OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

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COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

FIRST SESSION

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OVERSIGHT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:01 p.m., in Room 301, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Amy Klobuchar, Chairwoman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Klobuchar, Fischer, Ossoff, Bennet, and Capito.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE AMY KLOBUCHAR, CHAIRWOMAN, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Good afternoon. I call this hearing of the Rules and Administration Committee to order. I would like to thank Ranking Member Fischer and her staff, as well as Hugh Halpern, who is, of course, the Director of the Government Publishing Office, previously known as the Government Printing Office, before we changed it to get with the modern times.

We are here today to discuss the critical role that GPO plays in making information from all three branches of government available to the public, delivering on its mission to publish trusted information for the Federal Government to the American people.

GPO serves millions of Americans every year, with over 22 million passports printed in the last fiscal year and more than 10 billion downloads of government information since its website went online 30 years ago. I bet it is a lot more available than it was when everything was just printed.

Established in 1860, GPO was created by Congress to print government documents and to bring transparency and accountability to our democracy.

GPO began work on the same day that President Lincoln was inaugurated. Were you there? No. Okay.

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. One of the first major documents that it was responsible for printing was the Emancipation Proclamation. In the decades since then, GPO has printed, published, and preserved so much of our country's history, and it has adapted its work to keep up with increasing demands and new technology along the way.

As GPO's work has expanded to digital publishing, its name, as I noted, was changed in 2014, when former Senator Saxby

Chambliss and I worked together to pass bipartisan legislation that was signed into law by President Obama.

Under Director Halpern's leadership, GPO has continued to modernize and expand the resources it offers to the public. Later this month, it will publish an online library of reports that Federal agencies submit to Congress.

This new resource is the result of the bipartisan Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act that I led with former Republican Senator Rob Portman, joined by Peters, Hassan, Rosen, and Warnock. It became law last year.

Last year, GPO also issued a 5-year strategic plan, highlighting goals to invest in new technology and additional in-house services that will lower production costs and save taxpayers money.

At the same time, GPO is focused on historic preservation that will make even more information accessible, including through its work to digitize historical and government documents with more than 1,100 libraries nationwide.

Finally, GPO is working to address challenges and harness potential efficiencies offered by artificial intelligence. I also look forward to hearing about Director Halpern's efforts to ensure that GPO's work force is strong.

It is especially important as about half of GPO's dedicated employees are eligible for retirement in the next four years. This will include recruiting the next generation of workers, and GPO has expanded both its recent graduate development program and its apprenticeship program, which provide young workers with a pathway into these careers, which accounted for nearly 20 percent of GPO's new hires last year.

I would like to acknowledge the members of the recent graduates program who are here today, I know seated behind you, Director. I will also note that these new employees are joining an agency that continues to receive recognition as a good place to work.

For the second year in a row, Forbes named GPO as one of the best employers for veterans, with veterans making up over a third of its work force.

I look forward to hearing more about what GPO is doing to carry out its mission. Thank you again, Mr. Halpern. I now recognize Ranking Member Fischer for her opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE DEB FISCHER, A UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Senator FISCHER. Good afternoon. I would like to thank Chairwoman Klobuchar for holding this hearing and welcome you, Director Halpern, back to the Committee for the first time since your confirmation in 2019.

Continued oversight of agencies within our jurisdiction is one of our most important duties, and I am glad to have the chance to learn more about where GPO stands four years into Director Halpern's leadership. Since its inception in 1860, the Government Publishing Office has served as the official resource for the production, distribution, and preservation of documents for all three branches of the Federal Government.

GPO's work is not always flashy, but the agency serves as the gold standard for government documentation and dissemination. I thank you, Director, and your team for your hard work.

Although the nature of publishing and the way people gather information has changed, the critical importance of GPO's work has not. In an increasingly digital era, GPO has the responsibility to meet the needs of a modern public without sacrificing the core mission.

GPO recently celebrated the impressive feat of reaching 9 billion retrievals of government information from their online repository, GovInfo, demonstrating the continued market for their services.

Since Director Halpern's confirmation, GPO has seen many advances, ranging from investments in modern printing equipment to the successful launch of their congressionally mandated reports portal. This portal will allow Federal agencies to submit their reports online for the public to access.

Transparency in government is of the utmost importance, and I appreciate the progress Director Halpern and GPO have made in making Federal documents more easily available to our constituents.

However, GPO still has its challenges, including how to maintain a work force with such a high number of eligible retirees, how to strategically invest in relevant emerging machinery and printing technologies, and how to think creatively about the publication needs of Congress and the public.

As GPO plans for the future, the agency must continue to fulfill its duty to the American people. It is important that the agency balance its necessary expenses with long term fiscal stability and examine how the decisions of today will impact the agency of tomorrow.

Dr. Halpern, I am encouraged by the steady improvements GPO has made under your leadership, and I look forward to hearing your answers to questions about how we can continue to build on this momentum. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. Thank you, Senator Fischer. Our witness, as we have noted today, is Director of the Government Publishing Office, Hugh Halpern, who has been in his current position since his unanimous confirmation, that sounds nice, by the Senate in December 2019.

