

## FDLP Myths & Monsters

This educational program focuses upon the myths and monsters which have developed in the depository library program. The program dispels some of those pesky myths; it also slays some of the big monsters or misconceptions that have grown in the depository program.

### Myths

- Myth: You have to isolate government documents from the rest of the library collection. You must organize your depository collection using the Superintendent of Documents Classification system.

Reality: There is no requirement to isolate government documents from the rest of the library collection. Each depository library is free to decide how best to manage their government documents collection.

- Myth: Government document collections must be housed in the basement.

Reality: GPO has no requirement mandating the physical location of the collection within a library beyond situating the collection in a location that allows access to the material.

- Myth: Government documents don't get used.

Reality: Government documents are utilized more and more, particularly as they are added to the library's OPAC. Outreach programs and training sessions with reference and other librarians can help increase comfort levels with government information.

- Myth: All government information is available on the Web.

Reality: While a great deal of US government information is available on the web, there is still a fair amount that is only available in tangible form and does not lend itself to electronic access such as maps. Also the vast majority of the legacy collection has not been digitized.

- Myth: Federal Depository Libraries aren't needed anymore because the public accesses government information online.

Reality: According to a study by the Urban Libraries Council, 75.2% of Internet users also continue to use the services of libraries. Use of the library and the Internet is directly related to educational attainment and libraries received high ratings for ease of use, low cost, and helpfulness of librarians. The study is available online at <http://www.urbanlibraries.org/Internet%20Study%20Fact%Sheet.html>



- Myth: Depository libraries must provide anybody access at anytime.  
Reality: GPO recognizes the legitimate need for institutions to balance the security concerns of depository libraries with public access. GPO permits various methods of access by administrators to ensure security of their facility and personnel. Permissible actions include asking patrons for identification, asking users to sign a guest register, asking questions that screen users to make sure that the library has what they need and even escorting users to the depository library.
- Myth: The *Instructions to Depository Libraries* and the *Federal Depository Library Manual* are written in stone.  
Reality: The Instructions and the Manual are being revised to allow greater flexibility for depository libraries.
- Myth: A library, once it selects an item, can never get rid of it.  
Reality: Material listed in the Superseded List may be discarded. Selectives may discard material 5 years after receipt with the permission of their Regional. All libraries may also apply the Substitution Policy which permits librarians to withdraw materials prior to 5 years by substituting online versions. Guidance is available at [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/subguide.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/subguide.html)
- Myth: A depository library has to maintain a certain Item Selection Rate to remain a depository.  
Reality: As long as they are not a Regional, a depository can select as little or as much as meets the needs of their community.
- Myth: The Shearer Measure of one hour staff time per item selection percentage is the standard measure for determining the staffing needs for a depository collection.  
Reality: Both professional and paraprofessional staffing levels must be sufficient, in terms of hours allocated to the depository and in staff expertise, to meet depository responsibilities. Professional and technical support staff should be added depending on the size and scope of the library and methods of organization of the collection.
- Myth: Depository libraries have to provide free printing or photocopying.  
Reality: A library may charge the same fees for printing and photocopying depository information resources that it charges for non-depository materials to be copied or printed. Downloading, however, must be available without fees. A library is not required to provide storage media, such as floppies or USB drives, unless they are provided for users of non-depository materials, and in that case the same charges may be applied.

- Myth: Depository Libraries must circulate depository materials.

Reality: A library has the option of establishing its own circulation policies for use of depository materials outside the library.

- Myth: Depository libraries must maintain identical public service hours at the general reference and documents service desks.

Reality: The general public must be able to access the depository's collections and services outside standard business hours if the library's primary clientele is able to do so. This can be accomplished through a combination of means, including open stacks, basic documents service from the general reference desk, e-mail or telephone reference, and appointments.

- Myth: All depository material must be housed in the depository library.

Reality: You don't have to house all depository material in the official depository library. If the host location is not within the administrative purview of the depository offering the material, a formal agreement must be signed between the parties. All off-site facilities must conform to the same preservation and access standards required of any depository library. You don't need a selective housing memorandum of agreement to house documents in other parts of your library or even in other buildings administered by your library's administration.

- Myth: The new economic model for GPO will eliminate free public access to government information.

Reality: GPO has an abiding commitment to provide free permanent public access to official federal government information and the Public Printer has upheld this commitment. In the Strategic Vision, he states one of the three essential missions of GPO is "to provide, in partnership with the Federal Depository libraries, for nationwide community facilities for the perpetual, free, and ready public access to the printed and electronic documents and other information products of the Federal government."



## Monsters

- Monster: Government documents are perceived as second-class citizens in many institutions.

Issues: The fundamental importance, educational and research value of government documents needs to be marketed to some library administrators.

- Monster: Some institutions believe the space used to house government document collections can be put to better use by housing more popular collections.

Issues: The role libraries play in keeping the public informed about their government and how it operates, the stereotyping of government materials as not relevant to user needs, and the importance of promoting the collection both in the library and the community.

- Monster: Some institutions process and catalog government documents into collections last.

Issues: Because depository materials are received for “free”, they are often given a lower cataloging priority than purchased material. There is also a misconception that it is far more difficult to catalog and process government documents. Another misconception is that government documents do not have a high user demand warranting priority cataloging and processing and therefore, nobody will notice if they aren't cataloged and processed in a timely manner. However, libraries experience an increase in the use of the government documents collection as the material is added to the OPAC. With the ILS coming online, GPO also plans to help libraries catalog government documents by pushing cataloging to depositories.

- Monster: Some administrators believe there is no benefit to being a depository library.

Issues: In addition to Essential Titles in paper and free access to certain paid government information services, depository libraries benefit from GPO's efforts to capture and disseminate government information from one central operation. The Integrated Library System will push bibliographic records to depositories and serve as a basis for the National Bibliography. The future digital system will provide access to authenticated, version controlled government publications. Depository libraries also have an on-going voice as a partner in the continuing development and management of the National Collection of U. S. Government Publications.

- Monster: The size and age of many tangible collections pose collection management challenges including preservation.

Issues: The quantity and diminishing quality of collections must be addressed. Specifically, tangible materials that are rare and endangered, as well as those most at risk need to be identified by the community. The number of copies that must be preserved and their location need to be agreed upon. We need to assess what is currently being done, if anything. We need to determine standards for preservation.

