



A WINDOW ON THE POLITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE ELECTRONIC INFORMATION ACCESS ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 1993

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Abstract — This article discusses political interests and maneuvering that went on among professional trade associations, government agencies, and public interest groups and the ultimate effects that it had on the outcome of the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Act of 1993, also known as the WINDOW bill. Insight is provided into the increasingly contentious politics of information in the United States. With the trend toward the explosive growth in availability of and access to government information in electronic formats, it is recognized that access to and control of government information has tremendous economic and political rewards for libraries, businesses, and politicians alike.

INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 1993, the U.S. Congress approved S. 564, the Government Printing Office Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993 (GPO Access), a landmark in a long controversy over the role of the federal government and the Government Printing Office (GPO) in providing online access to federal information. GPO is required to create a system of online access to federal information, which will be free to the 1,400 member federal Depository Library Program, while fees to other users are limited to the "incremental cost of dissemination."

As recently as 1990, the question of GPO's role in disseminating federal information in electronic formats was highly controversial. GPO had a poor reputation for technical sophistication, and commercial data vendors had mounted intense opposition to any federal efforts to provide individuals with online access to federal information directly from the federal government. A few years earlier, the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) had narrowly escaped efforts by the Reagan administration to sell the agency to the private sector, and Congress was considering a bill to reauthorize the federal Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) that would have directed federal agencies to determine whether private sector information products and services met agency dissemination objectives prior to creating new agency information products and services [1].

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By 1993, the political environment had changed dramatically, and there was broad bipartisan support for GPO's expanded role in providing online access to federal information stored in electronic formats. Concerns about GPO's technical competence to run such a program had given way to the view that GPO should be given an opportunity to "see what it could do," and the data vendor industry's opposition to a GPO online program was barely visible.

The election of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore was partly responsible for the changes in the political landscape, but debate over GPO's entry into the online service had really been decided the previous year. The bill that passed in 1993 was based upon a bipartisan bill (HR 5983) that passed the House of Representatives in October 1992. By 1993 the major controversy over S. 564 was whether the bill went far enough, given the growing public support for online access to government information.

The GPO Access bill that passed in 1993 was a scaled down version of two bills introduced in the previous (102nd) Congress, HR 2772, the GPO Wide Information Network for Data Online (GPO WINDO) and S 2813, the GPO Gateway to Government Act. These bills in turn were products of earlier debates on federal information, including a bruising battle over the reauthorization of the federal Paperwork Reduction Act in the 101st Congress.

THE 1989–1990 DEBATE OVER THE PRA

The PRA is primarily a vehicle to reduce the regulatory burden on firms. Congress was engaged in bitter debates over efforts by Vice Presidents Bush and Quayle to use the PRA as statutory authority to have the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) exercise broad powers to review and modify agency rulemaking efforts on a wide range of important issues relating to the environment, product safety, and occupational hazards. OMB had also relied upon the PRA to exercise broad authority over federal information policy, including such controversial measures as OMB Circular A-130. The Information Industry Association (IIA), which represented several data vendors, was pressing to incorporate several features of A-130 into statute.

The 1989–1990 proposals to reauthorize the PRA would have broadened OMB's authority to set government-wide policies on the dissemination of government information. The sections of the PRA reauthorization bill that dealt with information dissemination largely reflected the views of the commercial data vendors. Like much of the debate over federal information policy in the 1980s, the PRA reauthorization focused on the issue of *whether or not* federal agencies use modern information technologies to disseminate information. Important questions of *how* federal agencies should provide public access to federal computer databases were largely ignored.

While several library and citizen groups believed the PRA reauthorization was far too restrictive in terms of agency mandates to provide public access to federal computer databases, it was exceedingly difficult to develop broad based public understanding of the measure, because the legislation was fairly technical, and addressed other important public policy issues (such as OMB's regulatory review program), which were unrelated to information policy.

The Taxpayer Assets Project (TAP) became involved in the debate over the PRA reauthorization in the summer and fall of 1990. At that time, there were only a handful of nongovernment organizations following the issue, which was becoming increasingly esoteric, and there was little if any involvement from citizens at the grass roots. When the PRA legislation died in the final days of the 101st Congress, TAP wanted to shift the public debate from the relatively obscure and technical issues raised in the PRA

reauthorization, to a broader vision of federal information policy, which would clearly address the benefits to expanded public access to federal information resources. The American Library Association (ALA) was also interested in a more proactive strategy.

