AMERICA'S DIGITAL SPLASH

The GovInfo Team Sees a Wave of Growth Year-Over-Year

Summertime is nearly over, and while most of us were trying to avoid being splashed at the pool, GPO's Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo (ASPG) team has been busy working to create a splash online.

Packages on GovInfo typically receive higher retrievals on the day they are released than on any other day of the year. This is what GPO Lead Program Planner and Deputy Program Manager for GovInfo Jon Quandt refers to as the "big splash."

"We have a lot of historical data about our traffic patterns on GovInfo and have scaled our systems accordingly to handle even larger than expected spikes," says Quandt. "For example, if there is a huge amount of public interest and one of our search servers goes down, there's another one that will take over its functionality immediately."

And it's a good thing they're preparing for high traffic. GovInfo has seen double-digit year-over-year growth for both packages uploaded and packages retrieved. GovInfo Program Manager Lisa LaPlant, who has been in her role for more than a decade, says GPO has come a long way since first making Government information available online.

"Back in the early days with GPO Access, we made PDF and text files available for only a handful of publications like the Federal Register and the Congressional Record," says LaPlant. "Fast forward to today, and GovInfo has grown exponentially. We now include documents and publications in multiple formats from all three branches of the Federal Government. It's truly impressive how far we've come!"

"Over the last three decades, thanks to automated testing and more frequent testing, we've been able to speed up our process for developing functionality and delivering content

quite a bit," says Quandt. "When we first launched FDsys, it took six months to a year between major releases. Now we do that same amount of work in half the time."

Thanks to this automation, improved technology, and the increasing availability of digital publications, the Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo (ASPG) team has gone from averaging 13,000 content packages uploaded per month to GovInfo in 2015 to averaging 22,000 per month in 2024.

One example of how GPO has become more efficient with uploading content is the President's Budget.

When Quandt began working at GPO 16 years ago, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) provided GPO with the files for the President's Budget on a CD-ROM. Quandt says the process of getting the budget online, which back then involved manually hand-coding the main budget volume for a mobile web app, previously took about 30–40 hours. In contrast, today, Quandt spends 4–8 hours getting the different budget volumes on GovInfo, including coordination with OMB and Government Integrated Print Services (GIPS).

"Our process to post the budget online has become much more streamlined in the last 5–8 years," says Quandt. "Today, after receiving the files through OMB's file share, we update the metadata and break the large file down into subsections to allow people to find exactly what they are looking for."

While the process of putting Government information online has been much improved, arguably more importantly, the process for users to access that information has also been much improved.

"A big area of focus for us is to constantly improve the user experience for the public search," explains Program Planner, ASPG Amanda Dunn, who has spent nearly two decades at GPO.

"GovInfo continues to set records for us in its use, both in terms of the number of packages we are posting online and in terms of folks on the outside retrieving those packages. GovInfo is poised for continued growth as more Americans turn to digital technology for accessing Government information."

– GPO Director Hugh Halpern

Opposite: Top row: Matt Scrum, Mark Kauffman, Courtney Dantzler, Cameron Alexander. Middle row: Alec Bradley, Myesha McBride, Alecia Woodruff, Robbie Michlewicz. Bottom row: Jon Quandt, Lisa LaPlant, Hannah Kim, Amanda Dunn, Amber Battle, Mark Caudill.

Top left: Cameron Alexander serves as a Program Planner for Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo.

Above: Director Halpern on GovInfo's success.

"A document without any helpful information accompanying it is just a document," says Dunn. "But GovInfo documents have robust metadata that helps describe what's inside. For example, we include the sponsors of the bill, the date it was published, and other identifying information. This metadata is what provides a powerful search experience to users."

Other user enhancements throughout the years have included design improvements, easier navigation, adding thumbnails in search results, adding related documents, pagination for optimized browsing, in-context help information, quicker downloads, and much more. About a year ago, the team implemented custom RSS feeds based on what users have searched for on GovInfo. Those feeds alert users when documents they may be interested in are newly available.

