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New Federal Digital System Provides Improved GPO Access

In June 1994, the Government Printing Office (GPO) launched the website GPO Access as part of its mission to provide federal electronic information to the public and make access to government publications easier.¹ Since then, advancements in information technology necessitated the creation of a new system to gather, authenticate, and preserve Government documents. As of 20 December 2010, GPO officially replaced GPO Access with Federal Digital System (FDsys), a new digital content management system for disseminating electronic information from all three branches of the Federal Government.² Searching government publications on FDsys is easier, and search results are more relevant, than searching on GPO Access.

The FDsys website, which is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>, provides not only comprehensive content for free to the public, it also serves as a preservation repository and advanced search engine for federal documents.³ Users may perform quick searches across all collections, filter results, browse collections, and search for government material by citation. The system's "advanced search" feature allows searches of selected collections focused by date and specified fields. Conducting a search within a search is also possible, and results may be bookmarked for later viewing. Users may also download bulk data, such as an annual edition of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, search for agency notices and rules across multiple years of the *Federal Register*, and locate and retrieve legislative information from Congressional Committee Prints and the *Congressional Record*. The

budgets for the Federal Government for Fiscal Years 1996 through 2011 are also available, as are Government Accountability Office reports and Comptroller General Decisions from 1994 through 2008.⁴

One of the greatest changes from GPO Access is the availability of multiple document formats and metadata. Documents in FDsys are available in .html, .pdf, .txt, and .xml, and content is now accessible through major Internet search engines. The expanded use of metadata now includes the use of descriptive data relevant to the publication.⁵ For instance, users can now access metadata for the *Federal Register* such as agencies, title, action, dates and contact information.⁶

The new FDsys site has also improved the way documents are authenticated, which enhances the reliability of information available to users. Official sources now approve content uploaded to the site, and GPO verifies that the content is unaltered. The GPO uses a digital signature and a GPO seal of authenticity to certify the authenticity of documents. The authentication process ensures that content as specific as a speech within a Congressional Record section has been approved and has remained unaltered,⁷ which can be especially useful in an age where information is readily available from numerous websites, many of which are nonofficial sources.

The introduction of FDsys has improved access to authentic, digital government publications over the Internet. Searching government publications just got a little bit easier.

For more information, contact the Electronic Services Librarian at TJAGLCS-Digital-Librarian@conus.army.mil.

¹ U.S. GOV'T PRINTING OFFICE, STATUS REPORT: GPO ACCESS (1994).

² Enchanting Devil, *FDsys Out of Beta*, FDSYS BLOG (Dec. 22, 2010, 11:54 PM), <http://fdsys.blogspot.com/2010/12/fdsys-out-of-beta.html>.

³ Selene Dalecky, Carrie Gibb & Lisa LaPlant, GPO's Federal Digital System (Apr. 21, 2009) (PowerPoint presentation).

⁴ The GPO maintains more recent reports and decisions on the Government Accountability Office website at <http://www.gao.gov/>.

⁵ Ashley Dahlen, Outreach Librarian, U.S. Government Printing Office, "The FDsys": The New GPO Access, (Nov. 4, 2010) (PowerPoint presentation).

⁶ Deng Wu, Paul Nelson & Johnny Gee, GPO Federal Digital System: Architecture and Design (Oct. 21, 2008) (PowerPoint presentation).

⁷ Dahlen, *supra* note 5.