

Virtual Reference and FDLP

A Partnership?

Past, Present and Future

- **A Past Model: GovXpress**
- **A Present Model: GIO**
- **A Future Model**

A Past Model

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the Florida Electronic Federal Depository Library (FEFDL) website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/fefdl/>. The website header features the FEFDL logo and the text "Florida Electronic Federal Depository Library". A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "home", "search/site index", "counties", "uf documents department", and "administration". On the left side, there is a dark green sidebar with a list of categories: "Local Governments" (including Cities, Counties, Commissioners, and Legislators), "State Government" (including Statistics), "Federal Government", and "Depository Libraries". The main content area features a large map of Florida with county boundaries highlighted in yellow. Below the map is the University of Florida logo, which includes the text "UF UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA" and the tagline "The Foundation for The Gator Nation". Underneath the logo, it says "Click on a county for more information".

GovXpress

GovXpress at UF

- Staffed by Government Documents Department at the University of Florida
- Viewed this service as our part of our mission as a Regional
- Funded by an LSTA Grant used to purchase software
- Sent an information packet to every library in Florida with link/logo
- Dismal failure!

Why it failed in my opinion

- **Before it's time – libraries were not ready for something called chat that was not allowed on public computers**
- **Perceived need did not exist in Florida**
- **Patrons did not know they needed “government information”**

Current Model - GIO



- 38 Federal Depository Libraries
- OCLC's QuestionPoint software
- Chat and email
- Began August, 2004

Links on libraries' homepages

ASLAPR -- Law and Research Library Division - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.lib.az.us/lrs/govinfo.cfm

Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records
Law and Research Library Division

[Home] • [Law and Research Library Division]

Government Information

The Law and Research Library houses four collections and other resources of interest to those seeking government information and publications. The Library is also participating in the **Government Information Online (GIO)** national pilot project which is attempting to establish a viable model for an online cooperative virtual reference and information service that specializes in answering questions with and about government information.

COLLECTIONS

- ♦ Collections:
 - ◊ [Arizona state agency publications](#)
 - ◊ [Federal publications](#)
 - ◊ [Law](#)
 - ◊ [Maps](#)
- ♦ [Elected Officials](#)
- ♦ Other resources:
 - ◊ [Arizona:](#)

Location Guides
Collections
Government Info
Legal Resources
Genealogy
Online Resources
Services/Programs
FAQ or Ask Us

Done

BPL - Government Documents - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.bpl.org/research/govdocs/index.htm

How Do I Find... go

Hand-made marionettes are just some of the unique things to see at the BPL

General & Contact Information
Central Library
Neighborhood Branches
Research & Specialized Services
BPL Catalogs
Electronic Resources
Guides to the Library
News and Events
Questions and Suggestions

HOME

Research Services

- Book Delivery and Periodicals
- Fine Arts
- General Reference
- Government Documents**
- Kirstein Business Branch
- Microtext
- Music
- Newspaper
- Prints and Photographs
- Rare Books and Manuscripts
- Social Sciences
- Special Collections

Other Services

- Booklists for Adults

Boston Public Library
Government Documents Department
McKim Building, 2nd Floor
617-859-2226 or 617-536-5400

[About Our Collections](#) , [Questions and Suggestions](#) , [Tools for Documents Librarians](#)

Website of the Month: [\[Archive\]- The Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation at the Smithsonian Institute](#)
Documents News: [\[Archive\]- Boston City Council Television](#), [USPTO Regional Job Fair](#), [Press Release for the UN Official Documents System](#)

Government Documents Links: **Government Catalogs and Databases:**

Done

Project's Purpose

The primary goal of the project was to see how a group of libraries participating in the Federal Depository Library Program might use the virtual reference software owned by OCLC, Inc.

GIO Statistics

August, 2004 - December, 2004

Chat – 73

Email – 60

January 2005 – December 2005

Chat – 506

Email – 702

January, 2006 – September 2006

Chat – 73

Email - 128

Positive Comments from GIO Participants

- **Workable model for a cooperative effort across state lines**
- **Only 2 hours per week – not a staffing problem**
- **Software was free**
- **OCLC offers good infrastructure**

Negative Comments from Participants

- **Low statistics**
- **Answer questions about other local or state governments**
- **Did not like software**
- **Links to service should not be on library web pages – should be elsewhere**
- **Needs more publicity**

Success?

