The Government Printing Office has a new vision of disseminating electronic information which means that depository libraries are no longer receiving the large amounts of tangible documents which made participation in the Federal Depository Library Program beneficial. Libraries remaining in the program will have to be advocates those still disadvantaged by the digital divide and ensure that the GPO follows through to create a system for permanent public access.
THE CHANGING FDLP: THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT INFORMATION ON THE FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY PROGRAM.

by

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Approved by

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The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has some deciding to do. Does it house documents or does it serve patrons, or does it do both? Can it do both? The Federal government is moving forward with digital initiatives, such as the E-Government Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-347), and many government publications are now published only as electronic documents, freely available on the Internet. Some participating libraries are leaving the FDLP because “it’s all on the Internet,” and the remaining member libraries have to figure out the role of the program. This paper argues that the FDLP is headed in the right direction in following the Government Printing Office (GPO)’s recommendation of focusing on dissemination of electronic information as opposed to printing documents. However, the FDLP must make sure that it voices the concerns of those remaining in the digital divide and plays a part in providing permanent public access to government materials.

This paper has five parts. The first part will provide the background on the Federal Depository Library Program. The second part will discuss the Government and the FDLP vision statements for the future. The third part will explore the concerns of the digital divide, and the fourth part will look at permanent public access projects. The final part will look at why libraries have left and the different roles that the FDLP can play in this changing environment.
I. Background

A. The Creation of the Federal Depository Library Program: 44 U.S.C. 19

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) has been in existence in various forms since 1813 (FDLP FactSheet). Title 44 chapter 19 of the United States Code statutorily authorizes the current model of the FDLP. This chapter of the Code describes the types of depository libraries, how to become a depository library, as well as responsibilities involved and how to terminate depository status.

Many people are involved in the process of establishing and terminating depository status, but there are a few who should be recognized early. First is the Public Printer. This person serves as the head of the Government Printing Office (GPO). The FDLP is just one of the programs the Public Printer oversees (44 USC § 1914). The Public Printer also has the power to designate Highest State appellate court libraries as depositories (44 USC §1915).

The Superintendent of Documents is the head of the Federal Depository Library Program. This person is responsible for making government publications available to depository libraries (44 USC § 1902). He is also responsible for creating a classification scheme and providing a list from which libraries can select documents (44 USC § 1904).

Finally, Members of Congress designate libraries in their state or territory to be part of the program (44 USC §§ 1905, 1912).

Any type of library may become a depository. The libraries may be public or private and may have different specialties. For instance there is a section of the United States Code which mandates that Land-grant colleges are depositories (44 U.S.C. § 1906).
Section 1916 of the United States Code states that “Upon the request of any accredited law school, the Public Printer shall designate the library of such law school as a depository library” (44. U.S.C. § 1916). The library must meet all the requirements of Chapter 19 except for the paragraph relating to location (44 U.S.C. § 1916).

The following table shows the types and percentages of depository libraries as of June 2006.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Libraries</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic (general)</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Law</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Agency</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Court</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Court</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Service Academy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Tribal Colleges</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two main types of depositories, regional and selective. Each state has no more than two regional depositories (44 U.S.C. § 1912). A library may become a regional depository if the Senator of the state designates it so, but only after the Head of the library authority of the State finds that the library can fulfill the duties of a regional library (44 U.S.C. § 1912).

A regional library will receive “copies of all new and revised Government publications authorized for distribution to depository libraries” (44 U.S.C. § 1912). The library must retain at least one copy of all government publications either in print or

¹ Email communication with the GPO.

A selective depository can determine its level of participation, but it must follow a few guidelines. First, it must be able to provide public access to the government publications and must retain the publications for five years (44 U.S.C. § 1911). After which time the library may discard the material if it is served by a regional library (44 U.S.C. § 1911). Second, every two years it must “report to the Superintendent of Documents concerning their condition” (44 U.S.C. § 1909). Finally, the library must have at least ten thousand books, other than Government publications (44 U.S.C. § 1909).

If at any time a regional or selective depository is unable to fulfill its duties an investigation will be made by the Superintendent of Documents (44 U.S.C. § 1909). If the library is unable to correct the problem within six months its depository status will be revoked (44 U.S.C. § 1909).

In summary, a selective depository chooses its Government publications from the list provided by the Superintendent of Documents. The depository provides access to the publications to its primary users and to the public. The library also keeps the publications for five years and then disposes of them if it is served by a regional depository.

