RESOLUTION ON A "MODEL FOR 'NEW UNIVERSE' OF FEDERAL INFORMATION AND ACCESS"


WHEREAS, The Forum on Government Information Policy was convened to seek consensus and develop strategies concerning Federal information policies in order to enhance public access to government information through the nation's Federal depository and other libraries; and

WHEREAS, The Model presents the participants' analysis and preliminary proposals; and

WHEREAS, The Model is intended to be the basis of ongoing discussions on the evolution of the Federal Depository Library Program in an electronic information age, and to serve as a reference document to be circulated widely, to spark discussion on these issues, and to provoke feedback to the library associations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association support in principle the working document, "Model for a 'New Universe' of Federal Information Access and Dissemination."

ATTACHMENT

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
San Antonio, Texas
January 14, 1996
(Council Document 20.2)
MODEL FOR "NEW UNIVERSE" OF
FEDERAL INFORMATION ACCESS AND DISSEMINATION

Preliminary Results of
Forum on Government Information Policy
July 20-21, 1995
Sponsored by American Library Association

The Forum was convened to seek consensus among the nation's principal library organizations as to whether (and, if so, how) federal information policies and structures should be changed in order to maximize the amount, quality, organization, accessibility and dissemination of federally generated or maintained information made available to the public through the nation's "federal depository," and other, libraries. The participants' analyses and preliminary proposals, in the following form, are here presented.

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I. RECONCEPTUALIZE FEDERAL INFORMATION ACCESS AND DISSEMINATION RESPONSIBILITIES

In keeping with the United States' long-standing legal tradition of free and equitable public access to government information, and libraries' unwavering commitment to that principle, the following model has been devised to assure that changing information technology enhances such access:

A. GOALS

1. specifically identify aspects of current information dissemination policy which require revision and/or improvement
2. specifically identify opportunities for improving and increasing public access to government information afforded by digital and other emerging dissemination and retrieval technologies
3. increase public awareness of the availability of government information and public advocacy in support of maximizing its availability and ease of use
4. increase and expand cooperation within and among government agencies in furtherance of government information dissemination
5. increase awareness, within government, of its critical information dissemination role and responsibility
6. improve, and increase the number of, government information "gateways"
7. acknowledge the need to involve all information "players" (producers, supporters and disseminators) in reconceptualizing government information dissemination policy
8. explicitly articulate how such "players" will contribute to the development and implementation of such policy
9. define the Federal role in coordinating the information dissemination activities of all relevant government agencies and "actors"
10. define the role of Federal agencies in informing the public of the means to obtain government information
11. achieve the widest dissemination of government information through the use of appropriate technology

1 "Federal" in this document includes all three branches of government--legislative, executive, and judicial.
12. achieve the broadest and easiest accessibility of government information

13. improve the organization and identification of electronically available government information (including cataloging, indexing, and abstracting) to better facilitate public and research use

14. improve the "usability" of electronically available government information

15. assure and facilitate access of the disabled to government information

B. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION ACCESS AND DISSEMINATION: "THE NEW UNIVERSE"

1. Endorse, in concept, the evolution of the Superintendent of Documents into a new "Chief Federal Information Dissemination Officer" (CFIDO) responsible to a "Steering Committee" constituted from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government (see discussion below), and charged with operational -- but not decision-making -- authority for:

   -- implementing applicable laws, Executive Orders and coordinated government information dissemination policy;

   -- dispensing appropriated funds to federal agencies for information dissemination and other Congressionally authorized purposes

2. Create by statute a government information "Coordinating Council" comprising high-level representatives of Federal agencies with explicit information dissemination missions (examples include but are not limited to the Government Printing Office Superintendent of Documents, National Technical Information Service, Defense Technical Information Center, Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, National Agricultural Library, National Archives and Records Administration, Educational Resources Information Center, Department of Energy Technical Information Center), and representatives of the Office of Management and Budget, the Supreme Court and Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and the Legislative Branch

3. Charge the Council, by statute, with:

   -- setting standards, issuing regulations and negotiating agreements pertaining to access to, and the dissemination of, information to libraries and the public;

   -- assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of federal information dissemination programs;
assessing and evaluating the adequacy of federal
information archiving and preservation policies and
practices (including the accessibility of information
collected by discontinued agencies and offices);

formally and regularly reporting to Congress and/or the
Executive Branch on:

- the scope and state of federal government
  information dissemination;

- anticipated information dissemination needs;

- recommendations for creating or modifying applicable
  law or policy pertaining to government information
  dissemination;

- recommendations for instituting or modifying
  Congressional, Executive Branch, and/or Judicial
  information dissemination policy or practice;

4. Constitute, by statute, a Steering Committee from the
membership of the Council comprising one representative
from each of the three branches of government (legisla­
tive, executive, and judicial) and empowered to:

-- sit for a term of years;

-- recommend candidates for Chief Federal Information
  Dissemination Officer to the appointing authority;

-- direct the CFIDO to implement regulations and standards
duly adopted by the Council;

