# Oregon State University Libraries and Depository Library Status: an investigation

**by**

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| **Research Statement** |

In October of 2010, library administrators at Oregon State University requested an assessment of status of the current depository library program. What are the pros and cons of OSU Libraries staying in this program, as supported by evidence such as government documents circulated in the last 3-5 years; as well as reasons why some depository libraries had withdrawn from the program.

OSUL has been a depository library since 1907. The issue of withdrawing from the FDLP is serious since it has many consequences. In addition to a lengthy work process involved in dismantling the federal depository collection at OSU, the impact of such a decision on the research and academic strengths of the university needs to be taken in to consideration.

This report explores the advantages and disadvantages for OSU of retaining the status of a federal depository, providing information to assist the library administrators in making an informed decision.

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| **A Brief History of the Federal Depository Library Program** |

In 1860, the U.S. Congress established the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) to carry out the core mission of the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO): to ensure that the American public has free access to information from and about its government. The GPO functions to centralize resources for gathering, cataloging, producing, providing, and preserving published government documents in all its forms; FDLP exists to guarantee that information produced by the U.S. government will not be lost in case of a disaster in the capital, by distributing many copies of documents throughout the nation. Depository libraries act as a “safety net” for government information.

Most depository libraries are designated as *selective:* they select from a list the documents that will best serve the users in their district. Each state (with rare exception) has a *regional* depository library as well, whose responsibility it is to retain one copy of every government publication received and provide assistance to the selective depository libraries in the state—through interlibrary loan and reference assistance, as well as assisting with disposal of unwanted items.

A library becomes a federal depository in various ways, generally by designation by a congressman or senator. OSU and all other Land Grant colleges were added to the program in 1907 as part of the expansion of the Morrill Act in 1890. Today there are more than 1250 depository libraries of all types in the program; 43 are Land Grant institutions. Oregon has a total of 19 selective depository libraries, including all the state universities, the courts, a number of law libraries and one federal agency (Bonneville Power Administration Library in Portland). OSU is the only Land Grant institution library in the program for Oregon. Since 2007 Oregon’s regional library is the Oregon State Library in Salem; Portland State University served this function previously.

Each depository library creates a profile for itself, choosing the publications of most value to their Congressional district and other members of their patron base that they want to receive from the *List of Classes of United States Government Publications Available for Selection by Depository Libraries and the Union List of Item Selections*.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Currently, although difficult to determine for certain, as much as 31% of the collection may consist of federal documents, most of which came to us through the FDLP.

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| **GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act**  |

In 1993, Congress passed the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act, P.L. 103-40, whereby it expressed its intent for GPO to use electronic technology to make Government information more accessible. In the process, GPO has become a leader in creating guidelines and best-practices for digitization. They undertook a massive project to retrain their staff and streamline their operations, re-creating themselves as a 21st-century distributor and digital preservationist; as a result about 95% of currently published materials are now published in electronic format. These are items that are largely “born digital.” Increasingly, they may not have a tangible equivalent as agencies elect to cease traditional print publication.

But there is a massive amount of documents from the past, and it has been a huge challenge for GPO to translate their “Legacy collection” into digital format. They encourage libraries and other organizations to partner with them to help with this effort, which has resulted in a number of project collaborations. They have established a *Registry of U.S. Government Publication Digitization Projects* (<http://registry.fdlp.gov>) to pull together information on many of the digitization projects happening throughout the country. Libraries can search the Registry to find out what other libraries are digitizing, locate possible partners for a collaborative project and avoid duplicating publications that have already been digitized. OSU has contributed by listing the *U.S. Forest Service Research Legacy* and the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Scientific Reports—Fisheries* in this registry.

However, while much less exists in print than before, it is unlikely that GPO will completely eliminate print and other tangible items, for reasons that include concern for historic preservation along with the way people want to use information.

