



August 25, 2004

Mr. Bruce James
Public Printer
U.S. Government Printing Office
732 North Capitol Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20401

Dear Mr. James:

We are writing on behalf of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), the American Library Association (ALA), and the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in support of GPO's proposed Collection of Last Resort (CLR). We very much appreciate the leadership role of GPO in ensuring no fee, long-term public and permanent access to federal information resources in all formats. The library community has long recognized and actively advocated the need for a comprehensive approach to the long-term preservation of and access to government information. The establishment of the CLR is an important step in achieving this goal.

While we understand that there are many details and issues yet to be resolved concerning the establishment and management of such a collection, the benefits to the Congress, federal agencies, the public and participating Federal Depository Libraries (FDLs) are significant. First, the assurance that over time there will be a trusted means to effectively access federal information resources is critically important and long overdue. Secondly, this will greatly expand access to federal information to the public and libraries alike. Third, GPO's collaboration with other agencies, institutions, and partners such as NARA, members of the FDL community and beyond is key to the success of this initiative. And finally, this plan presents new opportunities for libraries to more effectively manage their federal depository library collections.

Libraries serve diverse communities by acquiring, managing, preserving and providing continued access to collections and resources. We have tackled the challenges of preserving collections in a myriad of formats in many ways over time. Libraries have used conservation to preserve the original artifact and reformatting strategies, such as microfilming, to retain content, enhance access and protect the original from excessive use. More recently, many libraries are using digitization as an additional reformatting method for preservation purposes and importantly, access to the resources is vastly improved in the

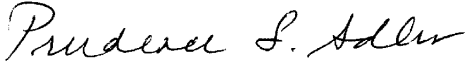
process. Thus we strongly support the inclusion of both tangible and electronic titles (born digital and digitized) in the CLR.

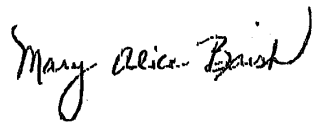
This support recognizes the ways in which our users are finding information. A recent study, the Electronic Publishing Initiative by Columbia University, concluded that users rely upon electronic access to information; indeed, increasingly they do not use non-electronic resources. The study noted that, whereas two-thirds of the respondents uses the physical library more than once a month, a third of the respondents don't look beyond electronic resources when seeking information. This mirrors the direction of many libraries in acquiring and/or licensing electronic resources. For example, research library expenditures for electronic resources have grown almost 400% between 1994/5 and 2001/2. As a consequence, the creation and establishment of CLR reflects the expectations of the user community, expands access to federal information resources, and provides a much needed preservation strategy for federal information.

This plan is fully consistent with Congressional policies vis-a-vis GPO providing FDLs and the public with access to electronic resources. Since the 1990's, Congress has explicitly directed GPO to increasingly shift the FDL from a paper-based to an electronic-based program. In addition, through passage of the Public Law 103-40, the "Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993," Congress called for the establishment of GPO Access, greatly expanding and enhancing public access to government information. These congressional actions mandate a role for GPO in disseminating information in all formats; indeed, they specify that GPO should not be limited to any particular format. ARL, AALL, ALA, and SLA believe that digitization of tangible formats is fully consistent with these congressional policies and leadership in this arena is appropriate for GPO as the benefits to the public and libraries are significant.

In closing, we appreciate that the plan acknowledges the importance of tangible and electronic collections and the need for redundancy of collections, including geographic redundancy; calls for input and partnership with libraries including working with the community and the Center for Research Libraries, in particular, for building consensus and standards; and is an evolving plan based on discussions and rapidly changing information technologies. We look forward to working with you and Judith Russell, Superintendent of Documents and other GPO staff as the CLR is further developed and moves towards implementation.

Sincerely yours,

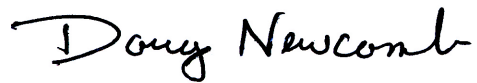

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