

ALA American Library Association

RESOLUTION REGARDING A TRANSITION TO A MORE ELECTRONIC FEDERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

WHEREAS, The American Library Association has a long-standing record of support for a more electronic Federal Depository Library Program; and

WHEREAS, The Government Printing Office (GPO), by Congressional direction, has prepared *The Electronic Federal Depository Library Program: Transition Plan, FY 1996-FY 1998*, an innovative and thought provoking proposal to lead the FDLP to a more electronic environment; and

WHEREAS, The Transition Plan provides the foundation for increased public access to government information by offering new opportunities and mechanisms for the Federal government to share electronic information with the American public; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with ALA policy, the practical experience of its member librarians, and the belief that public access to government information during the transition to a more electronic FDLP must be preserved, changes to the FDLP must ensure that:

- citizens are ready for and able to use government information predominately in electronic format, and
- providing information predominately in electronic format does not place undue technical, logistical, and economic burdens on the public nor on depository and other libraries that serve the general public, and
- Federal agencies are capable of supplying information in electronic format or that the GPO is in a position to convert all agency information to electronic formats, and
- the technological infrastructure is sufficiently developed to support a predominately electronic FDLP; and

WHEREAS, The time-frame for a transition to a more electronic FDLP must be reasonable and not impose barriers to public access to government information; and

WHEREAS, At this time, there are no empirical data to suggest that a predominately electronic FDLP will result in cost-savings and preserve public access to government information; and

WHEREAS, Implementation of the Transition Plan requires substantial statutory changes to existing Federal information policy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urge Congress to continue efforts to move the FDLP toward a more electronic information and dissemination program by adopting a 5-7 year time-frame for the transition, and be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Library Association urge Congress to reaffirm the Government's responsibility to provide Federal information in a format most appropriate to the public's needs by:

- supporting and funding the FDLP throughout the transition period at a level necessary to carry out a successful transition, and
- disseminating information in media appropriate to the information's content, use and audience, and
- ensuring no-fee public access to government information through depository libraries regardless of the agencies' cost recovery practices, and
- affirming the government's responsibility and strengthening its ability to archive and preserve government information for long-term access;

and, be it further

RESOLVED, That ALA urge Congress to hold public hearings by both authorizing and appropriating committees prior to implementing the Transition Plan and to enact the necessary statutory changes to USC Title 44 in order to implement the Plan.

Adopted by the Council of the
American Library Association
San Antonio, Texas
January 14, 1996
(Council Document 20.4)