

Spring DLC Meeting

Registrant Survey Summary

Federal Depository Library Program | Spring 2026

About This Survey

As part of registration for the Spring 2026 Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) Depository Library Council (DLC) Meeting, attendees were invited to respond to five open-ended questions about their experience working with U.S. government information. The questions asked about favorite aspects of the work, desired changes, practical workflows and tools, creative outreach activities, and any questions or suggestions for the Council. Responses informed the “Council is Listening” session held on March 5, 2026.

This summary presents the themes, patterns, and notable responses that emerged across the full registrant pool. All responses are paraphrased or described thematically; no individual respondent is identified. The survey was voluntary, and not all registrants answered every question.

Participation

Responses were collected from the full registrant pool for the Spring 2026 meeting. The five questions drew responses at different rates, with the first question (favorite aspects) generating the broadest engagement and the final comment field generating the fewest but most substantive responses.

Survey Question	Est. Responses
Q1: Favorite aspect of working with U.S. government information	~110
Q2: One thing you wish you could change	~80
Q3: Hacks or workflow tools you have created	~55
Q4: Crafts or arts to promote your depository	~40
Q5: Questions, comments, or suggestions for the Council	~30

Respondents represent a wide range of institution types — academic, public, law, federal agency, and special libraries — as well as a broad spectrum of career stages, from brand-new coordinators attending their first DLC meeting to professionals with decades of service in the program.

What Respondents Love About This Work

This question generated the strongest and most consistent response in the survey. The themes below are listed roughly in order of frequency.

The breadth and variety of subject matter

By a wide margin, the most common answer was some version of the observation that U.S. government information spans an extraordinary range of topics — “from anthropology to art to zoology,” “something for everyone,” covering “every area of our lives from food and clothing to medical research to world policy.” Respondents across all institution types and career levels cited this breadth as a defining and energizing characteristic of the work.

Historical depth and primary source value

Many respondents described a deep appreciation for the historical record embedded in government collections — maps, posters, the Serial Set, wartime publications, congressional documents spanning generations. Several described the feeling of holding or accessing primary sources as uniquely meaningful. One respondent, reflecting on 37 years of service, described the satisfaction of having contributed to a record that will outlast any individual career.

Discovery and surprise

A recurring theme was the joy of unexpected finds — the “weird” document, the obscure report that turns out to be exactly what a patron needed, the material no one knew existed. Respondents used language like “treasure trove,” “gold mine,” “panning for gold,” and “you never know what you’ll find.” Several described this element of discovery as what makes the work feel more like an investigation than routine retrieval.

Public service and democratic mission

A consistent secondary theme was the satisfaction of connecting people to information that is theirs by right — freely available, authoritative, and publicly funded. Respondents described this as “democracy in action,” noted that “an informed public is the only way to maintain a strong democracy,” and expressed pride in making government information accessible to patrons who did not know it existed. One respondent supporting scientists and engineers highlighted government information as uniquely enabling cutting-edge research and discovery.

The govdocs community

Multiple respondents — particularly those newer to the field — cited colleagues, FDLP staff, and the broader government information professional community as a favorite aspect of the work itself. The sense of belonging to a knowledgeable and committed network was described as both practically supportive and personally meaningful.

Active information recovery

A small but notable group of respondents described their work in increasingly active terms — not just providing access to government information, but specifically helping patrons find materials that have been removed or made harder to locate on federal websites. One respondent described this as their primary professional focus. This framing reflects a shift in how some practitioners understand their role in the current information environment.

What Respondents Would Change

This question produced the most urgent and consistent feedback in the survey. Four major clusters emerged, along with several notable individual positions.

Staffing and time

The single most common concern across all institution types and career levels was a lack of staffing and time. Respondents described being solo coordinators with no backup, wearing “many hats,” having government information as a fractional add-on to other duties, and feeling perpetually behind on collection work, outreach, and professional development. Phrases like “more time,” “I wish I had more time,” and “Actually having the time to do the work!” appeared across dozens of responses. Several respondents noted that no amount of enthusiasm compensates for structural under-resourcing. One respondent noted that their position is graded at GS-7 despite holding a master’s degree and serving on a term appointment — flagging a workforce equity concern that goes beyond simple staffing levels.

