

of Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Collections in the network include DOE's **Information Bridge** (also currently available through **GPO Access**), the Defense Technical Information Center's Report Collection, EPA's National Environmental Publications Internet Site (NEPIS), NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab Reports, and NASA's Langley Technical Reports.

Federal R&D Project Summaries includes more than 240,000 research summaries and awards by three of the major sponsors of research in the Federal Government. The Federal databases available via this tool are DOE's R&D Project Summaries, the National Institutes of Health's CRISP (Computer Retrieval of Information on Scientific Projects) Current Award, and the National Science Foundation's Award Data.

Partnership Agreement with National Library of Medicine

During the year, GPO and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) signed an agreement that assures permanent public access to key information published by NLM and disseminated as part of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP).

The agreement, signed by Superintendent of Documents Francis J. Buckley, Jr., and Donald C. Poppe, Associate Director for Administrative Management, NLM, outlined provisions for permanent access to *Index Medicus*, *Medical Subject Headings*, *The National Library of Medicine Current Catalog*, *The National Library of Medicine Audiovisuals Catalog*, and other titles in the FDLP. *Index Medicus (tm)* was replaced in the FDLP Electronic Collection by *PubMed(tm)*, NLM's search service that provides access to over 11 million citations in MEDLINE and other related databases, at <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS4708>. Access to the other titles was established through NLM's "Locator Plus" application, at <http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS4582>.

In signing the agreement, NLM acknowledged the FDLP as one of its dissemination partners and agreed to keep the online publications available permanently. In the event of an unforeseen circum-

stance that would alter their ongoing availability, NLM will turn the electronic files over to GPO for continuing access.

More than 500 Government Information Librarians Gather for Depository Library Conference

In what has become the Nation's premier event for Government information librarians, more than 500 depository librarians and Federal agency representatives attended the 9th annual Federal Depository Library Conference held in Arlington, VA, in October 2000. The conference was held concurrent with the 57th meeting of the Depository Library Council to the Public Printer, and was sponsored by GPO. The Council is composed of 15 representatives of the Government information community who advise GPO on issues related to the FDLP.

Highlights of the 3-day conference included demonstrations of Web sites from FirstGov, the Defense Technical Information Center, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Agricultural Library, and others. GPO's ongoing transition to a more electronic FDLP was a primary focus of the event, while the Census Bureau and STAT-USA from the Department of Commerce, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, the Forest Service, the Department of Energy, and others presented updates on their agencies' public information activities and products. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science provided a status report on its review of the Federal Government's information dissemination activities.

Concurrent technical and information sessions included digital archiving, economic statistics, Presidential libraries, and library grants. Tours of the Senate Library, the Center for Legislative Archives, GPO's Library Programs Service, and the Library of Congress were also available for meeting attendees. Prior to the formal conference, librarians from the Nation's 53 regional depositories attended an all-day session.

Working Group on Permanent Public Access Policy Convened

During the year, GPO convened a series of high-level meetings involving congressional and executive

branch officials, to develop long-term strategies that will provide permanent public access to Federal Government information made available over the Internet. Led by Public Printer Michael F. DiMario and Superintendent of Documents Francis J. Buckley, Jr., the meetings represented one of the Government's leading initiatives to ensure that Federal information remains accessible to the public once it is made available online.

There are thousands of Federal Government Web sites today, making millions of Government documents available to the public electronically. Yet documents frequently disappear from the Web just as fast as they appear, resulting in a growing amount of lost and often irretrievable information. Federal census, agricultural, energy, environmental, and budget information are just some of the categories from which online information products have disappeared in recent years. The files are no longer available for a variety of reasons—they may have been updated or revised, or they may have become outdated or simply removed. Regardless of the reason, however, the result is the same: an electronic document that is no longer available. The problem is becoming so pervasive that many observers in the library and Government information communities are beginning to speculate that without concerted action the current era will one day be known as an enormous "black hole" in the availability of Government information.

Speaking at the first meeting of the Permanent Public Access (PPA) Working Group in late 1999, Public Printer DiMario said there is "a pressing need to examine permanent public access to Government information in this time when computer systems encounter problems with viruses, overloaded servers, and other challenges. The public must be assured that Government information will be available, electronically, on a long-term basis."

There were four subsequent sessions of the Working Group during the year, involving key officials in the Federal information community, including representatives from GPO, congressional staff, the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Agricultural Library, the National Library of Medicine, the Energy Department, the National Commission on Libraries

and Information Science (NCLIS), the Defense Technical Information Center, and other agencies. Representatives of the library and Government information user communities also attended.

The goals of the PPA Working Group include facilitating discussion among stakeholders engaged in digital archiving research or applications; developing and publicizing "best practices" for digital archiving that will facilitate cooperation across agency and organizational boundaries; and identifying "at risk" electronic information and developing collaborative solutions or partnerships to ensure permanent public accessibility.

GPO's interest in the permanent public access initiative reflects its longstanding experience in providing such access through the FDLP. In addition, a permanent public access policy governs the operation of **GPO Access**. Documents made available through **GPO Access** remain permanently available either on GPO's own servers or through partnerships established between GPO and other information provider organizations.

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The PPA Working Group meetings resulted in several tangible outcomes during the year. A Web site dedicated to the issue of permanent public access was established by GPO (at www.gpo.gov/ppa). In May 2000, a partnership was formed between GPO and the National Library of Medicine (NLM) to provide permanent access to online versions NLM information products; and in November 2000 a GPO partnership with NCLIS was formed to cover all significant publications on the NCLIS Web site, including annual reports and other reports and studies of the Commission.