



Oral Statement of

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**On Behalf of the
American Association of Law Libraries
American Library Association
Special Libraries Association**

**Legislative Branch Subcommittee Public Witness Hearing
House Committee on Appropriations
May 7, 2008**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the American Association of Law Libraries, the American Library Association and the Special Libraries Association.

Madam Chair Wasserman Schultz and Ranking Member Latham, we appreciate your giving us this opportunity to seek your support for the full FY 2009 appropriations request of the U.S. Government Printing Office. Our communities are committed to public access to government information and a robust Federal Depository Library Program.

Your constituents benefit daily from the collections and services of the thirty depository libraries that serve your districts and states, as well as the government information available online at all libraries.

I'd like to point out that depository libraries spend millions of dollars each year for staff, space, and the technological infrastructure needed to effectively connect your constituents to the resources they need, in all formats that agencies choose to produce their information in. Past studies have shown that depository libraries annually spend about \$10 for every \$1 dollar of Federal investment. The monies that you appropriate to support public access and the FDLP are multiplied many times over by the costs contributed by depository libraries.

My long statement describes in detail why we are asking you to fund fully GPO's Congressional Printing and Binding, Salaries & Expenses, and revolving fund. Monies in all three accounts contribute to providing public access to print and electronic documents and to meeting the needs of depository libraries.

I would like to use my brief time this morning to urge you to agree to GPO's request of \$21.2 million for the Federal Digital System. We believe FDsys is absolutely essential to GPO's future. It's a myth to think that utilizing the Web to provide public access to reliable government information doesn't carry a hefty price tag.

There are enormous costs in managing the life cycle of online information, including its permanent public access and preservation. The funding for FDsys to date has come from monies reprogrammed in 2005. We ask that you support FDsys with a commitment to its launch next fall and its important future enhancements.

The GPO Access system, authorized by legislation back in 1993, is the central mechanism for making Federal government information more accessible to the public. GPO has done a remarkable job on a shoestring, and now estimates that 94% of new titles in the FDLP are electronic. With this emphasis on online access, it's time to replace the obsolete technology of the GPO Access system with the state-of-the-art FDsys. Here's why.

GPO Access uses WAIS, a pre-web technology that makes it challenging for the average user to search and locate the information they need. In addition, there are times when the technology fails, as it recently did when access to three years of the online Congressional Record, 1994 to 1996, became unavailable to users. Fortunately, in this case, the Congressional Record is one of GPO's "Essential Titles" and is available for anyone to access at a depository library.

During the past year, we've been very pleased with progress GPO has made in a number of areas because of the new functionalities available through FDsys. Let me briefly mention two that are especially noteworthy.

- **First, Digital Authentication.**

GPO has begun implementing digital signatures to certain electronic documents on GPO Access. This establishes GPO as *the* trusted information disseminator for the Federal government by providing the assurance that an electronic document has not been altered since GPO disseminated it.

This year, GPO launched an online collection of authenticated Public and Private Laws of the 110th Congress. The ability to authenticate online legal resources is especially important. And in February, GPO digitally signed the *2009 Budget of the United States Government* and published it in print after OMB had announced that it would only publish the 2,200 page budget online. OMB's shortsighted decision resulted in a flurry of news stories about how valuable the print budget books are in terms of usability.

- **Second, Web Harvesting.**

GPO is continuing its progress in automated web harvesting through FDsys. The goal of web harvesting is to discover and capture online publications from agency web sites. GPO is building on its successful 2006 pilot project with the Environmental Protection Agency through which they captured over 200,000 previously unknown online EPA documents. The web harvest is needed to increase public access to web-based agency information and to ensure its preservation.

Once GPO captures all these new resources, additional new costs are needed to catalog them and add the necessary metadata. Some, but not all, of these crucial tasks can be done electronically. The experienced, expert librarians at GPO are needed as well.

In closing, I hope you'll agree with us that full funding for GPO in FY 2009 is vital to supporting the needs of federal depository libraries and your constituents, whom they serve every day.

Last year, I asked you to become champions of GPO and the FDLP. This year, I ask that you champion FDsys and, at the same time, support GPO's other funding needs that are crucial to a robust information dissemination program. The FDLP is *your* program, and we are counting on your help to keep it relevant in the 21st Century. Thank you very much.