

Federal Depository Library Program Strategic Plan, 2009 - 2014



Creating an informed citizenry and improving the quality of life

Draft Discussion Document: 04/17/2009

Depository Library Council

**Library Services and Content Management
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Federal Depository Library Program Strategic Plan, 2009 – 2014

- I. Current Condition
- II. Vision
- III. Mission
- IV. Values
- V. Value Proposition
- VI. Assumptions
- VII. Goals and Strategies
- VIII. Success Factors
- IX. Conclusion
- Appendix A: Principles for Federal Government Information
- Appendix B: Scope of Government Information Products Disseminated Through the FDLP
- Attachment A: Action Plan for Implementing the Strategic Goals [place holder]

Federal Depository Library Program Strategic Plan, 2009 - 2014

The Federal Government fulfills its obligation to provide the public open and transparent access to information, as well as ensure its preservation, authenticity and integrity through a variety of means.¹ One of the longest serving programs of public information service is the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) managed by the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) and governed by Title 44, United States Code, Chapter 19. The Program traces its roots to 1813 when Congress first authorized legislation to provide one copy of the House and Senate Journals, as well as other Congressional documents, to certain local universities, historical societies, and state libraries. The program has been part of GPO since 1895, and today includes over 1,200 libraries.

Changes in technology, government structures, and library organizations over the last 15 years demand a new and bold strategic vision for this centuries old partnership between the national government and local institutions. It is no longer just about paper and print collections – any changes in the depository program must recognize that the growing number of ways people across the country stay informed about what the federal government is doing on their behalf. The future of depository libraries depends on how well GPO and the libraries can take advantage of new information technologies to connect their depository service to the information exchanged in a free press, open meetings, public assemblies, active petitions, and free speech. Just as the government now embraces a wide variety of social and community building tools to foster this civic discussion, so to do depositories and GPO.

At the same time, any strategic vision needs to embrace new ways of collaboration and partnership among depositories and with GPO. This cooperation may include ways of building and sustaining future digital collections of published Federal information sources, but it also must include the deliberative preservation of significant paper and print collections of Federal information.

This document and strategic planning process will suggest bold new models of service, collections, and communication to assure the FDLP provides access to the published information of the Federal Government in a rapidly changing environment of public information technology and policies. There are statutory issues that currently limit the implementation of some aspects of these models but that does not preclude them, from being options to explore, discuss, and perhaps become the impetus for potential future legislative interpretations and reviews to further the program service into a new century.

¹ See Appendix A: Principles for Government Information

I. CURRENT CONDITION

At present there are over 1,200 designated Federal depository libraries, 51 of which are regional depositories. Depository collections are housed in a variety of types of libraries: college and university libraries; public libraries, law school libraries; court libraries; state libraries; special libraries; research libraries, tribal college libraries, and libraries of Federal agencies. The size of libraries that are stewards to depository collections and provide services to the public range from the smallest of libraries in Government to some of the largest libraries in the world. All of the Federal depository libraries provide a valuable public service and they impact their communities daily.

With about 97% of materials disseminated to depositories having an online equivalent, the FDLP is now a primarily electronic program. Since the mandated transition began in fiscal year 1997, the Program has 119 fewer libraries including two fewer regional depository libraries. During this same time period, however, thirty libraries were designated as Federal depository libraries. Eleven of these designations were within the last three fiscal years.

The existing legislative authority and the current structure of the FDLP dates from 1962. Much has changed in libraries since then. Technological innovations facilitated the evolution of state and regional cooperative networks. Libraries have standardized bibliographic formats and transfer protocols that allow libraries to share catalogs and cataloging records. These same networks provide the infrastructure for rapid interlibrary loan and document delivery.

The more recent online Web-based environment and the distributive power of information technologies offer libraries an opportunity to provide access to materials they do not own and make available services that meet the high expectations of library users. As libraries are serving more and more users from locations outside the library building, librarians are turning to the online environment for delivery of information and services at the user's point of need. Consortia purchasing of full-text databases, cooperative virtual/chat reference services, and scanning publications for electronic delivery are examples of ways libraries serve their users in a networked environment. These services do not recognize geographic boundaries. With leaner budgets libraries look to collaborative solutions in an increasingly interconnected digital environment to meet user expectations for immediate access and service as well as to increase their return on investment.