This opportunity to gain free of charge, a large number of useful government materials- some traditionally available only through the FDLP, is one of the many reasons why libraries joined the program. In return for providing access to the public, the library received the documents for free. However, a new piece of legislation would threaten to make the depository’s unique status quite ordinary.

Title 44, chapter 41 of the United States Code covers access to electronic information. Section 4101 charges the Superintendent of Documents, under the direction of the Public Printer to “create an electronic directory of Federal Electronic information” (44 U.S.C. § 4101(a)(1)). The section also calls for the Superintendent to “provide a system of online access to the Congressional Record, the Federal Register, and as determined by the Superintendent of Documents, other appropriate publications distributed by the Superintendent of Documents” (44 U.S.C. § 4101(a)(2)).

The Government Printing Office Information Access Enhancement Act (P.L. 103-40, June 8, 1993) led to the creation of the Internet site known as GPO Access (www.gpoaccess.gov). At first the website only housed the Congressional Record and the Federal Register. However, as the Internet grew, so did the website. Today more than 300,000 Federal titles are on GPO Access (James, 2006).

One of the things GPO Access means for the FDLP is that special access to the information that once made the program so enticing is now freely available on the web. Does this shift mean that the end of the FDLP is near, or does it mean the FDLP will have to re-invent itself? The next section will discuss several plans the Government has in place for the depository program.
II. Government Visions for a Digital Future

In 2002, Congress passed the *E-Government Act of 2002*. (P.L. 107-347, December 17, 2002). One of the goals of the act is to “improve the methods by which Government information, including information on the Internet is organized, preserved, and made accessible to the public” (P.L. 107-347 § 207(a)).

This act combined with a huge debt at GPO served as a wake up call for the Government Printing Office to revise its practices. The world was changing, and GPO would have to change with it. The next section focuses on how GPO is preparing to survive in the 21st Century.

A. GPO’s Vision for the 21st Century

The GPO’s mission is to make government information available to the public in order to create an informed and enlightened citizenry (James, 2006). However, the Public Printer has determined that the GPO must function like a business and must make money in order to provide continued public access to materials (James, 2006). During the late 1990s monetary losses at GPO totaled more than $100 million (James, 2006). By the end of 2004, GPO’s finances were back on track (James, 2006).

In 2004, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study of Federal printing and publishing (James, 2006). The report found that “GPO should envision itself as a disseminator of information and place greater emphasis on direct electronic dissemination as [their] primary goal, rather than printing” (James, 2006).

GPO is now in the middle of transitioning itself to a disseminator of information.

*A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century* a vision statement by the GPO produced in 2004,

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2 See also, *A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century*, GPO, Appendix A
provides a detailed roadmap to guide GPO and focuses on a variety of ways to change GPO. One of those goals is to create a Future Digital System (FDsys) (James, 2006).

FDsys is a system “being designed to organize, manage, and output authenticated content for any purpose” (James, 2006). The goal is to create a central repository for all government information (James, 2006). Then, “all known Federal documents, whether printed or born digital, produced both prospectively and retrospectively will be cataloged and authenticated and then entered into the system according to GPO metadata and document creation standards” (James, 2006). The idea is to have all government information regardless of format in one centralized location, with the same cataloging and metadata standards.

The GPO also has plans for the FDLP. The FDLP is responsible for determining the content of FDsys and for setting standards for Federal documents (James, 2006). It is also responsible for authenticating documents, cataloging and managing the content, and determining the standards for preserving the content (James, 2006). In other words the FDLP will create and implement the FDsys.

GPO is the overarching organization in which FDLP belongs. Where GPO goes, the FDLP must follow. The next section discusses how the FDLP incorporates the GPO goals with its own vision statement.

B. FDLP Vision Statement: Knowledge Will Forever Govern

The FDLP vision statement, prepared by the Federal Depository Library Council (FDLC), in 2006, starts out by emphasizing that

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3 See also, A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century, GPO, Appendix B
the public’s need to access government information in an open, free, and easily accessible form shall be guaranteed and the information continue to be accurate, unmodified, official and authentic. The information must be maintained and held in trust in a public arena where history can be preserved in an unvarnished form (Knowledge, 2006).

