

**POSITION PAPER ON THE ROLE OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENT
PUBLISHING AND THE DEPOSITORY SERVICES PROGRAM**

The Government will become a model user of information technology and the Internet. By 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing.

Speech from the Throne
October 1999

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of Canadian Government Publishing (CGP) and the Depository Services Program (DSP) in the context of the evolving Canadian government technology and service environment. At present, both programs are at risk. They do not have sufficient financial support or recognition to enable them to play their full role in the emerging world of electronic government. This paper will look at ways the government can make the most of its investment in CGP and DSP. It will also examine ways these programs can reach their full potential and help the government build connections to Canadians.

The findings of this paper are based on a number of sources, including:

- Review of documentation on the CGP and the DSP and on a variety of related government initiatives and trends; and
- Interviews with CGP and DSP staff and with a range of stakeholder organizations including government departments, publishers, booksellers, libraries and NGOs with an interest in the dissemination of government information.

The report first provides a brief description of CGP and the DSP, including their rationale and funding arrangements. It then outlines some key government trends and policies that have a bearing on these programs. This is followed by an analysis of the implications of these trends for the continued relevance and value of the two programs. Finally, the report suggests a number of ways in which the delivery of the programs should be strengthened.

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

As the government takes advantage of information technology to bring itself closer to its clients and stakeholders, two programs—Canadian Government Publishing (CGP) and the Depository Services Program (DSP)—should be given greater opportunity to maximize the value they add to government information products.

These high value, low cost programs are connecting Canadians to one another and to their government. DSP and CGP are “flying the flag” for better, more transparent government from one end of the country to another, and through the Internet, they are providing this service worldwide. The two programs also fill a gap for those without

Internet access in Canada's urban, rural and remote communities and they speed the transition to electronic distribution of documents.

Properly supported, the programs become even more powerful levers to strengthen connectivity, to make it easier to use government information, and to foster a citizen base that is used to looking for, using and creating knowledge.

Canadian Government Publishing

The CGP has been in operation for over 100 years. As the Government of Canada's official publisher, CGP provides mandatory and optional publishing services to Government of Canada departments and agencies. Mandatory services include the production and distribution of priced mandatory publications, such as any publication tabled at the House of Commons, the Statutes of Canada, Royal Commission inquiries and reports, Main and Supplementary Estimates. It also administers Crown copyright and negotiates licensing arrangements, and provides co-publishing services. Under co-publishing, CGP plans and implements a three-party co-publishing program, involving client departments who are responsible for content and private sector publishers who are responsible for all aspects of publication. CGP also provides contract management services and acts as liaison between the authoring department and the publishing industry. Optional services include a range of services to its government department clients, either directly or through contractors, that spans the entire publishing process from concept development to the sale of the finished product for both print and electronic media. Among these services are content research, market analysis, writing, editing, design, pricing, marketing, promotion, distribution and sales. It also offers information, guidance and advice on publishing policies, practices and standards in accordance with Treasury Board Directives.

A key part of CGP's mandate is to facilitate public access to government publications. To this end, it operates a central ordering, warehousing and distribution facility and ensures that government publications are distributed directly to the public and to a network of about 2,300 bookstores and distributors throughout Canada and in other countries. Distribution activities are carried out by the private sector under contract to the CGP. CGP produces sales catalogues, guides and tools to help people to find the information they need, both in paper and electronic format. It promotes Government of Canada publications by participating in book fairs, trade shows and other promotional events. Finally, CGP secures publications on behalf of the DSP.

The rationale for the program is to help ensure that Crown copyright is protected, that key government information is published and promoted and that it is readily accessible by all those who need it. Accessibility includes making priced publications available in both official languages, as well as in certain aboriginal languages, where appropriate. It also includes setting up channels of distribution, providing a range of means of access (electronic, telephone, fax and face-to-face) and by providing sales catalogues and tools to help identify needed information. The program also plays an important role in promoting the work and publications of the Government of Canada through its

commercial network, web site, catalogues, fact sheets, newspaper and magazine articles, book reviews, advertising and signage.

The CGP is funded on a full cost recovery basis through the sale of publications and services provided to client departments.

Depository Services Program

The DSP, which was established by Order-in-Council in 1927, distributes copies of government publications to 955 depository libraries across Canada and throughout the world, which must then make these available to the public directly and through interlibrary loans. Thus, the DSP provides a "public information safety net" that complements the activities of CGP. Fifty-two are full depository libraries that automatically receive documents listed by the DSP, while the remainder choose only those publications that meet the needs of their clients.