- **Proves that a cooperative service using OCLC's software is feasible.**
- **What about the statistics? During its busiest period (2005) if 38 libraries shared the burden equally, it came to 14 chat sessions in one year with close to 100 hours of staff time for each library.**

Why Statistics are Low (in my opinion)

- Like GovX, links are on library pages and this is not where people go for government information**
- Patrons do not know they are looking for “government information”**
- Patrons are now empowered by the web and would rather find it themselves using search engines**

A New Model

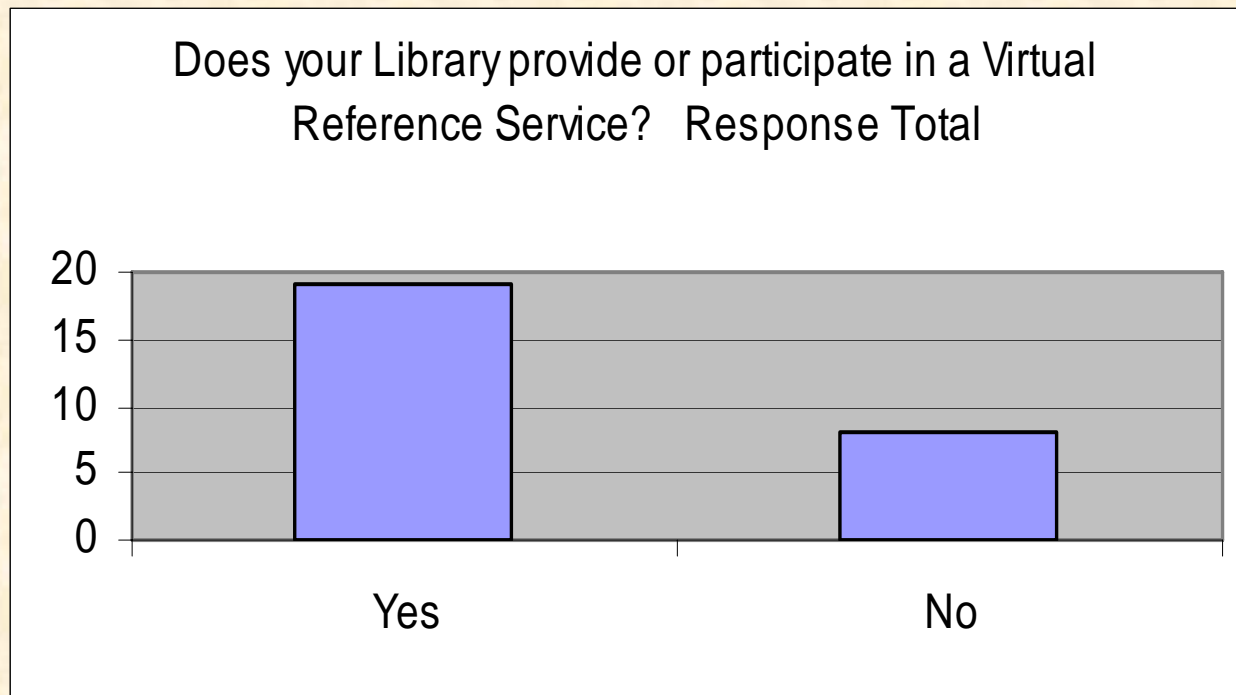
- **First question that needs to be answered:**

Is there a need for a national virtual reference service staffed by Federal Depository Librarians?