The FDLP recognizes that its patrons are the American public and will continue to provide accurate and trustworthy information. However, the nature of the Internet introduces the potential for security and reliability concerns that threaten the trustworthiness of the content. One of the goals of the FDLP is to create the same level of trust of electronic government information as the public has with books (Knowledge, 2006).

The FDLP vision statement also acknowledges that while participating depositories used to be able to obtain government documents at no cost to them, the digital age requires a different type of monetary investment (Knowledge, 2006). Part of this is because” there is no organizational framework or technological consistency to help the public find, use, and understand the myriad of networks, databases, web sites, and data sets proliferating throughout the government “(Knowledge, 2006). In order to make a transition to providing digital information depositories will have to provide money for a variety of things such as document and metadata standards, the development of public tools, public education, and preservation of print materials, just to name a few (Knowledge, 2006).

The vision statement then outlines goals for the 21st Century. The first goal is, to” respond to or anticipate U.S. citizens’ need for government information when and where it is needed by providing multiple access points to a network of experts” (Knowledge, 2006). To meet this goal the FDLC wants to provide a combination of machine and
human intermediated 24/7 assistance of the web, relying on the FDsys system mentioned earlier (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLC also wants to focus on partnerships with agency experts, depository experts, and GPO staff (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLC also believes that the depositories should collect data on its unique user population to determine their government information seeking behavior (Knowledge, 2006).

The second goal is to provide access to information in appropriate formats. The FDLC realizes that there is a need for continued access both in print and other “tangible formats,” but the information should also be available in digital format if the patron prefers it that way,” (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLC is also counting on GPO to continue to promote a dark archive⁴ which will house at least two printed copies of each federal document (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLP will continue the essential titles program “where select publications remain available for distribution in tangible form” (Knowledge, 2006). According to the FDLC, the combined efforts of these programs as well as others would “provide for redundant, permanent, and ready access to material in tangible form” (Knowledge, 2006).

The third goal is to ensure continuing access to digitally available government information (Knowledge, 2006). The statement declares,

Given that there is no single set of best practices for preserving electronic information and that many agencies add and delete publications without public notice, strategies must be established for identifying, collecting, describing, and preserving these digital materials so that they continue to be freely available to the public (Knowledge, 2006).

The FDLC is relying on GPO to create the FDsys and will use the system to provide continuing access to the digital government information. (Knowledge, 2006) The FDLC

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⁴“A collection of tangible materials preserved under optimal conditions, designed to safeguard the integrity and important characteristics of the archived materials for specific potential future use or uses” (Information dissemination, 2005).
is also counting on the GPO to continue its web harvesting\(^5\) program, and suggests that depositories should cooperate with other organizations such as the National Archives and Records Administration, and the Library of Congress, to develop standards for providing access to digital government information (Knowledge, 2006).

The fourth goal is to *provide excellent training to deepen and expand knowledge of government information resources via excellent training* (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLC believes that there should be training for users in the area of government information, not just in person but also using the Internet tools available (Knowledge, 2006). The FDLC suggests training by the librarians and other qualified outside experts, and also recommends the training of non-FDLP partners (Knowledge, 2006).

The fifth goal in the FDLP vision statement is to provide high quality descriptive tools for access to all FDLP publications, portals, and information products. This will “ensure that information is easily accessible for librarians and the general public” (Knowledge, 2006).

The sixth goal is to *enhance collaboration or coordination of effort among federal depository libraries, non-depository libraries, GPO agencies, and cultural memory organizations that deal with Internet resources* (Knowledge 2006). The FDLC believes that the FDLP should take advantage of the knowledge and resources provided by other organizations.

The final goal is to *expand awareness of both the Federal Depository Library Program and government information generally via excellent public relations and marketing* (Knowledge, 2006). According to the Council,

\(^5\) “The capture and processing of web-based documents or publications preparatory to ingest into an archive” (Information dissemination, 2005).
Enhancing awareness of the benefits the FDLP provides to both individuals and society will maximize use and support of the program. As the digital information glut replaces the paper information dearth, government information experts in the FDLP will be sought after more than in the pass to help users sort through information overload. Public awareness of the existence of such experts will increase the likelihood that they will be consulted (Knowledge, 2006).

By marketing their services and by continuing to be the experts in navigating government information, the FDLC is ensuring the continued need and existence of the FDLP.

Overall, the FDLP is relying on GPO to “make good” on the promises it outlined for the FDLP in the GPO vision statement. FDLP is also forging ahead with ideas of their own focusing on customer service and outside collaborations.