-- such other related functions as Congress may authorize

II. REINVENT THE CURRENT FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY
PROGRAM: A FEDERAL/STATE/LOCAL LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAM

Recognizing that libraries and librarians have existing
human and institutional networks, and a commitment to
providing access to information, the Partnership
addresses the following:

A. GOALS

1. design a system of equitable, no fee, efficient, and
dependable access/distribution of electronic and other formats
of government information from all branches of government
through a partnership of government, libraries, and others
2. forge an easily-accessible information link between citizens and their elected representatives, to enhance economic development, citizen empowerment, and participation in the democratic process

3. incorporate rapidly changing information and communication technologies that serve the public's multiple levels of skills and format needs for government information

4. empower state and local libraries to design their own systems, in partnership with the federal government, to meet user information needs

5. reduce federal requirements and increase state/local flexibility to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and better serve the public

6. ensure that expertise and resources are within easy geographic reach of all the U.S. public

7. incorporate library and librarian strengths in helping the public locate, use effectively, and customize to their needs current and historic government information in all formats, plus additional relevant library and information resources

8. address archiving and preservation issues through state and national cooperative plans, in partnership with the federal government, especially for preservation of electronic information

9. support increased training for staff and public to assure efficiency and expanded access

10. provide for accountability for measuring and evaluating levels of access for the public, and for evaluating the usefulness of government information products

11. make the library partnership program an asset and an incentive for federal agencies to partner with libraries and participate willingly in a federal coordination effort

B. FEDERAL LEVEL

1. Coordinates dissemination and availability of federal information, working with all government agencies and information providers

2. Develops catalogs, pathfinders and other locator systems to identify government information products and services

3. Ensures archiving and preservation of federal information

4. Establishes criteria for state plans
5. Provides incentives for program participation, and for local development of high quality access tools

C. NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR CONSORTIAL PARTNERS

1. Develop agreements with central authority and government agencies to ensure permanent archiving and access for electronic information resources

2. Accept responsibility for comprehensive collections and/or specialized expertise in subject areas or formats and provide support for program partners nationwide

3. Cooperate with federal agencies and other libraries in acquiring, maintaining, providing access to, archiving, and preserving government information

D. STATE - LEAD LIBRARY AND/OR LIBRARY AGENCY

1. One or more major libraries, in coordination with state library administrative agency (which may in some cases be the lead library), takes responsibility for developing state plan for public access to federal government information

2. Involves current federal depository libraries (or partner libraries in future) and other appropriate groups in development of state plan

3. Coordinates designation of continuing and new library partner members

4. Facilitates intrastate and intra-regional communication

5. Coordinates training and technical assistance for library partnership members

6. Communicates with federal central authority

E. LOCAL - PARTNER LIBRARIES

1. Partner libraries in every congressional district, officially recognized by members of Congress

2. Public, academic, research, state, federal, school, law, medical, court, special, and private libraries and library consortia throughout the states and territories may participate

3. Partner library services and responsibilities reflect varying user needs, library capacity, and state plans
F. ELEMENTS OF STATE PLANS

1. Designation of partner libraries by congressional district

2. Provision of specific steps for meeting government information needs of local users including users with special needs

3. Delineation of partnerships between partner libraries and other agencies or entities that create and/or provide access to government information

4. Sharing of access/collection responsibilities, both current and historical, based on subject strengths of libraries or geographic considerations

5. Identification of government information holdings through online catalogs, union lists, and other locator systems

6. Integration and improvement of existing resource sharing/document delivery agreements

7. Provision of opportunity for all partner libraries to provide basic electronic access

8. Coordination of training for staff and public in the use of electronic information resources

9. Provision of enhanced services for access to complex electronic products requiring special software and/or equipment

10. Incorporation of library arrangements within the state/region for national level archiving and preservation of government information

11. Encouragement of local/state advisory and support groups

12. Identification of measures of accountability for program partners

13. Advocacy for citizen access to government information and citizen education regarding such access

14. Provision of feedback mechanisms for information creators and access providers, to evaluate government information products and services

15. Coordination with other appropriate state plans, including plans for interlibrary cooperation under Library Services and Construction Act, state plans for public access to state government information, and state telecommunication plans

— Existing library plans meeting, or modified to meet, Partnership specifications may be used as the Partnership plan
The state plan requirement also may be met in whole or in part by reference to a multi-state plan or a regional plan.

G. STRENGTHS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

1. Builds on strength of current depository library program

2. Increases flexibility, emphasizes partnerships, recognizes multiple federal players, and spells out library responsibilities

3. Reduces rigidity of regional/selective depository system and increases state/local responsibility

4. Recognizes that transition to electronic dissemination will be gradual, costly, and never complete

5. Links access to government information with telecommunication planning

6. Encourages coordination of library provision of federal/state/local government information, so that the source of government information is transparent to users

7. Employs technology to provide access on demand when it is a more efficient alternative to housing large but little-used collections in many locations

8. Enables additional libraries to be partners for electronic entry-level access for basic government information necessary for participation in a democracy

9. Provides the flexibility for states/regions to develop partnership programs that may evolve in very different ways from the current depository library program