On November 23, 1990, TAP prepared a draft proposal for new federal legislation that addressed a wide range of dissemination issues. This proposal, which was developed after considerable input from ALA, dealt with several issues that were addressed in the information management sections of the PRA reauthorization legislation. It also addressed new topics, including a proposal for centralized online access to federal databases and information systems.

The PRA-related issues were designed to focus agencies on the issue of *how* federal agencies should disseminate information in electronic formats, rather than the question of *if*, which was the focus of the PRA reauthorization. While the PRA reauthorization would have required public notice and a finding every time a federal agency proposed a new information product or service, creating a forum and an opportunity for data vendors to argue that the service would compete unfairly against the private sector, the new proposal would have required all federal agencies to accept public comments every year on a wide range of information management issues, including issues that the agency had ignored, such as the need for new services or improvements in old ones.

Agencies would be required to accept and consider public comments on such topics as the types of information that the agency collects and disseminates, the formats that the agency uses to store and disseminate information, the prices the agency charges for information, and the usefulness and value of the information to public. Agencies would also be given a broad mandate to use modern information technologies to disseminate government information in usable formats, and with adequate documentation, software, or other resources that would broaden public access. The proposal would also limit agencies' prices for information products *and* services to the "incremental cost" of dissemination, and ban royalties and fees on the redissemination of agency information.

THE ORIGINAL GPO WINDOW PROPOSAL

The plan for a centralized, one-stop-shopping program for online access to federal information resources was considered among the most ambitious and novel aspect of the proposed legislation. A key issue to be resolved concerned which agency would provide such a service. The principal candidates were the GPO and the NTIS. A third suggestion was to create an entirely new federal agency or government sponsored enterprise (GSE) to provide the service.

NTIS, which was considered the more technically sophisticated of the two agencies, was contacted in 1990 about its interest in providing online services, but officials indicated that online access was not an appropriate government function, in light of Reagan and Bush policies to privatize the dissemination of government information. NTIS was also saddled with funding mechanisms that required the agency to operate on user fees, and NTIS was using its electronic products to subsidize its unprofitable microfiche and paper product lines, resulting in high prices. Moreover, NTIS did not routinely place its electronic products in the Depository Library Program, which was an important vehicle for promoting universal access to government information. A new government sponsored enterprise would have started with a clean slate, but it would have also raised a number of new issues concerning oversight and accountability, which would have added more complexity.

GPO did not have a particularly good reputation for its technical capability, but it was operating under the Title 44 of the *U.S. Code's* pricing rules (cost plus 50 percent), and

it ran the federal Depository Library program, two factors that weighed heavily in the decision. Ralph Nader and James Love met with the GPO Public Printer, Robert Houk, to find out what GPO would do if faced with legislation that would broaden its role in the area of online access to federal information. Houk indicated that GPO was interested in providing such a service, although the push for the legislation would have to come from outside GPO.

The decision was made to create the program within GPO. The proposal was originally referred to as the GPO WINDOW, and was described as follows.

1. *Mandate.* The proposal noted that federal data sets are numerous and difficult for many citizens to locate. The difficulties of locating federal data sets, opening different accounts, and learning different user interfaces, present large and unnecessary barriers to citizen access to federal data.

To enhance citizen access to federal data, GPO would be required to provide a single point, one-stop-shopping system for online access for federal information. The service would not offer access to all federal information resources, but would initially consist of a large group of core products, which would be expanded as the system matured. The initial lists of core products would be large, including information from congressional and executive branch agencies, such as the House LEGIS system, census data, the National Library of Medicine's MEDLARS system, the Security and Exchange Commission's EDGAR system, the Department of Justice's JURIS system, and many others.

While the WINDOW was supposed to provide one-stop shopping for federal databases, it was not intended to be an exclusive mode of disseminating this information, but rather an additional outlet that would complement other agency dissemination efforts. When possible, GPO would have been asked to rely upon departments and agencies to provide their own data storage and retrieval software; GPO would have had the authority to provide its own services when agencies did not provide the services, or if GPO could improve user access or lower prices by doing so.