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| **Partnership between Libraries and GPO in FDLP**  |

Libraries in the depository system consider themselves partners with GPO, and work closely together to improve the program. The Depository Library Council (DLC) was created in 1972 to serve as an advisory committee to the Public Printer and the Superintendent of Documents and addresses such issues as improving public access, optimizing resources, indexing and classification, format, storage and administration. DLC members are appointed by the Public Printer and consist primarily of depository library representatives. This is a robust arrangement, and depository librarians are encouraged to attend the twice-yearly meetings of the DLC and GPO to observe, learn and participate.

GPO is sensitive to the concerns of its depository library partners, and continues to work to keep the FDLP relevant and useful without being a great burden on the participants. Most recently, last year GPO commissioned an environmental scan from Ithaka S+R as part of an effort “to analyze the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) and recommend a sustainable and practical model or models, consistent with its existing vision and mission, for its future.”[[2]](#endnote-2) This process is still in the beginning stages. Depository library partners will be involved throughout the process.

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| **Legal Requirements of a depository library** |

Authority for the legal obligations of FDLP libraries are found in [Title 44](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/44/usc_sup_01_44_10_19.html) of the US Code, sections 1901-1916.[[3]](#endnote-3) In essence: All federal depository libraries are required to make depository materials available for free use by the general public; complete the Biennial Survey (in odd-numbered years) to inform the Superintendent of Documents on the condition of the library; retain a collection of at least 10,000 books in the library; and to maintain the depository materials so they’re accessible to the public.

The legal obligations of selective depository libraries are to retain materials for at least five years (unless superseded or replaced by bound volumes). They may then be discarded according to the librarian’s professional judgment. Selectives are permitted to replace tangible items with an online version providing the online version is official, complete and free of charge to the user[[4]](#endnote-4). They must also to provide access to computers for the public to view and print these online documents.

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| **Oregon State University Libraries' role in the FDLP in Oregon** |

Oregon State University’s selection percentage has fluctuated since we became a depository in 1907, but has generally been high. Currently it stands at 82%, and the reason for this is in part due to a recent arrangement with the state regional library, the Oregon State Library (OSL). Previous to this arrangement, we collected between 72-77%.

OSL took on the duties of Oregon’s regional library in November of 2007, when Portland State University relinquished this status due to lack of space, staff, and budget. OSL has similar limits, and agreed on condition that the three major university libraries (PSU, UO, and OSU) would enter into a selective housing agreement and accept all publications from certain agreed-upon agencies, as well as perform reference and interlibrary loan duties associated with those collections.

Depository materials consist primarily of monographs, serials, maps, and reports, with a few videos, posters, flyers and the like mixed in. They come to us in a variety of formats: paper, microfiche, CD and DVD, and electronically via the internet. Of the total of 1,582,886 items in OSU Libraries’ collection, we estimate that 473,080 items are federal government publications (their records tagged “f-gov” in Millennium). Therefore as much as 31% of the collection consists of federal documents, most of which came to us through the FDLP.

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| **The Housing Agreement and OSU FDLP's Collection Profile**  |

In developing the agreement, collection and academic program strengths were determined by the regional library and the three participating university libraries. They divided up the Superintendent of Documents agency classifications according to each institution’s individual strengths and existing level of collection.  OSUL agreed to take responsibility for most of the agencies related to agriculture, natural resources, fisheries, oceanographic and atmospheric sciences, and other sciences, since these areas have for many years been an important part of OSU and OSU Libraries’ mission and were already heavily collected.

Following are the agencies that OSUL agrees to accept, along with total number of current active item numbers for each and how many items are in paper and electronic:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Department** | **Total active** | **paper** | **electronic** |
|  Agriculture | 1393 | 266 | 1241 |
|  Interior | 601 | 292 | 325 |
| NOAA | 276 | 143 | 80 |
| National Oceanographic Data Center | Included in NOAA |  |  |
| National Marine Fisheries Service | Included in NOAA |  |  |
| Oceanic and Atmospheric Research Office | Included in NOAA |  |  |
| FAA - inactive | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| MCB: Board of Mediation and Conciliation - inactive | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  NASA | 83 | 20 | 68 |
|  National Science Foundation | 34 | 6 | 34 |
| Fed Mine Safety - inactive (Y 3.M 66: )  | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| NRC - inactive (Y 3.N 88: )  | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TVA - inactive (Y 3.T 25: )  | 0 | 0 | 0 |

