



**Oral Statement
Mary Alice Baish
Associate Washington Affairs Representative
American Association of Law Libraries**

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

**Legislative Branch Subcommittee Public Witness Hearing
House Committee on Appropriations
May 1, 2007**

Good afternoon. I am Mary Alice Baish, Associate Washington Affairs Representative for the American Association of Law Libraries. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of AALL and the Special Libraries Association, and I ask that you please include our formal statement in the record of today's hearing.

We commend you, Madam Chair, for holding this important hearing and giving us the opportunity to urge your support for the full FY 2008 appropriations request of the U.S. Government Printing Office. We were very pleased when Chairman Obey reconstituted the Subcommittee earlier this year.

Our organizations are strongly committed to public access to Government information and a robust Federal Depository Library Program. I would like to address two key points this afternoon.

The first is that GPO and the Federal Depository Library Program need champions in Congress, and we are counting on members of this Subcommittee for your support. The FDLP is Congress' program to ensure that your constituents have easy access at no cost to Federal government information, both current and historic.

I attended the Subcommittee's March 16th hearing where you discussed with Acting Public Printer Turri the challenges of funding the full amount requested by GPO for FY 2008, which represents a substantial increase over current levels.

The requested level of funding—\$181.9 million—is a very good bargain for Congress and the American taxpayer, when you look at the unique mission of GPO—to provide the three branches of the Federal Government with expert publishing and printing services *and* to ensure perpetual, no-fee, ready public access to the information published by the Federal Government, in partnership with Federal Depository Libraries.

There are more than 1200 Depository Libraries nationwide, and 30 of them are in your districts. They come in all sizes, from small law depository libraries like the Nova Southeastern University/Law Library & Technical Center in Fort Lauderdale; the U.S. Tennessee Valley Authority Research Library in Chattanooga; and the New Mexico State Library, a regional library in Santa Fe.

What they all have in common are very committed librarians who serve *your* constituents every day—whether they need a Congressional hearing published fifty years ago, the latest Census data available only online, or expert help to navigate the complex IRS or FEMA web site. The FDLP is the most successful—if under-publicized—partnership program in the Federal Government.

Another little-known fact is that depository libraries spend millions of dollars annually for staff, space, and the technological infrastructure needed to effectively connect your constituents to electronic resources. Past studies have shown that depository libraries annually spend about \$10 for every \$1 dollar of Federal investment. I encourage you to visit the depository libraries in your District to see for yourselves the important role they have in serving your constituents.

The second point is that in 1995, this Subcommittee initiated a study resulting in GPO's 1996 Report to Congress to identify measures necessary for a successful transition to a more electronic FDLP. You asked GPO to develop *GPO Access* as the mechanism for making government information more accessible to the public, and GPO has been very successful.

The number of documents available through *GPO Access* has grown from about 160 thousand in FY 1999 to almost 300 thousand in FY 2006. It is especially impressive that the number of average monthly downloads has grown from 2.3 million in 1996 to 38.5 million in 2006. GPO estimates that today, 90% of new titles in the FDLP are electronic.

There are a few points we must keep in mind relating to the urgent need to fund GPO's Salaries & Expenses, Congressional Printing & Binding, and revolving fund at the requested amounts.

• First, there will always be a need for some print distribution to depository libraries.

Print is still the most useful format for certain types of information and certain categories of users—from third graders to octogenarians. In addition, print formats are required to meet the needs of the legal community because print is the *only* format that is both official and authentic.

GPO is asking for \$8 million dollars to publish the 2006 volumes of the official print *U.S. Code*. By statute, the print version of the Code is official (the online version is not). Nor can the online version at this time be authenticated to ensure that it has not been changed or tampered with. We urge the Subcommittee's support to ensure that the 2006 *U.S. Code* and the essential legislative resources of the 110th Congress are published and distributed to depository libraries in a timely manner.

• Second, GPO must have adequate funding to enhance their electronic programs and bring them into the 21st Century. It's a myth to think that e-government doesn't carry a hefty price tag.

We urge you to agree to the requested level of S&E funding so that GPO can continue efforts to replace obsolete technology and upgrade their electronic services, including *GPO Access*.

GPO recently completed a pilot project that resulted in the harvesting of 200,000 online publications from the EPA Web site. These must now be cataloged for easy retrieval. When you multiply that number by the thousands of Federal Web sites, I hope you will agree that GPO's mission is uniquely important.

We also urge you to approve GPO's request for the revolving fund needed to support essential IT projects. This includes \$10.5 million for the continuing development of the Future Digital System. FDsys is essential to GPO's ability to ensure that electronic information will be permanently available, authenticated and versioned, and accessible through the Internet for easy searching, viewing, downloading, and printing. With your funding support to complete FDsys, the first public release will be next December.

In conclusion, we hope you will agree with us that full funding for GPO in FY 2008 is crucial to support the needs of Federal Depository Libraries and the thousands of users served by these libraries every day. AALL and SLA look forward very much to working with you, and we thank you for inviting us to participate in this important hearing. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.