

New Model for the Selection of Online Titles: Summary of Public Comments



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Introduction

As part of its ongoing planning efforts, GPO's Information Dissemination (Superintendent of Documents) organization has undertaken a review of the item number system used by libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) to select tangible and electronic titles. As the number of electronic publications disseminated continues to grow, GPO raised questions about the continued utility of item numbers in its initial planning statement on the National Bibliography. In response to a request from the Depository Library Council, GPO conducted a review of the current item number system and examined possible alternatives.

As a result of this review, GPO released three briefing papers, *Depository Selection: History and Current Practice*, which provides background information for the other two papers, *Depository Selection Mechanisms: New Model for the Selection of Online Titles* and *Depository Selection Mechanisms: New Model for the Selection of Tangible Publications*, and solicited comments from the depository library community.

Below is a summary of comments GPO received between September 22 and October 31, 2005 on the model for selection of online titles. GPO received 26 comments on the online selection model and 38 comments that focused on both proposals. GPO asked the depository library community to respond to several questions about the selection of online titles to assist in the development of this model. Responses to those questions are also summarized. Several comments requested clarification on aspects of the selection model. Those questions and GPO's response are listed in a frequently asked questions section.

Summary of Comments

GPO received mixed reactions to the proposed priority one model for selection of online titles. Comments, primarily from small to medium sized depositories, expressed concerns with the plans for the agency-based item numbers. These concerns centered on the loss of flexibility in selecting material by placing all online titles from an agency under a single item number and the possibility of being overwhelmed with bibliographic records for publications that may not be useful to their users. A frequently cited concern was the lack of specificity that agency/bureau based item numbers would provide, particularly for the larger agencies and those with high publishing rates. One comment, for example, notes that their depository collects heavily from the Census Bureau and USGS, but would not want to acquire every online publication from these agencies.

Other comments, however, commended GPO for creating a simpler method of selecting online publications. These comments stated that agency/bureau based item numbers, as described under priority 1, will help to clean-up the *List of Classes* while still providing depositories the flexibility

needed to select online publications that best met the needs of their users. For example, one comment notes that, “issuing agency is often enough of an indicator of selection desirability for a library”. GPO was also commended for reaffirming that unique SuDoc numbers would continue to be created for all online titles.

The plans described for priority 2 were very well received. While understanding that using these services would require more time, the ability to only select the publications that will serve their users needs best was viewed as a positive development. The possibility of creating customized searches in the OPAC for publications related to a particular state was noted in several comments. GPO was encouraged to expand plans for priority 2 to increase selectivity even more.

As a result of questions received with the comments, GPO is aware that a number of points require clarification, and they are addressed in the frequently asked questions section of this summary.

Summary of Responses to Questions Posed in the Briefing Paper

1. Does the Depository Library Community agree with these assumptions? If not, what changes are necessary?

GPO received a mix of responses to this question. The concept of selecting online titles was questioned, while other responses stressed the continuing need to have the type of specificity for selecting online titles provide by the current selection mechanism. However, GPO also received responses which agreed with the assumptions. A sample of the responses received is below.

- I believe the assumptions about selecting electronic publications need to be examined by the depository community. The concept of selecting electronic items has always seemed somewhat illogical, and the basic concept deserves more discussion.
- The proposed tiered selection mechanism appears to have many merits. This proposed model would afford all depositories the opportunity to obtain non-selected publications at frequent intervals through some form of notification and if desired, also allow vendors (e.g., MARCIVE) to profile by SuDoc class stems more specific title selections.

2. Does the phased approach to implementation seem logical? How much time would be needed to review the new notification services before implementing the proposed changes in item numbers?

The majority of responses to this question agreed that a phased approach was logical and even crucial to allow depositories to transition to a new selection mechanism. A review period of two months was suggested in a number of the responses. A sample of the responses received is below.

- I think we will need a couple of months to review all the changes to the item number system before we can migrate and adjust to the new system.
- The phased approach is crucial to allow all depositories to be "converted"; from the ones who are still in the "horse and buggy days" to the ones on the cutting edge. No one must be left behind. I would even suggest the development some sort of mechanism to make sure all the depositories have embraced these changes; relying on regionals to do this would not be reliable. Sixty days seems like a comfortable amount of time to allow for review of the notification services.

- Phased approach seems logical as long as the libraries got to review and provide suggestions to the new services for at least 1-2 months before implementing.

3. Is using agency and bureau level item numbers to profile depository libraries' online selections an acceptable approach to providing "locate libraries" information for users of online publications? If not, what alternatives should GPO consider?

Several responses questioned the utility of "Locate Libraries" for online titles, as users do not need to go to a library to use an online publication. However, concerns were also expressed about the amount of specificity allowed by agency-based item numbers. It was suggested these item numbers might not be granular enough or "deep" enough into the agency structure to allow for easy selection by depository librarians. A sample of the responses received is below.

- This is generally acceptable. The assignment of item numbers should "go deep" into the agency structure. The CDC, for example, has many divisions and subdivisions. The "Locate Libraries" access point should come with a caveat that the user should check the local library's OPAC to verify that a resource is available. Since the profile is based on online resources, the GPO PURL should be readily available anyway. A person could simply click on the PURL. If a database requires an onsite login the person should check the library's OPAC. This area needs a little fine-tuning.
- It is important to keep the specificity in the selection process to make it easier for the depository librarians to do their job, but also so they can help their patrons more effectively.
- I don't understand how this would work. For online documents, the user does not need the library. A PURL or URL will get them the information. I don't know in what context you are supposing the user located the document – through GPO Access, Franklin, Google or other search engine, or a library's catalog.

