



August 19, 2008

Dear Depository Library Director,

This letter is an invitation to discuss the value of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and your library's participation in it. The trend of Government agencies to publish primarily to the Web provides widespread access to their information like never before. This has resulted in many changes to Federal depository libraries: fewer reference transactions are being reported, remote use of resources is increasing, and fewer tangible materials are being sent in depository shipment boxes.

As library administrators rethink the role of their library within their institutional settings and how they are going to conduct business in the twenty-first century, it is not surprising that some directors and depository librarians are questioning the value of continuing to participate in the FDLP.

The FDLP, sometimes called the nation's first "right-to-know" program, is steeped in a history that dates to 1813. At the foundation are the unwavering principles that the public has the right of access to its government's information and Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its information, preserve its information, and guarantee its authenticity and integrity. The original intent of the FDLP, as it is today, is to create an informed citizenry who will participate in the democratic processes of the U.S.

GPO's cataloging staff provides bibliographic control for all information products published by the U.S. Federal Government including all formats of products disseminated through the FDLP. GPO is the national (and defacto international) authority for cataloging U.S. Federal publications and participates in the monograph, serial, and authority programs of the Library of Congress, Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). Depositories have the capability to download authoritative cataloging records from GPO's *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications* at no cost. These records can be used by depositories in their own online catalogs which helps ensure the general public can identify, locate, and use Government information.

Federal depository libraries are uniquely positioned, through law and tradition, to provide no-fee public access to current and historical Government information dissemination products. Dedicated, knowledgeable, and service-oriented staff is found in depository libraries. This combination provides limitless possibilities for depository users.

The FDLP is comprised of a network of approximately 1,250 Federal depository libraries around the U.S. and its territories joining in a cooperative partnership with GPO. The libraries are of varying sizes and types and provide expert assistance rendered by professionals. All contribute to the success of the network. Depository staff naturally operates in a collegial, collaborative manner to uphold the principles of Federal Government information.

A strong value is placed on the relationships that have developed among and between depositories, library users, GPO, and Federal agencies. With the FDLP serving as a catalyst, depository libraries continue to operate best as a network of libraries that support each other regionally and spontaneously form alliances and consortiums to provide value-added services. Increased collaboration and additional flexibility in the FDLP resulted in:

- Enhanced service to underserved populations;
- Promotion of citizen participation in the democratic process;
- New marketing strategies and promotional materials;
- Additional education and training opportunities for depository library staff in the use of Government information resources through conferences, peer assists, virtual reference, and Web-based training modules;
- Web-based training software that depository coordinators may use to create training modules to share across the FDLP;
- Access for depository libraries to premium databases such as the Homeland Security Digital Library and the National Technical Information Service's Depository Access to Reports, Technical & Scientific (NTIS/DARTS);
- Government Information Online: Ask a Librarian (GIO) to answer user questions or provide subject matter expert assistance to depository coordinators; and
- Cadre of depository library experts available to provide instruction for staff and users in your library via the Government Information in the 21st Century project.

The challenge now is to identify the value depository designation creates at a local level for your library, staff, and users. For example:

- Academic libraries may find their depository collection of value for curriculum support or for accreditation purposes;
- Public libraries might value the peer network that provides onsite instruction for staff, helps them achieve an informed citizenry, or assists in conducting a voter registration drive; or
- Law libraries may value the FDLP as a source for official, authentic government materials.

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GPO is actively seeking success stories and anecdotes about the value of your depository to feature on the FDLP Desktop. What are the ways your library derives value from the FDLP? How have your users benefited by using depository resources?

Please e-mail me at rdavis@gpo.gov and tell me about the unique benefits the Federal depository in your library provides. Let me know how we can assist in improving the value of the depository to your community and library. This information is ever so important as we embark on the strategic planning process for the FDLP and design our path for the next ten years. Through this collaboration we may discover additional ways to increase the value of the FDLP for all as we *Keep America Informed* for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard G. Davis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

RICHARD G. DAVIS
Acting Superintendent of Documents and
Director, Library Services and Content Management