The decline of print collections and the fragility of digital content

Many respondents mourned reduced or eliminated print shipments, and the challenges of managing — and justifying — physical collections in an era of digital predominance. This concern was expressed in two distinct registers. For some, it was primarily logistical: weeding is cumbersome, space is limited, physical collections are increasingly seen by administrators as liabilities. For others, it was explicitly about content security: digital files can be altered or removed in ways that paper cannot. One respondent offered the most direct articulation of this position: “Paper files can’t be taken down. Don’t give up on paper; digital files can always be disappeared.” This argument treats print retention not as nostalgia but as an archival safeguard.

Government website integrity and content changes

Multiple respondents raised the concern that federal agency websites are changing in ways that make it harder to trust or rely on online government content. Several noted that datasets and publications have disappeared. One respondent described being required to remove or restrict specific scientific terminology from their own resource guides — an operational-level manifestation of content-integrity pressure that others described in more general terms. Another respondent wished for “more advocacy from GPO for secure and stable government websites in which content did not change due to changes in the leadership of the executive branch.” The concern that government information is becoming “more filtered and partisan” was also raised independently by more than one respondent.

Findability, cataloging, and technical tools

Persistent frustration with the difficulty of locating, cataloging, and maintaining records for digital materials ran throughout the responses. Specific pain points included: CGP submission processes for unreported documents; FDLP eXchange interface and logic; the absence of a batch-import pathway from the Catalog of U.S. Government Records into OCLC Connexion (currently requiring individual copy-paste of OCLC numbers); the quality of MODS metadata submitted to GPO by contributing organizations; serial holdings control; and the irregularity of FDM updates since the Marcive closure. Several respondents noted they have built individual workarounds for these gaps but would prefer coordinated solutions.

Institutional visibility and the value of expertise

One respondent offered a particularly strategic analysis that resonated with themes raised by others: the FDLP has historically emphasized its collections, and as publications moved online, library administrators concluded there was no longer a competitive advantage to depository status. The argument the respondent offered: the value of a depository is not just the publications but the librarian who knows how to find and apply them. “We need to start stressing our expertise instead of just our collection.” This reframing — from holdings-based to expertise-based value proposition — was echoed in different terms by respondents at multiple types of institutions.

Hacks and Workflow Tools

Approximately 55 respondents described practical tools, workarounds, or efficiencies they have developed. The responses range from simple organizational aids to sophisticated technical integrations. Several are directly shareable and worth highlighting as peer resources.

Common approaches

- LibGuides and web-based finding aids: The most widely used tool across institution types, employed to replace outdated static webpages, organize digital resources, and create patron-facing subject guides. Several respondents noted building these in response to the disappearance or reorganization of federal agency web content.
- Excel maps and inventory spreadsheets: Used for physical shelf mapping, tracking display-worthy publications, managing basic collection checklists, and building finding aids for uncataloged materials. One respondent created a 7,000-title spreadsheet over a 37-year career to ensure perpetual catalog access to digitally converted titles through Alma — a legacy preservation project completed in anticipation of retirement.
- SuDoc simplification tools: Posters, classification guides, departmental cheat sheets, and simplified signage to help non-specialist staff and patrons navigate the SuDoc system.
- Cataloging macros and strings: Several respondents use OCLC macros and text expansion tools to speed cataloging workflows. One respondent described building MarcEdit task pipelines specifically to process GPO records for ILS ingest following the Marcive closure.

- **DSIMS integrated with List of Classes:** One respondent described integrating DSIMS with the List of Classes over multiple years to construct a comprehensive shelf-list — a technically specific contribution of use to selective depositories managing large physical collections.