OSUL agrees to select and retain one tangible (print or microform) copy of every publication from these agencies. OSUL also agrees to help other Oregon depository libraries with disposal of unwanted publications from these agencies by reviewing their lists of potential discards, and claiming any that are needed to fill in gaps in the collection. It is part of our agreement to claim any offered documents older than five years to fill collection gaps. This is the reason for including inactive agencies on the list. In addition OSU provides interlibrary loan and reference services to other libraries in Oregon in our areas of expertise. At least one year’s written notice must be given to the regional partners if we wish to withdraw from the agreement.[[5]](#endnote-5)

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| **Impact of the Housing Agreement on OSU Libraries**  |

The chief impact of this agreement on our work has fallen primarily to the staff members in DSS that review the lists and claim missing documents. Staff must verify holdings which usually requires more than simply checking the library online catalog and shelf list, particularly for older titles. However, most of the items on the discard lists are newer and require less time, since we likely have received them and they are already included in the catalog. The older items that may not be cataloged are far fewer in number.

OSU downloads catalog records for FDLP titles from Marcive, loaded weekly into the online catalog. There are about 650 new electronic resources per month, and approximately 400 titles of tangible materials (including microfiche).

Well over half of what we currently receive through the FDLP, whether item numbers (59%) or actual receipts (62%), are electronic library documents and require little cataloging attention. Receipt of print titles has fallen below 30%, even taking into account that we may be receiving more print from selected agencies than we might normally choose due to the housing agreement.

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| **Benefits and drawbacks of the Selective Housing Arrangement** |

Depository librarians from OSL, OSU, UO and PSU worked closely together to make the housing agreement as strategic for each library as possible to mitigate impact on each institution, and believe we have been very successful. The agencies each library is responsible for collecting were already heavily represented in their depository profiles, and OSU has every reason to expect the agencies we agreed to collect will continue to be important to OSU. There is no requirement or expectation to provide server space for digital documents, but we may do so if we choose; it is not covered in the agreement.

Reference and interlibrary loan are services that we have always offered to other Oregon libraries, and these departments have noticed only minimal impact from the arrangement. Cataloging, processing, and shelf space is not impacted greatly; the agencies OSU agreed to collect are those that we already collected heavily, so we often find that we already have all the items on the discard lists.

We are required to keep tangible documents in perpetuity (unless they are superseded), which could become a burden. However, these make our collection more complete, benefitting both university researchers and the citizens of Oregon. One problematic aspect is that we are required to accept some documents we might not normally select, such as posters and study kits. The good news on this is that production of this kind of “ephemera” has fallen drastically in the last decade.

GPO and the Depository Library Council are aware of the burdens that being a regional library puts on an institution. Over the last several years they have been working toward changing Title 44, sections 1911 and 1912 to ease this burden, such as allowing consolidation of regional libraries from 51 to 15 across the country, and allowing regional libraries to drop required receipt of print for some titles in favor of GPO’s digital access. This discussion is on the agenda for the next Depository Council meeting in the Spring, but is unlikely to be resolved during this Congressional session.

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| **Records of Documents received by OSU through FDLP** |

In order to determine whether Federal government documents serves as an integral part of our collection, we have collected various types of data. The method of investigation is based on the types of data collected and how they relate to each other. Reconciliation of our statistics has been difficult, since different stats are reported differently. We discuss some of this in a little more detail later in this document.

OSU Libraries is currently an 82% depository (ie, this is the percentage of active item records we have included in our selection profile). This includes all formats, both tangible and electronic.

