

III. Methodology

This section details how the data reported in this study were collected and analyzed. An explanation as to how the depository library community was kept informed and their comments solicited is provided as well.

The timing of the study allowed GPO to benefit from two major depository events, the Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries and the Spring Meeting of the Depository Library Council (DLC).

The DLC meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, in March 2008, offered the first opportunity to share information about the study and the approach GPO planned to take to produce this report of regional depository libraries. A meeting with regional depository librarians in attendance consisted of a qualitative structured interview that helped determine a strategy for collecting additional data and the feedback obtained was critical in solidifying the framework for the report.

The major source for data about regional depository libraries was the Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries, which was conducted in October 2007. All depository libraries are required to complete this survey to fulfill their statutory mandate to report the conditions of their library every two years to the Superintendent of Documents (44 USC §1909). Approximately 1,200 of the 1,257 Federal depositories submitted the survey in accordance with the deadline for responses; two regionals did not submit the survey. Data from this survey were compared to results from the 2003 and 2005 surveys to determine trends.

In April, 2008, GPO sent a letter to regional depository library directors that informed them of the study and requested their assistance in providing additional data that would help determine the direction and future trends of regional depositories. This included a request for strategic plans, library task force reports, or other planning documentation they thought might be useful. A brief survey also was included with the letter. Fifty-two surveys were submitted to GPO, a response rate of one-hundred per cent. Additionally, a similar letter was sent to selective depository library directors in April, 2008, that informed them of the study and encouraged them to submit comments to GPO. To reach the entire Federal depository library community, GPO posted a message on the FDLP-L listserv announcing this study, the methodology, and soliciting comments. FDLP-L is the official notification service for the Federal Depository Library Program and has nearly 2,000 subscribers.

Additional data sources used to prepare this report included the annual surveys from the Institute of Museum and Library Services: *State Library Agencies* and *Public Libraries in the United States* as well as the biennial survey from the National Center for Education Statistics: *Academic Libraries*. Finally, other reports used as reference sources included *The State of America's Libraries: A Report from the American Library Association*, (April 2008) and *OCLC Environmental Scan: Pattern Recognition* (2003).

Throughout this process, GPO worked to ensure transparency with the Federal depository library community and interested observers. In preparing the report, a Web page was established on the

FDLP Desktop at <<http://www.fdlp.gov/regionals/study.html>>. Draft sections of the report were made available as soon as they were completed. To gather additional feedback GPO provided a Web form for comments, which were taken into consideration in preparing the final version of this report.

All the data were taken together and analyzed, and the narrative information provided in this report is fully supported by the data gathered by GPO, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

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