Under the Program, federal departments and agencies provide copies of their publications to CGP for distribution under the DSP. Although it is government policy that all government departments and agencies are required to make their publications available to the DSP, only about 50% do so in practice. Some departments that have significant cost recovery publishing programs do not see it as being in their interest to contribute to the DSP. In other cases, departments have no systematic method of identifying and depositing with the DSP. For the most part, the libraries do not receive publications from the other 50%, although they may purchase some if they become aware of them. Statistics Canada and the House of Commons, whose publications are particularly important to library collections, participate in the DSP.

In addition to these physical repositories, the DSP also maintains electronic repositories of government documents that can be readily accessed through the Internet and participates in the System of Interactive Government Information (SIGI), a pilot project to develop a practical model for the deposit and preservation of electronic documents. The DSP is also responsible for maintaining and supporting the infrastructure of the public information safety net. This includes, among other things, developing and coordinating training, facilitating international publication exchanges on behalf of the Government of Canada and supporting the media outlets used by the government to make citizens aware of information.

The rationale for the DSP is to help ensure that all Canadians have reasonable access to Government of Canada information, wherever they live in Canada, in a form and language of their choosing. In the process, it helps to promote national identity by ensuring that Canadians do not have to rely on ubiquitous and readily accessible U.S. data. Both Programs have a broad public constituency. Government departments benefit from the efficient distribution of information related to their programs and services. Intermediaries, such as libraries, although absorbing the costs of accommodating the materials and providing associated reference services, benefit from receiving materials that enhance their collections and enable them to better serve their

clients. Ultimately, the public benefits from assured and equitable access to government information in a variety of formats.

The DSP is funded through appropriations, which it uses to acquire documents for distribution and to distribute them to depository libraries as well as to support the “public information safety net” in other ways. Under the current arrangements, departments must generally bear the cost of providing the required number of copies. However, some government organizations, which normally sell their publications, expect to be compensated when they supply hard copies or electronic documents that will be made freely available through the DSP and its repositories. Thus DSP budgetary limitations are one of the major reasons for the lack of universal participation in the Program.

Filling a valuable and unique niche unfilled by anyone else

Some confuse the functions of DSP and CGP with the mandates of such bodies as the National Library (NL) and the National Archives (NA). In fact, the latter are two very different bodies with very different objectives.

The National Library collects, preserves and promotes the published heritage of Canada. It collects Canadian publications and Canadian publishers are required by law to send copies to the NL.

The National Archives preserves Canada’s archival heritage. It collects government records and unpublished records from private collections. The National Archives is not really in the business of lending out or publishing documents.

Whereas the NL and NA are based in Ottawa, DSP and CGP are actively providing a government presence in every major community from coast to coast, and they are further providing a virtual presence through an online catalogue of 100,000 paper and electronic publications. More than 90 percent of Canadians live within easy access of a depository library. Annex A provides a map of DSP and CGP points of service across Canada.

Unique in the government, DSP and CGP provide “metadata,” or information about information across government. Because of this, the government can fulfil information requests for comprehensive content (“What information is available on ...?” “Where can I find out about ...?”).

The front lines take the heat when the public cannot get their hands on government information in the format they want.

Gordon Graham, Renouf Publishing Co. Ltd.

3. KEY GOVERNMENT TRENDS

The Emerging Role of Government as a Catalyst and Information Provider

The role of government as an information provider is not new. The publications of the Government of Canada span an enormous array of topics that meet the information needs of Canadians in many different walks of life. Some idea of the variety of such publications can be obtained from the following list:

- The Canadian Guide to Clinical Preventive Health Care
- Customs Tariff 1999: Departmental Consolidation
- Main Estimates
- Canada Year Book
- Mineral Bulletin Series – Metallurgical Works in Canada
- Lexique analogique
- Chemical Contaminants in Canadian Aquatic Ecosystems: An Assessment of their Effects on Fish, Fish Habitat and Fisheries Resources
- Commission of Inquiry into the Blood System in Canada: Final Report
- Your Pension Plan

With the advent of the knowledge economy, the production and dissemination of information are becoming increasingly important government functions in their own right. The government sees its role as “steering” and not “rowing”. Thus, it no longer carries out its responsibilities alone but relies increasingly on others to work with it to fulfill national objectives. In other words, playing the role of catalyst and broker rather than doer. The numerous references to “partnership” and “working together” in recent Throne Speeches testify to this. As a consequence, getting the right information into the hands of its partners and collaborators is becoming vital to program effectiveness. More generally, the government seeks increasingly to exert influence through knowledge and information rather than ownership, coercion or subsidies. Thus, overall, the provision of reliable and objective information is becoming an increasingly important component of government services.