2. *Standards.* GPO was required to issue voluntary standards for the record formats of numeric and text data, and for the minimum types of search and retrieval functions that would be provided.
3. *Pricing.* When GPO would have provided data through departments or agencies, it would charge users the department or agency fee, plus a fee that reflected WINDOW's incremental cost of providing access to the data. When GPO provided its own data storage and retrieval software it would charge users a fee to reflect GPO's cost of disseminating the data.

GPO would have been required to use a peak load pricing approach, based on morning, afternoon, and evening and weekend usage. Off-peak users would pay no more than the incremental cost of providing service in that time period. To limit cross subsidies, no individual service or product should be priced above its stand-alone cost.

Depository libraries would have been given free access to all federal information products and services provided through the Window, as was the case for information products printed on paper or microfiche. The most difficult funding issue concerned the telecommunications charges. The TAP's analysis suggested that because of significant economies of scale, it would cost very little to add additional users or to increase the traffic on most online systems, and therefore, it would be very inexpensive to provide data processing services to the Depository Library Program (DLP). However, the costs of long distance telecommunication charges over telephone lines would be substantial,

in terms of the absolute costs, even though they would be a minor expense on an hourly basis, relative to what libraries were paying to commercial data vendors for online access to government information. The decision was made to ask initially that GPO pay for the telecommunications costs to the DLP, as it presently pays for postage on paper and microfiche documents, and to use this item as a negotiating point later. Moreover, there was hope that this cost would be vastly reduced, as the DLP gained access to the Internet.

4. *Role of other Nonfederal Information Services.* Among the most novel features of the original WINDOW proposal concerned nonfederal information providers. The proposal noted that many useful information products are not available due to the high cost of marketing to data users, and that it is also costly for users to identify vendors who offer services, or to learn different user interfaces (the same barriers which make it difficult for data users to gain access to diverse government data sets make it difficult to gain access to diverse private data vendors).

To provide opportunities for small businesses and other nonfederal groups to develop useful information products, the original WINDOW would have allowed nonfederal entities to offer services for sale through the WINDOW. The providers would pay GPO fees equal to the incremental cost of providing the access, while the nonfederal providers would be required to maintain their own billing systems with subscribers who used their services.

The proposal to allow nonfederal providers to sell services through the WINDOW was designed to lower their marketing costs, and reduce the cost of market entry barriers for new services, leading to increased competition for value added products. Nonfederal providers would be free to use the same user interfaces that were used for the federal services.

EVOLUTION OF THE DEBATE

The ALA organized a series of meetings in late 1990 and early 1991 to discuss these proposals through its Coalition on Government Information (COGI), chaired by Nancy Kranich from New York University. In the beginning, it was felt that it would be useful to put forth a bold new legislative agenda on information policy that was based upon a vision of what ought to be, in the best of all worlds, rather than what was considered politically possible at the time.

Many of the early participants were looking for ways to shift the public debate on information policy toward a more open policy regarding the dissemination of electronic records. Many of the ideas in the TAP proposal, including the WINDOW proposal, had been discussed earlier by others, but had not been introduced as legislation [2]. The introduction of new legislation, even if it did not have immediate prospects for passage, was considered necessary, to provide a vehicle for organizing and broader press coverage.

The proposal by TAP in November was modified several times by a working group chaired by Kranich, that included other library groups such as the American Association of Law Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, the Special Libraries Association, and other citizen groups and professional organizations who favored a more aggressive dissemination policy, such as the American Historical Association, the TAP, and Public Citizen. ALA also hired Thomas Sussman, a Washington lawyer and lobbyist with close ties to lobbyists representing data vendors, as an advisor.