A network of diverse libraries with varying needs, like the designated libraries in the FDLP, requires flexibility and collaboration such as is afforded Federal agencies through e-government initiatives. As stated by the Office of Management and Budget in *FY 2007 Report to Congress on Implementation of the E-Government Act of 2002*, "the use of information technology to provide consistent access to and dissemination of government information is essential to promote a more citizen-centered government in a cost-effective manner." The current framework of depositories exists within a structure designed more than forty-five years ago prior to the creation of statewide and regional consortia for resource sharing and prior to the development of digital information delivery networks.

For more than fifteen years the depository community has explored alternative structures for the FDLP. In today’s digital environment where geographic boundaries are non-existent to services, libraries are improving and increasing access to tangible and virtual information resources by digitizing collections; providing point of need services; and participating in collaborative relationships to share personnel, space, and services. To move forward in the 21st century, consideration should be given to allowing libraries to apply these options to Federal depository collections.

The results of a recent examination of the FDLP’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are shown in Figure 1 below. GPO, with the depository community, developed this strategic plan that leverages identified strengths and opportunities to mitigate the external threats and internal weaknesses of the FDLP.

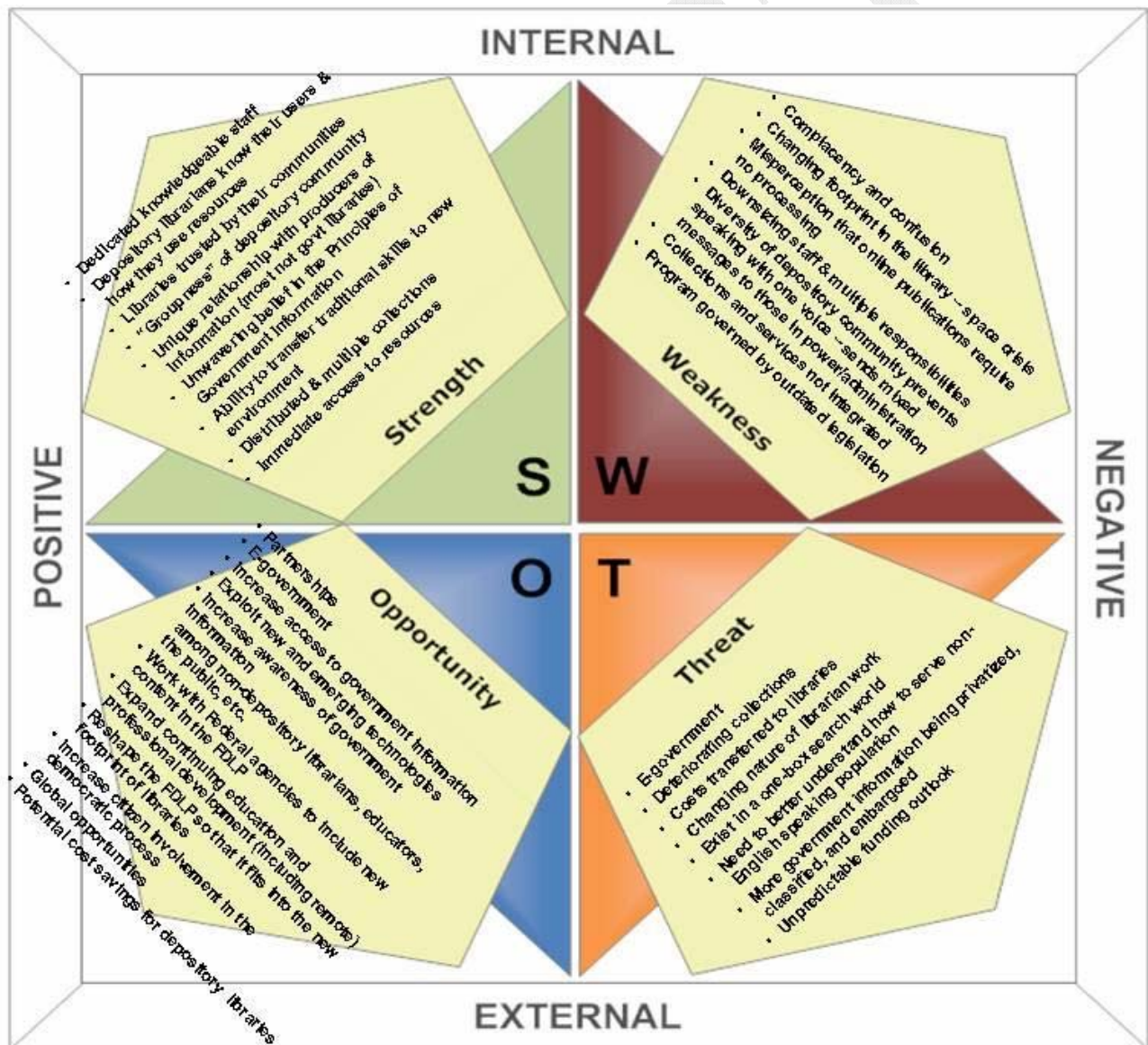


Figure 1: FDLP SWOT Analysis

II. VISION

The Federal Depository Library Program will provide Government information when and where it is needed in order to create an informed citizenry and an improved quality of life.

III. MISSION

The mission of the Federal Depository Library Program is to provide for no-fee ready and permanent public access to Federal Government information, now and for future generations.

The mission is achieved through:

- Organizing processes that enable desired information to be identified and located;
- Expert assistance rendered by trained professionals in a network of libraries;
- Collections of publications at a network of libraries; and
- Archived online information dissemination products from GPO Access, Federal agency Web sites, and partner Web sites.

IV. VALUES

Access

No-fee access for anyone, from anywhere, to use Federal depository resources or services

Collections

Tangible and online collections of official Federal information dissemination products built to support user and community needs

Collaboration and communication