He is now four years into his ten-year term, which is a result of legislation led by former Senator Blunt and myself. The position used to serve at the pleasure of the President, and that has now been changed. Previously, Mr. Halpern worked here on Capitol Hill for 30 years, most recently as Director of floor Operations for former Speaker of the House Paul Ryan.

You might not want to be Director of floor Operations right now, so I am glad that you are in your job. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from American University and his law degree from George Mason.

Now, if you could please stand and raise your right hand. Okay. Do you swear that the testimony you will give before the Committee shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. HALPERN. I do.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you. You will be seated. We will now proceed to your testimony, and then we will—Senator Fischer can ask the first round of questions. Go ahead.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE HUGH NATHANIAL HALPERN, DIRECTOR, UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE, WASHINGTON DC

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you so much, Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Fischer. It is a pleasure to be here, and to be accompanied by my teammates in our recent graduate program. They are a really impressive group of folks.

On behalf of GPO's more than 1,600 craftspeople and professionals, I am pleased to be able to tell the Committee that GPO is in good shape and the agency is poised for continued success.

In terms of GPO's finances, we are on track for another solid year of performance. While I am still awaiting final figures from our auditors, I believe that our final consolidated revenue for last year will be more than the prior year's total of $1.1 billion. We have been aggressively hiring to support the growth in passports and secure documents to ensure that our team is prepared for what lies ahead.

During fiscal year 2023, we onboarded 190 new teammates, 41 percent more than we did in fiscal year 2022. Strong recruitment is critical as we hire to support new work and to offset significant looming retirements among our team. We have been able to recruit because of our dedication to making GPO a great place to work and our willingness to experiment with alternate work arrangements.

For instance, in our passport division, we successfully implemented a 4-day workweek where our teammates work ten hours a day. This cuts down on wear and tear of our equipment while giving our teammates the flexibility of a 3-day weekend or overtime work when it is available.

Similarly, we are in the final stages of standing up a weekend shift at our Mississippi production facility to test the efficacy of a 3-day workweek for our teammates who are willing to work for more hours, fewer days per week.

These innovations, along with our efforts to build a kind and effective culture, are why Forbes has recognized GPO as a great place to work two years in a row. We continue our dedication to support the work of Congress and our other Federal Government customers.

Last year, Congress directed GPO to develop a system to make reports requested by Congress available to the public and policymakers alike. I am very pleased to announce that congressionally mandated reports are available online starting today on our trusted digital repository, *govinfo.gov*. As of today——

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. You are making us feel very powerful. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Mr. HALPERN. I am glad I can help. As of today, there are more than 125 reports available, and more than 50 agencies registered on the system. I expect these figures to grow as agencies understand their obligations under the law.

GPO met this deadline about two weeks sooner than what was required by the statute. That is what we do at GPO. We deliver for our customers and meet difficult deadlines.

We have also started to work on a project of personal interest to me as a longtime committee staffer. The format of Congress's committee reports has not substantially changed since GPO started its work in 1861. They are difficult to read, they are hard to manage digitally, and do not easily support basic features that our customers want, such as graphics or color. While our new composition engine XPub, is in testing for bills, resolutions, and amendments, we have started talking to focus groups about what a committee report for the 21st century looks like.

I have dubbed this effort "Project Common Press", named after Ben Franklin's printing press design. We have been discussing report design options with staff from the Joint Committee on Printing, and House and Senate institutional officers.

In the new calendar year, we will start talking to our committee customers, as well as our partners in the library and civic communities. Before the end of 2024, we hope to have a report style guide and digital formatting standard that we can release for public comment and use as we start to work on a new authoring solution for committee reports.

Last, I need to touch on the transition in the Federal Depository Library Program. As you know, the FDLP is moving to a digital program based on the recommendations of our library task force.

However, given the prospect of flat funding for the FDLP for the foreseeable future, we need to accelerate that transition by reducing the quantity and variety of tangible materials sent to libraries.

We are currently working with our FDLP partners to allocate the remaining copies of popular publications, like the Code of Federal Regulations, so that they are accessible to the greatest number of patrons across the country.

We are also working to improve the availability of documents on *govinfo.gov* and assist some of our partner libraries to digitize unique Federal documents so they can also be available nationwide.

The goal is to provide the best possible access to Federal documents for our partner libraries and their patrons, and we are working very hard to make that a reality. Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Fischer, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today, and I look forward to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Halpern was submitted for the record.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. Thank you. I will let Senator Fischer go first.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Director Halpern, GPO has been consistently ranked as one of the best employers in the Nation with high levels of employee satisfaction, regarding your performance as director, and with day to day morale.

How are you leveraging GPO's reputation as a great place to work into meeting the work force challenges that you have identified, and especially that being the aging work force, which you have said is a top concern that you have?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. One of the things that I identified very early, even before I came to GPO, was the need to highlight the fact that there are areas of Federal Government employment that are as much trades as they are professions.