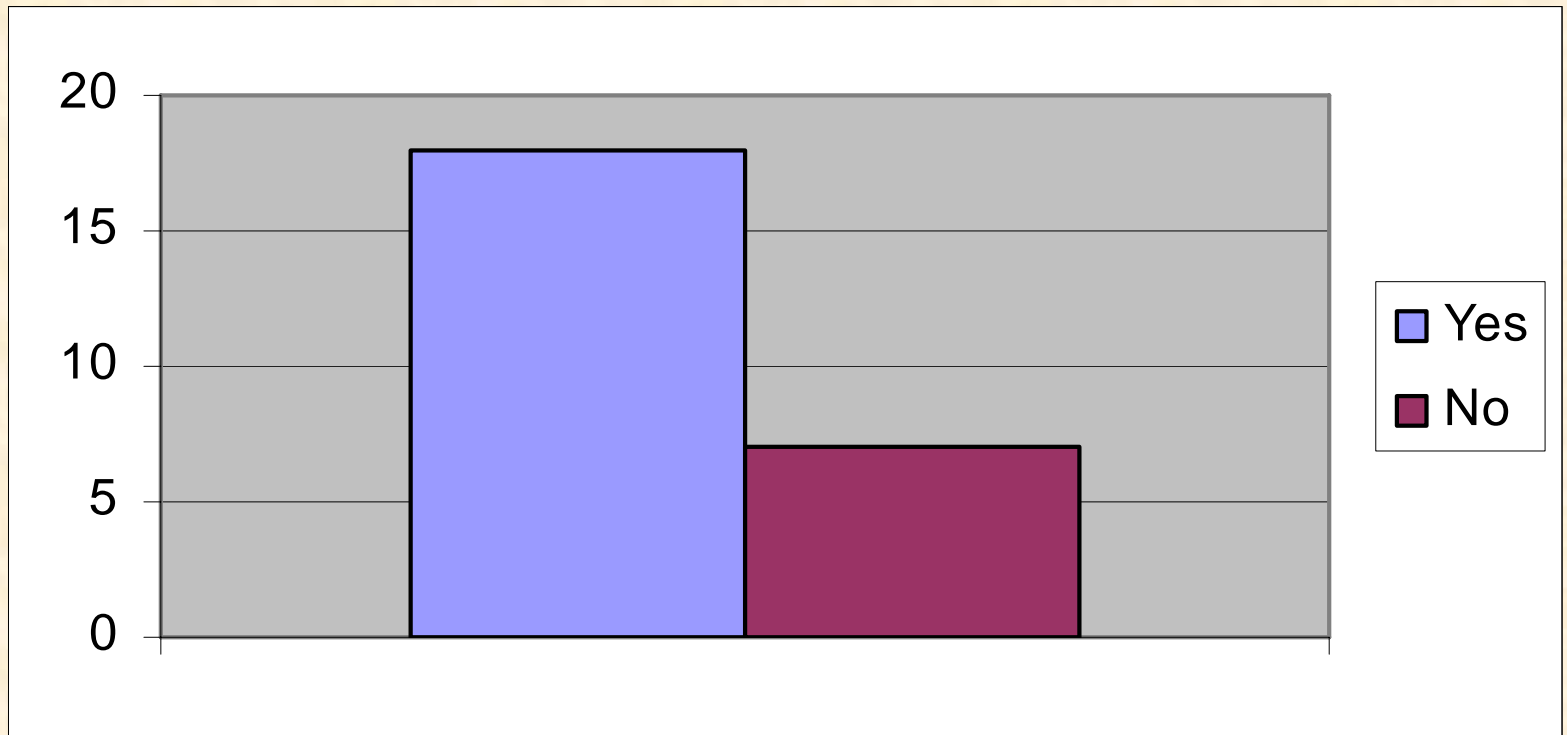
Survey of Regionals

- **Surveyed Regional Libraries on their participation in Virtual Reference services at their library**
- **Asked an open-ended question about the feasibility of a national service**