As various drafts of the proposal circulated, it became clear that the section dealing with the GPO WINDOW was far more popular than had been anticipated. It was also

likely that the entire proposal would face multiple referrals in Congress. The sections of the proposal that dealt with issues raised in the PRA reauthorization would require a referral to the Senate Governmental Affairs and House Government Operations Committees, two committees that were strongly influenced by the commercial data vendors, who were expected to oppose the legislation, while the WINDOW sections would require referrals to the Senate Rules and House Administration committees, two committees that were considered supportive of a more open dissemination policy. While initially the effort to develop new legislation was considered part of a long run strategy to shape federal debates over information policy, there was growing optimism that something could be done in the 102nd Congress. In January 1991 Charlie Rose (D-NC) had unexpectedly defeated Frank Anunzio (D-IL) as chair of the House Committee on Administration. Rose had previously chaired a subcommittee that had responsibilities for providing information services to the House of Representatives, and he was reportedly fascinated by technology. Moreover, Representative Pat Roberts, a conservative Republican from Kansas, was investigating his own plan to provide the *Federal Register* and the *Congressional Record* online.

Among signs that the WINDOW proposal was gaining support, the Information Industry Association (IIA), a trade group that represents commercial data vendors, began to sense that it could not completely stonewall the WINDOW proposal. Instead, it suggested that the WINDOW proposal be scaled down as a pilot project that would provide online access to the *Federal Register* and the *Congressional Record* at the federal depository libraries.

The working group chaired by Kranich debated a number of alternative legislative strategies. It was decided that the two parts of the legislation should be broken up, so that the WINDOW legislation would only be referred to the House Administration and Senate Rules committees [3]. The proposal that the WINDOW provide opportunities for nonfederal service providers was rejected as too complex. Tom Sussman argued that the WINDOW proposal should be scaled down, along the lines of that which IIA was suggesting, as a pilot project with the *Federal Register* and the *Congressional Record*, with access limited to terminals in the federal Depository Library Program. The working group, however, decided to pursue the original concept, which would be an operational program that provided one-stop-shopping to a wide range of congressional and executive branch databases and information systems, with both a sales program and a Depository Library Program component—"everything for everybody."

Representative Rose scheduled hearings before the Joint Committee on Printing on the topic of "Government Information as a Public Asset." The issue of the WINDOW proposal was raised during the testimonies of James Love of TAP and Joan Claybrook, President of Public Citizen, which focused on the pernicious effects of federal efforts to privatize the dissemination of government information, and the high prices charged by commercial data vendors [4]. Representative Rose asked for help in preparing new legislation, noting "the basic idea is to make the GPO . . . the online window to Government information" [5]. Representative Pat Roberts, who reminded the Committee of his efforts to provide public online access to the *Federal Register* and the *Congressional Record*, was nonetheless not enthusiastic with the notion that GPO should provide online access to a large number of federal databases, and he said "You are going to have an awful time getting that window open, . . . I can assure you that" [6]. Rose was undaunted, however, and later remarked that "it is the beginning of a revolution" [7].

Encouraged by the April 25, 1991 hearing [8], the working group on the WINDOW proceeded to work on a draft of the legislation. The GPO WINDOW became the GPO Wide Information Network for Data Online, or WINDO. A decision was made to develop a short bill. Thomas Sussman's draft eliminated many of the details of the original proposal.

The pricing section, for example, omitted references to peak load pricing or limits on cross subsidies, and the section on free access to the DLP made no mention of telecommunications costs, leaving the issue ambiguous. On June 26, 1993, ALA representatives, accompanied by Sussman, met with Representative Rose to discuss the bill. Rose was delighted with the proposal, and the bill was introduced the same day.

Rose did not schedule hearings on the bill for more than a year. The Committee on House Administration became entangled in the House Bank, the House Post Office, and the Iran-Contra scandals, which became increasingly bitter and partisan as the 1992 presidential elections heated up.

Despite the lack of legislative activity, the legislation gained popularity. ALA and other library groups mounted an effective grass roots campaign among their membership to enlist additional cosponsors, including a number of conservative Republicans, such as Henry Hyde of Illinois. Citizens groups, such as TAP and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR), and hundreds of individual activists and data users, used online information networks to spread the word about the bill.

As time passed, perceptions about the political feasibility of the WINDO proposal rapidly changed. GPO made several public statements that were supportive of GPO's entry into the market for online government information. On January 1992, GPO released *GPO/2001: Vision for a New Millennium* [9], a strategic plan that endorsed a variety of electronic services, including INTERACT, an interactive online system for access to text and numeric data. GPO's formal endorsement of an online program signalled the increasingly prodisssemination political environment. The proposals in *GPO/2001* seemed modest when compared to the WINDO legislation, but they were very advanced compared to the state of the debate in 1990. The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) also entered into a joint project with ALA to study methods of implementing the WINDO legislation.

