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TRANSFORMING GPO FOR THE 21ST CENTURY AND BEYOND: PART 3 — FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY
PROGRAM

WRITTEN TESTIMONY
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Thank you, Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee on House Administration for inviting me to appear before you at this hearing. It is an honor to be able to give my testimony regarding my experiences as a regional federal depository library coordinator at the University of Maryland, College Park and Clemson University.

Before I proceed, I need to make it clear that my testimony is not given on behalf of the University of Maryland. I am here to testify regarding my experiences and observations as the regional librarian at the University of Maryland, College Park and former regional librarian at Clemson University.

The University of Maryland-College Park (UMD) is the flagship institution for the University System of Maryland. In the 2017 *U.S. News and World Report College and University Rankings*, UMD was ranked the 22nd top public school in the United States. UMD Libraries provide over 4.65 million electronic and physical information resources in electronic, paper, online, and microform formats to meet the needs of over 39,000 students, 4,300 faculty, and 5,400 staff. Like many institutions, the UMD Libraries have capitalized on the opportunity digital publications provide by transforming from a place that houses books to a user-friendly space where people can come to collaborate, study, and create. At the same time, the libraries have continued in their mission of providing their users with expert assistance and training in information retrieval.

In addition to its role for the UMD community, the University Libraries serve as the regional federal depository library for fifty-nine selective federal depository libraries in Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia. The University of Maryland is one of seven regional federal depositories serving two or more states. I administer the depository library program, which includes authorizing materials discard requests, providing training to depository library coordinators, facilitating an annual meeting, and answering depository-related questions.

At Maryland, the library has experienced increasing strain on its labor, space, and financial resources due to the constraints of the federal laws and regulations governing the maintenance of its government documents collection. To alleviate this pressure, I developed a vision and project plan to increase users' access and use of government information, while withdrawing eligible no-use and low-use materials. Unfortunately for me as a librarian, the physical materials have proven to be an obstacle to fully realizing my vision. A considerable amount of time and expense is required to maintain the collection. Like many of my peers, I am the sole librarian tasked with the responsibility of coordinating the regional depository library program in addition to my other professional activities. Materials are cataloged by a staff member in a different department. With the help of one to two part-time student workers, I shelve new and circulated materials, identify duplicate and superseded materials eligible for withdrawal, offer them to other institutions, and then work with another department to withdraw and discard them.

Just consider, last year I had one student, who worked twenty hours a week to shelve all materials, retrieve duplicate copies, offer them to other institutions, and transport them to another department for processing. No matter how hard he and I worked, we simply could not keep up with demand. Fortunately, I have been able to build good relationships with other departments and libraries. Here's a strategy I've learned that may be useful to you in your work as well: enticing your colleagues with baked goods is a surprisingly effective way to get them to volunteer when you need help.

Unfortunately, pumpkin bread pudding with rum raisin caramel sauce cannot solve all the issues that come with having a growing collection that needs to be maintained in a finite amount of space with a finite amount of resources. This problem is not unique to the University of Maryland. In the *2011 Biennial Survey of Depository Libraries*, 63% of Regionals (30 of 47) reported that "use of physical space" is one of the "big issues the library as a whole is facing." A year later in the *2012 Library Forecast Study*, 61% of Regionals (25 of 41) indicated their tangible collections are "cost or space intensive." Even maintaining an existing collection is a costly endeavor. A 2009 study published by the Council on Library and Information Resources estimated the cost of keeping a single book in an open library shelf accessible to users at \$4.26 per year. In an environment where library budgets continue to be consumed by subscription journal price increases that outpace inflation, every expense must be ruthlessly scrutinized and justified, and a collection that is underutilized is a prime target.

Regional librarians, like myself, are trapped between our desire to help people find information and the reality that the old ways of collecting, maintaining, and providing access to content are no longer sustainable. For me, my mission is simple. I want to provide access to the right information at the right time by using all of the tools available to me. Outside of my work as government documents and subject librarian, I have built a reputation as being the librarian who will find "the" answer or be able to tell you exactly why I didn't find it. It is a point of great pride for me that when I worked at my previous institution, Engineering students sought my assistance despite my lack of scientific background. When I asked why, one PhD student said "because you always figure it out" - even when they are looking for a piece of computer code created by NASA in the late 1970s.