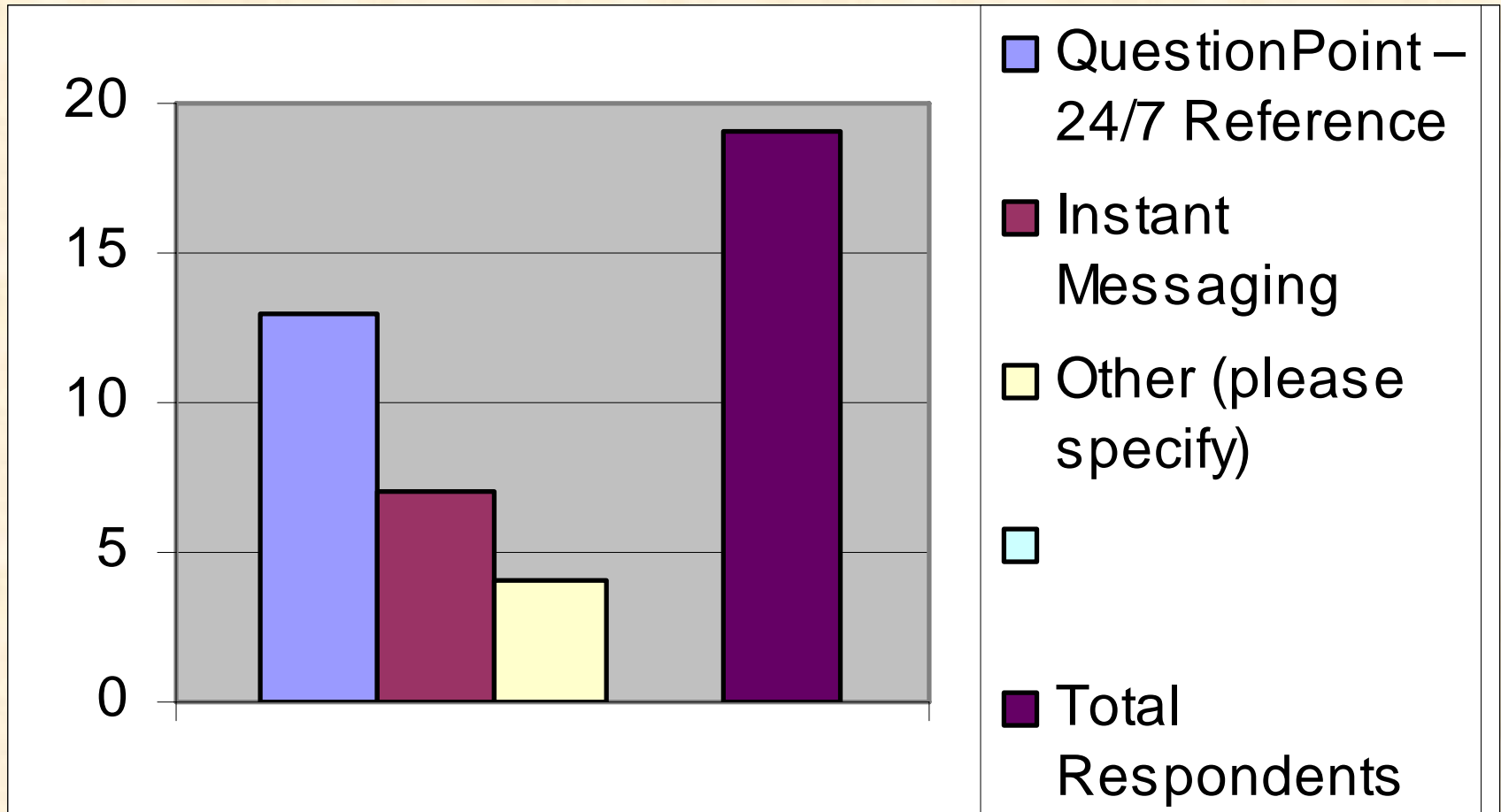
Regional Participation – 70%



Willingness to Participate in a National Service – 72%



VR Software – 68% Use QuestionPoint



Where should links to this service appear?

- **GPO Website 77.8%²¹**
- **Federal Depository Library Websites 70.4%¹⁹**
- **Regional Library Websites 55.6%¹⁵**
- **FirstGov 51.9%¹⁴**
- **Google U.S. Government Search 44.4%¹²**
- **Other (please specify) 18.5%**

Survey Answers on the Feasibility of a National Service

- **Because of lack of traffic on the existing pilot project, I'm better off merging our departmental address into our central VR service and avoid confusing patrons with two different branded ways of contacting us**

Feasibility (continued)

- **Our experience with GIO is that there simply isn't a justifiable audience for this service**
- **The average patron has no idea whether their query requires government information or not....regular people don't think like that – librarians do**

Feasibility (continued)

- **Library administrations perceive it as “competing” with local chat services**
- **If links can’t appear on Federal Agency web sites I’m not sure it would be worth it. I feel that’s the most important place we could be of assistance**
- **I am not comfortable with putting an “official” government stamp on it and having it run by GPO**

Feasibility (continued)

- **The service would be most helpful if there were a well developed system for referring patrons to librarians with special expertise, such as in legal information or Census data**
- **We participated in OCLC's QuestionPoint virtual reference service and found that it cost too much and wasn't used enough to justify the cost**

Feasibility (continued)

- **The amount of time required would determine our participation**
- **If we participate what would my library get out of this?**
- **It's important to place the links where information seekers have questions or reach frustration – search engine and agency pages**

Feasibility (continued)

- I fear being overwhelmed with questions if FirstGov or Google provide links
- I hope that GPO can coordinate with other consortia that are providing virtual reference

What does this tell us/me?

- **Smaller number of Regionals than expected participate in VR**
- **Preference for concentrating staff time on local chat service**
- **GIO has not demonstrated a need for the service**
- **Links should be where patrons search; this came out in open-ended responses but not in the specific question about links**

A New Model – my ideas

- **Until the NEED has been demonstrated, GPO should not pursue a national VR service**
- **Avenues already exist to answer the questions of users of Government Information:**

FirstGov

Ask Your Question - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://answers.firstgov.gov/cgi-bin/gsa_ict.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php

Firefox Help Firefox Support Plug-in FAQ

FIRSTGOV.gov
The U.S. Government's Official Web Portal

Home About Us Site Index Español Other Languages

XML RSS Feeds from FirstGov.gov

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) **Ask Your Question** FAQ Help

Use the form below to submit any questions you have about the U.S. government. If you provide your email address, a member of our Citizen Response Team will respond to you within two business days. For [privacy and security](#) purposes, we recommend that you do NOT include any other personal information, especially Social Security numbers.