"When you think about the GovInfo user experience, we think about how we are going to help people find one small bit of information they need amongst millions of documents. It can be like looking for a needle in a haystack. We are always looking at new ways to use metadata that provides an easy search experience for the user."
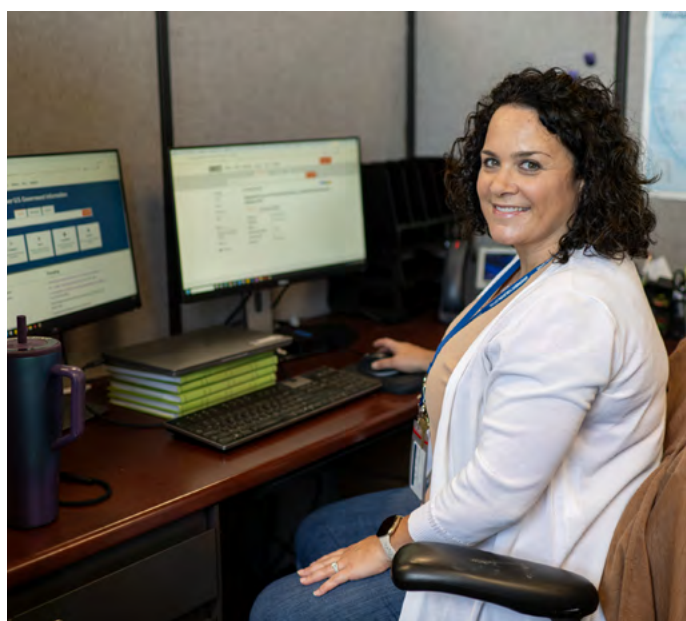
– GPO Program Planner Amanda Dunn

THE HISTORY OF ONLINE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

This year marked the 32nd anniversary of President Bill Clinton signing the legislation that enabled GPO to make Government information accessible online. The pivotal 1993 legislation laid the foundation for the modern GPO, transforming how the public accesses Government information.
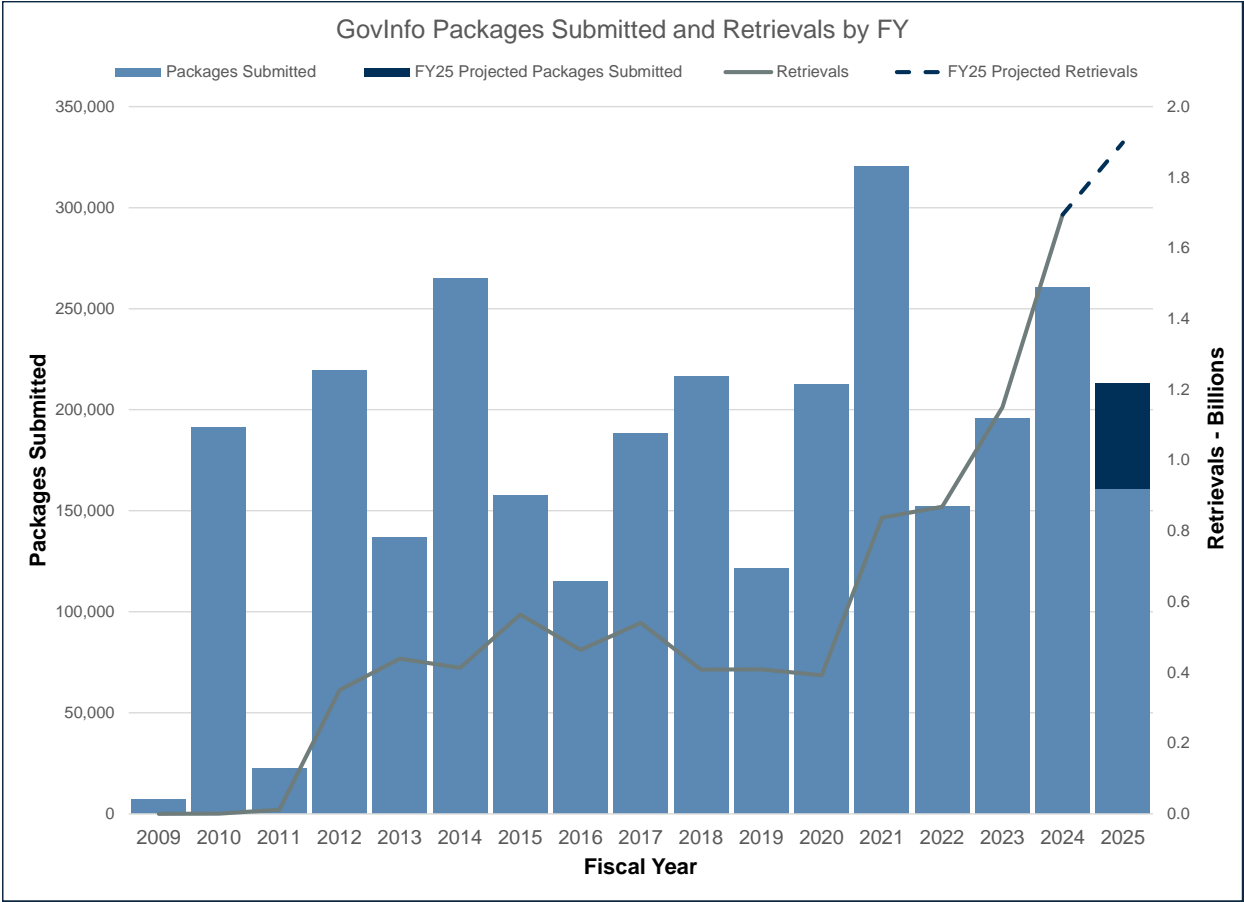
Since the launch of GPOAccess in the 1990s through today's GovInfo, there have been 13.7 billion retrievals.

