

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Cecily Giardina, Chair, and the Officers the AALL Government Documents Special Interest Section (GD-SIS)

FROM: Peggy Jarrett, Committee Coordinator, AALL GD-SIS Fugitive & Electronic-Only Documents Committee

RE: Annual Report, 2004-2005

DATE: July 11, 2005

The GD-SIS Fugitive and Electronic-Only Documents Committee was fairly inactive this last year for a variety of reasons. Few fugitives were reported to GPO. This report will attempt to explain why and suggest questions the GD-SIS leadership should consider regarding the future work of this Committee.

The Fugitives Committee has a listserv and a website, maintained by Scott Matheson: <http://www.law.yale.edu/outside/scr/library/fugdocs/index.asp>. Committee members are listed on the website, along with their monitoring responsibilities. Members split up agencies and other bodies that produce law related documents, monitor their publications, and if fugitives are found, report them to both GPO and the Fugitives Committee for listing on the website. This past year, only a handful of fugitives were reported.

In addition, GPO did not respond to emails. Our contact person is listed as Joe Paskoski, but he did not reply to messages sent last fall. Cynthia Etkin assisted the Committee by correcting our member information on the Electronic Documents Working Group website. But it was not her job to liaison with us and attempts to find out the person who had that responsibility in the newly reorganized GPO led nowhere.

### Reasons

Why was this year so unproductive? One, this Committee, until this last year, was a labor of love by one person – first Rob Richards, then Mark Bartlett. Scott Matheson and Susan Lyons gracefully picked up the labor in spring, 2004, when Mark changed jobs. I did not continue the labor of love model. Instead, I hoped the fugitive hunting would be shared.

Two, changes at GPO, both staff reorganization and Depository distribution issues, complicated the Committee's work. Communication with GPO went unanswered for the most part, so there was no sense of partnership. In January, GPO announced plans for all-electronic Depository distribution (with the exception of the Essential Titles list), effective October 1, 2005. The subsequent

discussions, announcements, partial backtracking, and the Essential Titles List survey took everyone's time and energy during the winter and spring.

Three, it is possible that the Committee needs a new focus. It could be that because of GPO's new plan to use web-crawling technology to search for fugitives, there is no longer a need for a "fugitives" committee (see ID 73: Harvesting Federal Digital Publications for GPO's Information Dissemination Programs). More likely, we need a new or refined focus, since in some sense most government information still has a good chance of being "fugitive."

### **Fugitive Documents Week**

In spring 2004, Susan Lyons and Scott Matheson organized a very successful Fugitive Documents week. This spring, after consulting with Scott, I decided not to attempt one because of the issues set out above – perceived lack of enthusiasm, lack of communication with GPO, GPO's ILS rollout, and the exhausting issues around tangible distribution and the Essential Titles List. At the time it seemed like the right decision. In retrospect, maybe it was not. Maybe people like searching for fugitives once a year and not on a regular basis. Maybe a Fugitive Documents week should be the primary activity of this Committee.

### **Questions for the Future**

What should the GD-SIS do now? The Fugitives Committee, if it continues, needs a new chair and most likely some new members. The new Committee and the GD-SIS Board need to consider a variety of questions. Do we need a "labor of love" person as chair? Is there a way to find a group of people to share the work? How can we encourage participation? Should a Fugitive Documents week be the primary activity?

The answers to all these questions may depend on the general state of the FDLP this upcoming year, the success of the GPO harvesting policy, and the enthusiasm and commitment of GD-SIS members.

I would be happy to answer any questions.