

NEW MEXICO



STATE LIBRARY

April 2, 2019

Laurie B. Hall  
Superintendent of Documents  
Government Publishing Office  
732 North Capitol Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20401

Dear Laurie,

In December 2017, the Depository Library Council recommended that the Superintendent of Documents explore the feasibility of adding a copyright statement to records in the Catalog of Government Publications. It was the hope of the Council that such a statement would inform users that most government information dissemination products are free of copyright and in the public domain. It was also hoped that such information would encourage more use of government information in teaching and research.

Following the recommendation of Council, the Library Services and Cataloging Management division consulted other federal government information publishers and developed a general copyright statement. The statement was announced to the depository library community on May 31, 2018. The announcement further stated that the implementation date was set for October 1, 2018. At the time of the statement's release, you asked the federal documents community for comment. Subsequently, fifteen librarians and two library associations responded. Unfortunately, the support for such a statement was not uniformly endorsed, primarily because it was felt that a single general statement could be misinterpreted since some government publications not only contain material subject to copyright but could be completely under copyright protection. In September or October, you also revised SOD 2018-1, the purpose of which is to define the scope of the products that are included in the Catalog of Government Publications, noting in the policy section that in certain circumstances, the scope of materials will include copyrighted products. As of this writing, the proposal is still under review by GPO's General Counsel.

Since the introduction of the proposed copyright statement last May and the draft revision of SOD 2018-1, Council has undertaken an intensive review of the information available to us regarding this matter, including notes from the meeting with the associations in July and all of the comments received through August of last year. We have had much discussion as a result. It is now the consensus of the Council that the approach as outlined in the May 31, 2018 announcement to the community is not advisable.

However, because the Depository Library Council remains committed to informing the public about government information dissemination products that are in the public domain, and serves as an advisory body to the Government Publishing Office, Council would like to propose an alternative approach which is that a brief, general, explanatory statement be placed prominently on the landing page of the govinfo and the Catalog of Government Publications web sites. No such copyright information appears on those pages at this time. Council hopes that by adding this information to the Catalog of Government Publications landing page, users will have a basic understanding about government information in the public domain.

Submitted respectfully for your consideration on behalf of the Depository Library Council,

Lori Smith Thornton  
Depository Library Council Chair