reported 4,300 Web sites

    * Government top-level domains as of Jan. 1999
        o 651,200 .gov
        o 1,510,440 .mil

* These figures do not represent the Federal Government's entire Web presence. Excluded are: .fed.us, .edu, .org, and .com Government sites

Electronic Government Information Environment: GPO Access

* Over 70 applications on more than 1,000 databases

* Documents downloaded
    o FY 96: 30 million
    o FY 97: 46 million
    o FY 98: 137 million
    o FY 99 (Oct - Feb): 67 million

Electronic Government Information Environment: Locator Services

* Catalog of U.S. Government Publications
    o 115,900 records of which 6,500 have hyperlinks

* Browse Electronic Titles
    o 2,400 titles on service
    o 15-25 titles added per week

* Browse Electronic Topics
    o Nearly 170 topics

* Pathway Indexer
    o Searches 1,350 Government sites
    o Searches 3 levels or about 200,000 Web pages

Electronic Government Information Environment: Electronic Collection

* FDLP Electronic Collection (EC) designed to provide permanent public access to Federal electronic information

* www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/dpos/ec

* EC includes:
    o Internet accessible resources
    o Tangible electronic products distributed to depositories

* Managing the FDLP Electronic Collection
    o www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/dpos/ecplan.html

    o SuDocs: GP 3.2:C 68

Challenges

CD Challenges for Depositories

* Equipment
    o Technical requirements

* Lack of standards

* Permanent public access
    o Security
    o Network or stand alone
    o Cost

* Personnel
    o To learn & train staff
    o Technical support

* Public Service
    o Access
    o Licensing
    o Training users
    o Documentation
    o Usability

* Bibliographic Control
    o Cataloging questions
    o Shelflist cross references

Revelations

The Bright Side of CDs

* New service opportunities
    o Circulate resources
    o Different formats available
    o GIS

* Cooperative opportunities
    o Documentation
    o Training
    o Selective housing sites

* Collection development
    o More resources available

* Local control
    o Information there tomorrow
    o Independent of other systems

* Virtual library projects

    * Web is not trouble-free

Conclusions

Foreseeable Future of CDs

    * Government agencies still producing

    * GPO will continue to distribute to depository libraries

    * Element of the FDLP Electronic Collection

    * Not the "panacea" hoped for

    * Equivalency of print, CD, and Web versions must not be assumed

    * Still have a role in depository libraries

FDLP Policies to Consider

    * Service for Government Information in Electronic Formats
        o Administrative Notes, v. 19, #11 (Sept. 15, 1998)

    * FDLP Internet Use
        o Administrative Notes, v. 20, #2 (Jan. 15, 1999)

    * Substituting Electronic for Tangible

    * Collection Development Policy

What Is Best for Your Library: Issues to Consider

    * Collection Development
    * Bibliographic Control
    * Maintenance
    * Human Resources
    * Physical Facilities
    * Public Service
    * Cooperative Efforts

    * Mission
        o FDLP
        o Your Library

    * Clientele
        o Primary
        o General Public