Virtual Snack with Council — Focus Group Preliminary Results

Unique Challenges, Underserved Populations, and FDLs Subcommittee of the Depository Library Council

UCUP Series of Focus Groups

The Depository Library Council's (DLC) Subcommittee on **U**nique **C**hallenges, **U**nderserved **P**opulations, and Federal Depository Libraries (UCUP) conducted focus groups with the Federal depository library community over the course of the spring and summer of 2024. The purpose of each focus group was to address challenges that limit access to Federal Government information and to discuss best practices and possible solutions, so the Government Publishing Office is better positioned to offer support for these issues that depository librarians face every day. Below are the focus group topics and the discussion questions.

Digital Divide: seeks to understand how the digital divide impacts library services for Federal depository patrons and the methods libraries have developed to overcome these challenges.

1. Rank the following barriers related to the digital divide in your library and community.

   Access to technology
   Skills and digital literacy
   Civic literacy
   Infrastructure
   Economic disparities
   Educational disparities
   Geographic disparities

2. How does your library actively engage with the community to understand and address digital inclusion needs?

3. What successful partnerships have you established, and how have they contributed to addressing the digital divide?

4. Are there any notable success stories or positive impacts you can share regarding how your library has made a difference in bridging the digital divide?

5. What future plans or strategies does your library have for improving digital access and literacy?

6. Are there specific demographic groups or community segments that you find particularly challenging to reach with digital inclusion efforts?

7. Have you developed ways to provide access to electronic depository materials for patrons who have difficulty accessing online content?

Language Barriers: seeks to obtain a more detailed understanding of how language impacts the ability to access the library's Government Information Resources, and how libraries are addressing these challenges.

1. How do different customs and cultural challenges, such as understanding humor or other social cues, affect the ability of your non-native and non-English speaking library users to access services, especially government information?
2. How do the communication challenges and other issues of speaking a language other than English affect a user's ability to access Government Information in your library?
3. What is the main obstacle for non-English speakers learning English in your community or library?
4. What government resources and in what languages are non-English speakers looking for in your library?
5. What challenges does your library have in providing government documents in other languages that non-English speakers can use?
6. How does mistrust of government play a role for those who speak other languages and their ability to access and use government information?

Budget & Administration: explores how libraries are meeting the challenges related to reduction and cuts in budget, administration, and staffing, particularly as it relates to depository library resources and services.

1. Has your library experienced any budget cuts and/or staff reductions? If so, please describe.
2. What have been the cumulative effects of these reductions?
3. How have community services and materials been affected by these budget cuts/ staff reductions?
4. What might happen if the current trend (in cuts) continues?
5. How has your depository staff been affected by budget /staff reductions?
6. How might the shift to a digital-first FDLP impact your library's budget or staffing?

Mistrust of Government: examines how a mistrust of Government affects the use of depository library collections (and Government information generally) and seeks to learn to what extent this issue is a challenge and how librarians are addressing it to help their patrons with their Government information needs.

1. How trustful of the Government is your staff? Your library users?
2. How do you determine if your library users trust government publications as reliable information resources?

3. Describe any indications that your library users trust printed publications over digital content, or digital content over printed publications.
4. What government information do your library users seek but cannot find? What key government information isn't getting to underserved communities?

Outreach: seeks information on the difficulties of serving infrequent or underserved library users, and the library's services or programs designed to overcome those challenges.

1. Currently, which populations are considered underserved in your library community?
2. Have these populations been underserved for a long time or relatively recently?
3. What are some internal or external challenges to have in-person outreach programs?
4. What long-term or short-term solutions work for in-person outreach programs?
5. What are some internal or external challenges to having virtual outreach programs?
6. What long-term or short-term solutions work for virtual outreach programs?

Training: seeks to gather information about the challenges, needs, and preferences of Government information librarians working in underserved communities or with affinity groups, thereby helping GPO understand librarians' training needs and tailor training programs to their specific requirements.

1. What are the most common barriers or challenges you face when providing government information services in underserved communities or with affinity groups?
2. In your experience, what types of government information are most in demand by your user groups, and how can training programs better address those specific information needs?
3. How confident do you feel in navigating and utilizing online government resources, and what additional training or support would enhance your skills in this area?
4. Are there specific legal or policy-related aspects of government information that you feel would benefit from additional training, especially in the context of underserved communities or affinity groups?
5. How important do you think cultural competence and sensitivity are in providing government information services to diverse communities, and how can training programs enhance these aspects?
6. How do you currently gather feedback from patrons, and how do you use that feedback to improve your services?