The Central Role of Information Technology

The means of disseminating information is also changing rapidly. Information technology has provided the government with a key tool to fulfill its emerging role. The 1999 Throne Speech contains the following statement:

“The Government will become a model user of information technology and the Internet. By 2004, our goal is to be known around the world as the government most connected to its citizens, with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing.”

The Throne Speech portrays IT as a key policy instrument in the economic social and cultural development of Canada, permeating all sectors of the economy and society.

Policy Response

To date, there has been a limited policy response to the rising importance of information and information technology. The Management of Government Information Holdings encourages departments to retain and manage information and recommends that it should be systematically organized to be accessible. It does not address these issues at a practical level. The Government Communications Policy supports the active dissemination of government information. It requires departments to "maintain an index of published material...and ensure that published material is available for examination by the public". The Government Communications Policy provides the policy basis for the CGP and the DSP and establishes their responsibility for the coordination of publishing activities across government and for ensuring that copies of published material are made available to Canadians. It also stipulates that authors of government publications are required to deposit copies with the DSP. Significantly, there is no clear policy on the on the archiving and release of electronic information and the means by which it should be retrieved.

Other Relevant Trends

A number of other government trends are relevant to CGP and the DSP. These include:

1. Decentralization of authority: Since the 1960s, there has been a steady decentralization of authority from the centre to individual departments and agencies. This, in combination with the flexibility afforded by the Internet, has enabled departments and agencies to make their own arrangements for publishing and information dissemination and has eroded the position of central providers, such as CGP and the DSP.
2. Fiscal Restraint: Since the 1980s, the federal public service has been under a regime of fiscal restraint culminating in Program Review. Among other things, this has led to an increased emphasis on privatization and cost recovery. Thus, most government publishing has been privatized and the CGP operates on a cost recovery basis. Although the DSP receives appropriated funds, these have been cut back in recent years.
3. Public Accountability: The free flow of information has always been a cornerstone of democratic government. Without this citizens cannot make informed judgements about how their government is performing and what value it is adding to their lives both as individuals and as members of society. The government is under increased pressure from citizens to be transparent and accountable. The Access to Information (ATI) legislation has been a key policy response in this area.

4. Citizen Engagement: There is a desire on the part of many citizens for on-going two-way communication with government to enable them to become more engaged in the governance process. This includes the provision of practical opportunities to respond to government on-line, rather than exclusive reliance on information that has been pre-packaged from the perspective of government and its constituent programs. If the information sharing effort is to be sincere then people will need access to objective and comprehensive information that meets their individual requirements.

In a democracy, access to information isn't just a right it is a necessity.

Michael Gurstein, Coalition for Public Information

5. Citizen-Centred Service: There is an increasing demand from citizens for the delivery of government services to be organized in a manner that meets their needs, as opposed to one that reflects the internal organization of government. The Service Canada model is a response to this pressure in that it aims to provide citizens with single-point access to a suite of related services through various channels that include electronic access, telephone access and in-person access. Other government initiatives, such as Services Canada, Government Online, the Canada Site and the Canada Business Service Centres, follow the same logic.
6. Social Cohesion: In a country as ethnically diverse and far-flung as Canada the issue of social cohesion has always been uppermost in the mind of government. In recent years the national unity debate has added a further sense of urgency to this issue. Clearly information on the country and on the activities of the national government has a key role to play, as reflected, for example, in the establishment of the Canada Information Office. It is also considered important that users recognize the role of government in providing them with the information as laid out in the Federal Identity Program (FIP).
7. Canada's Image Abroad: Canada's ability to project a clear image abroad is being increasingly challenged by the global domination of the United States and by international trade agreements and other globalization pressures that threaten to undermine its cultural integrity. Again, information is central to building international awareness of Canada and what it stands for.

4. THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF CGP AND THE DSP

The provision of reliable and comprehensive information in an accessible manner is central to the evolving role of government and its ability to achieve its objectives as outlined in the previous section. In addition the government has an important stewardship responsibility to preserve information for the use of future generations. CGP and the DSP have an important role to play in supporting these requirements for reliability, comprehensiveness, accessibility and preservation. Many of the government trends discussed in the previous section also lend continued relevance to the Programs.