As discussions about the WINDO became more common on the Internet, Senator Gore (D-TN) became interested in the legislation. In spring 1992 Gore offered to introduce a Senate version of the bill. Mike Nelson, who worked for Gore and was responsible for his work on the National Research and Education Network (NREN), recommended some changes in the House bill.

The name was changed to the GPO Gateway to Government, because Nelson did not want the word "network" in the title of the bill. The bill also modified somewhat the mandate for GPO. The findings of HR 2772 stated that "access to public electronic information will be greatly enhanced by a single point of online public access," and GPO was "the appropriate federal office to establish, coordinate, and maintain, single-point [online] access to a wide range of government electronic databases." Gore's version preferred to say that GPO is "the appropriate Federal organization to establish and maintain an electronic gateway to provide online access to electronic public information of the Federal Government." The term "single-point" access was dropped to avoid the inference that the GPO online service would preclude NTIS or other agency options for providing government-wide online services. Gore also included a specific appropriation for the online service, \$3 million for FY 1993 and \$10 million for FY 1994, which had not been included in HR 2772, and he mandated that the system provide access to *Congressional Record* and the *Federal Register*.

On June 4, 1992, Senator Gore and others introduced S. 2813, the GPO Gateway to Government Act, with several cosponsors, including Senator Ford (D-KY), the chair of the Senate Rules Committee. Gore's involvement increased the prestige and visibility of the bill, and re-energized its supporters, but time was running out. Senator Ford and

Representative Rose announced joint hearings on the two bills on July 23, 1992, right before the August recess, and only a few months before adjournment.

Matters were quickly complicated once more by Bill Clinton's choice of Gore for vice president on the Democratic presidential ticket. While Gore's entrance in the 1992 presidential campaign gave the WINDO/GATEWAY proposals added visibility, it also made the measure more partisan. Several Republican members of Congress were opposed to passage of legislation so closely associated with Gore, prior to the November presidential election.

As adjournment approached, it became less likely that the WINDO/GATEWAY bills would pass as drafted. In comments submitted for the record of the July 23, 1993 hearings, the OMB opposed the legislation, saying that its Circular A-130 offered a better framework for managing federal information resources. For example, in response to questions from Representative Rose, OMB's Frank Hodsoll said:

We recognize that these bills would create "non-exclusive" authority in the GPO to disseminate Government information online. However, by failing explicitly to acknowledge the importance of diversity of sources and media for information dissemination, these bills appear to place GPO and the depository libraries in a preferred position. Balancing the interests of all parties in this area is a complex matter. The Committees on Governmental Affairs and Government Operations have held hearings on the Paperwork Reduction Act and proposed amendments which have considered these issues in detail.

Unlike the proposed OMB Circular No. A-130, no provision is made for the evaluation of whether equivalent information products are available from other Federal or nonfederal sources before offering a new information product through the Gateway. Instead, S 2813 appears to give the Superintendent of Documents the authority to select which agency databases shall be made available through GPO, and to determine the terms and conditions under which those databases are made available to the public [10].

OMB's opposition raised the specter of a presidential veto. Moreover, under the Senate rules, it becomes fairly easy for a single senator to kill a bill toward the end of a Congress, by giving notice of a filibuster, commonly referred to as placing a "hold" on a bill. It is possible to overcome a Senate "hold," but it is often difficult to do so at the end of a Congress, when a large number of bills must be passed before adjournment. There was also growing concern about opposition to the bill from NTIS. While NTIS had declined to offer online services as recently as 1990, the agency had watched public opinion rapidly shift during the GPO WINDO debate, and it had begun plans to offer its own online services. NTIS may have begun to see the WINDO legislation as a threat to its own plans.

In the face of these constraints, the threat of a presidential veto or a Senate "hold" on the bill in the final days of the Congress, Representative Rose began discussions with the Republican minority on a new bipartisan "compromise" bill. The result was HR 5983, the "Government Printing Office (GPO) Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1992," which was introduced on September 22, 1992, and passed by the House Administration Committee the following day.

