
From: kmalenfant@ala.org
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Subject: Regional Depositories Study Comments

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Your Name: Julie Todaro, Pamela Bluh, & Sara Kelly Johns

Your Email Address: kmalenfant@ala.org

Library Type: Other

I am responding on behalf of a: Library Association

Comments: May 16, 2008

Note: This is an updated version of comments submitted on Tuesday, May 12, as an additional division of ALA has signed on in support. The content remains the same.

Dear Mr. Davis and Ms. Etkin,

I am writing for the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association, to offer comments as you prepare your report for the Joint Committee on Printing. Of the 53 regional Federal Depository Libraries, almost two thirds are affiliated with academic institutions. As such, ACRL has a great interest in this issue. ACRL and ALA have supported shared regional depository libraries in the past. ACRL, on behalf of our 13,500 members, continues to do so in principle.

We think the salient question at this point is, "What is the appropriate model for providing access to government information to 21st century audiences?" This is not only an issue as it relates to depository libraries and federal documents but to our collections in total. Providing access to information of all kinds is part of a larger shift in libraries in the 21st century. The broader library community increasingly engages in activities like consortial buying and digital delivery of collections as part of this shift. While we recognize that there are significant organizational, financial, space, and other challenges in operating a regional depository library, we think that employing cooperative models and practices could improve public access to Federal depository resources.

We see the question around access to government information as a critical issue and are concerned about the timeline for the survey of regional depository libraries and the short comment period. This is a complex issue involving hundreds of organizational and institutional stakeholders. We would much rather have a thorough sense of the state of regional depositories, including partial depositories in order to offer more substantial comment, but the timeline has precluded this.

We do recognize the nature of pressures experienced by regional depository libraries, in line with the stated purpose of the current study you are undertaking. They include:

1. increasing pressure on physical space for collections
2. increasing interest in providing services based on digital collections
3. increasing need to balance processing and access to digital collections with processing, access to, and management of legacy paper collections
4. the need for collaborative approaches to managing legacy paper collections across both regional and partial collections, including expedited "needs & offers" procedures that might underlie such efforts
5. the overall situation about multi-state repository collections
6. fiscal pressures on staff, facilities, and the transition to digital services

ACRL believes that collaborative work supports libraries' ongoing strategies for balancing digital and tangible resources from the government and from all other sources as well. We understand at the same time that many people in the library community are concerned about the long term quality of government information services, and ACRL is convinced that the quality of services associated with collaborative efforts may be even stronger.

In ACRL's June 26, 2007, letter reacting to the guidelines for shared regional depository libraries, we noted: "Flexibility and simplicity are critical to the success of rethinking models for housing and delivering government information to our various constituents." In the case of the University of Kansas and the University of Nebraska, they are constrained by the interpretation of the current statute. We support the solution they proposed, believing regional Federal Depository Libraries can develop effective models for cooperation and future collaboration that serve their users well.

ACRL is a proponent of reconsidering Title 44 so that it ensures excellent access to government information while allowing for innovations as libraries work to provide this service. Regional depository libraries are self-funded and voluntary participants in the Federal Depository Library Program. They play a critical role in providing public access to government information, and we support allowing them flexibility to collaborate, innovate, and experiment in order to thrive.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide comment as you conduct your study on the condition of and factors influencing the success of regional Federal Depository Libraries. We urge you to consider any information obtained through this current study period as only a first step and to continue exploring the issues in more depth over the next several months.

Sincerely,

Julie Todaro
ACRL President, 2007-2008

Co-signed,

Pamela Bluh
ALCTS President, 2007-2008

(The Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) is the national association for nearly 5,000 information providers who work in collections and technical services, such as acquisitions, cataloging, collection development, preservation and continuing resources in digital and print formats. ALCTS is a division of the American Library Association.)

and

Sara Kelly Johns
AASL President, 2007-2008

(The American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association, promotes the improvement and extension of library media services in elementary and secondary schools as a means of strengthening the total education program. Its mission is to advocate excellence, facilitate change and develop leaders in the school library media field.)

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