Above: Amanda Dunn serves as GPO Program Planner.

Above: Jon Quandt, Matt Scrum, Amanda Dunn, Heidi Ramos, Matt Landgraf, and Kirk Petri serve on GPO's Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo team.

Above: The number of retrievals on GPO's GovInfo has continued to grow over the years.

"We have feelers out in a lot of different ways to get feedback on GovInfo," adds Quandt. "We have forms to submit feedback, we facilitate listening sessions with people in the library community, we have a routine process for submitting requests for improvements and changes, and we participate in working groups. We have done focus groups and usability studies and talk to our various users and stakeholders on a routine basis."

The team also conducts meetings with legislative data partners and public transparency communities through the Congressional Data Task Force. They work with LSCM to field technical questions and feedback on GovInfo through AskGPO and have ongoing conversations with partners like OFR.

"We have a responsibility to help users of all types access the Federal government's publications, from students and members of the general public to power users and experts in their field. We have to keep asking questions and learning every day."

– GPO Lead Program Planner and Deputy Program Manager for GovInfo Jon Quandt

Dunn and Quandt both speak about the importance of staying curious and learning in their roles. Dunn began her career at GPO in the Library Services and Content Management group, answering askGPO questions, often ones specific to using GovInfo.

"I learned to read bills and had to have someone teach me how to track legislation and regulations using GovInfo," she says. "If you don't know what this thing is, and your whole purpose is to make it available to people and to help people use it, you won't succeed."

LaPlant says she considers one of ASPG's biggest milestones to be achieving ISO 16363 certification as a Trustworthy Digital Repository. This certification underscores GPO's commitment to managing, preserving, and providing free public access to information through the GovInfo website, bulk data repository, and application programming interface (API).

Top: Jon Quandt serves as GPO Lead Program Planner and Deputy Program Manager for GovInfo.

Above: Matt Landgraf serves as a Lead Program Planner for Agency Strategic Programs & GovInfo.

LaPlant says GovInfo users can expect more exciting enhancements in the future.

"We are committed to continuing our collaboration with our data partners to make more information available in machine-readable formats like XML," says LaPlant. "This will undoubtedly enhance usability for our end-users by making Government information more interoperable and easier to use."

"We want to delight our users," adds Dunn. "We're never not building. We're never not thinking about where we can enhance our product. That's our entire goal. It's not just about keeping the system running. It's about 'where do we go from here?'."

GOVINFO BY THE NUMBERS:

15%
increase in total retrievals over this time last year

145 million
retrievals of Congressional Bills in FY25

205 million
retrievals of the Congressional Record, bills, and reports for FY25

126 million
retrievals of Federal Register in FY25

271 million
retrievals of U.S. Court Opinions in FY25