

Chapter 66

Academic Libraries in Partnership With the Government Publishing Office: A Changing Paradigm

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-40) brought the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) fully into the digital age. The transition has created expected and unexpected changes to the way the Government Publishing Office (GPO) administers the FDLP and, in particular, to the relationships between the GPO and academic depository libraries. Innovative partnerships, use of emerging technologies to manage and share collections, and greater flexibility on the part of the GPO have given academic depository libraries a prominent and proactive role within the depository program. Newly announced initiatives from the GPO, the National Plan for Access to U.S. Government Information and the Federal Information Preservation Network (FIPNet) potentially could either increase academic depository libraries' collaboration with the FDLP and the likelihood that they will remain in the program, or accelerate the rate at which academic depositories are dropping depository status.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the profound changes that have occurred in the traditional partnership between depository libraries at academic institutions and the Government Publishing Office (GPO) as the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has transitioned from a distribution system for tangible government publications to a harvester and disseminator of digital publications and information. Data derived from GPO Biennial Surveys, GPO Annual Reports, Federal Depository Library Council Meeting transcripts and presentations, and academic journal articles are used to illustrate and analyze the shift that has taken place in the ways that academic libraries participate in and view the FDLP.

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BACKGROUND

Government depository libraries at academic institutions and the United States Government Publishing Office (formerly the Government Printing Office) have been collaborating for over 150 years to bring free, permanently accessible government information to the American people. Historically, the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has proved to be a stable and successful federal/state/private sector partnership in fulfilling GPO's mission of informing and educating the citizenry. An early version of the program began in 1813, when the 13th Congress passed a joint *Resolution for the Printing and Distribution of an Additional Number of the Journals of Congress, and of the Documents Published Under Their Order*. The 1813 resolution ordered the distribution of journals and documents of Congress to universities, colleges, and historical societies in each state (*Fulfilling Madison's vision*, p. xi). Congressional resolutions passed in 1858 and 1859 allowed members of Congress to designate depository libraries in their districts and states (*Fulfilling Madison's vision*, p. xi). The Printing Act of 1895, the forerunner of Title 44, United States Code, consolidated distribution of government publications under the Government Printing Office (McGarr, 2000). The Depository Act of 1962 brought significant changes to the depository program when, for the first time, regional depository libraries were designated for each state. The regional libraries were required to accept all publications offered through the depository library program and to maintain the collection permanently (*Fulfilling Madison's vision*, p. xi). The remaining depository libraries, known as selective depositories, were allowed to choose only a portion of what was published and were permitted to weed documents from their collections, according to GPO regulations, after a 5-year retention period. The end of the 20th century brought technological advances in publishing that had major impacts on the FDLP. In 1977, GPO began a micropublishing program to distribute documents in microfiche format, in addition to traditional print publications, to depositories. Census CD-ROMs were first shipped to depository libraries in 1989. Microfiche and CD-ROMs, however, are still tangible publications. The major transformation of the FDLP was precipitated by the passage of the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-40), which launched the transformation of the GPO from a distributor of tangible publications to a disseminator of digital information. In 1895, when the Printing Act created the Government Printing Office, 420 depository libraries existed (McGarr, 2000). At the present, nearly 1,200 depository libraries are established in the United States and its territories. Of that total 630, or 52.5%, are academic libraries. Of the 47 regional depository libraries, 31, or 66%, are academic libraries (FDLP, n.d.). As evidenced by the numbers, academic libraries currently dominate as the type of libraries designated as either regional or selective depositories.

TRENDS IN GPO PARTNERSHIPS WITH ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Space and Budget Constraints Due to Tangible Collections

Currently, academic libraries of all sizes are struggling with space, budget, and staffing constraints. In odd-numbered years the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) conducts a survey of depository libraries to identify trends, issues, and concerns. The libraries are required by law to respond to the survey and report the conditions of their depository collections. The 2013 Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries, the most recent available, included a question that asked depository library coordinators to select,

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