2025 Biennial Survey Glossary

Cataloging
The process of creating standardized bibliographic records that describe an information product (digital or tangible) that allows for discovery and retrieval of the resource. Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) is the standard format for these records.

Digital FDLP Collection
A group of online U.S. Government produced information resources that the library has determined best meet the Federal Government information needs of their community served and are freely accessible to them. They are made discoverable through the library's online public access catalog, a local repository, the library's website, or assembled library resource guides or webpages. These information resources were published in a local repository of, or online at, a Federal agency website, or available from an official GPO partner's site. The resources may be born digital or digitally reformatted.

Discovery layer
An online tool that enables libraries to search seamlessly across a wide range of content. Discovery services provide users with another method for discovering content.

In-person reference services
Providing assistance to library patrons in answering their questions and fulfilling their information needs through a face-to-face interaction. That is, the patron and the reference staff member are in each other's physical presence during the reference transaction.

Library catalog
A search tool to facilitate resource discovery through detailed bibliographic records for physical and digital items in a library's collections, including government publications, books, periodicals, maps, internet resources, etc. Records contain essential information about the items and where they are located (records contain links to digital content) to ensure library users can access items of interest. Most libraries now make their catalogs accessible through the internet allowing access for remote users.

Metadata
Metadata is a structured representation of information that facilitates interpretation, management, and location by describing essential attributes and significant properties. Metadata describes the content, quality, condition, or other characteristics of other data.

Metadata describes how, when, and by whom information was collected, where it resides and how it is formatted. Metadata helps locate, interpret, or manage content.

National Collection of U.S. Government Publications
A geographically dispersed collection of the corpus of Federal Government public information that is accessible to the public at no cost. (https://www.fdlp.gov/about-the-fdlp/the-national-collection)

Offsite storage
A facility outside of the library where all, or portions of, their tangible or print collections are located. The intent is for space recovery within the library. There are expectations that these materials are cataloged and discoverable and that they will be delivered to the library for use by patrons.

Physical FDLP Collection
The total accumulation of U.S. Government produced tangible information products added to a library's holdings and made freely accessible to the general public. This includes, but is not limited to, those information products that were distributed through the Federal Depository Library Program or received through another depository library's discard process. These information products are produced in a variety of formats, such as print, microfiche, floppy disks, analog video cassettes, and CDs/DVDs. A library's entire physical FDLP collection may not be housed in the same location. It may be dispersed to the library's general collection, a branch library, or be selectively housed in another institution's library.

Permanent Public Access
Continuous free public access to Government information dissemination products within the scope of the public information and dissemination programs of the Superintendent of Documents in accordance with 44 U.S.C. §1911.

Preservation
Strategic initiatives, programs, and processes designed to maintain useful access to information assets, serving the information needs of both present and future generations.

Virtual reference services
Providing assistance to remote library patrons in answering their questions and fulfilling their information needs through the use of internet technologies including, but not limited to, chat, instant messaging, email, video calls, and web-based submission forms.