With the assistance of a tool provided to depository libraries called Documents Data Miner 2 (DDM2) we can detail the current number of active items in our depository profile. Data in DDM2 are for current profile only. Please note that these are item records and not a count of actual individual pieces received. The chart shows that we select 8507 items in all formats.

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| **Active item numbers** **received by OSU** |
| break down by format: | P | MF | CD | E | EL | Ukn | DVD | total |
|  | 2457 | 701 | 101 | 147 | 4987 | 57 | 23 | 8507 |
| percent of total | 29% | 8% | 1% | 2% | 59% | 0.7% | 0.3% | 100% |

Format codes: P-paper, MF-microfiche, CD-CD-ROM disks, E-electronic, EL-electronic library (titles available online), Ukn-unknown format, and DVD is self explanatory.

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| **Measurement of Federal Government Document Usage at OSU** |

To get a more complete picture of how much and how often federal documents are used at OSUL, a number of things need to be measured in addition to circulation of SuDocs. These include (1) titles accessed online, (2) items downloaded from government databases, and (3) in-house use of tangible documents, namely paper, microfiche, and maps. Measuring some of these usages is challenging and involves some estimation and guesswork.

*(1) Titles Accessed Online*

With online government publications replacing tangible documents by Congressional mandate, we need to know what is being accessed in this way to have a full picture of documents usage. GPO has devised a way to track an institution’s use. GPO cataloging records for electronic documents all include a PURL (persistent URL). This not only allows library users to access online documents through the catalog, and libraries to leave the finding of documents that have changed URLs to GPO, it also allows the GPO to track by IP address how often the PURL links are clicked through to the document. While any library (regardless of whether they are a depository or not) may include records and links to the online documents in their catalogs, the PURL tracking service is available exclusively to FDLP libraries.

The most recent data shows that between November 2009 and August 2010,there was a total of 3,631 PURL referrals from OSU IPs. 3,156 of these were from the OSU catalog, 478 from other pages (subject guides, for example). (see Figure 1 in Appendix)

(*2) Items downloaded from Government Databases*

There are several passworded databases that are available to Federal depository libraries for free[[6]](#endnote-6). Agencies otherwise charge access fees for non-depository users, if they allow non-depository use at all. They currently are:

* NTIS
* National Climatic Data Center Online Document Library
* Homeland Security Digital Library
* Public Health Reports
* USA Trade® Online

It has proven difficult to obtain usage statistics for most of the databases we access. Methods of access to these databases are determined by the providing agency.[[7]](#endnote-7)

OSU access to National Climate Data Center documents is through their various catalog records and we are so far unable to separate usage statistics from the rest of our online documents. We have set up access to the NTIS database and the Homeland Security Digital Library through our database of databases. Numbers are unavailable for the depository version of the NTIS database (they will provide it for the subscribed version, but that costs $14,000 per year).

But the Homeland Security database, which is *only* available to military and depository libraries, is tracked. We have been able to obtain data only from January to September of 2010:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2010** | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep |
| Homeland Security | 254 | 155 | 57 | 35 | 24 | 26 | 14 | 1 | 4 |

*(3) In-house use of all types of tangible documents: paper, microfiche, maps*

a. Circulation

Not all information is readily available for three years; availability has been noted in each case. This makes it somewhat more difficult to assess use in some areas. Further complicating matters, only a portion of our government documents collection is classified in the Superintendent of Documents (SuDoc) classification and housed in the Government Documents areas on the 3rd floor. Over the years many titles have been classified in the Library of Congress system and interfiled with other library materials. Catalog records, particularly for older titles, may not contain the SuDoc numbers. This interfiling complicates both circulation and re-shelving statistics. Looking only at circulation by location code gives an incomplete picture, to say the very least.

Millennium indicates that government documents (classified in SuDoc numbers) have circulated steadily from 2008-2010, showing no significant increase or decline:

2008: 386

2009: 349

2010: 371

b. Re-Shelving

Many documents (microfiche for example) have a “Does not Circulate” status, so it is important for a fuller picture to get re-shelving statistics to determine actual use. We have some significant challenges concerning re-shelving statistics, because they are taken by floor and not broken down by whether something is a government publication or not, and a significant number of documents are classified in LC and would not be recognized as such by re-shelvers anyway.