HR 5983

The new bill would have required the GPO to establish "a system of public online access to the *Federal Register*, the *Congressional Record*, and electronic directory of federal public information stored electronically, as well as other appropriate publications distributed by the Superintendent of Documents" and "other information" under the control of other federal departments or agencies, when requested by the department or agency.

The requirements that GPO provide access through the Internet and other computer networks and develop voluntary standards were eliminated in favor of feasibility studies on those topics. There were also provisions for studies of the costs, cost savings, and utility of the online systems that are developed, including an independent study of GPO's services by the U.S. General Accounting Office.

The most important changes concerned GPO's mandate. Under the Gateway/WINDO bills, GPO would have had broad authority to publish federal information online, but the new bill would restrict such authority to documents published by the Superintendent of Documents (a small subset of federal information stored electronically), or situations where the agency itself asked GPO to disseminate information stored in electronic formats. This change gave agencies more discretion in deciding whether or not to allow GPO to provide online access to their databases, including those cases where agencies want to maintain control over databases in order to charge higher fees and retain profits from dissemination programs.

HR 5983 also removed language introduced by Gore in S. 2813 that would have explicitly allowed GPO to reimburse agencies for their costs in providing public access, leaving as ambiguous the matter of how agencies recover their costs. The public notice sections were also changed. While the S 2813 and HR 2772 would have required GPO to publish an annual report on the operation of the Gateway/WINDO, and accept and consider *annual* comments from users on a wide range of issues, the new bill only provided a general requirement that GPO "consult" with users and data vendors.

Finally, while S 2813 would have provided startup funding of \$3 million in FY 92 and \$10 million in FY 93, the new bill did not include any appropriation at all, causing some observers to wonder how GPO will be able to develop the online *Congressional Record*, *Federal Register*, and directory of databases, as required by the bill.

Most of the changes in the legislation followed suggestions made by the IIA in the July 23, 1992 testimony by Steve Metalitz. The scope of the bill was reduced, and the several feasibility and evaluation studies reshaped the bill more as a pilot project than a major change in direction for GPO.

Despite the disappointment over the changes in the new bill, ALA, TAP, and other WINDO/GATEWAY supporters pressed for its passage. The presidential election was in its final days, and there was great uncertainty over the outcome. Rose had asked for support for the bipartisan bill, and it was considered the best bill that could be obtained at the time. There were risks for this strategy, however. The bill lowered the stakes for the GPO online program at a time when public support for the measure was rapidly growing. It was possible that after groups endorsed HR 5983 it would still be killed in the Senate, while lowering expectations for the next year. John Merritt, the staff director for the Joint Committee on Printing, told several industry lobbyists that if HR 3459 died all bets were off, and they would reintroduce a new bill in 1993 that was even broader and more ambitious than S 2813 or HR 2772. In fact, the bill was killed after passing the House of Representatives, due to an anonymous Republican Senate "hold" on the bill. No industry groups claimed responsibility for killing the bill.

The election of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore in November 1992 seemed to offer great opportunities for significantly expanded online access to government information. Vice President Gore had been the prime sponsor of S 2813, and both the President and the Vice President talked about the need to use new "information superhighways" to improve national productivity, education, and the delivery of government services.

A number of groups, including TAP, believed that the new political environment would lead to a better bill. Because Congress and the administration were both committed to do

something to create an online program within GPO, and the legislation was no longer facing the threat of a Bush veto or an end of session filibuster, it was time to "up the ante."

Instead, Senator Ford and Representative Rose decided to opt for a bill similar to the previous year's HR 5983, which was based largely upon the views of the House Republican minority, with considerable input from the commercial data vendors, through the IIA. The decision to use HR 5983 as the model for the new legislation was sealed when representatives of the Washington Office of the American Library Association, including ALA lobbyist Tom Sussman, met with Senator Ford and Representative Rose's staff and expressed their support for quick passage of the "compromise" bill that failed in the previous Congress.

While ALA did not publicly discuss its rationale for backing the scaled down legislation, it was reportedly concerned that attempts to hold out for a stronger bill would lead to lengthy delays, and possibly renewed attempts by NTIS or data vendors to further weaken or defeat the legislation. While ALA had worked closely with a number of other groups in the development of the original WINDO and GATEWAY bills, ALA's decision to back a version based upon HR 5983 was taken without consultation with other groups, generating resentment, not so much at the ultimate decision, but rather because ALA acted unilaterally [11].

