

SUPERINTENDENT OF DOCUMENTS
PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT
SOD-PPS-7-2025

EFFECTIVE: 03/31/2025

Supersedes

No.: SOD 301

Effective Date: 09/28/2006

SUBJECT: Print Distribution and Access to Government Publications in a Digital Federal Depository Library Program

PURPOSE

Establish a policy for limited distribution of print Government publications through the Federal Library Program (FDLP) in which digital is the preferred format for access.

BACKGROUND

In June 1993, the GPO Access Act¹ ushered the Government Printing Office² into the Internet age by establishing a means of enhancing online public access to a wide range of Federal electronic information through GPO. With the success of GPOAccess, the Legislative Branch Appropriations for FY 1996 directed the Public Printer³ to provide a report to Congress, which was published in June 1996, *Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program*.⁴ It was clear that the intent of Congress was to shift the FDLP towards a more online program.

A major change in the FDLP came in 2015, when the Joint Committee on Printing (GPO's oversight committee) approved the Superintendent of Documents' proposed regional depository library discard policy with the added stipulation that a "minimum of four tangible copies of the publication exist in the FDLP distributed geographically."⁵ This

¹ Pub. L. 103-40, [STATUTE-107-Pg112.pdf](#).

² Pub. L. 113-235, div. H, title I, §1301(a), (b), Dec. 16, 2014, 128 Stat. 2537, the Government Printing Office was redesignated to the Government Publishing Office.

³ Pub. L. 113-235 also renamed the head of the GPO from Public Printer to Director.

⁴ This report to Congress is accessible from <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-GP3-83702f16b5d4a3823308c2c477545669/pdf/GOVPUB-GP3-83702f16b5d4a3823308c2c477545669.pdf>.

⁵ A 2015 letter to GPO Director from the Chair of the Joint Committee on Printing conveyed approval of the proposed regional depository discard policy with the added stipulation of "minimum of four tangible copies of the publication distributed geographically." <https://www.fdlp.gov/file-repository-item/correspondence-between-gpo-director-and-chair-jcp-regarding-discarding>

decision also resulted in more flexibility for new and collaborative opportunities for the FDLP. GPO began to envision a collective collection, a National Collection, with the four geographic areas⁶ — later named the National Collection Service Areas (NCSAs). The NCSAs are critical for ensuring the “minimum of four tangible copies” JCP directive is met. They also are the foundation for the limited print distribution framework.

The National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information is a shared geographically dispersed collection of the tangible and digital corpus of Federal Government public information, accessible to the public at no cost. The tangible portion of the National Collection is held in the network of Federal depository libraries that serve as stewards for their holdings of materials distributed in tangible format throughout the FDLP.

Digital holdings reside in GovInfo as well as with Federal agencies and with libraries through partnerships. Digital content is accessible to all depository libraries and the general public through various means, including the *Catalog of U.S. Government Publications*,⁷ the comprehensive catalog authorized in 44 U.S.C. §§ 1710-1711.

While the limited print distribution framework is new, there is precedent for not making all in-scope print publications available to all depository libraries. For example, for twenty years (2003-2023), the Slip Opinions were offered only to law libraries and regional depository libraries until they became an online-only item. Other examples include the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* and the *Congressional Record* (bound), which for a period of time were sent only to regional depository libraries and one designated depository library in states without a regional.

In January 2022, the GPO’s Director convened the Task Force on a Digital Federal Depository Library Program,⁸ concluded that the FDLP can and should be a digital program. The Director subsequently charged the Superintendent of Documents with implementing a digital FDLP.

For a more complete picture of the digital transition, see *Evolution of a Digital FDLP: A Transition Timeline*.⁹

⁶ The National Collection Service Area boundaries are based on the Census Bureau Regions, as suggested by the Joint Committee on Printing.

⁷ Catalog of U.S. Government Publications: <https://catalog.gpo.gov/>

⁸ For more about the Task Force on a Digital Federal Depository Library Program see <https://www.fdlp.gov/project/task-force-digital-federal-depository-library-program>.

⁹ The Transition Timeline is accessible from <https://www.fdlp.gov/evolution-of-digital-fdlp-timeline>.

POLICY

The Superintendent of Documents has the authority¹⁰ to determine which in-scope¹¹ Government public information is distributed through the FDLP, in what format, and the quantity. With this authority it is established that:

- Digital will continue to be the preferred format to make Government public information accessible, as it has been since 2006.¹²
- With a limited print framework, the *Print Distribution Titles List*¹³ will facilitate the selection and allocation of only those publications that the Superintendent of Documents determines are needed by depository libraries in print format.
- Special Selection Offers¹⁴ (SSO) will be extended to depository libraries on an irregular basis for publications that have a special value when printed.
- At a minimum, each National Collection Service Area will receive at least one copy of all distributed print publications.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all appropriate elements of the Superintendent of Documents Public Information Programs. The Superintendent of Documents, through the Managing Director of Library Services and Content Management, must authorize any exceptions to this policy.

¹⁰ 44 U.S.C. § 1904 directs the Superintendent of Documents to provide a list of publications for selection and to distribute those documents according to policy and § 1914 allows the GPO Director to administer the FDLP with measures for the economical and practical implementation of Chapter 19.

¹¹ See SOD-PPS-2019-1, the scope policy for Cataloging & Indexing and for the FDLP: <https://fdlp.gov/file-download/download/public/15592>.

¹² In September 2006, the Superintendent of Documents policy, *Dissemination/Distribution Policy for the Federal Depository Library Program* (SOD 301), declared online versions of publications as the preferred format for disseminating information to depository libraries when the publications are available in both online and tangible formats. SOD 301: <https://www.fdlp.gov/file-repository-item/disseminationdistribution-policy-federal-depository-library-program-sod-301>

¹³ Access the *Print Distribution Titles List* from <https://www.fdlp.gov/file-download/download/public/25410>.

¹⁴ For more on Special Selection Offers, including a list of titles that have been offered as SSOs, see <https://www.fdlp.gov/project-list/special-selection-offers>.

APPROVED

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Date