Since most of the 3rd floor collection consists of paper documents, it is reasonable to assume most the re-shelving statistics for that floor would consist of documents. This does not take into account the large number of agriculture and forestry titles on the 1st floor in the Q, S and T classification, nor the social sciences data in the H classification on the 5th floor. *Data came from the Circulation department, which had access to the most recent year only; earlier years may be available.*

University Archives is in charge re-filing maps, microfiche and CDs, and keep quite decent statistics on them. Since CD statistics are negligible, we have not included them here.

Re-shelving records show that from December 2009 to October 2010, a time span of 11 months, there are 3268 non-circulated items being used. (See Figure 4 in Appendix)

Our microfiche collection consists of a variety of government fiche such as NTIS reports, ERIC documents, Congressional documents (like hearings and slip laws), and US Forest Service and EPA reports. While not all fiche are federal documents, and not all of them came via the FDLP, a large majority of it is so we don’t think it affects the data too drastically. The case of maps is similar so we are confident that the greater part of these numbers reflects document use.

Because new microfiche to be filed is mixed in with existing fiche waiting to be re-filed, some adjustments have had to be made to pull out the new fiche from our result. Because there is often a delay between when fiche was received and checked in until it finally gets filed, our quarterly numbers sometimes dip into negative territory. To adjust for this, and to more closely match the circulation statistics, we have charted them annually rather than quarterly. We are lacking the numbers for the last half of 2010, so only six months’ data are represented in the chart:

Microform and maps are also heavily used, they record that from 2008-2010, 1621 maps and 4809 microform are being used. (See Figure 3 in Appendix)

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|  **Case Studies: Withdrawing from FDLP**  |

Of approximately 1250 depository libraries throughout the U.S. and the territories, 45 have withdrawn from the FDLP since 1998 and 4 other academic libraries joined for a net loss of approximately 3%. Only 16 out of 45 were academic libraries; most of these were private, rather than public, colleges, and 3 of these were community colleges. No land grant universities were among those withdrawing. Only 7 of the 45 libraries had a pre-1950 designation, and 3 of those were academic libraries. In the case of one academic library, the entire college was disbanded which forced the removal of the depository designation.

A 2002 article by Lev et al outlined the decision Towson University made to give up their depository status, and explored through a survey why 14 other college and university libraries had made the decision to withdraw from the program. Their findings indicated that all of these libraries were depositories with a selection level of 25% or less, usually located within 50 miles of other depository libraries. The primary reason given for the decision was electronic access to documents. Other reasons frequently mentioned included staffing priorities and space constraints, being near bigger and older depositories, and the amount of time spent on reports, inspections, and meeting other FDLP requirements.[[8]](#endnote-8)

We investigated two more recent decisions.

*Case 1: Iowa State University, still in the program*

Iowa State University is an interesting case due to its comparability to OSUL. Both universities are land grant institutions, added to the program in 1907, with a similar student fte, library staffing numbers, and library budget. Iowa collects at 70% and OSUL at 82%. Both institutions have similar curricula (agriculture, engineering, science). Like many other depository libraries, Iowa State University considered withdrawing from the FDLP, but ultimately decided against doing so.

Their reasons for considering the option were primarily a need for more space and the reduction of staffing. However, they decided after review that the value of remaining a depository was too important to their programs. Rather than dismantling the depository library, they made adjustments to their protocols that freed up space and time.

Like OSUL they receive Marcive records, and their IT staff reported that this makes their cataloging “no burden.” They found a solution to their space issue by switching formats from tangible to electronic whenever possible, reviewing their selections and dropping unnecessary titles, and performing more aggressive weeding. Every item more than five years old is reviewed by the appropriate subject librarian, who decides whether to weed or to keep. Those they decide to retain are reclassified into LC and moved into the general collection. Their goal is to reduce their depository size from 70% to 40%. In their case they have discovered they can solve their problems by downsizing but still remaining in the FDLP.

