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Regional Depository Libraries How Ready Are We to Become Electronic Depository Libraries?

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Survey Responses

Total Regional Depository Libraries: 53
Total number of libraries responded: 47
Response rate: 89%

Academic: 31 out of 33 =94%
Public: 3 out of 5 =60%
State: 12 out of 15 =80%
Unknown: 1

1. Do you have computer stations that meet the "Recommended Minimum Technical Guidelines for Federal Depository Libraries"?

Yes: 36 (77%)
Are they for staff use only? 7 (19%)
For public access as well? 29 (81%)

2. Do you have computer stations to access Internet and GPO Access gateways?

Yes: 47 (100%)
Are they for staff use only? 12 (26%)
For public access as well? 35 (74%)

3. Do you have computer stations for searching CD-ROM databases?

Yes: 47 (100%)
Are they for staff use only? 3 (6%)
For public access? 44 (94%)
Are they connected by Local Area Network (LAN)?

No: 23 (50%)
Yes: 24 (50%)
Accessible at your library?
Yes: 24
Outside of the library?
Yes: 11 (49%)
No: 12 (51%)

4. Do you have computer connections to do the following?

E-Mail: 99%
Yes: 46
Staff only? 28
Public use as well? 18
No: 1

Telnet/FTP: 91%
Yes: 43
Staff only? 19
Public use as well? 24
No: 3

WWW/Lynx: 100%
Yes: 47
Staff only? 14
Public use as well? 33
No: 0

Download/Print: 99%
Yes: 46
Staff only? 8
Public use as well? 38
No: 1

.5. Do you have a technical expert available to assist you in the operation or installation of library computer equipment?

Yes: 45 (96%)
No: 2 (4%)

Do you have access to technical training provided by your community or institution?

Yes: ?
No: 1

Is there funding available for technical training?

Yes: ?
No: 1

6. Do you have staff who would have the professional expertise to make the transition to an electronic depository library by the end of fiscal year 1998?

Yes: 44 (94%)
At what level? Descriptions: (Internet search engines, Web browsers, GPO Access, etc)
All of above: 31
Needs more training: 14
Not enough staff: 2
Very basic, low level: 1
No description: 2
No: 2 (4%)
Unknown: 1 (2%)

7. Will your staff be able to participate in staff development or training programs provided by GPO and your Regional to increase their knowledge and skills with electronic information resources?

Yes: 38
Unsure: 6
No Answer: 3

What kind of support will your library provide?

Release time for staff? 42
Funding for travel?
Yes: 13
Some: 10
Maybe: 10
No: 4
No answer: 6

8. If you cannot meet the guidelines, will you consider relinquishing your depository library status when the Federal depository library program changes to a predominantly electronic program by the end of FY 1998?

Yes: 1
No: 15
NA: 25
Undecided: 6

Will you consider retaining your present collection, and select only the paper core list depository items after 1998?

Yes: 3

Comments:

It has been raised as an option that's something we consider on a fairly regular basis.

9. Please comment on the Electronic Federal Depository Library Program: Transition Plan, FY 1996-1998. (See Administrative Notes, v. 16, no. 18, Dec. 29, 1995)

The Plan contained a lot of assumptions. From sources I know, government agencies will not be ready to meet GPO's standards mentioned in the plan, let alone a number of depository libraries. From my sources, GPO is finding out that scanning documents will be more expensive than microfiching them. A number of documents are color sensitive (i.e., color has significant information content. Will all institutions have color monitors and color printers. Don't think so.) A number of people are being refused access to Web connections because lines are busy. This is going to only get worse. People who need information and are being refused Web access due to line overloads are calling me for the paper format!!! I am finding the public becoming less patient and more frustrated with electronic access.

Very ambitious.

Arizona depository librarians group concerns:

STANDARDIZATION OF ELECTRONIC SEARCH SOFTWARE:

Staff training needs to be increased--difficult for documents staff to keep up with software intricacies, but highly unlikely for non-documents librarians (Census is example of good software). Burden will be on GPO to urge agencies to use "user-friendly" (intuitive) standardized software.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR ELECTRONIC SOURCES (to aid staff and patrons):

GPO provide technical support. GPO provide fiscal support for equipment and training to deliver electronic information. Technical difficulties referring to parts of several documents at the same time.

INTERNET ACCESS DIFFICULTIES:

Phone lines in Arizona are not reliable. Questionable quality for online computer access. Patron assistance is more lengthy with electronic. Instead of handing them a book, there is a need to explain computer process. Downloading electronic data puts printing costs on the library/users. Another instance of money determining access to information. When libraries are unable to continue their commitment or do limited service, others have higher level of use and referrals.

PRESERVATION:

Can we be assured of access to the older files in the future? Would electronic media be refreshed so that data doesn't slip on tapes, etc.? I have held a statewide meeting of Colorado Federal depository libraries (plus four from Wyoming) with depository librarians and depository library directors. I will be writing letters to GPO and Congress with the concerns expressed at the meeting. Probably the greatest concern is the timetable and the

fear that the Federal Government will not be ready to accomplish everything outlined in the Transition Plan with the result being a great increase in government information not included in the depository program. Adding a year or two to the timetable would also allow depositories to better prepare.

