



Office of the Superintendent of Documents

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT 20XX-X

EFFECTIVE: XX/XX/20XX

SUBJECT: Government Publications Authorized for Discard by Regional Depository Libraries

PURPOSE

To allow regional depository libraries the option to discard certain tangible materials which have been retained by the regional for a specified length of time and only if permanent public access to an authenticated digital version of the discarded material is available on the U.S. Government Publishing Office's (GPO) online system of record or from a Federal agency's trusted digital repository.

BACKGROUND

Responsibility for retention of depository materials by regional depository libraries is found in 44 United States Code §1912, which states:

[regional depository libraries] will, in addition to fulfilling the requirements for depository libraries, retain at least one copy of all Government publications either in printed or microfacsimile form (except those authorized to be discarded by the Superintendent of Documents) ...

This provision of section 1912 has been in place since the Depository Library Act of 1962, Pub.L. 87-579, which established regional depository libraries.

In 1993, Congress passed the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act, Pub.L. 103-40, codified at 44 U.S.C §§ 4101 – 4104, whereby it expressed its clear intent for GPO to use electronic technology to make Government information more accessible to the greatest number of people. The law established the authority for the Superintendent of Documents to carry out the functions necessary to provide the public with access to online information from the Federal Government. The intent of Congress is further evidenced by a series of actions including the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the mandate for GPO to conduct the study which resulted in the 1996 Report to Congress: *Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program*.¹ The overriding effect of all these efforts has been to advance the shift in Government dissemination methods from print and/or microfacsimile form to digital.

¹ See Senate Report 104-114 that accompanied H.R. 1854, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act of 1996, pp. 48-49 [<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-104srpt114/pdf/CRPT-104srpt114.pdf>].

GPO has over 20 years of successful experience providing access to digital Government information, and today, approximately 96% of materials disseminated through the FDLP are online. Through electronic dissemination of Government information, GPO and libraries are serving vast numbers of users who do not physically come into the library yet are accessing information and library resources from locations and at times that are convenient to them. This trend is accelerating. In addition, as responses from the [FDLP Forecast Study](#) indicate, those depository library users who do come to the library often express a preference for online tools and formats, and use the library's computers to find and download the digital information they need.

GPO's **govinfo**² is a content management system, a preservation repository, and GPO's system of record for providing free online access to official Federal electronic information. Furthermore, it securely controls digital content throughout its lifecycle to ensure content integrity and authenticity. In December 2018 **govinfo** received certification as a Trustworthy Digital Repository under ISO 16363.

Federal agencies also have repositories for their online content. In 2013, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued a memorandum titled "Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research." The OSTP memorandum requires Government agencies to select one or more digital repositories to host their products, ensuring the long-term preservation, public access, and authenticity of federally funded scientific publications and data. In accordance with the collection development plan for GPO's system of online access, and as good stewards of taxpayer dollars, GPO will not replicate Federal agency repositories in **govinfo**.

In a letter dated July 10, 2015, to Honorable Gregg Harper, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP), GPO Director Davita Vance-Cooks requested the approval to provide regional depository libraries the option to withdraw tangible materials in print, CD-ROM, or microfiche from their collections when an equivalent digital copy is available on FDsys³ with a digital signature of the Superintendent of Documents. GPO received JCP approval of the draft policy on August 5, 2015, with an added stipulation that "a minimum of four tangible copies of the publication exist in the FDLP distributed geographically." This, the Chairman asserted, "will enable the Program to accomplish its goals while also providing the necessary access to the materials."

POLICY

Regional depository libraries are authorized to discard tangible depository materials in their collections under the following conditions:

1. The publication is superseded or later issued in bound form.
2. The publication:

² At the time of the issuance of this policy, **govinfo** is GPO's online system of record. This policy will be valid with **govinfo**, or any successor online system of record.