*Case 2: Evergreen State College, dropping depository status*

Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington is a smaller depository library (34%), a member in the FDLP since 1972, that did make the decision to withdraw from the FDLP in April, 2010. One mitigating factor in this decision is the close geographic proximity of the regional library, the Washington State Library. Evergreen's depository profile emphasizes environmental, wildlife and fisheries, public policy, geology, earth sciences, education, and legal topics. The dismantling process includes (1) stop receiving any more Federal documents and (2) distributing existing documents to other depository libraries as much as possible. Evergreen does not plan to retain any of the depository collection.

This proves to be a lengthy process due to the legally required procedures involved in dismantling a depository library. Evergreen has first to create lists of all the documents they have received over the years, put those lists out for review by other depository libraries, and then ship the documents to those claiming them. In this case, after the regional library has claimed what they want, the Washington State and Alaska depositories have an opportunity to review the document lists and decide which items they want to keep. Anything remaining is offered to depository libraries nationwide. Whatever is left will be discarded.

*Analysis*. The two individual case studies present two very different scenarios and decisions, one to remain a depository and keep but downsize their collection to solve some of their issues; the other to entirely dismantle their depository collection and accept all the effort involved in that. They and the survey from the Lev article are examples of different approaches to addressing space and staff issues and a good contrast and reference for administrators to consider on the issue of the depository library in the mist of this changing and resource constrained world.

Evergreen State College is only minimally comparable to OSU differing in size, age and curriculum. Its decision is well supported by its proximity to the Washington State Library. However, the process of dismantling a depository library is long and labor-intensive, even for a small library. They are still involved in this process. Indications from previous libraries that have withdrawn from the FDLP are that it will take them longer than they might have expected: Towson University, in the Lev article, had estimated that the entire process would take them a year from start to finish; in fact it took three years.

It is not surprising that Iowa State University Libraries decided to remain in the FDLP, for there are many benefits attached to being a Federal Depository Library. These are being collected from FDLP libraries and listed in a publication currently under development by GPO and the Depository Library Council, a draft of which can be found at <http://www.fdlp.gov/outreach/fdlp-value-and-options/820-benefitsaffordedtolibs>.

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| ***Analysis***  |

The Depository library system is similar to a library consortium, with tools and procedures developed by GPO to assist member libraries in selecting items that are pertinent to their individual needs. In addition it provides a framework that allows those libraries to share their strengths, specialties and knowledge with other depository libraries. Weaknesses in one depository library can be strengthened by other member libraries' collections and expertise, and GPO tools let them easily discover which libraries these may be. Although a depository profile is based on agency publications rather than subject, it is roughly equivalent to a YBP profile as the agencies concentrate on a limited area of expertise.

A variety of public access, collection management and cataloging tools are available to assist depository libraries and are unavailable to non-depositories.

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| **Benefits provided by FDLP membership to OSU Libraries** |

*Subject Librarians input*

The federal government produces information of use to all academic subject areas. In interviews with subject librarians, all indicated use to a greater or lesser extent of government information and publications, even the humanities librarians. The heaviest use is in the areas of Forestry, Engineering, Agriculture, and Political Science. The engineering librarian says that the free NTIS database is essential to her discipline, along with the Transportation Research Information Service (TRIS) and the Office of Science and Technical Information (OSTI). Librarians tell us that vitally important agency publications (both serial and monograph) come from the Dept. of Agriculture, many of the agencies in the Dept. of the Interior (Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife, US Geological Survey, National Park Service), EPA and the Dept. of Energy.

When asked if a Google search would be a sufficient way of locating government documents, most indicated that while the search engine is convenient, it does not retrieve everything they need and that the records in the OSU Catalog are a very useful way of locating important items.

These interviews indicate to us that federal documents are indeed an integral part of the collection which sustain and advance teaching and research at OSU.