There are a number of ways regional libraries can approach the problem of having expensive, low-use, space consuming collections. At my previous institution, Clemson University Libraries, we decided to relinquish regional status. This decision was not made lightly; it was a process that took two years from when the idea was first broached to me to when we fully relinquished regional status. Before initiating the process, I did what librarians are famous for doing - I researched all aspects of it. Clemson's intention in relinquishing regional status was not a desire to discard our entire holdings, but to gain more control over them. Being required to keep a physical copy of everything we received - even with allowances being made to discard duplicate and superseded materials - was impractical and hard to justify. Imagine having to explain that rule to your boss when they see shelves full of documents that are one page, crumbling, outdated, and never used.

As a selective, it became easier for Clemson to trim the fat from the collection while continuing to meet users' needs. Becoming a selective did not prevent the public from accessing Clemson's holdings; in fact Clemson's ability to provide access to content improved after they relinquished regional status. For example, Clemson University became an Association of Southeastern Research Libraries Center of Excellence for the National Park Service and United States Forest Service, which meant that they would collect, catalog, and retain at least one copy of all documents published by both agencies. Becoming a center of excellence supplemented its special collections holdings which include the papers of former directors of the National Park Service. Additionally, the NPS materials in the government documents collection could support the Open Parks Network (OPN), a digital repository of NPS publications developed in partnership with the National Park Service with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. To date, the OPN has cost \$136,535.15 and the collection has only been reduced by 112,692, 73% of which were acetate-based microformat materials in an advanced state of chemical decomposition known as vinegar syndrome. For Clemson, relinquishing regional status was a matter of divesting in order to strategically invest, thereby ensuring they could continue to sustain the collection while expanding access to the collection.

Unlike Clemson, which shared regional responsibilities for the state with the University of South Carolina, the University of Maryland is the only regional for two states and the District of Columbia, including thirty-two federal agencies. The selective depositories in our region, which include the Library of Congress, have extensive and rich collections. Despite differences between libraries that serve academic institutions, the general public, and federal agencies, all of the region's libraries are facing the same space, financial, and labor shortages that hamstring UMD. Government documents librarians must carefully tread the line between fulfilling our sacred trust to provide no-fee access to government information, while continuing to demonstrate our value to our institutions. No library collection is exempt from the scrutiny of its institution's administration, who sees any underutilized space as prime real estate to repurpose for another use. Between the law and their employers are government documents librarians, whose prime

objective is to provide no-fee access to the right information at the right time. Quite frankly, as things currently stand, the current situation is a pressure cooker that many libraries are turning away from.

With regard to Title 44, Chapter 19 of the U.S. Code (Depository Library Program), I hope that this committee and Congress will revise the legislation so that:

- The definition of government publication includes electronic materials and reflects the ways information is published in the 21st century
- Institutions are able to share regional federal depository library status and responsibility across state lines
- Regional Federal Depository Libraries have more leeway to substitute electronic publications from approved sources such as GovInfo and FDSys in order to right-size their collections to the needs of their users and institutions
- Federal Depository Libraries can apply to the Government Publishing Office for grant money for special projects that will increase access, discoverability, and preserve content for future generations.

I know that some people have reservations regarding revising Title 44 Chapter 19 because they fear that changing the rules will undermine the FDLP and endanger long-term free public access; however I believe that failing to modernize Title 44 Chapter 19 and increase flexibility will be more detrimental to the program. An inescapable truth about what it means to be a regional federal depository library is that they cannot afford to house low-use, expensive tangible collections that continue to grow while less space is allocated to them. At the same time, online information is not going to go away, and librarians need flexibility in order to devote more attention to organizing and preserving access to the increasing bulk of material primarily or solely provided online.

Like many of my colleagues in the profession, I love the tangible materials. There is something wonderful about being able to retrieve a physical book from the shelves. By the same token, thanks to advances in technology people can directly access information from a laptop or smartphone, or have an electronic copy quickly delivered via Interlibrary Loan to their local library, making it accessible to users who would never have been able to visit the library and spend the day searching for the information they need. As more publications are becoming available electronically, public access to government publications has become easier to provide. Regional depositories don't have to use the same methods they did at the program's foundation in 1962 to help their users discover and retrieve the government information they need. In an era where librarians and users are turning their attention to the long-term preservation and accessibility of electronic documents, having the flexibility to move beyond solely maintaining print collections allows the depository library program to fulfill the purpose for which it was created: to make government information freely available to the American public.