These visions provided by the GPO and the FDLP are very forward thinking, and broad in scope. One of the fears though, is that while the government is moving forward, it is forgetting about FDLP users who might be left behind. The next section examines the digital divide, and what that might mean for the FDLP.
III. The Digital Divide: Reality or Myth

The Digital Divide is “a reference to the perceived disparity that results from portions of the American population not having the ability to use IT due to a lack of access and/or skill” (Relyea, 2002). Does this disparity still exist and how does the FDLP plan to provide for those still in the divide?

As of April 2006, 73% of American adults (147 million) are Internet users, and 42% (84 million) have broadband connections at home (Pew/Internet, April 2006). Overall, this is a high percentage of Americans; however, there are some variations of percentages of users among age, income, and education.

87% of 12-17 year olds use the Internet (Pew/Internet, April 2006). 88% of 18-29 year olds use the Internet, as do 84% of 30-49 year olds (Pew/Internet, April 2006). 71% of 50-64 year olds and 32% age 65 and over use the Internet (Pew/Internet, April 2006).

As for the income disparity, only 53% of adults in households with less than $30,000 in annual income use the Internet, as opposed to the 80% of the adults in households with an annual income between $30,000 and $50,000. (Pew/Internet, April 2006). 86% of adults in households with an annual income between $50,000 and $75,000 use the Internet, and 91% of adults living households with an annual income more than $75,000 use the Internet (Pew/Internet, April 2006).

Only 40% of adults who have less than a high school education use the Internet, and 64% of those whose highest degree is a high school diploma use the Internet (Pew/Internet, April, 2006). 84% of adults with some college education use the Internet,

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6 Citing Oct-Nov 2004 survey
and 91% of adults with at least a college degree use the Internet (Pew/Internet, April 2006).

As these statistics show, the digital divide still exists in terms of age, income, and education. How does GPO/FDLP plan to handle the divide while moving towards digital access?

We have had to take extra care to ensure that documents in print format that are required at this time by some communities, particularly law libraries, continue to be supplied. As we work to bring FDsys into operation, we envision that its capabilities to provide for security and authenticity will eventually eclipse the continued need for print in many cases, while improving access by these communities to Government information (James, 2006).

So, for now the print materials stay, but as FDsys becomes usable, the print documents will no longer be used. What will happen with the digital divide? Perhaps it will go away.

As of March 2006, 42% of adult Americans (84 million people) have broadband access (Pew/Internet, May 2006). 21% of those Americans living in households with incomes less than $30,000 have broadband access; this is a 40% increase from March 2005 (Pew/Internet, May 2006). 25% of rural Americans have broadband access, an increase of 39% (Pew/Internet, March 2006). 41% of Hispanic-Americans have broadband access an increase of 46% (Pew/Internet, May 2006). Finally, 31% of African-Americans have broadband access an increase of 121% over the last year (Pew/Internet, May 2006).

These statistics show that Internet usage is continuing to climb; and it is reaching those previously excluded by the digital divide. There is room for improvement, and the divide still does exist, but the numbers are encouraging. Still, it is a little too soon to be
preparing for the day that Americans are universally connected to the Internet. In the meantime what can FDLP do for these communities?

The FDLP’s mission is to provide access to government information to the public. Given that service to the public is one of the fundamental principles of the FDLP, it is up to them to keep those in the digital divide in mind. Depositories should continue to use print documents if possible. Depositories should also focus on Internet training for patrons, not just on finding Government information, but also on basic Internet skills. Finally, depositories should continue to be open and welcoming to all patrons, not just those with Internet savvy.

This section argued that the concerns of those in divide still exist and that the FDLP must keep these patrons in mind while forging ahead with the GPO plans. Some suggestions are providing basic internet training for patrons and to continue to use print materials. The next section focuses on another important issue, the need for permanent public access.
IV. The Necessity of Permanent Public Access

Today there are more than 300,000 Federal titles online on GPO Access (James, 2006). “50% of all Federal Government documents are now born digital, published to the web, and will never be printed by the GPO” (James, 2006). If there is no original copy of the document, who is responsible for providing access to it? Who is responsible for making sure that the document still exists tomorrow?

According to one report,

As Public Printer, Bruce James’ job is to save these documents in perpetuity. “In perpetuity” actually means the time that the United States will exist as a country. That could be 100 years or 500 years, but probably not 1000 years. James asked, “How many companies have been around 100 years?” James concluded that we must trust Federal government agencies to preserve government documents than a company that likely will not be here in 100 years (NCLIS, 2006).

