

# The Congressional Joint Committee on Printing

## The Nation's Guardian of Public Access to Government Publications and Information

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The Congressional Joint Committee on Printing has been the nation's guardian of public access to government publications for over a hundred years. Depository libraries have a close relationship with the members of Congress in their own state because those members are the ones that designate them as depositories. JCP has taken many steps to improve services to libraries and the public, including hiring the first librarian with the charge of helping Congress improve information services for the public and the libraries that serve them.

JCP membership comes from the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Rules Committee. The Joint Committee on Printing was established in 1846 to adopt measures "deemed necessary to remedy neglect, delay, or waste" on the part of government printing contractors. Over the years, Congress assigned more duties to JCP and consolidated its duties under the 1895 Printing Act, and codified all of its responsibilities into U.S.C. Title 44. Congress also moved the Federal Depository Library Program from the Department of Interior to GPO, thus creating JCP as the champion for public access to government publications. Congress also approved the JCP and the Library of Congress's request to transfer the International Library Exchange Program from the Smithsonian to GPO in order to improve services and cut the cost by some million dollars per year.

JCP has reviewed Title 44 over the years by conducting a number of exhaustive studies. In 1978 the JCP established the Ad Hoc Committee on Revision of Title 44 and included representatives from fifteen organizations. Francis Buckley and Lois Mills, both GODORT members, were chosen to represent the library community. Roy Breimon and myself served as JCP staff to assist the advisory committee.

The committee report "Federal Government Printing and Publishing: Policy Issues" explained the role of the Joint Committee On Printing as follows:

Under Title 44, United States Code, the primary responsibility for setting and administering policy for the printing and distribution of government publications rests with the Joint Committee on Printing. Section 103 establishes the major JCP policy goal to "remedy neglect, delay, duplication, or waste in the public printing and distribution of Government publications." In addition, other sections of the law state

that specific actions or assignments are "subject to regulation by the JCP," or must be "approved by the JCP."

The report goes on to list some of the responsibilities of JCP:

1. Establishment of policies for the federal printing and distribution system through regulations.
2. Establishment of standards and specifications for federal paper procurement and use.
3. Oversight of the operation of almost 300 departments and agency printing plants worldwide.
4. Approval of agency requests to purchase printing and binding equipment.
5. Oversight of the Federal Printing Procurement Program, whereby a substantial percentage of the Government's printing requirements . . . are purchased from commercial sources via competitive bids.
6. Oversight of the Government Printing Office's operation and policies. Additionally, under 44 U.S.C. the Kiess Act, the committee serves as the final board of appeal in GPO labor/management negotiations pertaining to wage-related matters.
7. Oversight over public access to government information through various programs, including by-law distribution, document sales, and the Depository Library Program.
8. Promotion of cooperation between the Senate and House of Representatives publishing activities in such areas as automated production of Congressional publications and automated indexing.
9. Formulate recommendations to Congress for the updating, revising, and /or eliminating sections of Title 44 of the United States Code.
10. Compilation, publication, and distribution of certain Congressional publications and supplements, including: "The Congressional Directory," "The Congressional Pictorial Directory," "The Capitol Magazine," and the "Biographical Directory of the American Congress."

JCP, until its separate office and staff were taken away in the late '90s, worked every day to provide oversight of the executive and judicial branches. JCP had liaisons in every department and agency and held a yearly meeting with them to review JCP regulations and discuss new printing and information

policies. JCP worked with the Government Accounting Office, the LC Congressional Research Service, and the former Office of Technology Assessment to explore ways to improve GPO's ability to do its job.

JCP employed staff who were experts on the legislative process and the publications that support that process, such as the bills and the Congressional Record. They were knowledgeable about printing, paper, binding, technology, publishing, appropriations, depository libraries, and labor. The JCP separate office was gotten rid of by Congress as a cost-saving gesture. The JCP parent committees, Senate Rules Committee, and Committee on House Administration (now Committee on Oversight) have one or two staffers assigned to conduct the work of the JCP.

JCP, since 1846, has more than proved its worth. JCP developed many policies that saved hundreds of millions of dollars. JCP helped GPO use technology to reduce GPO's staff from about 9,000 to a little over a thousand staffers without firing a single person.