Standout innovations worth sharing

- **Collaborative mini-games with campus partners:** One respondent described building mini-games in partnership with the Political Science Department, Mathematics Department, and student organizations specifically to make government information feel connected to students' real lives rather than abstract or purely academic. This multi-departmental approach to engagement is the most sophisticated student-outreach model in the dataset.
- **The Game of LOCKSS:** One respondent described an original board game in which players encounter challenges along a "Pathway to Preservation" and work together to build a community-based digital preservation network modeled on the FDLP structure and LOCKSS technology.
- **Integrated stacks with FDLP eagle stickers:** One community college respondent described fully integrating government documents into LC-classified stacks and marking them with FDLP eagle stickers — making them easier for students to find and easier to identify during weeding.
- **Wayback Machine as a standard workflow tool:** One respondent described using the Wayback Machine browser extension as a routine step when visiting government websites at any level — a direct practical response to the content-disappearance problem.
- **WWI/WWII poster storage with Mylar display system:** One respondent developed a method for storing and transporting large historic posters that protects them in transit while allowing users to inspect the originals without Mylar glare during instruction sessions — particularly useful for lithography and graphic design classes.
- **Ready.gov community disaster resources handout:** One respondent created a targeted brochure of six disaster-preparedness resources tailored to their specific community's needs — a strong example of using federal content to address locally relevant concerns.

Creative and Outreach Activities

Approximately 40 respondents described arts, crafts, programming, or display projects they have created to promote their depository collections. These activities document a vibrant and inventive outreach culture across the FDLP community.

Lil' Ben costumes and seasonal displays

By far the most widely practiced outreach activity in the dataset, with respondents at institutions of all sizes and types describing elaborate themed wardrobes for their Lil' Ben Franklin cutout or figurine. Costumes mentioned across the dataset include: Skeleton Ben, Space Ben, Park Ranger Ben, Eclipse Ben, Earth Day Ben, USGS Ben, Franken Ben, Superhero Ben, Santa

Ben, Vampire Ben, Park Ranger Ben, and an anniversary edition Ben. Several respondents noted that student workers have taken ownership of this tradition at their institutions. Others described it as a reliable conversation-starter with patrons who had never engaged with government information before.

Constitution Day programming

The most common programming hook in the dataset, with approaches ranging from simple publication displays to elaborate multi-activity events, focused on Constitution Day. Activities mentioned include: topic-specific publication displays, a Kahoot trivia game described as a great success with students, an embroidery and crochet Crafternoon (“Revolutionary Stitches”) with plans for a National Library Week repeat, a painted FDLP emblem on a craft pumpkin, decorated cookies, custom buttons, and an oversized replica of the Preamble to the Constitution.

Fiber arts and handmade items

A notable thread of fiber arts and handcraft runs through the outreach responses. Respondents described completed and in-progress cross-stitches of the FDLP emblem, knitted Ben Franklin costumes, paper costumes, origami in planning, and future crochet aspirations. One particularly memorable entry: earrings made from microfiche, created by a colleague for GODORT’s 50th anniversary.

Digital and social media outreach

A smaller but growing group of respondents described digital-native outreach approaches: movie-inspired event flyers, “silly social media videos,” zines, and custom LibGuides designed with visual appeal in mind. One respondent also described collaborative mini-games built with campus departments — blending digital interactivity with in-person programming. These approaches tend to come from respondents working with student populations and suggest an emerging generational shift in outreach methods.

Monthly and commemorative displays

Several respondents create regular thematic displays tied to commemorative months and current events — severe weather awareness, emergency preparedness, National Library Week — often pairing them with coloring pages and activity sheets for family audiences. One respondent highlighted an emergency preparedness display using library animals as “spokespeople” for Ready.gov resources, making federal content approachable in a memorable way.

Questions, Comments, and Suggestions for the Council

Approximately 30 respondents used the final field to pose direct questions or offer substantive suggestions. Despite being the lowest-response question, this section contains the most policy-relevant content in the entire survey and warrants direct Council attention.

Direct questions for GPO and the Council

- How do small depositories without preservation partnerships maintain an important role in the FDLP, especially in the face of easy answers from AI?
- How will Internet Archive, as a new federal depository, positively impact the sharing of federal material?
- Does GPO have statistics on how many government documents were taken offline or deleted in 2025?
- Why is it so hard to get unreported government documents added to CGP?
- Can GPO provide SuDoc classification assistance for out-of-scope government documents when the regional library is unable to do so?
- Is USCIS planning to publish study guides in print for the 2025 naturalization test, or focusing exclusively on digital materials? (One respondent cited the relevant Federal Register notice: FR 90, no. 179, September 18, 2025.)
- Will sessions from this meeting be recorded and available for those who cannot attend the full event?
- Will there be a mentoring program for new depository coordinators?
- Could a session address how depository libraries support Veterans Administration libraries?

