

Remarks by Judy Russell Superintendent of Documents

Fall Meeting, Depository Library Council
Washington, DC
October 23, 2006

I am pleased to join Bill [Sudduth, Chair of the Depository Library Council] in welcoming you once again to our Nation's Capitol and to this 69th meeting of the Depository Library Council.

I am delighted that so many of you have made the effort to be here. As of Friday, there were over 490 people registered for this meeting, and another 30 registered on site yesterday, so we have an excellent turnout. And based on the "Council Aerobics," we have a good representation of library types and sizes and various parts of the country.

Nevertheless, I am (as always) conscious that many of our colleagues were not able to be here with us. I urge you to take home all that you learn from this conference and share it with others in your institution and in your community. It is important that we engage the entire depository library community and, in fact, the entire library community in these discussions since other libraries throughout the country rely on depository collections and services. We will be posting the GPO Update, the presentations and other handouts, and we are recording the sessions so we can make them available as podcasts, but your personal engagement will be the most important means to make sure that we are communicating effectively about the issues and ideas that are discussed here.

We have heard from Bruce [James, Public Printer of the United States] about the progress of GPO and public access to US Federal information. We have been enlightened by Carol Tullo's [Director of the Office of Public Sector Information for the United Kingdom, <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/>] description of how the UK is unlocking the potential of public sector information. We have been challenged by José-Maria Griffiths' [Professor & Dean, School of Information and Library Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill] remarks on the cyber infrastructure and the future roles of librarians and information professionals in this new environment. All three speakers have given us a lot to think about and I am sure that many of the ideas they touched on yesterday will be part of our dialog over the next few days.

We also had the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our newest Federal Depository Library of the Year. For those of you that were not here yesterday, I would like to announce that the Benton Harbor Public Library in Benton Harbor, Michigan was chosen for this honor.

We all know that many patrons come into the library seeking information, not necessarily knowing that their question can be answered using government information. I want to read a brief passage from the nomination that demonstrates how Benton Harbor Public Library addresses that issue: “In asking not ‘What source might be useful?’ but ‘What government source might be useful?’, the library ensures that Federal government resources are used to their full potential to help the local community.” Please join me again in congratulating Fred Kirby and Jill Rauh on the excellent job that they are doing serving their community. Benton Harbor Public Library exemplifies the very real contribution that a depository library with minimal resources and considerable dedication can make in a community. [The press release is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/news/2006/06news30.pdf>.]

It is not too early for you to be thinking about your library or another library that you would like to nominate for the award next year.

With me this morning is Ric Davis, Director of Library Services & Content Management, who is going to give you an update on the major projects that support the FDLP and Cataloging and Indexing program. He will be followed by Bob Tapella, GPO’s Chief of Staff, who is going to give you an update on key initiatives from other parts of GPO.

As always, we have a full agenda – and you have lots of choices in addition to the Council sessions. There are agency updates, GPO operational open forums, and a variety of other educational programs. There are also some excellent tours on Wednesday afternoon.

First time attendees are reminded that Council is an advisory body and, as such, its purpose is to advise the Public Printer and Superintendent of Documents. This is done primarily through the dialog that you will observe during the Council sessions. We reserve a portion of the time in each session for audience participation, and provide a variety of other means for the members of the community to share their points of view with GPO and Council members. We welcome that input and actively seek it, but the Council sessions are meetings of an advisory body and should be understood as such.

This is my 8th, and final, meeting with the Council as Superintendent of Documents. Bruce and I have met with Council in Reno, St. Louis, Albuquerque, Seattle and four times here in Washington, DC (though I was only here in spirit for the meeting last fall because my mother was in the hospital). These meetings have been important milestones of my tenure as Superintendent of Documents, providing an opportunity to discuss our options, debate the issues set a course of action and assess our progress.

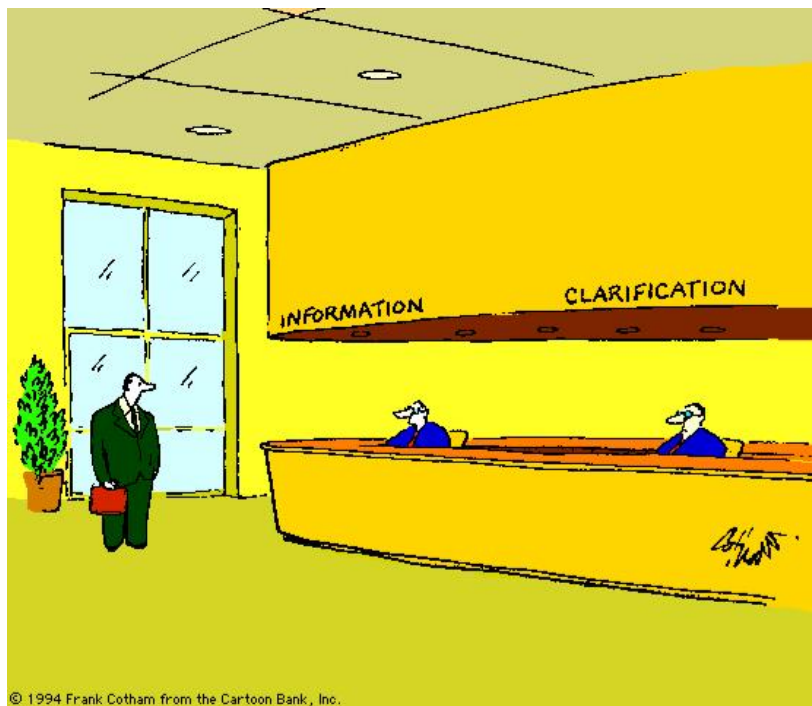
There were 15 individuals already serving on the Council when I became Superintendent of Documents, and four additional classes have been appointed, including the one that begins its service with this meeting. (We have actually been putting them to work since their appointments were announced last spring.) These thirty-five individuals have invested their time, energy and