Reliability

Citizens generally look to government to provide them with reliable, objective and impartial information. When information is formally published it is usually subject to the type of critical evaluation that enables it to meet these standards. However, government is increasingly replacing conventional publishing with information provided on the Internet. Although some of this Internet information certainly meets publishable standards, much of it is more informal and less subject to critical review. Material is often placed on the Internet in order to meet a public need for current information but without particular concern for rigour, context or permanence. Programs such as CGP and the DSP help to establish cross-government standards that enable users to distinguish between information that meets rigorous publication requirements and information that is more ephemeral.

Comprehensiveness

Each citizen has his or her own individual needs for information that may cut across program, departmental and even government lines. The more comprehensive the information from a particular source the more useful that source is likely to be for greater numbers of people. Decentralization of publishing and the creation of local Internet web-sites tends to fragment information sources along program and organizational lines and leaves the user with the task of integrating their information requirements from a variety of different sources. Furthermore, many people like to be able to browse catalogues, bibliographies and information databases in order to identify the information they require. Clearly, it is easier to do this from one comprehensive source rather than searching through multiple sources. One of the reasons that mega-bookstores have proved so popular is the comprehensiveness of their displays and their browser-friendliness. CGP and the DSP with their cross-government catalogues and databases play an important role in providing these much-needed comprehensive sources of information.

Accessibility

Information has no value unless people are aware of it and have access to it. Taxpayers pay for the development of government information and should to be able to access that information, preferably through their medium of choice. Furthermore, the effectiveness of many programs depends upon the information they generate reaching as broad a target audience as possible. The first step in accessibility is to know what information exists. A comprehensive database can play an important role in building user awareness of the availability of pertinent information. The CGP and DSP catalogues make people aware of what is available and help them to find it. Furthermore, the DSP can make it much easier for departments to meet the requirement of Government Communications Policy to maintain an index of published material and ensure that it is available for examination by the public.

There is an enormous volume of information, including government information, on the Internet. However, for various reasons, discussed below, such information is not always readily accessible. First, Internet information is not always well organized or easy to find. Even librarians sometimes have difficulty when information is not properly organized or categorized. Moreover searching for information under these conditions can be costly and time-consuming. A major focus of CGP and the DSP is to ensure that information is comprehensive, well organized and accessible.

The organization of information is critical. I get so frustrated when I can't find information because it isn't organized or categorized. There are no common search tools. Andy Reddick, Public Interest Advocacy Centre

A second concern is that many people are not connected to the Internet. One estimate is that only about 50% of Canadian households are currently connected. Even many of those that are connected may not have developed the skills or confidence to use the Internet effectively. Seniors, members of the aboriginal community and people with low incomes have particularly low connection rates. Thus, as noted by the Task Force on Digitization, exclusive reliance on the Internet risks cutting many people off from ready access to government information, which is clearly inconsistent with the government value of equitable treatment of citizens. While this problem may diminish over time, it is important for that the government not get too far ahead of its citizens. The continued existence of CGP and the DSP provides some assurance that this will not happen.

Third, regardless of whether they are connected or not, people have different preferred media for accessing information, which the government should respect. The Treasury Board's Strategic Infrastructure Initiative Business Plan expresses the issue as follows:

"(The government) must take a more inclusive approach (than the private sector) recognizing that access in the digital environment is an issue of fundamental democracy – that citizens have the right to choose not to be connected and the government must continue to serve them as well or better"

Access preferences may also vary with type of document and location. For example, lengthy reports are tedious to view on the screen or to print off. In remote locations, such as the North, speed of access to Internet can also be a problem. It is interesting to note that, in spite of the rapid rise in Internet use, the DSP has experienced no decrease in the demand for paper products in recent years. People with disabilities (such as the visually impaired) also have special access needs. It is interesting to note that Cabinet recently approved the expansion of the DSP to include libraries that service the visually impaired. Thus, CGP and the DSP help to protect the right of citizens to choose their preferred mode of access and the rights of those whose access choices are restricted by reason of disability.

Fourth, the ability to access information often depends on the availability of intermediaries. These may be human (e.g. librarians) or electronic (search tools). Under the DSP, librarians serve an important function in helping users find the information they need. This service is especially important for the physically challenged and for those without the necessary search skills. In particular, users often require human assistance in navigating the electronic environment. In general, it has been found that librarians with specific training and experience in government documentation provide markedly better service in this area than those without. In addition, the DSP has devoted considerable effort to develop electronic inter-mediation tools (such as catalogues, thesauri and meta data) that users can employ themselves to locate needed information.