Please note: We currently can only accept and respond to inquiries in English or Spanish.

Please select one of the following categories: (required)

Select a category...

E-mail Address: (required only if you would like a response)

Zip Code: (optional, but will help us respond to your message)

Done

GPO Access

Ask a Question - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://gpo.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/gpo.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php

Firefox Help Firefox Support Plug-in FAQ

Resources by Topic Site Search: [advanced](#)

GPO Access

LEGISLATIVE EXECUTIVE JUDICIAL HELP ABOUT

A-Z RESOURCE LIST FIND A FEDERAL DEPOSITORY LIBRARY BUY PUBLICATIONS

Answers Ask a Question My Account Help

Identification * Denotes a required field.

* E-mail Address: (enter email address if you do not have a user ID)

Question Data

* Question:

Done


EPA

Frequent Questions | EPA Public Access - Contact Us | USEPA - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Tools Help

http://publicaccess.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/publicaccess.cfg/php/enduser/ask.p Go

Firefox Help Firefox Support Plug-in FAQ

 **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
EPA Public Access - Contact Us

[Recent Additions](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Print Version](#)

[EPA Home](#) > Frequent Questions

Frequent Questions

Find an Answer | **Ask a Question** | **My Stuff**

Identification * Denotes a required field

* E-Mail Address: (enter email address if you do not have a user ID)

Additional Information

* Topic :

Done

My Ideas continued

- **Do we really think these agencies and companies want our assistance?**
- **Why haven't they asked?**
- **Could we answer an EPA reference question better than an EPA staff member?**
- **Are we trying to justify our existence?**
- **Does it fit in with the mission of our libraries?**

My Conclusions

- **Federal Depository Libraries need to focus on thoughtful Web Page development to reach out to users of the Internet who seek information using search engines**

Specialize!

- **Web pages should focus on state and local resources and should have a VR component that will provide state and local experts to those who need that information**

Example of Specialized Search

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window with the title bar "florida alachua county planning documents - Google Search - Mozilla Firefox". The address bar contains the URL "http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&lr=&q=florida+alachua+county+planning+documents". The search results page displays the Google logo, navigation tabs for "Web", "Images", "Video", "News", "Maps", and "more »", and a search box with the query "florida alachua county planning documents". The results section shows "Results 1 - 10 of about 121,000 for florida alachua county planning documents. (0.27 seconds)".

Web Results 1 - 10 of about 121,000 for [florida alachua county planning documents](#). (0.27 seconds)

[Alachua County: Florida Electronic Federal Depository Library](#)
spacer Univ of **Florida** Libraries - **Documents** spacer History and Heritage ... **Planning**
spacer Comprehensive Plans spacer **Alachua County** spacer Gainesville ...
www.uflib.ufl.edu/fehdl/counties/alachua.html - 28k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Communications Office - Your Government - Alachua County, FL](#)
Alachua County's Budget by years; **County** Manager's Budget Message (large PDF **document**); 2006-2007 Budget in Brief. FY 05-06. **Alachua County's** Budget by ...
www.co.alachua.fl.us/government/depts/comm/documents.aspx - 14k - Oct 17, 2006 - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Communications Office - Your Government - Alachua County, FL](#)
12:30 PM, **Alachua County** Presents: Expedition **Florida**, Wild **Alachua**, 0h 27m ...
6:00 PM, **Alachua County Planning** Commission on 10/18/06, 1h 0m ...
www.co.alachua.fl.us/government/depts/comm/schedule.aspx - 35k - Oct 17, 2006 - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)
[[More results from www.co.alachua.fl.us](#)]

Sponsored Links

[Share Docs Online - Free](#)
Share and edit docs online with Google Docs & Spreadsheets
docs.google.com

[Florida Legal Forms](#)
USLF Offers Thousands of Legal Forms for the State of **Florida**
USLegalForms.com

Done

Conclusions Continued

- **Depository Libraries should maintain accurate statistics of web page visits to justify their existence**
- **Depository Libraries not currently offering a VR service should consider chat via AIM and other services – it's free and the way young patrons and increasing older patrons communicate.**

GPO's Role

- **Provide a link to an alphabetical list of regional library web sites or state/regional chat services on the GPO Access help page**
- **Consider joining QuestionPoint as a library – many depositories are part of this already**

GPO's Role

- **Contact other agencies to determine if there is a need for a cadre of government information specialists to assist their staff; if the answer is yes, work with Council to develop a plan based on the GIO model**