A strong depository library network built on transparent, open communication and collaboration between and among depository libraries, Federal agencies, and GPO

Expertise and professionalism

Dedicated and knowledgeable staff in depository libraries; dedicated to the mission of the FDLP, to increasing their knowledge, and to their profession

Service

Enrich one's library experience by providing quality user-centric services; strong commitment to service

Stewardship

Good stewards of the resources entrusted to us by the American people

V. VALUE PROPOSITION FOR THE FDLP

For libraries that need official and authentic Government information, being a Federal depository library in today's public online environment offers the benefits of a Federal

coordinating agency. Drawing upon a century of national service and as valued partners, depository libraries are strong and dynamic stewards that work with the Government Printing Office (GPO) to assure their communities enjoy free, permanent, and open access to the Federal government's wide selection of information resources. As the coordinating agency, GPO specifically:

- ◆ Assists depository libraries with the acquisition of Federal resources, including free access to selected Government fee-based databases and core print primary sources;
- ◆ Catalogs the collection of Federal resources using recognized standards, which provides the capability for Federal depositories to retrieve those records in bulk;
- ◆ Provides free tools for maintaining the depository collection, supporting public service, and fostering communication;
- ◆ Provides opportunities for specialized training to keep depository library staff abreast of new Federal information resources and depository administration guidance;
- ◆ Facilitates collaboration, partnerships, and opportunities to cooperate across geographic and institutional lines in order to make more Federal resources and services available to depository libraries and indirectly to communities;
- ◆ Offers depository libraries authentication services for their digitized Government information dissemination products; and
- ◆ Develops marketing materials to promote broad public awareness and disseminates them freely to depository libraries.

Unlike other libraries, Federal depository libraries enjoy the singular century of public service to sustain a program of Government information expertise, to manage significant public permanent historical collections, and to work with their communities in positive ways to assure that informed civic choices are made with an open and transparent infrastructure of public information.

Federal depository libraries, in partnership with GPO, are afforded the privilege of safeguarding no-fee access to a rich historic public information source that contributes to the individual and collective well being of communities throughout the United States.

