



Office of the Superintendent of Documents

**SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS  
PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT  
2019-3**

**EFFECTIVE:** 09/26/2019

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**SUBJECT: Access to U.S. Government Information within Scope of the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents**

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**PURPOSE**

This policy statement is to assert the U.S. Government Publishing Office's (GPO) responsibility for not only providing access to publications and information dissemination products of the Federal Government, but to enhance discoverability and public access to them.

**BACKGROUND**

Government information is a national asset. The public has the right of access to Government information and the Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to it. It ensures an informed citizenry, it informs decision-making, and it spurs innovation.

The Government Publishing Office (GPO) has been the U.S. Government's agent for providing free permanent public access to Federal Government information for more than 155 years. The mandates of Chapters [17](#), [19](#), and [41](#) of Title 44, United States Code established GPO's responsibility for providing publications of the Federal Government to the general public through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP), comprehensive indexing to tangible and digital Government publications through the Cataloging and Indexing Program (C&I), and online access to and storage of digital Government publications (Public Law 103-40).

The purpose of the *Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993*, the statute ([107 STAT. 112](#)) that ushered GPO into the digital age, is to establish in the Government Printing Office a means of enhancing electronic public access to a wide range of Federal electronic information.

In addition to the statutory mandates that apply to GPO, there are statutes, regulations, and other guidance documents that apply access and dissemination responsibilities to agencies of the executive and judicial branches of the Government:

**OMB Circular A-130, *Managing Federal Information as a Strategic Resource*.**—Agencies have a responsibility to provide information to the public consistent with their missions and subject to Federal law and policy. Agencies will discharge this responsibility by:

a) Publishing public information online in a manner that promotes analysis and reuse for the widest possible range of purposes, meaning that the information is publicly accessible, machine-readable, appropriately described, complete, and timely. This includes providing such public information in a format(s) accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities. . . .

d) As appropriate, making Government publications available to depository libraries through the [GPO] regardless of format.

**E-Government Act.**— The purpose of this Act ([116 Stat. 2899](#)) is to enhance the management and promotion of electronic Government services and processes, in part, by establishing a broad framework of measures that require using Internet-based information technology to enhance citizen access to Government information and services. Other purposes contained in the Act include:

- To promote interagency collaboration in providing electronic Government services.
- To promote the use of the Internet and emerging technologies within and across Government agencies to provide citizen-centric Government information and services.
- To promote access to high quality Government information and services across multiple channels.

The E-Government Act also requires Federal courts to establish websites that make publicly accessible the substance of all written opinions issued by the court, regardless of whether such opinions are to be published in the official court reporter, in a text searchable format. Any other information (including forms in a format that can be downloaded) that the court determines useful to the public should also be made accessible.

**Open, Public, Electronic, and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act.**— The purpose of this Act ([132 Stat. 5529](#)) is to improve Federal data management and access, and applies to executive branch agencies. Provisions include:

- Public government data assets are required to be published as machine-readable data.
- General Services Administration must maintain an online Federal data catalogue to provide a single point of entry for the public to access agency data.
- Agencies shall develop and maintain a comprehensive data inventory that includes metadata that describes the method by which the public may access or request access to the data asset.

## POLICY

GPO will take technological and other measures to enhance discoverability and free public access to Government publications and information dissemination products that are within the scope of the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents.

GPO will work with Federal agencies to increase access to and preserve their public information products, and content within the scope of the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents.

GPO will not inhibit access to Government publications and information dissemination products that are within the scope of the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents unless an originating agency determines the withdrawal, withholding, or restriction of access is necessary, and notifies the Superintendent of Documents of this. After discussions, the most appropriate course of action will be determined jointly between the Superintendent of Documents and the authorizing official of the originating agency. High impact personally identifiable information discovered within publications in GPO's System of Online Access will be redacted.

## DEFINITIONS

<b>Agency</b>	For the purposes of this policy “agency” means a department agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government.
<b>Authorizing official</b>	Head of the originating agency or designee
<b>Discoverability</b>	The quality of Federal Government digital content being easy to find from the internet, a website, or an application via search engine (or other indexing methods). GPO also applies discoverability to publications of the Federal Government through cataloging and indexing of tangible materials that are held by Federal depository libraries.
<b>Government publication</b>	As used in <a href="#">44 U.S.C. §1901</a> , means informational matter which is published as an individual document at Government expense or as required by law.
<b>GPO's System of Online Access</b>	Authorized in <a href="#">44 U.S.C. §4101</a> , it is a means of enhancing electronic public access to a wide range of Federal electronic information. It is a content management system, a preservation repository, and a public access website.
<b>High Impact Personally Identifiable Information</b>	Information for which the loss of confidentiality, integrity, or availability of personally identifiable information (PII) could be expected to have a major, severe, or catastrophic adverse effect on organizational operations, organizational assets, or

	individuals. Examples include Social Security Numbers, financial account numbers, and driver's license numbers ( <a href="#">NIST Special Publication 800-22</a> ).
<b>Information dissemination product</b>	Any book, paper, map, machine-readable material, audiovisual production, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristic, disseminated by an agency to the public. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Permanent public access</b>	Government information dissemination products within the scope of the FDLP remain available for continuous, no fee public access through the Program as required by <a href="#">44 U.S.C. §1911</a> .
<b>Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents</b>	Through statutes, the Public Information Programs of the Superintendent of Documents are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal Depository Library Program</li><li>• Cataloging and Indexing Program</li><li>• GPO's System of Online Access</li><li>• U.S. Government Bookstore</li><li>• By-Law Distribution</li><li>• International Exchange Service</li></ul>

## APPLICATION

The Superintendent of Documents is responsible for ensuring permanent public access to all Government publications and information dissemination products within scope of the FDLP, C&I Program, and GPO's Online System of Access. Those products that cannot be made permanently accessible through the application of this policy will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

The Superintendent of Documents, through the Managing Director, LSCM or, as appropriate, the Chief Technology Officer, must authorize any exceptions to this policy.

## RELATED SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENTS (SOD-PPS):

[SOD-PPS 2019-1](#) Scope of Government Information Products Included in the Cataloging and Indexing Program and Disseminated Through the Federal Depository Library Program

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<sup>1</sup> The Superintendent of Documents adopted the use of this definition, which is used by the Office of Management and Budget and Executive Branch agencies. It is found in [OMB Circular A-130](#).

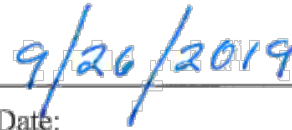
[SOD-PPS 2019-2](#)    Redaction of Personally Identifiable Information from GPO's System of Online Access by the Superintendent of Documents

[SOD-PPS 2016-2](#)    Content Scope for GPO's System of Online Access

**APPROVED:**



Superintendent of Documents



Date: