

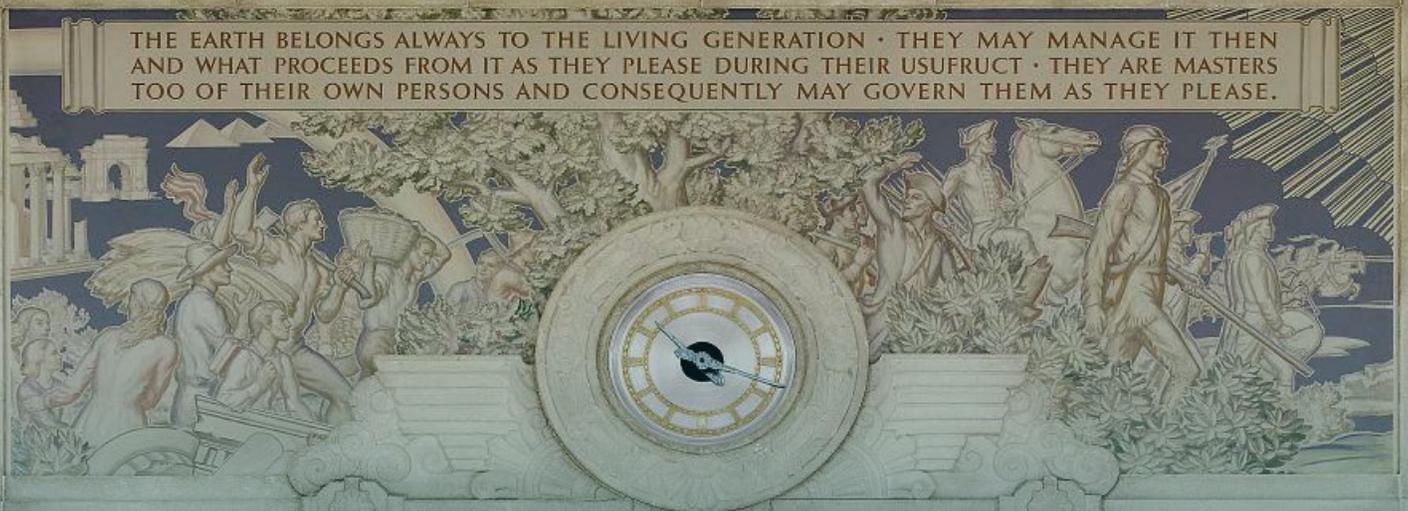


Guide to Federal Librarianship



4 Federal Depository Library Program





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 Pictured above: A mural by Ezra Winter decorates the South Reading Room in the John Adams Building, Library of Congress. The theme is drawn from Thomas Jefferson’s writings, with this quotation from 1789:

The Earth belongs always to the living generation. They may manage it then and what proceeds from it as they please during their usufruct. They are masters too of their own persons and consequently may govern them as they please.

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4. Federal Depository Library Program

One of the oldest congressionally mandated programs in existence, the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) helps safeguard one of our nation's strongest traditions: the public's right to know. Since Congress established the program in 1813, the FDLP has collected, organized, and preserved information produced by the federal government and assisted people in locating and using it. The FDLP has been administered by the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) since 1895.

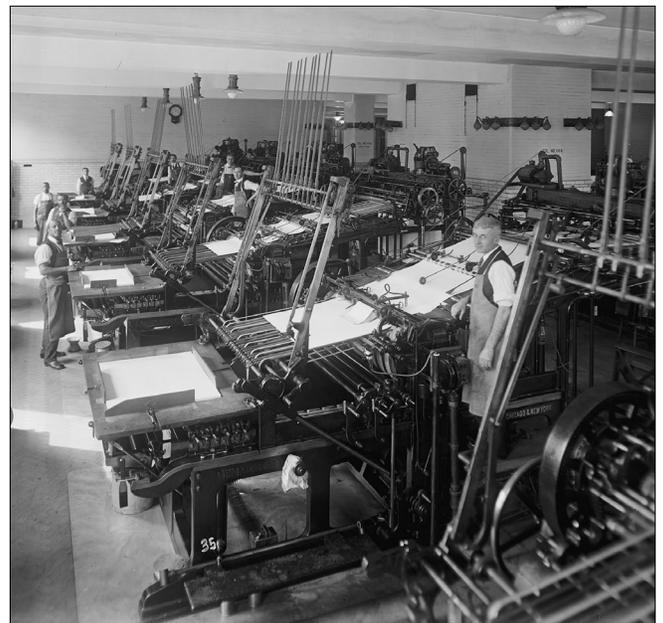
Libraries designated as federal depositories provide local, no-fee access to current and historic information from all three branches of the federal government.