VI. ASSUMPTIONS

- ◆ Developments in the larger library world inform the future of the FDLP
- ◆ Fewer Federal depository library professionals will be steeped in the FDLP or Federal resources
- ◆ Collaboration, cooperation, and flexibility are essential
- ◆ Depository libraries must be allowed to adapt to technological and Program changes to perform their roles

- ◆ Competencies to lead and manage the depository library of today and the future are different than those of the traditional depository library
- ◆ The law governing the FDLP may have to be revisited and reinterpreted in order to achieve the vision
- ◆ Government agencies and the private sector will continue to independently develop tools and resources to locate government information
- ◆ Partnerships between the government and the private sector will continue to develop and increase
- ◆ GPO must promote depositories and their resources outside the FDLP
- ◆ An enhanced system is needed to ensure persistent identification and description of Government information products available via Government electronic information services
- ◆ A primarily electronic FDLP offers opportunities to make more information locally available to the public with enhanced functionality
- ◆ GPO will be able to make access and preservation level digital content available to depository libraries
- ◆ GPO will continue to create new services that meet the needs of different types of depository libraries as technologies and libraries evolve
- ◆ As an unintended consequence of technology, the trend to shift costs from agencies to the user or to libraries will continue to occur

VII. GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The following goals were established jointly with the Depository Library Council and the depository community at the Fall 2008 meeting of the Council. The strategies enumerated below represent some ideas put forward to GPO by the depository library community.

Goal A: Develop new models for Federal depository collections

1. Investigate current processes for the disposition of materials and offer less burdensome and more efficient alternatives
2. Identify flexible options for the current regional/selective structure
3. Develop a collection plan for GPO to manage the FDLP online collection
4. Develop a comprehensive collection of online authenticated Federal publications
5. Distribute digital files to depository libraries
6. Digitize and support digitization of Federal government publications
7. Preserve and support preservation of Federal government publications

Goal B: Develop new models for Federal depository services

1. Create a comprehensive online catalog of Federal publications
2. Increase access to and usability of Federal information
3. Develop a registry of experts
4. Share resources and provide collaborative services
5. Conduct outcomes-based assessments of depository libraries
6. Seek gift/grant authority for GPO

Goal C: Develop new models of communication for the depository library community

1. Strengthen the network of Federal depository libraries
2. Develop a library/customer relations plan for the FDLP
3. Create new relationships between depository libraries and their users
4. Develop new marketing strategies for the FDLP
5. Expand training and conference opportunities (traditional and virtual)
6. Continue implementation of Phase 2 of the FDL Handbook (gap analysis)
7. Reaffirm obligations of Federal depository libraries

VIII. SUCCESS FACTORS

The goals and strategies will be reached in the next five years when:

- ♦ The necessary collaboration and partnerships allows participating libraries to easily shift their local resources between collections and public services;
- ♦ Responsibilities for regional libraries become more flexible in such ways that allow for more effective cooperation across regions and institutional boundaries;
- ♦ Federal depository libraries become publicly recognized as one of the first places individuals can go to get the necessary information about Federal programs and services; and
- ♦ The FDLP and depository libraries build a sustainable model for preserving legacy collections of paper and print; a cost-effective model of the digitization of paper and print material; and a long-term approach to preserve Federal information digital resources.

IX. CONCLUSION: WHAT WILL THE FDLP LOOK LIKE IN 2014?

There are a several models that promise an optimal future for the FDLP. In order to meet the needs/expectations of the program's national community of users, as well as the institutional needs of the Program's diverse local libraries – the successful model will be a careful blend of the program's traditional accessibility and technological innovation. Indeed, the FDLP's future might depend on how well the libraries, GPO and users can agree on how a dynamic national organization delivers services, sustains collections, and facilitates civic

communication between the federal government and the many local communities served by hundreds of depositories across the country.

For much of its history, the program depended on a century-long strategic alliance between GPO and the libraries. The public printer and his organization gathered, organized and delivered publications to the depositories. In the paper and print environment, GPO provides a national distribution infrastructure and a set of best practices for the programs public and private institutions that assures a consistency across institutional and geographic boundaries. For their part, the depository libraries provide the strengths of local bibliographic organization, collections management, and strong public services that enable the public to successfully retrieve useful information from the often complex set of federal programs and offices. As we begin the second decade of federal governance that chooses digital resources over paper and print, this long-term partnership can continue to exist only within an environment permeated by collaboration and flexibility between GPO and its libraries.