4. Should the update cycle for online titles continue to be annual, or on a more frequent schedule?

The majority of responses to this question expressed support for more frequent update cycles with the continued ability to drop item numbers at any time. A twice a year update cycle was suggested in most of the responses. A sample of the responses received is below.

- With respect to the frequency of item cycle updates, the Roundtable supports a twice-a-year cycle for adding items if that is feasible for GPO staff. We should continue to be able to drop items at will.
- More frequent would be nice, at least 2 times/year in case of changes at academic libraries.

5. GPO should be able to identify online only titles for which libraries have agreed to provide service. Are item numbers an appropriate mechanism for accomplishing this? If not, what alternatives should GPO consider?

All the responses GPO received to this question expressed support for retaining item numbers for online publications. The only alternative suggested was the SuDoc number stem. A sample of the responses received is below.

- I personally like the item number system especially if kept more specific. The only alternative I can think would be to do the selection via the SuDoc numbering system since that allows the librarians the ability to know what the agency and department are. Need that specificity.

6. Are there other requirements of a new tangible selection and distribution system that GPO should be considering?

GPO received a few suggestions to consider while continuing to review online selection mechanisms. Increased ability to select titles by state was mentioned in several comments. GPO was also encouraged to re-examine the specificity provided by agency-based item numbers. The importance of the phased approach was stressed, as well, in order to ensure that no depositories are left behind during the transition to any new selection mechanism. A sample of the responses received is below.

- I think there needs to be state level demarcations, and that libraries are able to select more than the state they are located in, even if they are not a regional.
- I think it is very important that the implementation of any new mechanism is well planned and "planted". I am especially concerned about the following: depositories that could be "left behind"; implementation of a phase or step when all the preparations are not complete or all the players at GPO are not on the same page and with a backup plan; and revisions and updates of records by Cataloging need to be done in a timely and accurate manner since we will be relying in this information for all the actions that will affect the item numbers.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is GPO developing a method to push bibliographic records to depository libraries?

GPO is developing a requirements document for record export. However, this is outside the scope of the proposed selection models, so details will not be discussed here.

2. How would we get records for things we want on the priority two list? Would GPO make records available as part of that list, or would we need to get records from OCLC or a bibliographic record vendor?

While the ability to push bibliographic records to the depository libraries is not within the scope of the proposed selection models, GPO is developing a requirements document for record export to depository libraries. GPO will also continue to share selection profiles with vendors.

3. Will depositories still be able to drop item numbers at any time?

Depositories will continue to be able to drop item numbers from their selection profiles at any time.

4. Will we be able to selectively delete specific titles from the agencies and bureaus that we do choose from in the priority one round or just the ones we do not select in priority round 1? Priority 1 should only be used for items you are absolutely sure you want for your library. Priority 2 should be used for items you want to review and then approve or decline. You can delete item numbers that you do not want at any time, but it has not yet been determined how frequently you can add new item numbers or move selections from one priority category to another.

5. Item number creation for online titles is proposed to be at the agency or bureau level. Does this mean that the Food and Nutrition Service would have an item number that differs from that for the Agriculture Dept. within which it resides?

Under the proposed model for the selection of online publications, item numbers for online publications will be at the agency/bureau level. For example, the Department of Agriculture has 23 bureaus listed in the April/October 2005 *List of Classes*. Each of these bureaus will have an item number for online titles. There will also be an item number for the entire department. This is consistent with existing practice. For example, the Department of Agriculture is classed as A 1.x with corresponding item numbers, while the Food and Nutrition Service is classed as A 98.x with corresponding item numbers.

6. How will changes to item numbers be announced? Will they continued in the *Administrative Notes Technical Supplement*?

We believe that standard and customized reports from the ILS will be the best way to deliver this information in the future. A survey is presently being conducted to determine whether *Administrative Notes Technical Supplement* will continue to be produced in print or electronic form. Pending the results of that survey, changes to item numbers will continue to be announced in *Administrative Notes Technical Supplement*.

7. If unique SuDoc numbers will still be created for all online publications, will SuDoc number searches in the OPAC retrieve records for titles available in multiple formats?

Searches by the SuDoc number in GPO's OPAC will bring up all records for that title, regardless of format.

8. When items go to electronic only who is in charge of maintaining the material?

GPO will maintain online access and an archive and will assume responsibility for future migration. Libraries may also choose to download copies of access files for local storage.

9. On the second paragraph of Priority Two Titles, I did not understand this sentence, however: "Once the OPAC's depository library only services are available, depositories will be able to set-up predefined searches..." Does this mean a search is available for only depositories? And do you really have that many non-depository libraries using searches?

While anyone may conduct searches in the OPAC, the ability to set-up saved or predefined searches will only be available to depository libraries.

10. What does GPO mean by providing service to online publications?

GPO encourages depository libraries to provide bibliographic records for online publications in their catalogs. "Providing service" to an online publication means the depository is able to assist users in locating and using that publication and others on that subject.

11. Is there a minimum number of item numbers or a minimum selection percentage that is required of a depository library?

At one time all depository libraries were required to select at least 25% of the item numbers available for selection. This is no longer true. While page 6 in the Instructions to Depository Libraries (July 2000) states "...An appropriate level of selections should be at least one-half the average item selection rate of libraries of similar type and size...", this measure is viewed as a starting point to compare collection development activities among depositories. The numbers themselves should not be viewed as absolute benchmarks.

The true measure of a library's collection development success is not the degree of adherence with the guideline in the Instructions, but whether the depository library is meeting the

Government information needs of people in the area it is obligated to serve. How this is accomplished and any major divergence from "one-half the average item selection rate of libraries of similar type and size" should be well documented in a collection development policy.

For more information, see: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/coll-dev/expl-ave.html.