[Federal depository libraries](#) are located within libraries of all types and sizes, including academic, public, law, and community college libraries, as well as federal and state libraries. Federal depository collections, both digital and print, are available for use by everyone. Expert assistance in locating information is available at all locations from government information librarians. [Collections and databases](#) are available on a wide range of topics relevant to the public and to professionals, researchers, and students in almost every field. Access to vast digital resources is available through [GovInfo.gov](#), the [Catalog of U.S. Government Publications](#), and countless agency and other government websites.

[FDLP.gov](#) offers news, information, and tools to assist libraries in managing their depositories and collections.

History

The FDLP originated in the early 1800s by a joint resolution of Congress. The Printing Act of 1895 was a comprehensive and substantive revision of public printing laws, which established the parameters for the current FDLP and GPO's role in providing distribution and cataloging services for U.S. government information. For more information, visit [FDLP Mission & History](#).



Government Printing Office presses (above) and type setting (left) in 1905.

FDLP Today

The depository program has grown into a geographically dispersed network of over 1,100 libraries. Members of Congress, by law, have designated these libraries as official depositories. Most congressional districts and territories of the United States have at least one federal depository library. The combined collections of all the federal depository libraries are considered to be the [National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information](#). The superintendent of documents coordinates and applies lifecycle management best practices to support federal depository libraries and to establish partnerships to build, provide access to, and preserve government publications as vital information assets for the American people.

This is achieved by providing:

- » Public online access to government information products
- » Permanent access to government information
- » Cataloging and indexing of government publications
- » Distribution of publications to federal depository libraries

Library Services and Content Management is the GPO business unit responsible for activities such as information lifecycle management, in multiple publishing formats, from acquisition to public access to dissemination to preservation.

The FDLP is evolving. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, in response to a recommendation from the [Depository Library Council](#) (DLC), GPO Director Hugh Halpern established the Task Force on a Digital Federal Depository Library Program to study the feasibility of a digital FDLP. The task force had representation from the DLC, depository libraries of different types and sizes, library associations, federal agencies, and GPO. The work took place throughout FY 2022 and in the first quarter of FY 2023.

The task force consensus stated the FDLP can and should move to a digital program, a major shift in operations.

GPO then designed a phased approach for implementation. [National Collection Service Areas](#) grouped federal depository libraries into four regions to ensure geographically-dispersed permanent public access to federal government information products, sharing resources among depository libraries, and receiving services from GPO's Library Services and Content Management. GPO then reduced the number of titles available for print distribution, as trusted digital versions are accessible. GPO continues to evaluate and prioritize key activities and map them to task force recommendations.

The FDLP community has begun to see changes to operations that focus on a digital-first approach to service. Information is available from GPO's [Digital FDLP Implementation](#) webpage as this initiative progresses.

Services from GPO

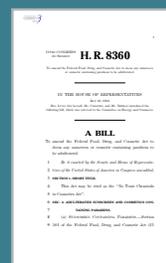
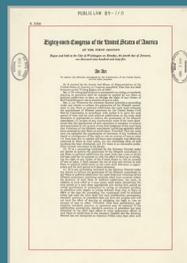
GPO provides convenient and reliable access to trusted information through GPO’s many products and services. One such effort is to provide — in partnership with the federal depository libraries — perpetual, free, and ready public access to the publications of the U.S. Government.

GovInfo

GPO’s [GovInfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov) is an advanced search engine, preservation repository, and content management system for information from all three branches of the federal government. GovInfo preserves, authenticates, manages, and delivers federal content upon request. GovInfo attained ISO 16363:2012 certification as a trustworthy digital repository in 2018 and CoreTrustSeal certification in 2023. See [Trustworthy Digital Repository Audit and Certification](#) for more information.

GovInfo provides free online access to more than 2 million official publications from all three branches of the federal government, including:

- » Legislative, executive, and judicial content
 - Bills and statutes, congressional committee materials, calendars, and congressional proceedings, such as the *Congressional Record*
 - Presidential and regulatory materials, such as the *Federal Register*
 - Opinions from more than 150 U.S. courts
- » Congressionally mandated reports
 - Reports submitted to GPO in compliance with the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act
- » Digitized historical content
 - Including the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*, bound *Congressional Record*, *Federal Register*, *Statutes at Large*, and executive branch documents dating back to 1793
- » Notable publications
 - *9-11 Report*, post-JFK assassination audio, *Warren Commission Report*, Nixon’s Watergate grand jury testimony, Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, and historical landmark legislation including the Civil Rights Act, Social Security Act, and Voting Rights Act
- » Tools and resources
 - Convenient links to recent, trending, and popular content; curated featured articles; and tools like sharing, sorting, searchable help resources, and citation generation
- » Developer resources
 - Available API, bulk data repository, link service, and sitemaps to allow automated access for developers and systems (GovInfo [Developer Hub](#))



GovInfo provides users with digitally signed documents that have an eagle image or GPO Seal of Authenticity on them. The seal alerts users that the digitally signed document is unaltered since GPO made it available through GovInfo.