In this digital environment, collections services, and communications blend and shift in ways not possible in a paper and print world. The three support/interact with each other, provide or facilitate the means for access, and alter the ways communities can use federal information resources. In many cases information once available only in depositories now can be easily available to anyone with access to the World Wide Web. As a result the local expertise of the depository community is shifting from technical processing and collection management to help their users access a wide range of federal information and services. No one library can “do it all”. Nor



can the GPO assume the depository essential local connection to the communities. The basic law, regulations, and guidelines that govern the system allow for some of this flexibility to take place as part of the natural evolution, but in other cases specific changes to the program’s legislation may be necessary. However, a strong future for the program can not react to this change out of fear or uncertainty to the unknown. Many of the current innovations, partnerships, and technological adaptations used by GPO and the depositories came about by creative approaches to what the current law allows – which is to deliver a sustainable, freely accessible, and consistent set of programs and services that inform the American public.

The Federal Depository Library Program of the future will continue to build from these fundamental aspects:

- ◆ The Principles for Government Information will still be the FDLP's core ideology.
- ◆ Federal depository libraries will continue to facilitate access to the American public through traditional services as well as through enhanced or new services made possible by the digital age.
- ◆ GPO, working actively with depositories, will ensure accessibility, findability, and usability of government information dissemination products.
- ◆ The options for building Federal depository collections will increase.
- ◆ Regional depositories will continue to have the responsibility for permanent public access for tangible publications that remain in their collections.
- ◆ GPO will ensure permanent public access to, provide version control of, and authenticate Federal digital content. Alternatives will be explored for libraries to provide digital redundancy.
- ◆ Communication will exist, and improve, between and among GPO, depository libraries, other Federal agencies, and the public and communities served by depository libraries.
- ◆ Consumers of Federal information will be able to access it from where ever they are and when ever they need it.

Appendix A: Principles for Government Information

Access to Government information is steeped in our history. From Thomas Jefferson in 1789: "Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government; ... whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights." And from James Madison in 1822: "A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps both..."

These quotes, from the author of the Declaration of Independence and the Father of the Constitution of the United States, illustrate the recognition and importance of the free flow of information in a democratic society. The Founding Fathers thought it essential that the citizenry be informed about its government and its workings so as to allow effective participation in the democratic process. Federal depository libraries uphold the tradition of public access to Federal Government information that began with our nation.

By law and tradition, the following Principles for Government Information² have come to represent the core ideology of the Federal Depository Library Program:

- The public has the right of access to government information;
- Government has the obligation to disseminate and provide broad public access to its information;
- Government has an obligation to guarantee the authenticity and integrity of its information;
- Government has an obligation to preserve its information; and
- Government information created or compiled by government employees or at government expense should remain in the public domain.

Principles published by other organizations:

- American Association of Law Libraries. Government Relations Policy (April 2008). http://aallnet.org/about/policy_government.asp
- American Library Association. Government Documents Round Table (GODORT). GODORT Principles on Government Information (March 1991). <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/rts/godort/godortfactsheets/prinGODORT.cfm>
- U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Principles of Public Information (June 29, 1990). <http://www.nclis.gov/info/pripubin.html>
- U.S. Office of Management and Budget. "Basic Considerations and Assumptions" in Circular A-130 (11/28/2000). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a130/a130trans4.pdf>

² U.S. Government Printing Office. *Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program As Required by Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996 Public Law 104-53*. June 1996. p.4-5.

[http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/study/studyhtm.html].

Appendix B: Scope of Government Information Products Disseminated Through the FDLP

In accordance with Superintendent of Documents policy, the scope of tangible materials for the Federal Depository Library Program includes all published Federal information products, regardless of format or medium, which are of public interest or educational value or produced using Federal funds. Exceptions are those products:

- ♦ For official use only or for strictly administrative or operational purposes that are not of public interest or do not have educational value;
- ♦ Classified for reasons of national security;
- ♦ The use of which is constrained by privacy considerations; or
- ♦ That must be sold by the publishing agency in order to be self-sustaining (“cooperative publications”).

All Federal information dissemination products published on an agency’s (or an agency’s official partner’s) publicly accessible Web site and originating from or funded by the agency are intended for public use and are to be considered in scope for the FDLP.