

# Breakout Session by Library Type—2005 Spring DLC

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<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>Future Tangible Distribution to Depositories</b>
<b>LIBRARY TYPE</b>	<b>Large Academic</b>
<p><b>MODERATOR:</b> GIL BALDWIN</p> <p><b>NOTE TAKER:</b> LILLIAN GASSIE</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>	<p>Users of depository libraries have differing needs for tangible documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is unique about your library’s users and how do those characteristics create a requirement for the use of tangible distribution?</li> <li>• What information needs do tangible documents meet for your users that are not met through electronic information?</li> </ul> <p>Answers: The following library users of Large Academic Libraries create unique needs for tangible materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was general consensus that large academic depository libraries serve a wide range of users, for both in-depth research and general use. It is difficult to establish a short list of essential titles because of this. Several land grant university staff members emphasized that their libraries have special needs that include law, medicine, liberal arts, and agriculture. There is nothing on the essential titles survey that they don’t need in paper, and it is difficult to fit libraries into a niche. Another example of special use is library schools; library school students need to see the print and compare to the electronic, as part of their education.</li> <li>• An additional problem occurs at some institutions when students are told by professors to use tangible documents, not web resources when doing research or writing papers. This would be an opportunity for depository librarians to educate the professors on the reliability of some electronic documents.</li> </ul> <p>The group identified several other issues associated with electronic documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of printing, for users and/or the library. This is a cost that has been transferred from the government to the libraries and the public. Printing costs may be prohibitive for economically disadvantaged users, and many libraries charge for printing e-pubs.</li> </ul>

- Some depository library coordinators work only part time on depository functions and are unable to keep up with new, sophisticated e-resources. Libraries don't always have the resources or skills to assist users who want to use data from electronic resources, including CD-ROMs.
- It is difficult or impossible to connect with the economically disadvantaged users, e.g. those who live in areas with no phone services, Internet access, etc.
- Lack of browsability with e-pubs limits the serendipity factor that researchers require. Researchers can find similar items by browsing at the shelves, an advantage of tangibles that is not available in electronic. When people search using keywords, they will only get documents containing the words they use, and may not find related information.
- Usability problems often crop up, with connections and the need to learn how to navigate, so electronic does not necessarily mean faster access. The library staff must spend more time with the user assisting with e-pubs than with tangible materials.
- Several comments were made on the high use and desirability of soil surveys in tangible format, though it was recognized that the issuing agency is switching to online. Mining and mineral information in paper was also mentioned as an overwhelming choice among users.

Under ID 71, GPO policy is to continue tangible distribution of essential titles as long as the publishing agency publishes in tangible form. GPO will also continue tangible distribution for those titles for which there are no useable/useful electronic equivalents. GPO will apply the criteria ID 71 to determine how to best provide other information products by assessing:

- (a) How the product will be used.
- (b) The specific characteristics of the online and/or tangible product.
- (c) Issues relating to permanent public access.
- (d) The cost of providing the material.

- Do you concur with these criteria?
- Are there additional criteria that GPO should consider?

There was extensive discussion of cost as a factor in driving the decision to disseminate a publication in online format. Concern was expressed that cost is even an issue.

A need for clear information on costs of titles was expressed. It was again noted that the total costs include library staff time to teach people how to use a book vs. a CD/electronic. There was consensus on the need to calculate or create a formula that includes the cost of teaching someone to use electronic products. It was noted that what is too expensive may change from year to year depending on Congress' allocation and is hard to nail down. Resounding approval met the statement that depository libraries need to identify the cost of the remaining tangible titles, and then go to Congress for funding and remove cost as a factor.

It was felt that GPO should clearly define concrete standards to guide the format decision.

Other points on this question included:

- There is a time commitment from depository librarians to teach users how to use books/indexes; for electronic products, time will need to be spent selecting the e-products and learning how to use them, and keeping current with what's coming in.
- GPO should look at what other countries are doing with regard to dissemination of public documents, e.g., UK and Canada. Canadian depositories are able to go online to click off a list of items to receive in tangible format. The list also lets libraries know where one can get the document for free, whom to contact for extra copies, and provides a link to the full text online.
- If an agency believes that it is important to distribute in paper, then the document should be in paper for depositories. GPO should include agency intent as a factor in ID 71.
- Local interest and how the user community uses a publication should also be criteria in deciding the distribution format.

- The breaking point for the tangible/electronic distribution decision needs to be defined: is it based on percentage of users? How are decisions to be determined when half of the users will use paper, the other half use electronic?
- How will GPO employees who have never been in the position of depository librarians or worked with librarians decide on the usability of electronic products, e.g., availability of online help, ability to extract information, etc. GPO staff will need to know when something is usable from the user's perspective
- To secure fugitive documents; libraries could form collaborative partnerships with other organizations, look at who gets what and obtain publications via interlibrary loan.
- Permanent access and preservation need to be assured before moving to totally electronic.
- There was concern about copies residing only in dark archives; there is a need to have tangibles in light archives that can be circulated when needed.
- ID 71 appears to be a good solid document showing a common sense approach to what should be distributed/disseminated. However, serious issues remain, including service to populations lacking access to electronic resources, ensuring free and permanent public access, migration of file format, and authentication and version control.

Approximately 60% of depository libraries participated in the most recent Essential Titles Survey. While many sample surveys would consider this an excellent response rate, the purpose of this survey was to determine if a clear set of additional titles could be identified as essential for the various types of depository libraries.

- How can we most effectively use the survey results to make meaningful decisions?
- Do you concur with the recommendations put forth this morning by the Depository Library Council?
- Are there other steps that GPO and the community should take?

There was general dissatisfaction with the survey and its results. Major irritants were the inclusion of items that had not been published for some time, and the limited number of titles to choose from in the initial list. It was suggested that the Council should have had a role in developing the survey, and that regional libraries could work with the Council to provide further input in developing the essential titles list, using this survey as a base. There was interest in seeing the entire list of write-in titles, including those that were officially “dead,” because the write-ins would show what was really needed in libraries.

It was stated that the survey results validate the assertion that one size does not fit all, even within library groups. It was suggested that the list be classified by subject (Law, Political Science, etc), and by use by congressional district. Users vary dramatically, both in preferences and ability or willingness to use electronic products. The question was raised as to how much good such a limited list of titles would be to users who are so diverse.

Several members of the group were interested in reviving the discussion of print-on-demand. They felt that some documents that are irregularly published would fit better under POD. A robust POD program is especially needed for those who do not have access to electronic resources, e.g., American Indian communities and the economically disadvantaged. Academic libraries are moving to just in time instead of just in case, with the JSTOR and e-database model, in which librarians extract information for users, or users extract information for themselves. A more flexible program should be developed to allow individual libraries to select the documents they need.

Other comments included:

- Future surveys should include series as well as individual titles.
- One librarian noted that the library is giving more than it is getting, and may relinquish depository status.
- Since GPO works at the behest of Congress, librarians should talk to Congress about their needs.
- Appreciation was voiced for GPO’s attempt to get users feedback.