



# NATIONAL ACADEMY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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## Written Testimony of the Marilu Goodyear Chair

### National Academy of Public Administration Panel on the Government Printing Office Before the U.S. House Committee on Administration December 4, 2013

Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee, I appreciate this opportunity to offer the written views of the National Academy of Public Administration (the Academy) Panel that recently completed a comprehensive review of the Government Printing Office (GPO). I am Director of the School of Public Affairs and Administration at the University of Kansas and an Academy Fellow. I chaired the five-member Academy Panel that conducted an operational review of the Government Printing Office. The Academy is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping leaders address today's most critical and complex challenges. Our organization consists of nearly 800 Fellows—including former cabinet officers, Members of Congress, governors, mayors, and state legislators, as well as distinguished scholars, business executives, and public administrators.

This hearing, “GPO in 2023: Keeping American Informed in a Post-Print World,” covers a number of issues addressed in the Academy Panel’s recent report, *Rebooting the Government Printing Office: Keeping America Informed in the Digital Age*. This report resulted from a Congressional mandate that the Academy conduct a review of the GPO to:

- examine GPO’s business model for how the Government should operate its printing and information dissemination responsibilities;
- review past studies evaluating GPO’s production, procurement, and information dissemination and operations, including the Federal Depository Library Program, in light of the recent growth in printing and digital technology;
- examine the feasibility of GPO continuing to perform executive branch printing; and
- explore various cost-saving operational alternatives.

The Academy formed a five-member expert Panel—drawn from the organization’s nearly 800 elected Fellows—to direct and oversee the project. As part of this review, the Panel assessed GPO’s existing business model; examined its current mission and functions, as well as the desired future state of government printing and dissemination; and identified needed improvements at GPO and government-wide. The Academy Panel and study team conducted a wide range of primary and secondary research, including:

- conducting background research, including relevant GPO documents and academic research;

- reviewing prior studies of GPO;
- interviewing GPO leaders, managers, union representatives, and employees;
- interviewing other external stakeholders, such as Congressional staff, agency customers, and the library community;
- surveying the Federal Depository Library community;
- holding a focus group with private sector printing and publishing experts;
- analyzing financial, workforce, and print procurement data;
- analyzing results from the Panel's survey of the Federal Depository Library Program community; and
- visiting GPO field operations, including one regional office, both distribution facilities, and the backup passport production facility.

Declining demand for print products has challenged GPO's business model and its operating methods because only a small percentage of the agency's funding is derived from direct appropriation from Congress. The bulk of the agency's revenues come from agency payments for work performed by GPO or sales of publications to the public. This means that GPO—like businesses across the country—must carefully review its product lines to ensure that they respond to market demand and continually monitor its financial situation.

To address the digital age's challenges to GPO's business model, agency leaders have expanded products and services for the digital age and made difficult decisions to align revenues with expenditures. To increase access to information, GPO has created the Federal Digital System, which contains authentic published government documents from all three branches of government. It has also been providing access in other formats, such as mobile apps and e-Books, and making these available through Google and Amazon. In fiscal year (FY) 2013, it released the President's Budget as an award-winning app.

To reduce costs, GPO has made significant reductions in employee staffing levels, administrative expenses, and the costs of plant production and distribution. In addition, GPO has instituted a variety of cost offset and recovery measures to help alleviate financial pressures. These have included improvements to its billing and debt collection processes, leasing of available building space to government and non-government organizations, and investments in more productive and efficient equipment and operating systems.

GPO will need to continue to be aggressive in taking action given that its own analysis, based on a conservative set of assumptions, shows that it only has the cash necessary to offset operating losses and fund modest investment for another seven years. This provides the agency with a narrow window of opportunity to continue to expand business lines and maintain financial health into the next decade. To expand products and services, the Panel believes that GPO can make an important contribution to the lifecycle management of government information by doing more in the areas of content management, metadata creation, authentication, preservation, cataloging, and providing permanent public access. To further reduce costs, the Panel believes that GPO can reduce its facilities footprint through the lease of unneeded space and more consolidation of regional office locations, space, and staff. And, by implementing a new print procurement system, GPO can both reduce labor costs and improve the customer experience, which could lead to increased business.

The Academy Panel concluded that GPO's core mission of authenticating, preserving, and distributing federal information remains critically important to American democracy in the digital age. The Panel further concluded:

1. In the digital age, the federal government must continue to ensure that the public has permanent access to authentic government information. This requires coordination across the federal government to manage the lifecycle of digital government information.
2. GPO has a critical role to play in providing permanent public access to authentic government information. Like the rest of the printing industry, GPO faces challenges in the transition to digital publishing. It is important to remember, however, that GPO's responsibilities are far broader than those of a private commercial vendor.
3. GPO's leaders have made significant progress in "rebooting" the agency from a print-centric to a content-centric focus. GPO has a narrow window of opportunity to make further business and operational changes.
4. GPO has achieved important cost savings to date and has additional opportunities to make cost reductions. It is unclear exactly how much further costs can be reduced, and some savings must be reinvested in human and technological capabilities to meet evolving demands of the digital operating environment.
5. To continue rebooting in an external environment that is changing rapidly, GPO must upgrade its planning capabilities. Enhanced strategic planning and human capital planning, as well as scenario planning, are necessary.

