

Public Access Assessments:

Focus on Access, Collections, Service and Cooperative Efforts



PUBLIC ACCESS ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES DESCRIBED

Each element applies to all depository libraries, unless otherwise noted.

Federal depository libraries provide access.

Access is defined as providing free public access to Federal Government information products regardless of format. It involves making Federal Government information products available and usable for all library patrons, including those with disabilities and those of all ages. It also involves but is not necessarily limited to bibliographic, physical building, tangible collection, onsite computer, and Internet access. It is the degree to which the public is able to retrieve or obtain the information products, either through the FDLP or directly through a digital information service established and maintained by a Government agency or its authorized agent or other delivery channels, in a useful format or medium, and in a time frame whereby the information has utility.

This is evidenced by:

- Any member of the general public may use Federal Government information products in all formats at a Federal depository library free of charge without impediments.
- The general public gains access to use Federal Government information products in the collection through public access computer workstations and through direct browsing on open shelves and/or through timely access to resources retrievable from closed stacks or remote storage.
- The general public gains access to use Federal depository online resources onsite in the library and via the Internet (e.g., through the catalog or Web pages).
- The library responds to and addresses general public access complaints or concerns made directly to the library or through GPO in a timely manner.
- The library selects appropriate secondary resources (e.g. databases and indexes) that support bibliographic access to and use of the Federal Government information products.
- The general public may gain specialized assistance for access to depository resources in libraries with limited general public access (e.g., Federal libraries)

through such services as resource sharing and remote reference when timely access to the resources is an issue. The library continues to provide public access to the depository general public when visiting the library is the only option to gain access to needed resources and expertise.

- A library designated as a **highest state appellate court** Federal depository library is exempted by statute from the free public access requirement.

Federal depository libraries select and manage collections.

Collections are defined as the Federal Government information products in all formats maintained so they are accessible and meet the Federal Government information needs of the general public.

This is evidenced by:

- The library maintains its collection by technical processing of new receipts for access in an appropriate time period and properly storing and caring for all the resources acquired through the FDLP.
- The general public has ready access to all parts of the collection. If the Federal Government information products are in closed stacks or housed remotely or must be installed on a public access computer workstation, they are retrieved for use or installed in a reasonable period of time.
- The library identifies and selects resources that best meet the Federal Government information needs of the community served, in cooperation with neighboring depository libraries.
- The library maintains a collection, other than the Federal Government information products received through the FDLP, of at least 10,000 books (i.e., tangible information products).
- The **selective** depository library served by a regional depository may withdraw tangible Federal Government information products retained for the statutory minimum period of five years from receipt after securing permission from the regional library for disposal. Unneeded materials must be made available to other depositories per disposition guidelines. (Those libraries designated as Federal libraries and the highest appellate court libraries are not subject to this requirement.)
- The **selective** depository library communicates and cooperates with its regional depository library regarding publication disposition.

- The **regional** depository library, representing a state or region, retains permanently at least one copy of all tangible Government publications received on deposit, unless they are superseded or the discards are authorized by the Superintendent of Documents.
- The **regional** depository library communicates and cooperates with the selective depository libraries in its state or region regarding publication disposition.

Federal depository libraries provide services.

Service is defined as activities and professional expertise oriented to the Federal Government information needs of the local community and surrounding areas and provided to support the visibility and use of the Federal Government information products of the depository library. Visibility is achieved through cataloging, prominence of location of tangible collection and public service points, promotional activities, etc.

This is evidenced by:

- The library provides access to and services for the Federal Government information products for the general public in a manner comparable to access to and services for primary users of other library collections.
- The library provides reference assistance to the general public.
- The library's personnel have and maintain expertise (i.e., stay current with U.S. Government information resources and trends in information dissemination) in reference services which support research of Federal Government information products in all formats.
- The library promotes the Federal Government information products to its primary constituency and the general public, to ensure that the depository resources are utilized and to help ensure that the Federal Government information needs of the community are met.
- The **regional** depository library works with selective depositories in their region, with GPO, and with depository libraries from other regions to ensure that all depositories in their region have free access to all formats of depository resources --either through online access or through interlibrary loan and additional reference assistance.

Federal depository libraries cooperate as partners in the FDLP.

Cooperative efforts are the activities libraries undertake to participate effectively with GPO and all libraries in the nationwide network of the FDLP.

This is evidenced by:

- The library communicates and cooperates with GPO, their regional or other regional depositories, other depositories, and Federal government information users, in order to ensure the effective functioning of the FDLP.
- The library receives and responds, as appropriate, completely and in a timely manner to FDLP communications from GPO. This includes reporting the conditions of the depository library to the Superintendent of Documents every two years (i.e., Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries).
- The **regional** depository library communicates and cooperates regularly with selective depositories in its state or region to facilitate reference assistance, interlibrary loan, and selective depository publication disposal processing.

Document terminology

Access: Providing free public access to Federal Government information products

regardless of format. It involves making Federal Government information products available and usable for all users, including those with disabilities. It also involves but is not necessarily limited to bibliographic, physical building, tangible collection, onsite computer, and Internet access. It is the degree to which the public is able to retrieve or obtain the information products, either through the FDLP or directly through a digital information service established and maintained by a Government agency or its authorized agent or other delivery channels, in a useful format or medium, and in a time frame whereby the information has utility.

Collections: Federal Government information products in all formats maintained so they are accessible and meet the Federal Government information needs of the general public.

Federal depository library: A library designated under the provisions of 44 U.S.C. §19 which maintains a depository collection for use and local access by the general public and which offers professional assistance in locating and using Federal Government information products and services.

Federal Government information products: Discrete units of Federal Government information in all formats.

Free public access: Perpetual, no fee, and ready access to Federal Government information products without impediments is available to the general public.

Public access assessment: Review by GPO of individual Federal depository library conditions focusing on public access to Federal Government information products.

Service: Activities and professional expertise oriented to the Federal Government information needs of the local community and surrounding areas and provided to support the visibility and use of the Federal Government information products of the depository library.