It is important that if the government is moving to an e model, that they manage the transition. In the meantime, traditional systems need to be maintained and there needs to be a human interface to help with the transition. Ivan Hale, Canadian Seniors Network

Preservation

As noted, the government has an important stewardship responsibility to ensure that government information is preserved for the use of future generations in order to conduct research and preserve our national cultural and historical memory. While this is the particular responsibility of the National Library and the National Archives, the DSP also contributes importantly to this end. It does this by providing additional channels for the preservation and dissemination of historical information. It also provides the channel through which government documents are transferred to the collection of the National Library. The move to electronic publishing is raising difficult questions about what should and should not be preserved. There is a clear need to establish a standard and protocol for the preservation of electronic information. At present, the DSP catalogue serves as an informal standard and has a potentially important role in the preservation of key government electronic information that would otherwise be lost when departments update and change their web-sites. Finally, there are issues related to the storage and access of archived electronic information. CGP and the DSP have recently worked with Statistics Canada to explore these questions under the Electronic Publications Pilot. A further initiative is the SIGI pilot study, which is examining the movement of documentation through a life cycle that may include publication on the Web and subsequent movement to the National Archives and National Library.

I'm very concerned about preserving a record of actions and events. This is the development of Canada. We need this record and must take care to protect the recording. Betty Ann Lavallée, New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council.

Relevance to Government Trends

Decentralization and Fiscal Restraint

Under a continued regime of privatized publication and decentralized management of the publication process, the role of CGP as a coordinator and government-wide centre of expertise becomes even more critical. CGP has the specialized expertise needed to effectively address the demands of an increasingly complex publishing environment and provides an expert window on the publishing and retail industry to support cost-effective procurement of publishing services and to provide an integrated service package for government clients. Furthermore, as centres of expertise, CGP and the DSP have the capacity to innovate in support of publishing and access to publications. Finally, government-wide co-ordination of publishing and distribution offer the potential for significant economies of scale, which would be lost if these functions were carried out independently by individual departments or programs.

Along with privatization, fiscal restraint has also encouraged departments to charge for their publications, which impedes access. The DSP plays an important role as the “public information safety net” in enabling those who could not otherwise afford it to have access to such publications.

Public Accountability

By facilitating access to government information, CGP and the DSP help government to respond to pressures to be more transparent and accountable. They also have the potential to reduce the costs of responding to requests under Access to Information (ATI). It has been estimated that an average ATI request costs the government about \$2,300. The potential for savings arises because AIT requests apply only to unpublished documentation. Thus, increasing the amount of published documentation may decrease the ATI caseload and its associated costs. Of particular note in this connection, is the potential for savings from the deposit of electronic documents with the DSP.

Citizen Engagement

CGP and the DSP can play an important role in facilitating access to reliable, authoritative and comprehensive information about government and its activities that is needed to facilitate the process of citizen engagement.

Citizen-Centred Service

CGP and the DSP with their integrated approach to information delivery and their ability to give users a choice of access mode are consistent with the philosophy of citizen-centred service. Consequently, they are well positioned to support and complement a range of current citizen-centred initiatives, including Service Canada, the Canada Site, Reference Canada and Canada Business Service Centres. For example, they reduce the need for Reference Canada to provide callers with multiple referrals.

Social Cohesion

By facilitating access to government information and by providing a government-wide window on such information, CGP and the DSP help maintain the federal presence across the country, support the CIO and complement the FIP and its "common look and feel" intent. More generally, they help to build awareness among Canadians of Canada's common history, values, culture and achievements as a nation.

Canada's Image Abroad

CGP and the DSP are focussed on the provision of Canadian information, thereby providing an alternative to the proliferation of U.S. data and information. They also help to promote Canada's image, values and culture abroad and support the Canadian studies community around the world. The DSP also helps meet Canada's obligations under international treaties for information exchange.

Affirmations of Relevance

Ministers have consistently recognized the continued relevance of CGP and the DSP. For example, during the privatization of the Canada Communication Group and the TBS/PWGSC Functional Review, both were designated as "core" government functions. Furthermore, in 1997, the Federal Task Force on Digitization, which included senior communication and information officers from across government, formally endorsed the role of the DSP as "the public information safety net".

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING CGP AND THE DSP

The previous section made the case for the continued relevance and public value of CGP and the DSP in the evolving government environment. However, their ability to add value could be augmented by strengthening the programs in a number of ways. First, there is a need to strengthen the policy framework within which they operate. Second, the leverage from these programs would be greater if their coverage were more comprehensive. Third, CGP could concentrate on its value-added coordination role. Fourth, there are potential opportunities for improvements in access and inter-mediation. Fifth, there is a need to reconsider current funding arrangements. Sixth, there are opportunities for greater synergy through coordination with existing initiatives.