The Panel issued fifteen recommendations designed to position the federal government for the digital age, strengthen GPO's business model, and build the GPO of the future.

### *Positioning the Federal Government for the Digital Age*

- **Recommendation 1.** To enable the federal government to carry out its role of providing information to its citizens, Congress should establish a collaborative interagency process, and designate a lead agency or interagency organization, to develop and implement a government-wide strategy for managing the lifecycle of digital government information.
- **Recommendation 2.** To ensure GPO can carry out its mandate of providing permanent public access to government information, GPO should enhance its position and capabilities by offering an expanded set of services on a cost-recovery basis that contribute to the lifecycle management of government information. These services could include content management, metadata creation, authentication, preservation, and cataloging. GPO should develop strategies to encourage executive branch agencies to provide publications to GPO to enable permanent public access.
- **Recommendation 3.** To safeguard the historical documents of our democracy for future generations, GPO should work with depository libraries and other library groups to develop a comprehensive plan for preserving the print collection of government documents. This plan should include cataloging, digitizing, and preserving tangible copies of government publications, a timeline for completion, and options for supporting the effort financially, as well as a process for ingesting digitized copies into the Federal

Digital System. Congress should appropriate funds for the purpose of cataloging, digitizing, and preserving the government collection.

- **Recommendation 4.** To ensure the long-term preservation and access of digital government publications, GPO and Congress should explore alternative funding models for the Federal Digital System in order to ensure a stable and sufficient funding source.
- **Recommendation 5.** To preserve the relevance and viability of the Federal Depository Library Program, GPO should continue to collaborate with depository libraries and the broader library community to develop a national strategic plan for the program that gives libraries the flexibility and tools they need to provide permanent public access to government information in the digital age.

#### *Strengthening GPO's Business Model*

- **Recommendation 6.** To ensure the Publication and Information Sales Program continues to play a role in information dissemination and is able to recover costs, GPO should continue to aggressively research and expand into new markets.
- **Recommendation 7.** To enable further cost reductions, Congress should consider changes in its demand for print. GPO should develop estimates of cost savings that could be realized through potential changes in the requirements for printing the *Congressional Record*. GPO should quantify the savings that could be realized through such options as printing fewer copies of the *Congressional Record* or ending the daily start-of-business print requirement while continuing to provide electronic access.
- **Recommendation 8.** To continue to realize government-wide benefits, GPO should continue to perform executive branch printing, while further reducing costs and improving customer service.
- **Recommendation 9.** To generate additional revenue, GPO should continue to pursue smart card business. To assist GPO in growing this business and to leverage GPO's smart card expertise for public benefit, Congress should consider whether to allow GPO to respond to state and local government requests for smart cards.

#### *Building the GPO of the Future*

- **Recommendation 10.** To effectively integrate and align the agency's human resource policies, programs, and practices with its strategies for achieving mission success and desired programmatic results, GPO should develop and institutionalize a human capital planning capacity. GPO should make strategic human capital planning a high priority and use multiple strategies to ensure the recruitment, retention, development, and rewarding of a highly motivated and diverse workforce.
- **Recommendation 11.** To ensure it is able to continue to plan for and respond to future changes, GPO should continue its transformation by enhancing its strategic planning capabilities, broadening its change management efforts, and continually reviewing customer product and service needs.
- **Recommendation 12.** To achieve future organizational and operational cost savings in the Customer Services program, GPO should further consolidate regional office locations, space, and staff and continue to identify and implement best management

practices (such as cross training, telework, work sharing arrangements, and increasing managerial spans of control) and available technologies to the greatest extent possible.

- **Recommendation 13.** To realize significant potential savings and enhance revenues (as well as improve customer service), GPO should accelerate the development and deployment of a new automated print procurement system.
- **Recommendation 14.** To reduce GPO's facilities footprint while increasing the leasing of unused building space, GPO should continue pursuing incremental lease arrangements.
- **Recommendation 15.** To address workforce skills imbalances, GPO should continue to pursue targeted, gradual staffing reductions in specific areas, as well as functional consolidations, when feasible and appropriate.

In conclusion, I am pleased that the U.S. House Committee on Administration is conducting this hearing on GPO's future. In the post-print world, our Panel believes that GPO continues to have an important mission of authenticating, preserving, and distributing federal information to the American people. Meeting future needs will require GPO to continue to transform both externally and internally. Externally, it should serve as a critical player in the collaborative development of a government-wide strategy and offer new products and services. Internally, it will have to build upon its recent change management efforts, including the further development of an agile organization with the capabilities to plan for and respond to potential changes; continue to adjust its business model; and take additional steps to achieve cost savings.