In conversations with subject librarians and catalogers at OSUL, the following were determined to be some of the more important benefits of FDLP designation to OSU Libraries.

a. Budgetary benefits

* Free access to fee-based or restricted databases, such as NTIS and Homeland Security.
* We can obtain free reference materials which are often the basis of expensive commercial equivalents.
* It extends limited book budgets by providing valuable materials at only the cost of housing and maintenance; it is a significant cost savings compared to purchasing the same valuable resources.

b. Collection development benefits

* Our profile saves us time and effort in selection and organization of the collection; it also insures we won’t miss a new title from an important agency. Marcive utilizes this profile to select cataloging records that we download into our system, saving countless hours of cataloging effort.
* Flexibility: changes to the curriculum can be addressed in the library profile, adding and dropping where needed.
* FDLP membership allows access to a selection of resources not readily available from other sources or vendors, along with certain material that are not for sale.

c. Assessment tools provided

* PURL referrals reporting, a free tool available only to depository libraries to measure usage of their online FDLP collections.
* Membership in the FDLP has allowed us to build a premier agriculture and forestry collection based upon years’ worth of federal information. The older print collection includes primary sources important to research to these and many, if not all, disciplines. It is a very rich historical collection, as we’ve been in the program for more than 100 years.
* Access to the mailing list Govdoc-L puts us in immediate touch with the FDLP community.
* There is prestige to the institution attached to being a depository library

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| **Cost effectiveness in collection development and management for OSUL** |

*Free Cataloging Records and PURLs*

GPO provides depository libraries with free cataloging records and assigns PURLs to online documents and databases, reducing work that would otherwise need to be done by OSUL staff. Through our contract with Marcive, both brief MARC records and full MARC records can be batch-loaded into our system. Included in our contract are barcode and SuDoc labels, and adding holdings to WorldCat, at an annual cost of $5,690. Over a period of three years this averages to a cost of $0.85 per record.

GPO and Marcive are currently in negotiation to make the loading of MARC record free for all depository libraries. Which if any other services Marcive offers member libraries that might be included in the eventual agreement is unknown.

Once each year depository libraries have the opportunity of adding to their profile. If curriculum needs change at OSU we are able to adjust what we receive at no cost. Item records may be dropped from the library’s profile at any time during the year. Marcive can adjust what records we receive without further effort from us.

*Staffing reduction*

Over the years, staff FTE devoted to the depository collection has been substantially reduced. The 1999 Biennial Survey showed that the last year we staffed a separate documents desk, it took 3 librarians, 3 support staff and 2 student workers. This was reduced in 2001 to 1.5 librarians, 2 support staff and 1.5 students. By 2003 this was further reduced to .25 librarians, 2 support staff, and <2 student workers, where it has remained fairly consistently since. This is a 53% reduction. Several factors contributed to this, chiefly that we were no longer staffing a separate service point, and a substantial switch-over to primarily digital documents with its attendant reduction in processing and cataloging needs.

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| **Conclusion** |

There are many factors involved in any decision on whether OSU should remain in the depository library system. Free availability of 95% of current federal documents online would seem to indicate that membership is less of a necessity than in the past. Eliminating the need to comply with the legal requirements of the program seems attractive (ie, accepting publications we may not want, having to keep them for five years at least, having to provide public access computers to the public to access federal information) and so does eliminating a lot of record-keeping. While GPO and the regional library could require that we send parts of our collection to other libraries, it is a fact that libraries that leave the program are often allowed to keep at least some if not most of their depository collection.

However, the drawbacks are at least as equally dismaying.

