
HIGHLIGHTS 2000

Successful Y2K Conversion

Under the leadership of Senate Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Robert F. Bennett, GPO managed the transition to the Year 2000 successfully, with no disruptions to the essential computer systems supporting Congress's information products. GPO worked with the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as the General Accounting Office's oversight team, to prepare for the transition and staffed these systems on New Year's Eve to monitor the transition.

Commenting on GPO's record of preparedness at the FY 2001 appropriations hearing in February 2000, Chairman Bennett told Public Printer Michael F. DiMario that "[w]e are delighted of course with the fact that there were no Y2K problems, with the *Congressional Record* printed appropriately and on time..."

GPO Ranked First Again Among Nation's In-Plants

For the second year in a row, GPO was named the top in-plant printing operation in the Nation in a survey conducted by *In-Plant Graphics*, a widely respected journal of the in-plant printing industry. The ranking was released in the December 1999 issue of *In-Plant Graphics*.

As it did in 1998, *In-Plant Graphics* considered factors like budget, employees, and number of printed jobs. Annual impressions, sales per employee, customer service, responsiveness, and efficiency were also considered. According to the editor's note, the purpose of the ranking was to "show the world that the in-plant industry is strong, and is made up of efficient operations capable of handling complicated, critical work."

In its article entitled "The Digitizing of GPO," *In-Plant Graphics* noted the work GPO performed in making the U.S. District Court's "Findings of Fact" in the Microsoft case available in November 1999 in both print and electronic formats, observing that at GPO "such monumental projects have become second nature."

The magazine pointed out, "Now in its 139th year of existence, GPO has drastically changed itself over the past few years from a strictly ink-on-paper provider to a high-tech digital data delivery organization." *In-Plant Graphics* reported that "the public now downloads some 20 million documents a month from **GPO Access**..." The article also reported on GPO's efforts to upgrade its online delivery capabilities to handle the ever-increasing demand for its information services.

At the same time, *In-Plant Graphics* noted that "print is still strong" at GPO, with the recent installation of state-of-the-art computer-to-plate systems and a new automated passport bindery line. With the ongoing transition to electronics, *In-Plant Graphics* noted that GPO's plant has been able to downsize dramatically in the past 5 years, from 1,701 printing production personnel to 1,173, a drop of more than 30 percent.

"Now in its 139th year of existence, GPO has drastically changed itself over the past few years from a strictly ink-on-paper provider to a high-tech digital data delivery organization." – In-Plant Graphics, December 1999

Third Biennial Report to Congress on the Status of GPO Access

GPO submitted its third *Biennial Report to Congress on the Status of GPO Access* on December 31, 1999, in accordance with section 4103 of Title 44, U.S.C. The report was also made available on **GPO Access** at www.gpo.gov/biennialreport.

At the time of the report, the information resources on **GPO Access** featured more than 1,300 databases through over 80 applications, including the *Congressional Record* and all major congressional publications, the *Federal Register* and *Code of Federal Regulations*, Supreme Court decisions, and other key Government documents.

The databases also included such noteworthy publications as *Investigating the Year 2000 Problem: The*

100 Day Report from the U.S. Senate Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem, and the *Report of the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China*, known as the Cox Report.

As of November 1999, the Web site provided access to more than 104,000 titles on GPO servers and over 62,000 additional titles through links to other Federal agency Web sites. Statistics indicated that at the time **GPO Access** fulfilled approximately 21 million document retrievals per month.

Ben's Guide was awarded the American Library Association's "Notable Children's Web Site" designation in April 2000, an honor reserved for sites "considered the best Web sites for ages birth-14, outstanding in both content and reception."

Since the last *Biennial Report* in 1997, GPO redesigned and reorganized **GPO Access**, developed a plan for permanent public access, added new applications and publications, improved document searches and retrievals, and facilitated its indexing by

Internet search engines and directories. The service also introduced the "Online Bookstore" for GPO's sales publications, a site-search capability, a privacy and security notice, a creative Web site for kids known as **Ben's Guide**, a help page, and exit pages. With the increasing public use of **GPO Access**, system enhancements were made to handle Web site traffic more quickly and efficiently.

The report noted that the cost of **GPO Access** has been much lower than what was originally estimated by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in the legislation creating the system (Pub. L. 103-40). CBO estimated in 1993 that creating and operating the online system would cost approximately \$6 million in appropriated funds over the first 5 years. In addition, CBO said the provision of free online access to Federal depository libraries would cost another \$2 million to \$10 million per year in appropriated funds.

In fact, the latest *Biennial Report* found that the total cost of **GPO Access** has been \$12.9 million

since it began operations in 1994, 20 percent less than the lowest estimate and 77 percent under the higher estimate. At the same time, the report cited high levels of customer satisfaction with **GPO Access**.

Ben's Guide to Online Government Information Released

Early in 2000, GPO released a new Web site for students, parents, and teachers called **Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids**, at <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>. The site provides a fun and educational introduction to how the Government works based on information resources available through **GPO Access**.

With Benjamin Franklin as a guide, the kids' pages cover topics such as the Constitution, how Federal laws are made, the branches of the Federal Government, and what it means to be a U.S. citizen. **Ben's Guide** also includes games and links to other Government Web sites created for kids.

A service of GPO's Superintendent of Documents, **Ben's Guide** offers instruction in the use of the primary source materials on **GPO Access**. It includes resources tailored to four specific age groups, plus a special set for parents and educators.

Franklin was chosen as the tour guide through this site because he once held the title of "public printer"—the Government's printer—for several of the American colonies. He also helped organize one of the first libraries in America.

Ben's Guide complements the efforts of Federal departments and agencies in the executive branch to expand access to Internet-based educational resources for children, teachers, and parents, following a Presidential directive dated April 18, 1997.

Ben's Guide was released to highly positive reviews. A prototype was critiqued at the American Association of School Librarians conference in November 1999, where it received excellent reviews. The *Newsletter of the Documents Interest Group of Oregon* (December 1999) described **Ben's Guide** as a "well-designed children's Web site" that "could be useful for reference questions as well," and characterized it as having "an attention to detail and to readability