The Catalog of United States Government Publications

The [Catalog of U.S. Government Publications](#) (CGP) is GPO's web-based bibliographic database of all formats of federal publications. Direct access to online federal publications is available from the CGP's bibliographic records through persistent uniform resource locators (PURLs).

GPO began printing the *Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications (MoCat)* with the passage of the Printing Act of 1895. The CGP began as the online counterpart of the print MOCAT in the early 1990s. With Congress' approval, the print *MoCat* ceased in December 2004, and the CGP took its place in law as the official catalog of the publications of the U.S. government.

GPO catalogs approximately 2,000 titles per month and seeks new projects and partnerships that allow the scope of the CGP to grow and include more records for historical publications.

GPO is a member of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, the Cooperative Online Serials Program, the Monographic Bibliographic Record Cooperative Program, the Name Authority Cooperative Program, and the Subject Authority Cooperative Program, and catalogs according to national and international bibliographic standards.

FDLP Web Archive

The FDLP Web Archive provides points-in-time captures of U.S. federal agency websites, while preserving the functionality of the site to the extent possible. The aim is to provide permanent public access to federal agency web content. GPO harvests and archives the websites with Archive-It, a subscription-based web harvesting and archiving service offered by the Internet Archive.

Access harvested websites through the [Archive-It collection page](#) or through PURLs in web archive catalog records produced by GPO's Library Services and Content Management. Search Web Archive catalog records through the [FDLP Web Archive Catalog](#) or browse a full list of [Web Archive collections in the CGP](#).

GPO welcomes recommendations for federal agency websites to archive. Please contact them through [askGPO](#), click on FDLP, and select the "web archive" category.

The FDLP Academy

GPO's [FDLP Academy](#) is a free source for training opportunities, events, webinars, and webcasts for both the FDLP community and non-depository libraries. Resources include:

- » [FDLP events calendar](#) for information about upcoming educational opportunities
- » [FDLP Academy training repository](#) for access to recorded webinars, webcasts, and conference proceedings



Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government

[Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government](#) is a free, educational website from GPO that is designed to inform students, parents, and educators about the U.S. government. *Ben's Guide* content is divided into three learning levels:

- » Apprentice (ages 4-8)
- » Journeyperson (ages 9-13)
- » Master (ages 14+)

Ben's Guide users go on “learning adventures” on topics such as the branches of government, how laws are made, the election process, and historical documents. Interactive games, as well as printable activities such as crosswords and word searches, are also available.

Ben's Guide is currently undergoing a revamp by a cross-organizational team at GPO. The site will be migrated to a modern and secure platform, and site content and features will be evaluated for update.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Since 1997, GPO has developed strategic partnerships with federal depository libraries, federal agencies, and other institutions to increase public access to U.S. government information.

Partnerships provide one or more of the following benefits:

- » Permanent public access to electronic content
- » Access to services that allow federal depository libraries to enhance their collections
- » Access to services and resources that connect the public to its government's information
- » Access to resources that assist federal depository libraries to manage their collections
- » Preservation of tangible federal depository collections

