

Meet Katherine Pitcher, GPO's New Chief of Federal Depository Support Services



GPO Chief of Federal Depository Support Services Katherine Pitcher manages a team of seven librarians at GPO.

Katherine (Kate) Pitcher, GPO's new Chief of Federal Depository Support Services (FDSS), manages a team of seven librarians who work with the 1,115 libraries in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP).

A native New Yorker, growing up in the western part of the state, Pitcher received her undergraduate degree in English and Anthropology at the State University of New York (SUNY) Geneseo. After she graduated, she wanted to pursue a career in museums or archives but wasn't sure where to begin and ended up working for two years after college in retail while she figured out her next steps. While researching museum studies programs, Pitcher stumbled upon information about graduate schools in library and information science when researching museum studies programs.

"I have to admit to an Aha! moment; I had never considered libraries before that moment, even though it seems like a natural leap," said Pitcher. "Once I dug deeper, I realized the library science programs were more in line with what I was interested in—programming, reading, access to information, civic engagement, and intellectual freedom."

Graduating with an M.L.S. from SUNY Geneseo, Pitcher began working for the New York Public Library as an Adult Services librarian, planning programming, providing readers' advisory and reference services to the public, and selecting and weeding materials in their library collections.

"I loved working in a neighborhood branch, and because we were a small staff, I ended up doing a little bit of everything—from reading to little kids during afternoon read-alouds to checking out books at the circulation desk," said Pitcher.

She stayed in New York for two years, eventually moving back to Rochester to be near her family and work at the Rochester Public Library, first as a Reference Librarian in the Social Sciences division and then eventually in Literature and Media. Public librarianship gave her a good appreciation for customer service, problem-solving, and creative thinking—all necessary tools for librarians working with limited resources and constraints, while striving to help their patrons and creatively suggest solutions when money was an issue.

In 2002, Pitcher moved from public libraries to academic librarianship when

she went to work at Milne Library at SUNY Geneseo, her alma mater. She started out as a Reference and Instruction Librarian, providing reference to students and faculty and also teaching information literacy and technology skills to students. During her second year at Geneseo, she was asked to take on Government Documents Coordinator responsibilities in addition to her teaching role.

"It's a really typical story when you talk to many of our FDLP coordinators," said Pitcher. "Someone leaves, another librarian steps in!"

In Pitcher's case, her predecessor was still on staff and helped train her, in addition to her full-time Government Documents Assistant. One of the highlights of her training was being able to attend the GPO Interagency Seminar in the summer of 2004. She says it was an invaluable experience for her, as it gave her an enormous amount of background, resources, and knowledge about GPO, Government information sources, structure, and a hands-on look at how GPO ran.

In 2006, she moved from Government documents into a role as Web Development Librarian, from there to technical services and collection



Pitcher participating in the 2016 Library Publishing Forum.

development, and eventually became head of the department. In 2014, Pitcher was asked to become interim Director of the library.

Her fourteen years at Geneseo were full of change.

“The one word that always pops into my head when I think about Milne is ‘innovation’,” said Pitcher. “We were constantly assessing, evaluating, and remixing our services, spaces, and users. Pilot projects were the norm, and beta testing ideas was an expectation. We failed more than we succeeded and that was okay. The expectation was that a failure meant you learned what went wrong, how to fix and tweak, and how to improve upon the idea.”

Pitcher gained an appreciation for including staff in the strategic planning and development process, for getting feedback and data from users, and for constant communication with her team, their users, and the community.

In 2016, she made the move to Maryland and became Director of the Library, Archives, and Media Center at St. Mary's College of Maryland, a small liberal arts college in St. Mary's County. She worked with a small staff of librarians, professional staff, and technical personnel, and worked closely with faculty and administrators.

“The best parts of being a Library Administrator are the people, and one of my most important priorities as a Director was developing the staff and building a team,” said Pitcher.

The move to GPO felt like a logical next step for Pitcher. It also began in the midst of a global pandemic. Kate was thrilled to be joining the team at GPO, but it was also a huge learning experience for her; onboarding, meeting her team, learning the organization, and trying to plan for new staff, all virtually. At times it felt surreal, challenging, and scary, but it also unearthed the reasons she made the move. A chance to work within an organization with an important mission and an underlying sense of purpose to help people, whether customers, libraries, or her fellow co-workers.



Pitcher teleworking during COVID-19 in her Maryland home.

“Everyone is in the same boat; we’re teleworking and trying to keep sane. I felt like I was in an amazingly supportive place when I came to GPO. It was the perfect time to make the move, even with how stressful our day-to-day lives had become. I feel encouraged and supported every day,” said Pitcher

In her role as Chief of FDSS, she manages a team of seven librarians. Her team consults with the FDLP libraries and advises librarians on best practices, workflow, and depository operations. Her team also trouble shoots and provides user support on various GPO tools. “Kate is a great asset to LSCM,” said GPO Superintendent of Documents Laurie Hall. “Her vast experience working at a variety of libraries makes her a perfect manager for our business unit, especially to serve our most important customers, the Federal Depository Libraries.”

Pitcher says that one of the best parts of her job is developing the team.

“We are looking forward to adding

more staff to work with the FDLP, and thus, staff development and training is key to getting these new members acclimated and onboarded to support the work of GPO,” said Pitcher.

Her team is also working on building out their educational and training programming they offer through the FDLP Academy platform. Pitcher says she is excited about increasing and expanding upon popular webinars.

“Supporting our FDLP librarians through extended training and education is an extension of our mission *Keeping America Informed*,” said Pitcher.

Pitcher has three children and lives in Leonardtown. Not surprisingly, her number one hobby is reading. She is a podcast nerd, news junkie and has a vegetable garden. Before the pandemic hit, she took her children into D.C. every other weekend to visit a museum and eat at a restaurant and says she is excited to begin the tradition again once things reopen.