* Withdrawal from the FDLP means we must find and list all documents we have received through the program. It could lead to the possible removal of up to 31% of our collection to send to other libraries (and we have an attractive and historically significant collection, particularly in Agriculture, that other depositories might wish to have for themselves).
* Withdrawal from the program could have a strongly negative impact on our curriculum support. Without a selection profile, subject librarians would need to seek out the important government documents we wanted to include in our catalog, acquisitions would have to purchase those we want in paper (if available), both paper and electronic items would need to be searched in OCLC and/or the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (CGP) and records downloaded into our catalog—this is no easy thing when you select as heavily as we do. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that even after all the work involved in withdrawing from the FDLP is done, librarian and staff time would not show any savings.
* Additionally we would lose access to some important collections (NTIS, Homeland Security), tools (Documents Data Miner2, PURL Referral Tool) and support.
* Our selective housing agreement is very recent, and if we were to withdraw from the FDLP this would cause significant disruption to this arrangement and hardship for our partner libraries.

GPO, historically responsive to member library concerns although within legal restraints of Title 44, is currently working with the Depository Library Council to relieve some of the burden of belonging to the FDLP. Already mentioned are the efforts to simplify the regional library system, reducing the numbers from 51 to around 15. Working with the FDLP community, Ithaka S+R is developing recommendations for sustainable models for the FDLP. These discussions are ongoing. Iowa State University Library worked to find ways to solve their space and staffing problems by reducing their depository profile combined with an aggressive weeding program. Similar steps may be taken at OSU, although we have additional responsibilities connected to our regional selective housing agreement so may not be able to be as comprehensive as ISU. Outside these specific agencies we have already switched many titles from tangible to electronic, but as ever more of the collection is becoming available electronically we may be able to find more titles that we can switch. As the legacy collection is digitized, we will find that we can withdraw more of the older publications as well. We can in fact contribute to this process by entering into digitization partnerships with GPO, with something like Oregon Explorer participating.

Available circulation and usage data indicate that in the case of print documents circulation is steady, user “click-through” to electronic publications is growing swiftly, microfiche use is surprisingly heavy, and map circulation has fallen off somewhat but they still have significant use.

Considering all of this, indications are that a decision to withdraw from the FDLP at this time would be, at the very least, premature.

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| **Appendix** |

Figure

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New item shelving numbers are mixed in with re-shelving statistics. Microform numbers arrived at by subtracting receipts from total re-shelving statistics

Figure 4. Most recent year only (all that are available)

1. **Notes**

 Non-depository librarians often are confused by the difference between *item numbers* and individual documents with *SuDoc numbers*. SuDoc is the Superintendent of Documents classification numbering system, designed to identify individual publications and group them together by the same government author (agency). GPO then associates the SuDocs with item numbers, which depositories use to select what documents to receive (ie, develop their profile). An item number may be affiliated with one specific title and its own SuDocs number, or it may encompass more than one publication title and SuDoc number. A single publication distributed in more than one format would have a different item numbers associated with each format so that the depository library may select to receive only the format they wish. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See “[Modeling a sustainable future for the Federal Depository Library Program in the 21st Century: Environmental Scan](http://fdlpmodeling.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Background-11-29-2010-FINAL-DRAFT.pdf).” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See Federal Depository Library Legal Requirements, <http://www.fdlp.gov/administration/fdlp-legal-requirements> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “Substituting Online for Tangible Versions of Depository Publications by Selectives,” <http://www.fdlp.gov/collections/collection-maintenance/141-substitution-guidelines> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. A copy of this agreement is on the Shared drive, [\\Cn-share\library\CollDev\FDLP\FDLPSelectiveHousingAgreement\FinalAgreement.pdf](file:///%5C%5CCn-share%5Clibrary%5CCollDev%5CFDLP%5CFDLPSelectiveHousingAgreement%5CFinalAgreement.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.fdlp.gov/collections/building-collections/137-passworded-databases> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *Public Health Reports* and *USA Trade Online* are not accessed by OSU, since subject librarians have determined that the first is not necessary to support the curriculum, and data from the second is well-enough covered in other resources. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Lev, Y.T., Gilbert, M., Olson, C, & Gonce, N. (2002, July). Making the decision to relinquish U.S. document depository status. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *2*(3), Retrieved from <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pla/summary/v002/2.2lev.html> doi: 10.1353/ple.2002.0057 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)