³ In 2015, GPO's Federal Digital System or FDsys was formerly the online system of record. It was replaced by **govinfo** in December 2018.

- a. Has been retained by the regional in tangible form for a period of five years from the date of receipt, processing, or shipping list;
- b. Has an equivalent version that is accessible from GPO's **govinfo**, a Digital Preservation Steward partner, or from a Federal agency's trusted digital repository, in a format that meets the standards of the Superintendent of Documents as authentic with a verifiable digital signature; and
- c. Exists in tangible format with four Preservation Steward partners that are geographically distributed throughout the FDLP.

In order to ensure that the requisite number of tangible copies are retained within the Program for access and preservation, regional depository libraries must first receive advance approval to discard from the Superintendent of Documents.

Regional depository libraries that withdraw FDLP materials because the appropriate online version is available on **govinfo** or from a Federal agency's trustworthy digital repository, must first offer the publication to the selective depository libraries they serve and then to other depository libraries nationwide.

Nothing in this policy mandates that a regional depository library dispose of a tangible publication because there is an authenticated Government online version.

DEFINITIONS

Authentic	Content that is verified by GPO to be complete and unaltered when compared to the version approved or published by the Content Originator.
Complete	Online versions of Government information dissemination products whose content includes the entirety of the content of the tangible product.
Digital Preservation Steward	A Federal Information Preservation Network partner that makes a commitment to retain and make publicly accessible at no fee digital resources within scope of the FDLP. They also take on the responsibilities for preserving those resources.
Digital signature	A cryptographic code consisting of a hash, to indicate that the data has not changed, encrypted with the public key of the creator or the signer. A digital signature identifies the signer and verifies the integrity of the data.
Federal Information Preservation Network	A Superintendent of Documents strategy for a collaborative network of information professionals working in various partner roles to ensure access to the national collection of Government information for future generations.
Information dissemination	Any book, paper, map, machine-readable material, audiovisual production, or other documentary material, regardless of

product	physical form or characteristic, disseminated by an agency to the public.
Official content	Content that is approved by, contributed by, or harvested from an official source in accordance with accepted Federal Depository Library Program specifications.
Permanent public access	Available for use by the general public today and for future generations.
Preservation Steward	A Federal Information Preservation Network partner that makes a commitment to retain specified tangible depository resources for the length of the partnership agreement. They also take on the additional responsibilities for preserving that material. This includes both preventive maintenance and conservation treatments.
Tangible	Refers to information conveyed on a physical medium.
Trusted Digital Repository	A trustworthy digital repository that has a mission to provide reliable, long-term access to digital resources to its Designated Community, now, and into the future. To fulfill this mission, a trustworthy digital repository is committed to the continuous monitoring of risks to its systems and responsibilities, ongoing strategic action and technology implementation to meet the needs of its Designated Community, and regularly ensure the transparency of its preservation and assessment activities to the public.

APPLICATION

The Superintendent of Documents is responsible for ensuring that regional depository libraries retain all depository materials that are not authorized for discard under this policy.

REFERENCES

U.S. Congress. Senate. *Legislative Branch Appropriations, 1996*. Report to accompany H.R. 1854. Senate Report 104-114. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995.

44 *United States Code* §§ 1901-1916, [Depository Library Program](#).

44 *United States Code* §§ 4101 – 4104, [Access to Federal Electronic Information](#).

U.S. Government Printing Office. *Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program As Required by Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996 Public Law 104-53*. June 1996.

_____. Library Services and Content Management. *Federal Depository Library Program Forecast Study Final Report*. December 2014.

_____. Office of the Superintendent of Documents. Superintendent of Documents Public Policy Statement 2019-1: [Scope of Government Information Products Included in the Cataloging and Indexing Program and Disseminated Through the Federal Depository Library Program.](#)

White House. Office of Science and Technology Policy. [Memorandum: Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research](#), February 22, 2013.

APPROVED:

Superintendent of Documents

Date

Draft Revision