ALA's actions immediately set a low standard for the scope of legislation, and it became impossible to persuade Senator Ford or Representative Rose to restore elements of the original legislation, or to consider new ideas, which may have been appropriate, given the increasing popularity of the measure among computer users. Efforts by TAP, for example, to broaden the mandated services to include congressional information systems (such as the House LEGIS system) or to provide for stronger public consultation provisions (such as annual public comment or an ongoing Internet discussion group) were not successful. ALA's own public statements about the legislation did not address its reasons for supporting the "compromise" bill from last year, but ALA officials did say privately that they wanted to avoid a lengthier fight over the legislation.

On March 11, 1993, the House and Senate introduced identical bills (S 564, HR 1328) entitled the "GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act of 1993." The legislation was very similar to HR 5983, except that sections of the legislation that emphasized the tentative "pilot project" nature of the program were eliminated, giving the legislation a more permanent focus. Like HR 5983, the new legislation did not include any appropriations. There were no public hearings on the legislation, which passed Congress on May 25, 1993 [12]. The report language for the legislation indicated that GPO will finance the project out of its existing budget, without new appropriations.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

While the legislation might have been a stronger statement regarding the need for an integrated government-wide online service, GPO nevertheless had finally obtained a clear statutory mandate to provide online access to federal information. The success or failure of this effort will depend in large degree upon GPO's ability to execute the program technically, and also to persuade executive branch agencies to participate. The immediate reaction by several GPO officials was pessimistic, due to the lack of start-up funding for any new system. Moreover, GPO has done little to seize important opportunities to bring important new executive branch databases into the program. The Securities and Exchange Commission, for example, has indicated that it thinks that GPO is the appropriate agency to disseminate its new EDGAR database, but GPO has yet to follow-up with serious plans

to integrate this valuable database into the new system. Ultimately, success may depend upon the new personnel appointments at GPO, as President Clinton tries to move GPO into a new era of electronic publishing.

NOTES

1. James Love, Editor, *Correspondence on the Paperwork Reduction Act, 1991*, Working Paper No. 2 (Washington: Taxpayer Assets Project, March 1991).
2. See, for example, U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, Ad Hoc Committee on Depository Library Access to Federal Automated Data Bases, *Provision of Federal Government Publications in Electronic Format to Depository Libraries*, 98th Cong., 2nd sess., 1984, Committee Print 98-260.
3. The PRA related sections later became HR 3459, the Improvement of Information Access Act, introduced by Representative Major Owens on October 1, 1991. The "Owens bill" did not pass in the 102nd Congress. It was reintroduced as HR 629 in the 103rd Congress.
4. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Joint Committee on Printing, *Government Information as a Public Asset: Hearing*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., 25 April 1991.
5. *Government Information as a Public Asset: Hearing*, 59.
6. *Government Information as a Public Asset: Hearing*, 59.
7. *Government Information as a Public Asset: Hearing*, 89.
8. The Joint Committee on Printing also held a series of follow-up hearings on new technologies: U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, *New Technology and the Government Printing Office: Hearings*, 102nd Cong., 1st sess., 19, 24 June 1991.
9. U.S. Government Printing Office, *GPO/2001: Vision for a New Millennium* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, [1992]). See also: William A. Hohns, "GPO/2001: Vision for a New Millennium: Brief Observation on, and Reprint of the Strategic Planning Vision for the United States Government Printing Office," *Government Publications Review* 19 (July/August 1992): 333-83.
10. Responses by Frank Hodsoll, Office of Management and Budget, to written questions from Chairman Rose. Included in: U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on House Administration, *Joint Hearings on H.R. 272, the GPO Wide Information Network for Data Online Act of 1991 and S. 2813, the GPO Gateway to Government Act of 1992, Joint Hearing Before the Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives and Committee on Rules and Administration, U.S. Senate*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., 23 July 1992, 113.
11. See, for example, Taxpayer Assets Project, Information Policy Note, February 28, 1993, Update on WINDO/GATEWAY Legislation.
12. The bill that passed both houses was S. 564.