So it is up to the Public Printer and the agencies of the Federal government to provide access to the digital documents. But what is permanent access?

Permanent access “means that Government information products within the scope of the FDLP remain available for continuous, no fee public access through the program. For emphasis, the phrase “permanent public access” is sometimes used with the same definition” (Managing, 1998). Permanent access is the government’s guarantee that Government information, regardless of format, will always be available to the public. This is where FDsys comes in.

FDsys is the GPO’s plan for creating permanent access to electronic documents. The goal is to create a central database for all Government information, not just electronic documents, and not just new documents, but all information (James, 2006).
This is an important tool, especially given the way documents disappear. It will make
Government information more accessible and may help reduce the number of “fugitive
documents.”

This section does not critique or criticize the plans for FDsys. Instead it asks; is
there anything else that GPO/FDLP could be doing to promote permanent public access
to electronic documents?

One thing GPO/FDLP can do is to continue to partner with Universities to help
digitize government information. These digitization projects are the first step towards
creating permanent public access to government information. In the partnership with
North Texas, the University digitized information from the defunct Advisory
Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) (Hartman, 2000). In a partnership
with the University of Arizona the University created a virtual depository of electronic
documents by replacing tangible documents with online counterparts (Rawan, Malone,
2006). These partnerships not only take some the load off of GPO but are a good way for
universities and other depositories to gain valuable insights into the inner workings of
GPO. This can be a successful marketing tool for GPO in order to help keep members.

One other thing that GPO/FDLP can do is to ask the States for advice. Just as the
Federal Government is transitioning to E-governance, the states are too. Some states are
attempting to create a system to provide permanent electronic access (Spurlin, 2004). In
2003, the Government Relations Committee and the Washington Affairs Office of
American Association of Law Librarians (AALL) issued a report on State activities
regarding permanent public access (State, 2003).

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7 See FDLP Administrative notes, Fugitive Documents Week, Retrieved, April 8, 2007,
The report found that while only Colorado has enacted legislation to address permanent public access, states like Kansas, Connecticut, and South Dakota are using “innovative technologies to facilitate preservation and permanent public access” (Spurlin, 2004).

However, the Federal government cannot rely solely on the states for developing systems that support permanent public access. According to the AALL report, “approximately 2/5 of all states have not yet begun to address in any manner the need for permanent public access to web based public access” (State, 2003). This means that the Federal government will have to take the lead in creating systems for permanent public access, and it should pull the states into the process. By getting the states involved in this process, it may also ensure that the Federal government and the State governments have similar information systems that the public can access.

Overall, GPO and FDLP are on the right track when it comes to permanent public access. They must continue to believe that permanent public access is a priority while moving forward to digital depositories.

The next section focuses on the depositories themselves, why libraries are leaving and what the FDLP is doing to keep members.
V. Staying in the FDLP

Over the years many libraries have decided to drop their depository status. At the end of GPO’s fiscal year (October 1- September 30) in 1998 there were 1364 libraries. As of March 2007, there are 1260 libraries in the program. The following table lists the numbers from 1998 to the present (E-mail communication from GPO, April 5, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of FDLs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 1998</td>
<td>1364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 1999</td>
<td>1354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2000</td>
<td>1342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2001</td>
<td>1323</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2002</td>
<td>1310</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2003</td>
<td>1287</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2004</td>
<td>1278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2005</td>
<td>1270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2006</td>
<td>1265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2007*</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As of March 2007

A drop of 100 libraries over a period of 10 years is not a lot, but it does indicate a trend. Part of the reason the number is not larger is because of increased flexibility for libraries participating in the FLDP. This section discusses the reasons that libraries leave the program and what the FDP is doing to keep the remaining members.

Reasons for leaving the program include the increased availability of government information on the Internet and the cost of staffing, maintaining, and storing the
collection (Arrigo, 2004). Another reason for leaving is a shift in local practice towards restricted access that no longer allows the library to make the information available to the public (McKenzie, 2000)\(^8\).

When the GPO gets requests from libraries wishing to leave the program, GPO will talk to those libraries and give them several options that will allow the libraries to stay in the program (E-mail communication with GPO, April 5, 2007). The suggestion that most libraries opt for is to make the transition to selecting primarily online resources (E-mail communication with GPO, April 5, 2007).

