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The Collaborative Federal Depository Program: ASERL's Plan for Managing FDLP Collections in the Southeast

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In 2011, **Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL)** members unanimously approved the *ASERL Southeast Region Guidelines for Management and Disposition of Federal Depository Library Collections*, a common set of collection management and disposition policies, procedures and best practices that form **ASERL's Collaborative Federal Depository Program (CFDP)**. This plan represents the product of a process that first began in 2006 through the collaborative efforts of **ASERL** library deans and directors and documents librarians. In 2009, **ASERL** was awarded a grant from the **Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)** to support ongoing development of the model, testing three pilot sites: the **University of Florida**, the **University of Kentucky**, and the **University of South Carolina**. Today, 222 **Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP)** participating libraries in the southeast actively address the increasing cost of managing, preserving, and providing print and digital access to these critical collections through the **CFDP**.

Founded in 1956, **ASERL** is the largest regional research library cooperative in the country, with thirty-eight members in eleven states. The **FDLP** holds a prominent place in the southeast: thirty-seven of **ASERL's** thirty-eight members are **FDLP** libraries, including twelve regional depositories. That these collections are seen as a regional asset was an important factor in the decision to establish a collaborative stewardship model within the region.

It is generally recognized that no **FDLP** collection is one hundred percent complete: whether due to previous retention policies, damage, or theft, some degree of loss for publications is inevitable. Core to the **CFDP** is the "Center of Excellence" (COE), whereby a library seeks to construct a comprehensive tangible collection of U.S. government information for an agency, a subject area, or format. To date, forty depository libraries in the southeast serve as Centers of Excellence: eleven regional depository libraries and twenty-nine selective depository libraries. The **CFDP** program is not limited to **ASERL** libraries: in fact, 20% of COEs are depositories outside **ASERL's** membership. Together, these libraries have established 219 COE collections, including 215 collections based upon the issuing agency, three subject collections, and one collection based on format.

The processes for the disposition of government publications that are being deaccessioned by a selective depository have long been recognized as challenging and time-consuming for both selective and regional depository libraries. One of the more innovative and popular resources of the **CFDP** is the **ASERL**

Disposition Database, which is a software tool developed by the **University of Florida** to streamline the disposition process and to fill gaps in holdings. Today, 72% of the depository libraries in the **ASERL** region use the database to manage their disposition process. Since it was launched in 2012, more than 66,450 documents posted for disposal have been claimed by another library, further strengthening **FDLP** collections in the region. The **FDLP** eXchange database under development by the **Government Publishing Office (GPO)** was inspired in part by the **ASERL** Disposition Database. **ASERL** is working with **GPO** to coordinate functionality in order to streamline data transfer between the two systems.

In addition to building comprehensive collections, COE libraries commit to promoting use of the collection while ensuring its preservation. **ASERL** members agree that the best means of providing broad public access to these collections is through online access to digital copies, and the management of tangible collections should support initiatives to create a comprehensive digital collection of federal documents in the public domain. Digitization is optional for Centers of Excellence; however, COEs are encouraged to digitize items within their areas of responsibility when a stable public domain source is not available. Digital copies not only enhance access to the collection but also serve as a surrogate where no print copy is currently available.

Real-World Leadership: University of Florida & University of Kentucky

Two of the initial **IMLS** grant libraries, the **University of Florida** and the **University of Kentucky**, have extensively digitized their COE collections. Moreover, both libraries have signed agreements to serve as **Preservation Stewards**, a program established by **GPO** as part of its **Federal Information Preservation Network (FIPNet)** to support efficient government documents stewardship in the digital era.

The **University of Florida (UF)** has established more than 35 COE collections, including collections for twenty-one **USDA** offices, Congressional Hearings, the Code of Federal Regulations, and the Federal Register, along with a comprehensive subject and format collection for Panama and the Canal. From the onset, the **University of Florida** committed to digitize a significant portion of its COE collections. Many of these **UF**-digitized copies are "official" publications that are digitally signed by **GPO** and represent the first publications

accepted by **GPO** as official publications from a depository library, and authenticated with a digital signature.

Since 2008, **UF Libraries** have cataloged over 660,000 volumes, with 15,252 original cataloging records contributed to **OCLC** and available in **WorldCat**. The **UF Libraries** COE collections are treated as special collections, undergoing a stringent review process including page-level validation. In addition to preserving the print copies, digital copies are available in the **UF Digital Collections** online portal (<http://UFDC.ufl.edu>),

and preservation masters are sent to the Florida Digital Archives (<http://fclaweb.fcla.edu/fda>). Also, all academic libraries in Florida and all selective depositories in Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands can deposit government documents being withdrawn from their collections into **FLARE** (the Florida Academic Repository) for preservation and access, if it is the last copy held in the region.

The **University of Kentucky (UK) Libraries** began digitizing its Center of Excellence collection for the Works Progress/Work Projects Administration (WPA) in 2011. Given the age and fragile condition of WPA print publications, and in order to facilitate in-house digitization efforts, **UK Libraries** established a dual copy collection: where possible, one print copy is retained for access and digitization and one copy for preservation.

To facilitate its collection development activities, the **UK Libraries** maintain an exhaustive bibliography of all known WPA publications, both owned and not owned, that is checked against online sources such as **Internet Archive** and **HathiTrust** to identify digital copies in the public domain. Once identified, digital copies are cataloged and added to the library's online catalog. In-house digitization activities are limited to those titles for which no digital copy is available in the public domain. As digital content is created and cataloged, the best tangible copy is then placed in storage for permanent retention, and the digital and second tangible copy are used for access.

Real-world experiences confirm that the **CFDP** is a successful and innovative program that works within the legal framework of Title 44 to improve access while lessening the administrative burdens on depository libraries. Accomplishments achieved at the state and regional level have positioned **ASERL** Centers of Excellence libraries favorably to engage in national collaborative initiatives to ensure **FDLP** collections are cataloged, inventoried, digitized, preserved and accessible — core values of the **FDLP**. 🌱