Policy on the Deposit and Retrieval of Electronic Information

There is no comprehensive policy to address the proliferation of government information in electronic format, such as CD-ROMS and web documents. In particular, there are no government-wide standards for the deposit, preservation and retrieval of such information. In effect, each program or service establishes its own protocols and sets its own standards. Such a policy framework would enable the government to more fully

utilize the strengths of CGP and the DSP to establish common standards and a clear centre of responsibility and accountability and to provide a more cost-effective alternative to the development of parallel information storage and retrieval mechanisms across government.

The 1997 report by the Federal Task Force on Digitization, entitled *Towards a Learning Nation: The Digital Contribution*, pointed to the need for a government information policy and recommended that the role of the DSP be expanded to include published information in electronic format. In 1999, John English's report on the role of the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada also supported the clarification of the issue of the legal deposit of electronic publications.

Such a policy would also provide a common framework in which DSP/CGP franchise sites, information-clustering tools and navigation tools could be integrated into the Service Canada framework. Rather than starting afresh with each new program or service there would be a common point for understanding what information needs to be made accessible and what access tools are required.

More Comprehensive Coverage

The value of CGP and the DSP would clearly be enhanced if they had access to a wider range of government publications. As noted earlier, the current deposit policy is not enforced, so that only 50% of departments and agencies participate in these programs. Broader participation would enable CGP and the DSP to develop a more comprehensive catalogue of government publications (both paper and electronic) that would better satisfy a wide range of user needs from the casual browser to the serious researcher.

The current situation is far from satisfactory. A recent survey by the National Library found that 60% of Departments do not maintain a catalogue of their publications. Not only does this make life difficult for would-be users of public information, but it forces publishers and booksellers to spend considerable time and money trying to determine the existence and status of publications through numerous individual departments. Booksellers often bear the brunt of public criticism when they fail to find requested publications. The current situation also impedes the resolution of Crown copyright issues.

Thus, there is a critical need for a complete, comprehensive and accurate information on the existence and availability of government publications. Booksellers and libraries strongly endorse the need for a centralized agency such as CGP/DSP to maintain a registry of all government publications and to provide a ready means of access to such publications, ideally by being able to order directly from the agency. From a taxpayer perspective, such a centralized agency would be both less costly and would provide better service. However, from the perspective of the departments there are concerns over loss of control and over the possibility of losing contact with their public constituency. These latter fears could be allayed if the centralized agency were to provide client departments with records and analyses of access requests, as is done by Canada Business Service Centres, for example.

CGP and DSP have already begun work on the development of a comprehensive database of all current Government of Canada publications through a variety of partnership arrangements. This database will contain Crown copyright and licensing information for electronic clearance, bibliographical and price information on all publication products as well as lists of distributors, libraries, co-publishers, licensees and other relevant information sources and contacts. This database will be linked to the Canada Site, and Reference Canada. An electronic single window for granting licenses or copyright permission will automatically provide up-to-date information to the central database.

A Stronger Coordination Role for the CGP

Many stakeholders feel that CGP should focus primarily on its coordination role. Given the reality of privatization, there is little to be gained by its continued involvement in the publication process. The potential benefits of such coordination have already been discussed. These include gains in effectiveness (information supply), service (accessibility), efficiency and accountability. However, as discussed below, current funding arrangements prevent CGP from playing this coordination role as effectively as it might. It should be noted, however, that departments only support this coordinating role if it is based on collaboration and partnership. There is no support for a regulatory role for CGP. The CGP is currently planning to build partnerships with other government departments and agencies and other government publishers, other levels of government, associations and special interest groups and niche markets.

Inter-Mediation and Access Improvements

A key requirement is the further development of tools that help to organize information, support individual search styles and enable users to customize information according to their individual needs. There is also a need for support mechanisms to enable DSP depository libraries to provide effective inter-mediation services in the area of electronic documentation. A 1999 study indicated that there is considerable room for improvement in this area, including the need for more training.

In the area of access, there is also a need for CGP/DSP to work with the suppliers of non-government portals to help ensure that users can enjoy ready access through multiple channels. In other words, the public should be able to use their portal of choice and not be limited to a government portal. Further options include the expansion of access points through the Community Access program, including local resource libraries. Finally, it was also noted that the CGP/DSP catalogue might benefit from the sophisticated graphical approach of commercial web-sites.