While some libraries have accepted GPO’s proposal and the direction in which it is taking the FDLP, some authors have their reservations. Some believe that the GPO is leading the FDLP down the wrong path, while others believe that the libraries themselves should shift focus.

Jacobs and his co-authors believe that the depositories should focus on the traditional roles of selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, and providing access to and services for Government information. (Jacobs, 2005). Jacobs is concerned that GPO is forgetting about the FDLP and that the “new model for the FDLP envisions not 1300 libraries but “a reasonable number of comprehensive collections of tangible Government publications” (Jacobs, 2005)\(^9\). The authors believe that this quote from GOP will result in

\(^8\) University was unable to provide access to public because new library building allowed only for card access for students (McKenzie, 2000).

\(^9\) Citing, A Strategic Vision for the 21\(^{st}\) Century, GPO
a decrease in depository libraries (Jacobs, 2005). The authors believe that public access should not be placed in the hands of GPO because the government may not always provide adequate funding (Jacobs, 2005). Their over arching idea is that as government changes the librarians should be cool headed and take responsibility of their own destiny by focusing on traditional roles (Jacobs, 2005).

Shuler believes that libraries should focus on format instead of content. “All the traditional publications long associated with the legislative/regulatory process are now distributed in ways that do not succumb well to our traditional bibliographic tools. They are much less administrative and much more political in their release, distribution, and retention (Shuler, 2005). Shuler says, the libraries should change right along with the government (Shuler, 2005). If FDLP libraries were to adapt, how should this happen?

Arrigo has some suggestions. He wants create a certified training program for new government information librarians, and then later administer the program to veteran government documents librarians (Arrigo, 2005). First, he suggests the creation of the Federal Depository Library Association (FDLA) which would be the accreditation board (Arrigo, 2005). The board would create a set of competencies for FDLP government information librarians and establish requirements and goals for the certification program (Arrigo, 2005).

The certification program would consist of having newly hired government information librarians complete a “videoconference, video streaming and /or Web-based
basic training program, and successfully pass a certification test in order for the employer library to remain in the FDLP” (Arrigo, 2005). Arrigo would like to administer over a three year trial period in order to be sure it is feasible (Arrigo, 2005). If the certification program is realistic, then he would suggest amending Title 44 to ensure funding for the training program (Arrigo, 2005).

The question that remains for this program is how will it benefit GPO and FDLP? If the program is adding more rules and regulations at a time when libraries are considering dropping out, the certification program may result in many libraries leaving the FDLP. One other concern is the skill level of government librarians, particularly those at law school library depositories. Lawyer/librarians may wonder why they would have to be certified beyond their M.L.S. and J.D. degrees. While this certification program sounds like a good idea, more work and flexibility will have to be added to it.

There are many ideas about where the FDLP is headed and what to do to keep libraries in the program. There has been one benefit to all of this discussion. Participating libraries are beginning to look past their own collections and collaborate with other libraries, particularly in the area of permanent public access. National organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA), American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), and the National Archives and Records Association (NARA), are thinking about access and collaborating with each other to ensure that the public will have permanent access to government information (Jacobs, 2005).
In the end, the GPO will do what it needs to survive in the electronic age, but the partnerships that libraries are beginning to forge should help the FDLP maintain its balance and continue to be the strong force it has always been.

VI. Conclusion

The GPO has a new vision of disseminating electronic information which means that depository libraries are no longer receiving the large amounts of tangible documents which made participation in the Federal Depository Library Program beneficial. Libraries remaining in the program will have to be advocates for those still disadvantaged by the digital divide and ensure that the GPO follows through to create a system for permanent public access. While there are many ideas about what the new role for the FDLP will be one of the most important things that the program can do is to take advantage of the ongoing discussions and collaborations. Regardless of what GPO decides to do, the FDLP should continue to encourage and nurture the advocacy projects involving national organizations and other libraries. If the FDLP learns to value these relationships it will be well on its way to ensuring its future into the 21st Century.
List of References

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Congress established the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) to provide free public access to federal government information. The program’s origins date to 1813; the current structure of the program was established in 1962 and is overseen by the Government Printing Office (GPO). Access to government information is provided through a network of depository libraries across the United States. In the past half-century, information creation, distribution, retention, and preservation has expanded from a tangible, paper-based process to include digital processes managed largely through computer