expertise in a dialog with GPO and with the depository community on the future roles of GPO and federal depository libraries in public access to government information. If there are Council members from the earlier classes in the audience, please stand. Please join me in thanking the current and former Council members for their service.

The primary theme in all of these meetings (and many others in which I have participated since becoming Superintendent of Documents) has been planning for the future, and this Council meeting is no exception. During the next few days we will continue the exploration of the issues and opportunities that we must address to make sure that the Federal Depository Library Program is as vital to the nation in the next hundred years as it has been for the past 200 years. Our common goal throughout this dialog has been to reaffirm the important mission of the Federal Depository Library Program and seek to ensure that there continues to be a viable and vital program for permanent public access that acknowledges and utilizes new technologies to support democracy and inform our users.

We continue to build on the foundation of common principles, acknowledging that the Federal Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its published information, as well as to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of this information. And, furthermore, that the Government has an obligation to preserve its information and assure permanent public access.

Our common vision is to serve the public by increasing access to, and usefulness of, published Federal information. To provide, not just information, but (as the cartoon shows) clarification! I saw this cartoon at the ARL meeting last week. Others have used it as well as a humorous way to emphasize the essential role of the library – and its expert staff – to assist users who frequently find “good enough” information through Google and other search engines, but often need the expertise of our library staff to make that information meaningful and useful when it really matters.



In the future, even more than it does today, the public will insist upon timely, continuous, permanent, no-fee access to published information from its Government. The public will rely on depository libraries for services that facilitate informed use of published Federal information in all available formats and to provide access to tangible collections – and the public will expect 24/7 access to a comprehensive online collection of published Federal information. The Future Digital System that is now under development will ensure such a collection, curated and authenticated by GPO, is available for permanent public access. (During the next session, Mike Wash, our Chief Technical Officer, will update you on our progress on the development of this world class system to ingest, manage, deliver and preserve digital content.)

By law and tradition, the Federal Depository Library Program has the mission to provide for the perpetual, free and ready public access to the printed and electronic documents, and other published information products, of the Federal government through the partnership between the U.S. Government Printing Office and the participating libraries.

To paraphrase GPO's Strategic Vision, "while this mission will remain essentially the same in the future, the introduction of digital technology has changed the ways Government information products and services will be created and how they will look and function to meet the ever changing needs of the Federal government itself and the way public users of Government information now prefer to access and use it."

It is the refocusing of the Federal Depository Library Program to meet the changing requirements for access to the published information of the Federal government that we continue to address as a community – and we have made significant progress in the past four years. Not only has GPO issued its *Strategic Vision for the 21st Century*, but together we have reviewed and discussed dozens (sometimes it seems like thousands) of briefing papers and white papers on a variety of topics of importance to our future.

Tomorrow morning the Council will conduct a session on its vision document, culminating 18 months of work by Council members and others from the community. It has been a labor of love and an enormous effort to pull together all the threads of this complex and rapidly changing environment and they are to be commended for their efforts. This document will be an important part of the foundation as we continue to work together to design, build and manage the Federal Depository Library Program of the future.

As always, we have a lot to cover in the next two and half days, and I am looking forward to some lively and informative discussions. Many of these topics will continue to be on the agenda for the spring meeting in Denver (April 15-18, 2007). I hope many of you will be able to attend that meeting as well.

There may be a new Superintendent of Documents with you in Denver, but whether or not my successor is in place, Ric and his very capable staff are well prepared to continue our progress on the near term initiatives that are already planned or underway as well as to continue the dialog with the Council and the community to determine what else needs to be done to ensure the future of permanent public access to government information.

With that, I am going to turn the microphone over to Ric Davis. We will take your questions and comments after he and Bob Tapella complete their presentations. Thank you very much for your attention this morning, for your participation during the next few days – and especially for your support and assistance during the past four years.