Did not adequately address the impact on library users who cannot utilize electronic technology or libraries that will in essence be called upon to publish in paper many documents from electronic copies for local use or even just on demand by patrons. The cost of this is expected to be absorbed by the libraries. Did not fully address the issue of the archiving of older publications that would be necessary: (1) Where would they go; (2) What arrangements would be made to provide continued access to them; (3) would there be an effort to have certain networked depositories provide large servers holding certain classes of older documents for ready library style access so as not to have to rely on NARA?

We are heartsick about the many proposed changes to the depository program, and anxious about its technological implications. Presently, we have one Pentium PC with public access. Where the funds will come from to add 5-10 to this collection, I have no idea! (our library is presently in a budget crisis; our book budget this year is zero for all collections, with a few small exceptions.)

The time has come, and most depository libraries are willing. What's lacking are the computer equipment and staff training or re-training. This needs \$\$\$ which most libraries don't have.

It's something for which the time has come, but it is moving too swiftly. Obviously there are lots of issues to iron out.

My concern, as a regional and as a relatively well funded research library, is less with how well we will be able to deal with the Electronic Depository than how GPO will be able to achieve what they are proposing to do. I don't believe the transition can be achieved by 1998. I am concerned about GPO being given adequate support from Congress to accomplish the goals of the plan. I am concerned about losing total free access to some materials--like FBIS--and I'm concerned about non-computer literate users around my state.

Our concerns are typical of the depository community: lack of STANDARDIZATION of format of electronic materials, archiving of materials, shift of cost of printing to the depository library (or, more probably, the library user.)

I haven't read (the plan) yet.

The infrastructure is not yet in place, in depositories or in GPO. The method for including in the FDLP electronic publications not actually on GPO computers is very vague at this point. Proposals for long-term access do not have adequate back-up, nor any guarantee of funding for GPO to do what it proposes. What is the incentive to remain a depository?

A longer transition period would be helpful so that issues such as ease of use of electronic documents, cataloging, staffing, hardware, and software can be addressed.

The transition plan is a reasonably good document given the time frame within which it was developed. However, it is optimistic regarding the ability of libraries to adapt to the changes that it proposes in information delivery. The delivery of most information in electronic formats will have significant implications for library budgets, particularly for equipment and personnel training costs. While electronic formats will relieve libraries from some expenses for shelving and space--and presumably processing--the expense of computer equipment and staff training will be difficult for many smaller libraries to accommodate. I guess it is up to the library community to tackle this problem, to use imagination to discover new sources of funding and community support.

The plan sounds interesting: there are many publications I'll be happy to see go electronic. There are many others, however, which are not appropriate for reading on a computer screen (or microfiche reader for that matter). My two main concerns are that the archival issue has still not been adequately addressed, and that the bibliographic control issues seem fuzzy. I feel that if the plan goes ahead as written, we will have trouble determining exactly what documents are available, and that the documents will be available for only limited times.

We have concerns about the speed of the proposed transition, and the fact that the cost and difficulty of printing will be transferred to the libraries. It is difficult to envision such a radically different environment and plan for the unknowns. We also have grave concerns about losing access to information due to the lack of software and/or data provided in raw or unusable formats. Historic preservation questions have also not been answered adequately at this point in time. Comparability of data over the years is also a concern. Privatization of government information threatens the ideals of the DLP and there appears to be an increase of action in this area.

Needs much more discussion. Libraries need to fight for what their clients need, not just accept what's in the Plan.

Think it is overdue but is going to be hard for everyone to become proficient in that short a time. However, I have long felt that this was coming and that GPO and Federal Government should have hastened to move to electronics sooner rather than later. Must fix some glaring problems like long term storage and access (archivability), making large bodies of materials accessible. Think GPO should also have capability to produce their own CD's as a storage method for dissemination to depositories. Also not sure GPO can meet support standards for the entire community.

I believe the timeline is too short. Five years would have been more acceptable. Several people commented to us their concerns for the handicapped, the amount of equipment that would be needed, and the concern for archiving the materials. Another problem is, Will the CDs of today work on the machines of tomorrow?

None of us are going to be ready for this (Plan). I don't think they (GPO) will either.

The present timetable is too short! The Feds, GPO in particular, are unlikely to get their act together in that short a time. Depositories will be unprepared no matter what the schedule because of technological and fiscal realities. The net result will be a great loss of access to

a smaller amount of available information. As usual, the public will not notice that it has been short changed until it's far too late to reverse the process.þ

Issues to be carefully considered: Short-term storage of electronic materials: recent government furloughs which shut down government sites for weeks made government materials at those sites completely inaccessible. Twenty-four hour a day accessibility becomes a MUST when there are no alternative methods available to retrieve needed government information.

Long-term storage: "SOD will maintain access as long as usage warrants." How will this be determined? Documents librarians know that public need can continue for years, and historical information is requested frequently. Printed materials are accessible to all; will electronic sources of information still be accessible as technology changes?

.Need to add additional titles to the Core List.

As a Regional Librarian, my comments mirror those reflected in Cass Hartnett's letter to Jay Young, particularly the critical preservation/archiving concerns. I attend DLC and ALA and so will have my opportunity to express my concerns in those venues. Let me just add that I like the tone of what came out of GODORT in San Antonio: good idea, bad timeframe, study should be undertaken, core hard copy items identified, etc.

This question not answered because no consensus available.

Don't think all government information we now receive can be converted to electronic format. If GPO does have to be only electronic a lot of information would probably become fugitive.