Funding Arrangements

Maintaining CGP on full cost recovery is not consistent with its proposed central role as government-wide public access coordinator for the management and distribution of publications. The current arrangements encourage the organization to focus on revenue generating opportunities rather than on its primary public interest role. Cost recovery discourages rather than encourages the participation of client departments in the program. Cost recovery appears to add costs that have no direct benefit to the author departments. At the same time, CGP subsidizes publishing costs through its sales revenues. This indirect cost reduction is transparent to author departments. Thus, moving CGP to appropriations-based funding would enable it to play its core coordination role more effectively than at present.

As noted, the DSP is funded through appropriations. Its major expenses are the acquisition and distribution of publications. An expanded role for the program, as suggested in this section, would require increased funding. Such a funding decision should be based on an assessment of the program's overall benefit to Canada in terms of improved access to government information and its ability to support other government initiatives. It should take into account the growing importance of the government's role as information provider in our knowledge-based economy.

DSP needs to be funded to a level where it can maintain full public access, which means setting aside money to compensate government publishers who charge for their materials. (In particular, this would cover such major information sources as NRC/CISTI, NRCan and the National Library's AMICUS database.) Acquiring this product would cost an extra \$6.9 million in 1999/2000, although eliminating print-on-demand would reduce this amount by \$495,000.

At the same time, the costs and benefits of centralized provision of service should be compared with those of the decentralized alternative. Distributing the work of the DSP and CGP over all government departments would likely result in higher costs, but costs which are more difficult to quantify. There is a danger that, given the wrong funding mechanism, not only will the programs be weakened, but people who have become expert in delivering the programs could drift away.

Enhanced Synergy with Related Initiatives

As noted, there may be further opportunities for synergy between the CGP/DSP and related initiatives, such as Service Canada, the Canada site, Government Inquiries Centre (1 800 O-Canada), Service Canada, Government Online, the Canada BusinessService Centres and the Canada Information Office.

6. CONSEQUENCES

Canadian Government Publishing and the Depository Service Program have a long tradition of providing comprehensive and flexible public access to the work of the Government of Canada through its publications. The role of government is changing from that of doer to that of partner and enabler and the production and dissemination of information is central to that role. The evolving government environment is characterized by increasing reliance on information technology for external as well as internal communication, enhanced accountability and transparency, an emphasis on citizen-centred service and increased engagement of citizens in the process of governing. The government is also centrally concerned with issues of social cohesion, national unity and the image of Canada abroad.

The introduction to this paper noted that CGP and the DSP are at risk. Yet both have an important role to play in this emerging environment. Without these programs, the dissemination of information would be much more costly and less effective. Failing to keep pace with changing demands on CGP and DSP, particularly at a time when information management is being revolutionized, would hinder the government's ability to meet several of its objectives. This would especially be the case if the central content repository were to be lost. Information would be harder to find, the Government of Canada would be more remote from the lives of its people, and costs will rise as other departments reinvent the wheel of distributing documents to the public.

In effect, diminishing the role of the two programs would serve to disconnect Canadians, rather than to connect them, and a key component of the government's public access approach would be lost. This is particularly the case for those Canadians for whom access is already difficult, particularly disadvantaged, senior and Aboriginal Canadians.

However, CGP and the DSP face certain impediments that prevent them from realizing their full potential for adding public value. Of key importance is the absence of a comprehensive government policy on the deposit and retrieval of electronic information. There is also a need to address the funding mechanisms of these programs to ensure that such mechanisms do not act as a disincentive for effective cross-government participation and co-ordination. There is also a need to ensure that the information contained in the CGP and DSP databases can be readily accessed through multiple portals, both government and non-government. Finally, there is an opportunity to exploit the synergy potential of these programs by linking them to related service and communications initiatives across the government.