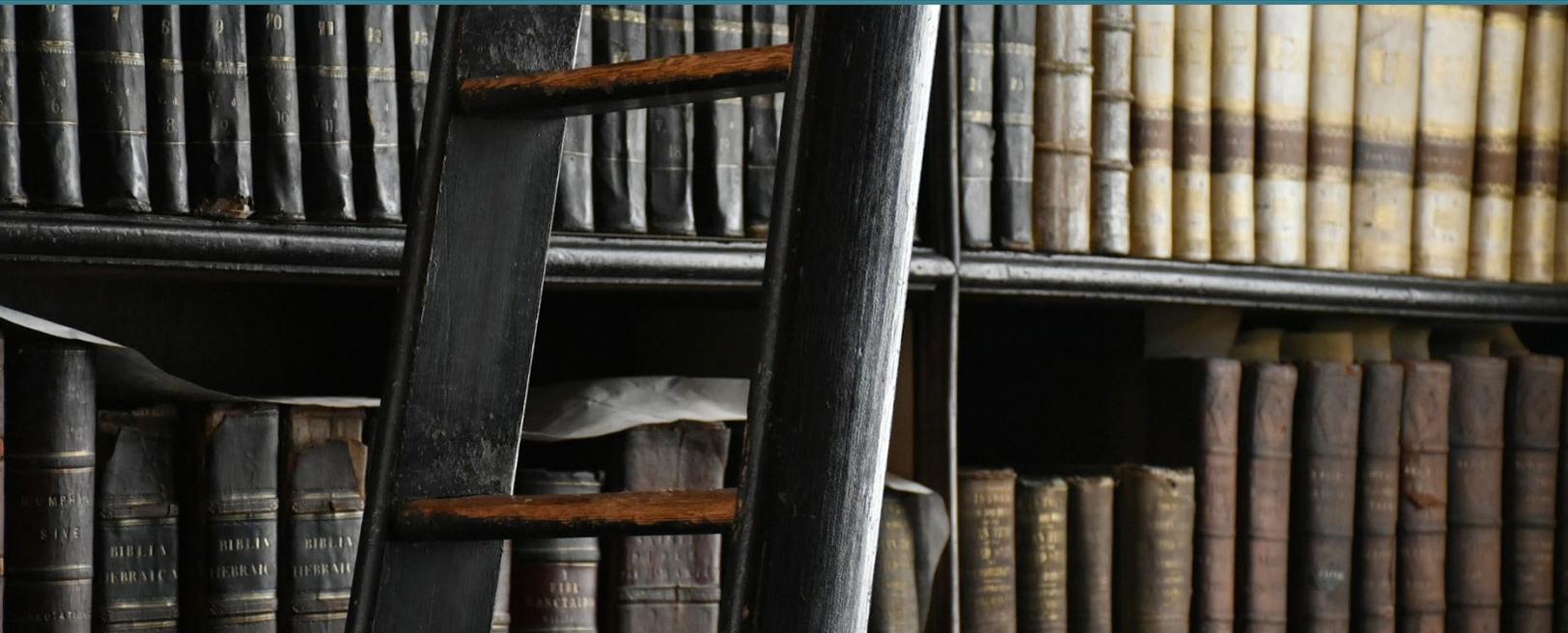
GPO has active partnerships with the following federal agencies for digital resources and tangible collections:

- » Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports
- » Homeland Security Digital Library
- » Library of Congress digital resources and tangible collections
- » Law Library of Congress digital resources and tangible collections
- » National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Technical Reports Server
- » National Library of Medicine (NLM) digital resources
- » National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Institutional Repository
- » National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) publications database
- » U.S. Department of the Interior Library tangible collections
- » U.S. Department of Treasury digitized content

For more information, visit [FDLP Partnerships](#).

Legislative Mandates

[Title 44](#) of the U.S. Code contains laws governing public printing and documents. [Chapter 19](#) specifically provides the authority for the establishment and operation of the FDLP. Among other things, this chapter gives the superintendent of documents responsibility for acquiring, classifying, and distributing federal government publications to depository libraries and ensuring that the public has long-term access to these documents. Authority for the sales, cataloging, and indexing programs is contained in [Chapter 17](#) of Title 44. In 1993, Congress passed the U.S. Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act (Public Law 103-40), which expanded GPO's mission to provide electronic access to federal electronic information. The GPO access law is contained in [Chapter 41](#). GovInfo fulfills this function of providing free public access to official publications from all branches of the federal government.



Federal agencies are required to provide federal publications, digital or tangible, to the FDLP and Cataloging & Indexing Program (44 U.S.C. §§ 1710, 1902-1903; [OMB Circular A-130](#)). Instructions for notifying GPO of new agency publications are available on [GPO's Dissemination Program](#) page.

FDLP Designation

Federal agency libraries eligible for depository status include:

- » Libraries of major bureaus or divisions of federal departments
- » Libraries of independent federal agencies
- » Libraries of service academies

GPO's Library Services and Content Management staff are available to offer consultation and answer questions at [askGPO](#).

Federal Libraries in the FDLP

All federal libraries that participate in the FDLP offer public access for free, but depending on the operations of a specific library, patrons may require appointments, identification, and building staff escorts.

Users can find federal libraries in the FDLP in the [Federal Depository Library Directory](#) by filtering by library type.

Subscribe to Email Alerts and Contact Us

Subscribe to [FDLP News & Events](#) to learn more about FDLP initiatives and to be alerted to free webinars related to free public access to U.S. government information.



For questions and comments, contact LSCM staff via [askGPO](#).