Programmatic suggestions

- GPO should send at least a yearly communication directly to library deans and directors highlighting the importance and value of the depository program and encouraging adequate staff time allocation. Depository coordinators advocate internally, but direct GPO advocacy carries independent institutional weight.
- A session or resource on digital humanities applications for government publications — which are in the public domain and well-suited to DH projects — could help practitioners demonstrate new forms of govdocs value to administrators and faculty.
- Targeted guidance on digital FDLP collection development is needed: what to keep in a selection profile during the transition, what is no longer necessary, and how to migrate thoughtfully.
- A session on conducting inventories of historic Preservation Steward collections — particularly large, cumulated sets like the CFR and Federal Register — with strategies shared from libraries that have done this work.
- Training specifically designed for law library selective depositories on weeding and cataloging practices would address a specialized need not met by general FDLP webinars.

- A concise official description of the FDLP coordinator role — one to two sentences — that coordinators can use for internal advocacy with supervisors and administrators.
- A “Gov Docs for Dummies” style onboarding resource for new coordinators entering the program without a background in government information. Multiple respondents independently requested this.
- More webinars focused on display and programming ideas, with emphasis on peer-sharing of what other libraries are doing.
- Guidance on assessing the trustworthiness of government websites, acknowledging that this may be a topic the Council cannot formally host but for which there is clear community appetite.
- At least some in-person regional meetings in addition to virtual programming, to build community and connection among coordinators who rarely interact face to face.

Expressions of appreciation

Multiple respondents expressed gratitude for GPO and the Library of Congress’s continued work digitizing the full Serial Set, describing it as an important democratization of a foundational resource. Several respondents thanked GPO staff and DLC members for their work. One respondent noted appreciation for the NCSAs and expressed hope for regional meeting structures. A number of respondents who are new to their roles expressed genuine enthusiasm for the community they are joining.

Summary Observations

Several themes cut across all five questions and speak to the state of the FDLP community as it heads into the Spring 2026 meeting.

- Enthusiasm is genuine and widely shared. The language respondents use about this work — treasure, gold mine, mystery, discovery, democracy — is not bureaucratic. People who work with U.S. government information tend to find it meaningful, and that enthusiasm is a significant program asset.
- Staffing constraints are the dominant operational reality. The under-resourcing of depository coordinator positions — in terms of FTE, job classification, institutional recognition, and dedicated time — is not a peripheral concern. It shapes what is and is not possible at nearly every institution represented in this survey.
- Content integrity has become an active professional challenge. What was previously a background concern about long-term digital preservation has become, for some practitioners, a day-to-day issue: materials disappearing from agency websites, terminology being altered or restricted, and declining confidence in the stability of online federal sources. The community is developing its own workarounds — Wayback Machine integrations, renewed interest in print retention, active information recovery — in the absence of coordinated systemic responses.
- New and early-career members are present in meaningful numbers and need support. Multiple respondents identified themselves as new to their roles, and their comments

reveal a gap in accessible, structured orientation to the FDLP ecosystem. The independent appearance of the same request — a basic onboarding guide — across multiple respondents is a signal worth acting on.

- The expertise-based value proposition deserves broader articulation. One respondent's argument that the FDLP's value lies in the knowledge of its librarians, not just the availability of its publications, resonates with the broader challenge of demonstrating program worth in an era when federal documents are nominally accessible to anyone with an internet connection. This framing may be worth developing as a collective advocacy message.
- The community's outreach creativity is a strength that could be better shared. The range and quality of outreach innovations documented in this survey — from collaborative campus mini-games to gamified preservation simulations to micro-targeted community resources — reflects genuine ingenuity. Structured peer-sharing of these approaches, through webinars, a shared resource repository, or meeting programming, could amplify their reach considerably.

This summary was prepared from registrant survey responses collected in advance of the Spring 2026 FDLP Depository Library Council Meeting. All responses were voluntary. Individual respondents are not identified. Response counts are estimates based on review of the full registrant dataset.