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U.S. Congressional Serial Set: Its History and Future

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In September 1997, Congress directed GPO to discontinue distribution of the bound U.S. Congressional Serial Set to all depositories, except the regional libraries, and one library in each state without a regional library. This reduced the distribution counts for the bound Serial Set from over 400 libraries to only 62 libraries, plus the State Libraries, and 14 International Exchange Service (IES) libraries. We are still distributing copies of the bound Serial Set to all libraries profiled to receive them through the 104th Congress. All libraries selecting to receive the slip, or initial distribution of House and Senate Documents and Reports will continue to receive them as they are produced.

GPO was directed by Congress to distribute the Serial Set title pages and/or table of contents pages to those libraries wishing to use the slip opinions to bind their own Serial Set volumes. The most recent item selection survey included an item number for the title pages, and 325 libraries responded to the survey to receive these pages.

The future of the U.S. Congressional Serial Set continues to be discussed within the depository library community, and among many others in the history community. Although the historical past of the Serial Set is a large and important topic, as evidenced by Virginia's discussion, future plans for the Bound U.S. Congressional Serial Set are still in the developmental process. At this time, House and Senate Documents and Reports that are submitted to GPO in electronic format are being loaded onto the GPO Access server. Some Documents and Reports are also being scanned for loading onto GPO Access when an electronic file has not been sent and the publication is not too large or too graphically intense for scanning. You can access the available online Documents and Reports on GPO Access at www.access.gpo.gov/congress/index.html.

There are several technical issues to overcome before a complete, useful and cost-effective CD-ROM Serial Set can be produced. The JCP has directed GPO to "work with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House, as well as the ongoing SGML working group, to facilitate Congress' maximum utilization of electronic creation and transfer of information. Such efforts will make possible a complete electronic version of the

Congressional Serial Set in the near future." At this time a CD-ROM version of the House and Senate Documents and Reports is not available.

For the first time, the Congressional Serial Set will be available through the Superintendent of Documents Sales Program at a cost of \$15,400 for the volumes of the 105th Congress. Only about 25 libraries have sent a letter of intent, thus the number of copies available for sale will be quite low. Those libraries interested in purchasing the Bound Congressional Serial Set should contact Alan Ptak, Chief, Sales Management Division, at (202) 512-1709 as soon as possible.

As evidenced by your attendance at this presentation, the Congressional Serial Set continues to be of interest to librarians, historians, and those wishing to preserve access to the source documents of our nation. Please continue to relay your needs and concerns for the future of the Serial Set to GPO. Your recommendations may have a real impact on the development of an electronic format appropriate to provide the long term access that is available via the distribution of the bound paper volumes.