techline

Ask The **CIO**

MIKE WASH *GPO's Chief Information Officer*

How will GPO ensure that digital documents remain accessible to the public as formats and technologies change?

Dealing with digital files over time exposes a number of challenges — particularly finding a way to read older format media and converting files to make them usable in today's and future applications. The bigger — and probably eternal — challenge is the rapidly evolving and changing world of applications and formats.

Preservation processes come in three forms: refresh, migration, and emulation. Refresh is the simple process of reading a file, verifying that it is still readable and then re-writing it. Migration is a process to move old formats to a new format — for example, moving Office 2003 documents to Office 2007. Emulation is a bit more abstract — creating an operating environment similar to the environment that existed when the file was created. An example of this would be emulating an early 1980's IBM PC operating environment to read WordStar documents.

At GPO, we will use a mix of these methods depending on the file type and circumstances. Refresh and migration will probably be used most often. •

FDsys

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GPO's Federal Digital System (FDsys)

New system will make your job easier!

As a GPO customer, you interact with us in a variety of ways including:

- Creating digital documents for GPO to print and distribute — both in paper form and electronically;
- Tracking those documents through the production process;
- Providing public access to many of those documents through *GPO Access*.

Currently, you use a variety of methods — phone calls, e-mails and Web sites — to complete your publishing jobs and find the information you need. FDsys will make your job a lot easier.

What is FDsys?

FDsys is an advanced digital content management system that will enable GPO to manage Federal Government documents. Some of the main functions include:

- **Publishing documents —** The U.S. Congress and other agencies will be able to submit files and orders electronically to GPO for printing, electronic distribution, and inclusion in the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP);

- **Searching for information —** Federal agencies' information will reach a wider audience by providing authentic, published Government information to the public;

- **Preserving information —** The preservation function of FDsys will ensure public access to information even as technology changes.

Publishing Documents with FDsys

In practical terms, FDsys is going to simplify the publishing process through:

- Electronic order and file submission;
- Centralized job management;
- On-line estimating tools;
- Access to detailed billing information;
- Collaborative authoring tools;
- Digital proofing;
- Version control.

Because all information will be stored in an "electronic job folder," multiple authorized users can access the job information and work on different aspects simultaneously. This is going to have a positive effect on efficiency, quality, effectiveness, and timeliness. And, as the submitting agency, you will be able to track your job electronically.

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Searching for Information with FDsys

FDsys will enable GPO to manage digital documents for all three branches of the U.S. Government. As a state-of-the-art digital content management system, FDsys will contain information gathered through three methods:

- **Files submitted by Congress and Federal agencies;**
- **Information gathered from Federal agencies' Web sites (often referred to as "harvesting" information);**
- **Digital files created by scanning previously printed publications.**

The FDsys search feature will function much like other common internet search engines where casual users can easily conduct simple searches and advanced researchers can specify detailed search parameters based on the content collection.

What will FDsys do for my Agency?

- **Submitting jobs electronically will reduce acquisition time and costs associated with sending files to GPO.**
- **All of your content and procurement-related information will be stored in one place. Researching past orders and developing reports will be easy.**
- **Estimating tools will offer more accurate estimates at your convenience.**
- **On-line job tracking will provide instant access to information about your orders.**
- **Detailed billing information will help you track expenses and create reports.**

Preserving Information with FDsys

Preservation of Government documents is another important component of FDsys. We're planning for the future so that documents created with today's software will still be accessible for generations to come. FDsys plans to be ready for whatever the future brings — including storing information in text, graphics, audio, and video files.

Availability of FDsys

Currently, GPO is in the beta testing stage of the initial "proof of concept" system. Beta testing is the process of operating and questioning a product to evaluate it with key stakeholder groups. A proof of concept is exactly what it sounds like – proof that a concept will really work. GPO has worked for three years to reach this stage.

Most of the work has been on the complicated infrastructure and technology necessary to make the basic functionality of FDsys possible. This has been a huge effort for employees from GPO and Harris Corporation. Harris Corporation is the technology firm working with us as a "master integrator" of technology and information.

GPO is giving FDsys proof of concept demonstrations to our key customers and stakeholders and asking for feedback. So far, we have received very positive reactions to FDsys. We expect to be in this testing stage into early 2008.

FDsys will become available in late 2008, beginning a process of incremental releases. Each release will add more functionality to the previous one. There are three major releases planned over the next three years. •

What is the FDsys implementation plan?

FDsys will be implemented through a series of releases, with each release building upon the features of the previous release. There are multiple releases planned over the next two years, with beta testing occurring prior to each public release. The initial public release is scheduled for 2008; subsequent releases will follow approximately six months later.

How did GPO decide what would go into each release?

The FDsys development team used several criteria to decide when specific features will be released — including importance to customers, development time, and cost. Each new release will add to the features of the previous release. We'll also be making modifications to the releases based on customer feedback.

Will users be authenticated?

Public users may search anonymously without the need of a login or password. Other users, such as agency employees, may establish an FDsys user identity, which will allow additional capabilities such as ordering and content submission.

How does GPO*Express*SM interface with the system?

GPO*Express*SM is a contract between GPO and FedEx Kinko'sSM to provide printing on demand. FDsys will provide an on-line interface so that FedEx Kinko'sSM can electronically submit all processed content and metadata to GPO. This will ensure that all documents will be included in the FDsys content database, regardless of where they are printed.

How will GPO regional offices be included?

FDsys will be a Web-based system available to all regional offices and customers. Customers will have the capability to choose the GPO office with which they want to work.

How will FDsys ensure that users are authorized to commit funds for orders?

Customers who want to submit content and jobs via FDsys must request an account either through the FDsys self-register function or through a GPO Printing Specialist (Service Specialist). FDsys will route account requests to a GPO Security Administrator. The Security Administrator will determine if the person is authorized to submit job orders and commit funds on behalf of the agency (e.g., call a predetermined delegated agency authority, verify against agency authorization letter). The customer will be notified of their account approval. FDsys will maintain billing address codes associated with each user account authorized to spend funds.

Will the forms look the same as they currently do? (SF1, 952, 2511, 3868, etc.)?

The FDsys data entry screens will not look the same as the current forms. Information that is needed on each of GPO's forms has been included in the user interfaces, but we have eliminated unnecessary fields and duplicate data. The system has been designed to be more intuitive, making the process easier and faster. However, the system will allow a user to print out current GPO forms containing the information they've entered into FDsys.

Will agencies be trained on how to use the system?

Yes. GPO will evaluate different methods of delivering training to the agencies and consult with our agency customers to ensure the effectiveness of the training.

Do I have to use FDsys to request services from GPO?

No. FDsys is an optional tool to facilitate ordering. Traditional ordering methods will remain available to accommodate all users.