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Resolution Urging Congress to Designate the Government Printing Office as the Lead Agency to Manage the Lifecycle of Digital United States Government Information

Whereas Federal information produced at taxpayer expense should remain permanently accessible to the public free of charge;

Whereas “In the past half-century, information creation, distribution, retention, and preservation has expanded from a tangible, paper-based process to include digital processes managed largely through computerized information technologies.” (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42457.pdf> p. ii);

Whereas some Federal agencies have created independent web sites and/or have worked in partnership with each other and with external entities to build integrated web sites to share information with the public;

Whereas web archiving is a fundamental part of managing digital government information, there exists an ISO standard for web archive formats (ISO28500:2009, WARC), the preferred format for web sites harvested by the Library of Congress;

Whereas some Federal agency web sites, such as the Census Bureau's *American FactFinder*, provide data and publications only for a specific period of time and make older information unavailable, often without providing an explanation for withdrawing that information or ensuring archival access to it;

Whereas when, due to funding or other reasons, a Federal agency can no longer maintain a web site either in whole or as a partner, this web site is dismantled and the information made inaccessible because no procedures or policies are in place to assure that the data will be transferred to another publically accessible repository, along with appropriate metadata, software applications, or other means for manipulating, analyzing or evaluating the data retrieved;

Whereas organizations, such as the Internet Archive, the California Digital Library and the University of North Texas, are unable to comprehensively archive information found on government agency web sites, but are archiving information only selectively at their own expense and/or with limited connection to the Federal government;

Whereas agencies such as the Government Printing Office (GPO), the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the Library of Congress (LC), are already authorized by law to provide information services to other agencies and should be included in a plan for the disposal or transfer of information in web sites; and

Whereas the National Academy of Public Administration recommended that “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;" now, therefore, be it 9

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members:

1. urges Congress designate the Government Printing Office the lead agency to develop a United States federal government-wide strategy for managing the lifecycle of digital government publications, documents, information, and web sites;
2. urges Congress authorize the Government Printing Office to develop and administer standards and procedures for the United States federal government which include rules for dismantling sites and archiving web content, including the preservation of all pertinent data protocols, documentation, and software programs for evaluating and manipulating the content for permanent public access;
3. urges Congress require that the Government Printing Office consult with the United States federal publishing agencies, the National Libraries, and professional library and archiving groups in the development of these standards and procedures;
4. urges Congress provide the Government Printing Office sufficient funding to handle the archiving of web content, to perform its duties on an ongoing basis and additional funding as necessary to fully assist agencies when they are forced to decommission a web site.

Adopted by the Council of the American Library Association
Tuesday, July 2, 2013 in Chicago, Illinois



Keith Michael Fiels ALA Executive Director and Secretary of the ALA Council