7. CONCLUSION

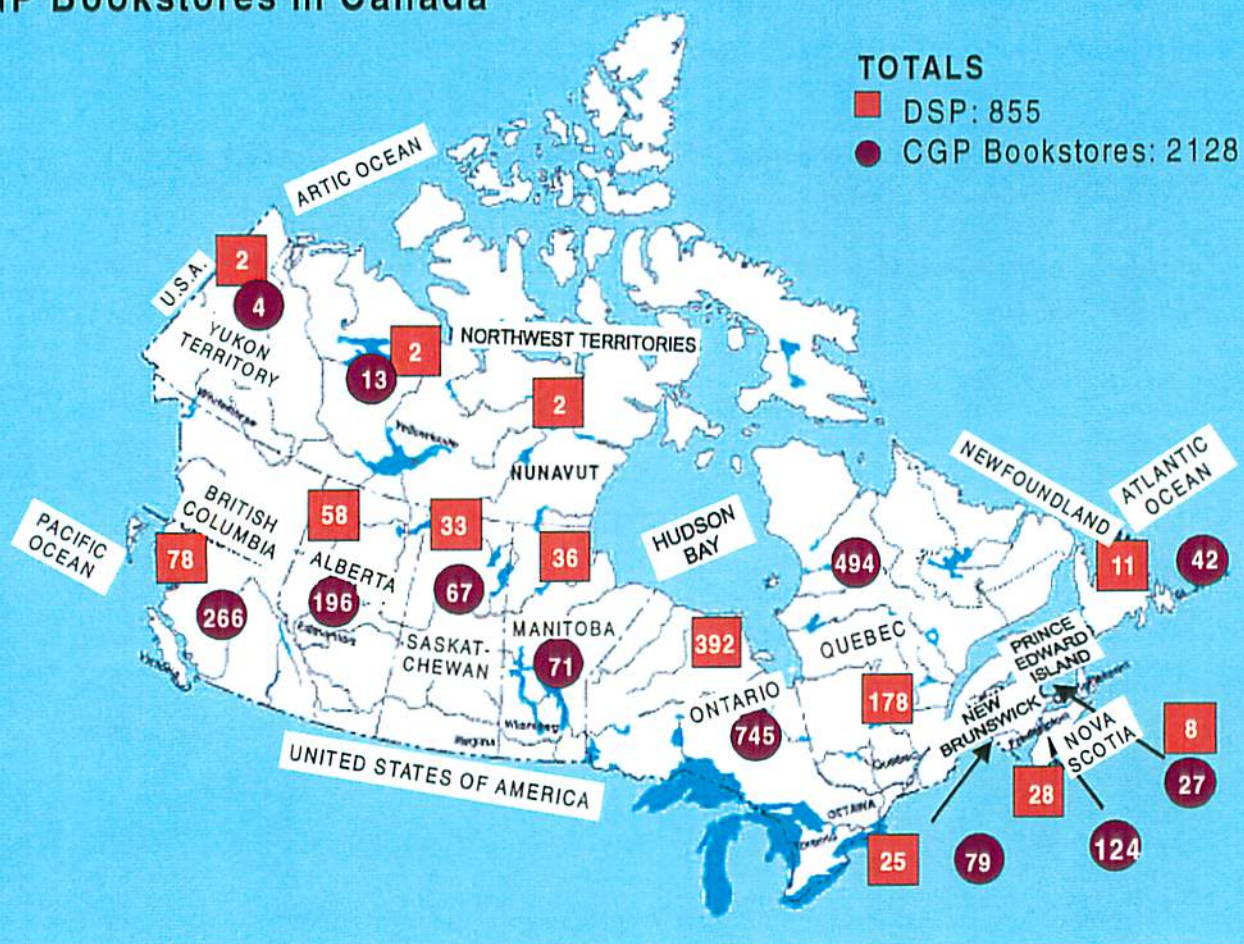
Today, **92 percent of Canadians live within easy access of a depository library**. This means that CGP and DSP have provided exemplary tools for connecting Canadians to each other and to their federal government.

Currently, both programs are at risk. Without these programs, the dissemination of information will be more expensive and more fragmented. Users in all communities across Canada would find it harder to get information and would have fewer ways of doing so.

However, by beginning a realistic discussion of new directions, particularly those regarding funding, the two programs can achieve their full potentials and continue to be leaders in the information business. The benefit of the programs is greater than the cost of closing the programs.

Annex A: The DSP and CGP on the Front Lines

Depository Libraries and CGP Bookstores in Canada



Annex B Authorities for the DSP and CGP

DSP

The DSP was established by Order-in-Council in 1927. Subsequently, there have been several Cabinet and Treasury Board decisions re-affirming the Program. Policy authority is derived from the *Communications Policy* and the *Common Services Policy*. It exemplifies the concept of “routine disclosure of information” in section 2 of the *Access to Information Act*.

CGP

The authority for publishing is derived from the Minister of Public Works and Government Services responsibilities as the Queen’s Printer which are described in section 19 of the *Department of Public Works and Government Services Act*. Complementary policy references appear in the *Communications Policy* and the *Common Services Policy*.

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Canadian Booksellers Association, Sheryl McKean
Canadian Publishers Council, Jackie Hushion
Canadian Seniors Network, Ivan Hale
Canada Information Office, Ted Baker
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Coalition for Public Information, Michael Gurstein
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Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Nancy Hector
Editio Online Publishing, Mark Frutkin
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Federal Publications, Juliet Atha
Fisheries and Oceans, Stéphane Dubreuil
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National Library, Nancy Brodie and Paul McCormick
New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council, Betty Ann Lavallée
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