



SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS DEPOSITORY GUIDANCE DOCUMENT 1-2021

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Federal Depository Libraries Relinquishing Their Designation

Strategic Disposition of Depository Materials in Support of the National Collection

PROCESS FOR THE DISPOSITION OF DEPOSITORY COLLECTIONS

In order to help build and preserve a comprehensive *National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information*, the Superintendent of Documents now will have a more active role in the disposition of materials from libraries relinquishing their depository designation. The U.S. Government Publishing Office's Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) office will work with regional depository coordinators and their process, for as long as practicable, for the disposition of depository materials. As depository materials in libraries are property of the U.S. Government, authority for the final disposition decisions rests with the Superintendent of Documents. As best it can, the disposition process will be expedient and efficient. Depository libraries will have an opportunity to obtain materials from libraries leaving the program through required national offers via FDLP eXchange, whenever possible.

When the Federal Depository Support Services (FDSS) receives notification from a library indicating they no longer wish to be part of the FDLP:

- FDSS staff will initiate consultation phone calls with the library administration and staff and the designated regional depository coordinator(s) to discuss options and how to move forward.
- Then, if the library has not already provided a letter to the Superintendent of Documents stating their decision, FDSS will request that the library director send the official notification to relinquish FDLP status.

- The Superintendent of Documents will then reply to the library director’s letter, transmitting the Collection Disposition Plan, which formalizes the decisions on how to move forward with the disposition of depository materials.
- The library will remain in the FDLP and provide access to depository materials, to the greatest extent possible, until the disposition process is completed.
- LSCM may visit the library to assess the situation and the collection. Regional depository coordinators are encouraged to do the same.
- The designated regional depositor(ies) and selectives in the same state or region will have the opportunities to obtain materials from the library leaving the program, before LSCM or other depositories nationwide.
- LSCM will review the remaining collection with an eye for digitization needs, “at-risk” materials, and rare or unreported publications.
- LSCM will ensure, whenever possible, that other depository libraries have an opportunity to obtain materials from these collections, particularly Preservation Stewards and other regional depository libraries, through national offers via FDLP eXchange.
- The library leaving the program may ask to permanently retain materials received through the FDLP after the disposition process concludes. Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Superintendent of Documents and the designated regional depository librar(ies), and the library will be advised of that decision via a letter from the Superintendent of Documents.
- The Superintendent of Documents will provide final written authorization for the disposal of materials at the conclusion of the disposition process. No materials shall be discarded prior to receiving this authorization.
- The former depository will then be removed from all LSCM systems, and their official file will be retained.

Comparing SOD-DGD-1-2021 & Previous Disposition Process	SOD-DGD-1-2021	Previous
Regionals able to obtain materials from libraries leaving the FDLP	Y	Y
Selectives in the same state or region able to obtain materials	Y	S
All depository libraries able to obtain materials from libraries leaving the FDLP	Y	S
The library relinquishing FDLP status may request to retain specified depository materials	Y	Y
LSCM able to obtain materials from libraries leaving the FDLP	Y	S
Library remains in the FDLP until disposition of materials is completed	Y	N

Comparing SOD-DGD-1-2021 & Previous Disposition Process	SOD-DGD-1-2021	Previous
Authority for the final disposition decisions will rest with the Superintendent of Documents	Y	N

Y= Yes / N = No / S = Sometimes

DISPOSITION OF MATERIALS BACKGROUND

The statutory authority for the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) resides in “Depository Library Program”— 44 United States Code §§1901-1916. With the exception of GPO’s name change in December 2014, the last revision to Chapter 19 was the addition of §1916 in 1978 that provides by-law depository designation for libraries of accredited law schools.

While §1909 addresses libraries being removed from the FDLP for not fulfilling their statutory obligations, and §1910 addresses designating replacement depositories, there is no section that covers libraries wishing to leave the FDLP of their own accord. Chapter 19, therefore, provides no direction on the disposition of the depository collections held by libraries leaving the FDLP — depository collections that are the property of the Federal Government.

Disposition of unwanted documents, however, is covered in §1912, which states that regional depository libraries shall provide “assistance for depository libraries in the disposal of unwanted Government publications.” And further it states, “The libraries designated as regional depositories may permit depository libraries, within the areas served by them, to dispose of Government publications which they have retained for five years after first offering them to other depository libraries within their area, then to other libraries.”

The first guidance provided to regional depository libraries regarding assisting selective depository libraries with the discard of unwanted documents came in their official regional designation notification letter. In the letter, it suggests that they may want to have selectives list publications they no longer need and “you may want to check the lists for any publications which may be missing from your own collection.”

This concept was incorporated into the [1974 Instructions to Depository Libraries](#), and required by the [1988 Instructions to Depository Libraries](#). These instructions also applied this process to libraries relinquishing their depository designation. Libraries leaving the FDLP were permitted to keep publications they had received through the Program, if approved by the regional depository. This basic process remained essentially unchanged for more than twenty years:

- Regional depository libraries require selectives to list each document they were discarding, including the SuDoc number, title, and date.
- Regionals were expected to acquire any documents offered by their selectives and missing from their own permanent collection in order to create a comprehensive regional collection.
- After regional library review, the lists were distributed to other depository libraries in the state(s) served by the regional and then materials could also be offered to depositories nationwide.
- Once these were completed, the discarding library could offer remaining documents to non-depository libraries or they could be disposed of in an “appropriate” manner.

In 1995, in response to complaints of an onerous process for both regional and selective depository libraries, and with the approval of the GPO General Counsel,¹ more flexibility, more latitude, and more discretion in the weeding process was granted to regional depository libraries. Discard approval options in addition to generating lists, include:

- Review by regional depository coordinator, in-person, of publications to be discarded.
- Require selectives to check discards against the regional’s “needs” list.
- Exempt selectives from listing specific formats or categories of documents.

Both regional and selective depository libraries have long seen the disposition of materials process as burdensome. It is a laborious process that can often take years to complete. Their burden could be reduced with LSCM accepting additional responsibilities. At present most, but not all, regional depository libraries have written guidance and instructions for selective depository libraries that prescribe their discard process.

THE NEED TO CHANGE DISPOSITION OF DEPOSITORY MATERIALS

A complete collection of the Federal Government’s publications does not exist in any one location. The geographically disbursed *National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information* supports the work of the Cataloging and Indexing (C&I) Program in the development of a comprehensive index of public documents, and it supports the FDLP in identification of titles for dissemination to the libraries, while providing governmental collections for reference, study, research, and the promotion of knowledge.

Building and preserving a comprehensive *National Collection* is a GPO strategic priority. In order to accomplish this, LSCM must be able to exercise a more active role in the workflow for the disposition of materials from Federal depository libraries when the library is relinquishing its depository designation. Including LSCM in the process will:

¹ This General Counsel memo, “1995 Memorandum On Eliminating Microfiche From Future Discard Lists,” was reprinted in [Administrative Notes. 25\(12-13\)](#), pp.12-16.

- Provide publications for digitization and ingest into **govinfo**.
- Identify publications in need of preservation and conservation services.
- Allow publications to be transferred to depository libraries where they can meet users' needs.
- Provide support services to depository libraries.

A comprehensive National Collection benefits GPO in *Keeping America Informed*, and it benefits FDLP libraries and the public at large.

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