JCP held public meetings all around the country to solicit feedback from GPO's staff and customers, librarians, printing and paper contractors, and commercial publishers about needed legislative and regulatory changes in 1980 and 1981. JCP inspected all the GPO plants, bookstores, the Pueblo Distribution Center, many agency in-house printing facilities, and 50 depository libraries. JCP continued to inspect printing and procurement plants until their staff was eliminated.

JCP worked closely with all the library associations and often sent staff to speak at their meetings. JCP encouraged GPO to support the Depository Library Council and sent JCP staff to their meetings. Often the professional staff was accompanied by the staff director, deputy staff director, or legal counsel.

JCP coordinated the efforts to pass the "1962 Depository Act," the law to bring law libraries into the depository library program, and the "GPO Access Act of 1993." JCP laid the groundwork for bringing electronic publications into the depository library program by interpreting the law to say that printing included electronic publications.

JCP worked with GPO to develop the requirements for the first contract for an electronic printing press. JCP directed GPO to use recycled paper for regular printing and archival paper for publications like the Serial Set. JCP directed GPO to use soy-based ink for printing. JCP chaired the working group that automated the "Congressional Record Index." JCP, with the cooperation of the Bookbinder to the Senate and GPO, developed binding standards for Congress, thus improving the quality and cutting costs. JCP worked with GPO in developing bibliographic and technical standards for GPO microfiche. JCP

investigated why the microfiche for a number of years was of poor quality and took steps to correct the problem.

JCP staff worked with the Superintendent of Documents to automate the "Monthly Catalog of U.S. Government Publications" using international standards such as AACR and MARC format, which made it possible for libraries, networks, and others to incorporate those cataloging records into their electronic catalogs. JCP, working with the Federal Library Committee, brokered the contract to allow GPO and federal libraries to catalog directly into OCLC. Vendors were able to take the cataloging data and produce secondary products. The Senate and House Libraries, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, the Congressional Research Service, and GAO used GPO's cataloging records rather than doing their own cataloging. They saved the judicial and legislative branches a lot of money. Most of the executive and federal court libraries followed suit, saving the federal government millions of dollars.

JCP encouraged GPO to hire professional librarians and raise the librarians' grades by two grades in order to compete with LC for experienced catalogers.

JCP worked with GPO to develop a marketing plan for the sale of government publications, including the publication of a sales catalog so customers would know the price and availability of publications before they ordered them. JCP worked with GPO in designing an automated sales order fulfillment system, which made it possible for staff to search a database when an order arrived and to process the order electronically. JCP worked with commercial bookstores to stock GPO publications. This was made possible because JCP persuaded Bowker and GPO to assign ISBN numbers to GPO publications and to use bar codes on sales publications which allowed their easy purchase by commercial bookstores.

JCP established the Ad Hoc Committee on Depository Library Access to Federal Automated Data Bases, which recommended to the JCP that electronic government information be provided to depository libraries and further recommended that the economic feasibility of such provision be tested through pilot projects. JCP staff convinced 16 agencies to develop electronic pilots. JCP convinced Census to publish their pilot CD-ROM through GPO. It was the first CD-ROM published through GPO.

JCP visited 55 congressional committees in 1975 and 1976 and persuaded them to allow GPO to ride their print order for committee prints for depository libraries.

JCP worked with Congressional, LC, and GPO staff to transfer the International Exchange Program from the Smithsonian to GPO, thus improving service to the libraries and cutting the cost of the program by several million per year.

JCP persuaded the map-producing agencies, who had legal permission to print their maps themselves and therefore had to pay for the printing of copies for depository libraries, to provide those maps to GPO for libraries. In return, GPO agreed to pay for the handling, mailing, and postage. Providing their maps through GPO allowed the agencies to cull their own mailing lists while being assured that the maps were getting too many users.

JCP worked with the sci/tech agencies to persuade them to provide their publications and reports to depository libraries. Many sci/tech publications were issued in microfiche. Since JCP had adopted a policy that microforms were publications, the agencies could not refuse to provide their publications to depository libraries.

In conclusion, JCP has listened to the concerns of government printers and publishers, GPO staff, depository librarians, purchasers of publications from GPO, and contractors of printing equipment and services, and took steps to improve services by developing better policies and by effective oversight. It takes a bipartisan committee with knowledgeable and full-time staff to be responsive to Congress's constituents.

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