

## PUBLIC PRINTER'S MESSAGE



U.S. GOVERNMENT  
PRINTING OFFICE  
KEEPING AMERICA INFORMED

Bruce R. James  
Public Printer

The Founding Fathers knew that public access to information by and about the Government is essential to preserving freedom. “The people have a right to know what their agents are doing or have done,” said James Wilson of Pennsylvania during the Constitutional Convention of 1787, “and it should not be in the option of the legislature to conceal their proceedings.” The Founders enshrined the principle of public access in Article I of the Constitution, requiring each House of Congress to “keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same.”

Later, in 1813, Congress established a means for distributing nationwide the information published by Congress and the Government, creating a system of depository libraries in each of the states to house the records of the Federal Government for free public inspection, and ensuring through this decentralized system that no government would ever be able to cut off the public’s ability to use Federal information. Subsequently, in 1860, Congress acquired a printing facility to produce the documents ultimately destined for the libraries efficiently and economically, naming it the Government Printing Office.

For more than a century, the GPO has carried out its core mission to produce the information requirements of the Congress and Federal agencies and distribute those documents to depository libraries, using the available technology of the age—traditional ink-on-paper printing. Today, the GPO continues to carry out its mission, but the available technology in this Internet era has undergone revolutionary changes.

Printing, the predominant means for information exchange for centuries, has been superseded by electronic information technologies, which now are the preferred mechanism for producing and accessing Government information. The facts speak for themselves. More than 65 percent of the new titles coming into the Federal Depository Library Program this year are online; at the current rate of growth, in 5 years nearly 95 percent will be online. Our Web site, GPO Access, features more than a quarter of a million Federal titles, which are retrieved by the public at a rate of nearly 35 million per month.

The times have changed and the GPO must change with them if it is to continue carrying out its core mission to keep America informed. The 19th century is not coming back. Instead, we need to forge a new GPO for the 21st century, one that is rooted in the core mission foreseen by the Founding Fathers, but which uses the technologies of today and tomorrow — not yesterday— to keep their vision alive. This is the overriding objective of the modern GPO.

Bruce R. James,  
24th Public  
Printer of the  
United States.



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President George W. Bush welcomes Peter James, Head Forwarder in GPO's Library Binding Section, to the Oval Office for the presentation of the Public Papers of the President

*White House Photo By Eric Draper*

Early this year we began transforming the GPO from a traditional manufacturing facility to a state-of-the-art information enterprise. Relying on best practices found throughout the private sector, we carried out a broad reorganization to redirect the GPO's management and bring new focus to preparing for the future. We created an Office of Innovation and New Technologies to identify new technologies and practices that will help us move forward. From reviewing the suitability of our current buildings to analyzing the scope of our relationships with other Government printing and information organizations, we initiated several broad scale evaluations to help determine our future course. Using existing statutory authority, we conducted a highly successful voluntary retirement incentive program that helped us adjust our workforce level to current operational demands, and we doubled our workforce development program to help us shape the staffing capabilities we will need for the future. To communicate our new direction and purpose, we created a new logo to show the GPO fully embraces the 21st century.

We also moved quickly to communicate our new commitment to the 21st century to the Congress, Federal agencies, and the public we serve. We resolved a longstanding controversy with the executive branch over Federal printing by proposing a new compact for Federal printing that will enable Federal agencies to choose their own printers, using technology and support services provided by the GPO. To be piloted for a year with a single agency before being implemented Government-wide, the compact not only will reduce printing costs—easing the taxpayers' burden—but will capture more Federal information for public access. We also met throughout the year with Members of Congress, heads of Federal agencies, representatives of the printing industry, the library and information communities, employee representatives, and others to discuss how we can improve the services we provide, and to forge new relationships for transforming the GPO. Across the board, we are getting strong support for the direction we are following.

In addition, we began restoring the GPO's finances, which sustained losses over much of the past decade. During the year, in recognition of the public's preference for accessing Government information via the Internet, we closed the GPO's retail bookstores, an action that will net savings of \$1.5 million in the first year alone. The voluntary retirement incentive program we carried out, with funds provided by a congressional appropriation, will reduce the GPO's payroll costs by approximately \$21 million annually, setting us on the road to recovery. Other cost-saving efforts are now underway to restore the GPO to a positive financial footing by the end of fiscal year 2004.

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### Joint Committee on Printing:

1st row seated, *left to right*:

Rep. John Linder;

Rep. Robert W. Ney,  
Chairman;

Rep. John Larson;

Rep. Robert Brady;

2nd row standing, *left to right*:

Sen. Gordon Smith;

Sen. Saxby Chambliss,  
Vice-Chairman;

Sen. Mark Dayton.

Not shown:

Rep. John Doolittle;

Sen. Thad Cochran;

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye.

Transforming the GPO for the long term will require much more than managerial and financial changes, however. The GPO's future is currently the subject of a long-range study of Federal printing and information policy currently being conducted by the General Accounting Office, at the request of Congress. The study, due for completion early next year, will establish a baseline of current operations on which we can confidently build a strategic plan for the GPO's future involving consultation with all of the GPO's stakeholders. The plan will include recommendations for reforming the 19th century statutes comprising Title 44 of the U.S. Code, the laws that authorize our programs and operations.

With less than a year yet in this post, we have already made noteworthy progress toward the goal of transforming the GPO. The key factor in this process has been the creative energy of the men and women of the GPO who see more clearly than anyone how best to carry out the changes we must undergo. From the GPO's plant and printing procurement operations to our Superintendent of Documents programs, from our administrative areas to those who work every day with our customers in the Congress, Federal agencies, and the public, our employees are the GPO's single greatest resource for ushering in the 21st century. Working together, we will transform the GPO into a world-class agency that will make us all proud.

BRUCE R. JAMES

Public Printer

November 2003

