

WHAT IS *GPO ACCESS*?

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs>

History

In 1993, Congress passed Public Law 103–40, amending GPO’s duties to include provisions for the dissemination of information in electronic format. Under the *GPO Access* legislation, the Superintendent of Documents, under the direction of the Public Printer, is required to: (1) Maintain an electronic directory of Federal electronic information; (2) provide a system of online access to the *Congressional Record*, the *Federal Register*, and other appropriate publications as determined by the Superintendent of Documents; (3) operate an electronic storage facility for Federal electronic information (the Storage Facility); and (4) maintain the Federal Bulletin Board, already in existence.¹ Collectively these components are referred to as *GPO Access*. As a result, in June 1994, *GPO Access* was introduced, encouraging and supporting immediate public access to electronic information products of the United States Government.

The vast majority of information currently available via *GPO Access* is information derived from databases used in the printing of Government publications. For example, in the case of congressional publications, GPO’s Congressional Printing Management Division receives a requisition from a congressional office asking that a specific document be processed for online access. Internal GPO communication then establishes authorization, priorities, etc. Subsequent to processing the database for printing, software developed by the Production Department’s Graphic Systems Development Division is used to prepare the data for optimum screen presentation and place it in the form required by commercially procured server software which indexes the data to facilitate effective searching via client software and/or World Wide Web browsers. At the same time, PostScript output of GPO’s automated composition software is processed by Electronic Photocomposition Division personnel via a network version of Adobe’s distiller software to produce files in the Adobe Acrobat PDF (Portable Document Format), which are then programmatically associated with the appropriate online documents. These Production Department computer-based operations are all performed on equipment configured and maintained by personnel of the Electronic Systems Development Division.

¹Senate Report 103–27 incorporated the Federal Bulletin Board, which existed prior to P.L. 103–40, into *GPO Access*.

In order to assist users in all facets of *GPO Access* and to monitor user requirements, the *GPO Access* User Support Team was developed. This team provides the public with a wide range of support for the electronic products and services available through *GPO Access*.

To contact the team, call 202-512-1530 in the D.C. area or toll-free 1-888-293-6498, between the hours of 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., EST, Monday through Friday—except Federal holidays. The team can also be contacted by fax at 202-512-1262 or e-mail at gpoaccess@gpo.gov.

Objectives

The objectives of *GPO Access* are as follows:

Improve access to official Federal Government information in electronic formats.

Provide electronic document delivery and online interactive services that are well-designed, easy to use, and available to the public without charge.

Ensure access to a broad spectrum of users with a wide variety of technical capabilities both directly and through an active partnership with Federal Depository Libraries.

Establish and operate an online interactive service that is capable of rapid expansion to meet the needs of Federal agency publishers and public users.

Encourage the use of electronic database standards and permit dissemination of the original document, without rekeying, in print and/or electronic format.

Utilize a variety of dissemination media and methods, including World Wide Web (Web), bulletin board services and online interactive search and retrieval services in order to achieve cost effective information delivery, that is appropriate to both the type of information being disseminated and the needs of users of that information.

Ensure permanent public access to Government information made available through *GPO Access* and the FDLP via direct provision, the electronic storage facility, and development of a distributed networked system of partner institutions.

Provide services to other Federal agencies on a reimbursable basis—saving time, money, and other resources.

Provide access to Government information that is official and complete. GPO secures the integrity of its databases to ensure against unauthorized changes in text or graphics.

Features of *GPO Access*

GPO Access was carefully designed, developed, and implemented so that it is easy to access and use. The free services of *GPO Access* fall within the following categories:

Government information databases available for online use that provide full-text search and retrieval capabilities. These databases include regulatory materials, such as the *Federal Register* and the *Code of Federal Regulations*; Congressional products, such as the *Congressional Record* and *Congressional Bills*; and business materials, such as the *Commerce Business Daily (CBDNet)*.

Individual Federal agency files that are available for download from the FBB (Federal Bulletin Board).

Tools that assist users in finding Government information available for sale or free of charge. These tools include keyword searches that locate information products by topic, title, or agency; lists and tables that may be browsed; and hyperlinks that direct users to related databases and Web sites in order to facilitate their searches and highlight connections among information products. When print and electronic sale products are identified, an electronic order mechanism enables users to purchase them online.

Guides to collections of Federal Government information available for free use at nearly 1,300 Federal depository libraries throughout the United States.

User support.

Everyone can benefit from *GPO Access*

The benefits of *GPO Access* extend to all individuals and groups who have an interest in the workings of the Federal Government. Citizens can obtain vital Federal information instantaneously, allowing for informed participation in the democratic process. Congressional staff members enjoy immediate access to documents they require while engaged in the legislative process. Librarians, legal researchers, and academic institutions have an excellent up-to-date reference and research tool at their fingertips. Procurement officials and public- and private-sector professionals can access relevant data and use it to create new products. The benefits are as numerous as the users who profit from them.

Multiple methods of public access

In recognition of the various needs and technological capabilities of the public, *GPO Access* supports a wide range of information dissemination technologies, from the latest Internet applications to dial-up modem access. Methods compatible with technologies to assist users covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act are also available. To accommodate people without computers, nearly 1,300

Federal depository libraries throughout the United States provide free access to the service through public-access workstations.

The system was designed to serve a large base of users through a variety of methods with the overall goal of ensuring widespread and equitable information dissemination. Statistics gathered on the number of searches and retrievals indicate that *GPO Access* is achieving this goal.

Information

The Government Printing Office recently introduced a new *GPO Access* home page for the Web interface to provide users with easier and more efficient access to online resources. The new home page is available at the following URL (Uniform Resource Locator): <http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs>.

The rules of grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc., as stated in this STYLE MANUAL, will serve well when preparing documents for electronic dissemination. Most of the documents currently available via *GPO Access* are derived from databases used in the printing of Government publications. However, as electronic dissemination of Government information continues to grow, the rules as stated in this MANUAL will continue to be the GPO's standard for all document preparation, electronic or otherwise.