

FAQs: Becoming a selective federal depository

1. What is a federal depository library?

Federal Depository Libraries are public, state, and academic institutions that are responsible for collecting, maintaining, and providing the public with unrestricted access to government documents. Depository libraries do not own the documents, but rather act as trustees.

2. What is the difference between a regional depository library and a selective depository library?

Regional depositories:

- Collect and retain all government publications in perpetuity.
- Provide guidance and interlibrary loan services to the selective depositories in the state.

Selective depositories:

- Collect as little or as much as they want.
- Tailor their collections to their needs.

3. Why should we change our depository status now?

As more publications are becoming available electronically, public access to government publications has become easier to provide. Libraries don't necessarily have to be regional depositories to make the government information accessible.

4. Is Clemson the only regional depository thinking about changing its status to selective?

Clemson is not the only regional depository library looking into changing its status. In 2008, ten libraries reported that they were considering relinquishing their status as regional depositories.

5. Hasn't Clemson always been a regional depository?

Actually Clemson will be returning to its original status. Originally all depository libraries were simply called depositories. Then in 1962, all depositories were classified as either a regional or a selective. From 1962 – 1988, we were a selective library. Clemson became a regional depository to share collection responsibilities with the University of South Carolina in 1988.

6. Is having a collection really that expensive?

Being a regional depository can be a very expensive endeavor. In a July 2008 report titled "Regional Depository Libraries in the 21st Century: A Time for Change," some regional libraries reported that being a regional cost more than \$1 million each year.

7. How will this help us maintain our present collection?

By receiving fewer materials in print, we will be able to spend less time processing new materials and devote more to maintaining the materials that we have. For example, some of the older editions of the Congressional Record are in an advanced state of decay known as red rot. By having fewer print items coming in, we will be able to devote more time to finding a solution to the red rot and ensuring that the materials are preserved. The goal is to have a collection that is rich in content and lean on excess.

8. How will this improve the collection's content?

Clemson will have more control over which print items it collects and retains because selective depositories can collect as much or as little as they wish. We will be able to tailor our collection to Clemson's information needs.

9. Will relinquishing our status have major impact on the prestige of the institution?

70% of the top twenty are selective depository libraries. Furthermore, 70% of the top ten are selective depository libraries.

10. How would the switch affect the users?

Most users will not notice a difference. We will continue to have full access to the same information. We will also retain and preserve many of our older documents.

11. How does Clemson stop being a federal depository?

We send a letter to the Superintendent of Documents alerting them to the fact that we are considering relinquishing regional status. During the six months following the first letter, all parties will have time to discuss the ramifications and steps that must be taken. After six months, a second letter is sent to the Superintendent of Documents notifying him that we are relinquishing our status as shared regional. The second letter includes the date we will officially change our status, a timeline, and details about large discard projects. The Superintendent of Documents then sends us official notification that we are now a selective depository library.

12. Can we lose our status in the federal depository as a result of this?

No. Clemson is a land grant institution which automatically entitles us to be a selective depository library.