As I think post-COVID, there is a realization that a 4-year college degree is not necessarily for everybody. There are great places where we can develop some of the talent for folks that may not necessarily go to college, but they can bring a lot of their skills and expertise to those jobs. That is one of the things we are focused on at GPO.

We have mentioned the recent grads program for folks who did go to college. We also have been ramping up our apprentice program. We started one class just with proofreaders. We have expanded that this year to a number of different trades, including press people and prepress folks, and I look to expand that more as we go forward.

Senator FISCHER. Where do you advertise to find people to fill those positions? Do you work, or do you try to steal them from other businesses? Do you work with community colleges? Where do you find them?

Mr. HALPERN. The short answer is "e", all of the above. To be honest, the other businesses that we normally pulled from—so newspapers, publishing houses, other printers—they are diminishing. There are fewer and fewer of those kinds of businesses.

I spend a fair amount of my time traveling to vocational high schools or community colleges to sort of pitch GPO as a career. If you are a graphic designer or you participate in one of the print programs and at a technical high school in Maryland, we want you to know that GPO that can provide you with a great career going forward.

We want to bring in as many young people as we can so this knowledge transfer occurs between the folks who have been doing this for a while and the folks who still have some opportunity to learn. That is really where my focus is.

Senator FISCHER. With all of the newer printing technologies that are out there, I guess I am thinking you would have to go to an educational institution to be able to access some of that to get younger members, wouldn't you, of your—?

Mr. HALPERN. The good news is, as we adopt newer technologies, some of the learning curve, some of that threshold knowledge that you need actually disappears because the machines do a lot of that work for you.

Now, we are still going to need really talented press people. There is always going to be a need for traditional offset printing, which really requires a dedicated skill set. But for instance, we adopted digital inkjet technology to run our daily publications—the Congressional Record, Federal Register, committee reports, things like that. Those operate much more akin to really, really large office copiers.

Senator FISCHER. I know that you have seen some delays in printing bills, not just for Members, but also for the bills that are reported out of committee. How do you—how are you trying to recognize that and improve the efficiency and processing in printing

congressional bills so we do not add to delays that we may have here in the Senate's legislative process?

Mr. HALPERN. I need to be a little delicate here, but this is largely not—while the problem manifests itself equally in both bodies, it is not a problem necessarily created by the Senate.

We have seen a huge increase in the volume of bills sent to GPO, and that has largely been a result of the number of bills introduced in the House. Our problem is that we have a small but hugely talented group of proofreaders, of prepress folks, who review those measures and make sure that they are ready for publication. These teammates are really akin to specialized paralegals.

It is very hard for us to train those folks and get new folks into that area, although we are working on that. We have been talking with the House about options to figure out how we can manage that flow and make sure that we are accommodating both bodies and the critical priorities of the House and the Senate.

Sometimes we are not 100 percent successful, and we are going to work on that and make sure that we deliver the standards that everybody expects.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Senator Fischer. You talked about some of the employees and what you need now. I was noting that you have adapted your work force over the years.

For instance, this is kind of amazing, with the shift to digital publishing, you reduced from 6,000 employees in 1980 to 1,600 currently.

Can you talk about the areas where you see change now, where you may add some people, given your success with $1 billion in revenue and the increasing demands on the digital system?

Mr. HALPERN. Well, absolutely. We are doing—there have been a number of areas where we are hiring. The biggest area where we have been hiring is in our high tech manufacturing process for the U.S. passport and for secure identity documents.

While the passport is our biggest single product, we do other secure documents as well. For instance, if you have Global Entry, you have a card that goes along with that. We manufacture those cards for our DHS customer. That is just one example. We do law enforcement credentials. We do a whole host of those things.

We have been hiring a lot of folks to support that operation to the point where we actually created a whole new role, production technician. We worked with our unions to create this position where we could take folks who had some aptitude for working in a manufacturing environment and provide a 3-year on the job training program for them.

We are also hiring on the digital side as well. Both for development of GovInfo, our trusted digital repository, but also for the software stack that we maintain for Congress and for some of our other customers as well. We are hiring IT specialists and developers and programmers to support the software transition that we are going through right now.

The—if you go to Senate Legislative Counsel and have them draft a bill, when they hit control-P to print that document for you,

GPO's software takes over. The piece of software that they use today first went into service when I was 12.

It has been a long time since I have been 12. We are replacing that with our new composition engine called XPub that will provide a whole host of additional capabilities both for our users and for the public. It will provide information in new ways.

We need folks to support that. Some of the folks in the recent grad program are supporting that as well. We are hiring a host of folks in those areas. We will need folks who have some skills in AI and other things as we look to leverage some of the newer technologies to automate our processes, to make up for the fact that we are going to be losing folks over the next couple of years.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Yes. You talked about—we have talked about these congressionally mandated reports, and you talked about over 100 that are already out. What steps will you take to make the public aware of this resource once it becomes available online?

Mr. HALPERN. We do a lot of outreach with—both as an agency across our social media channels and other channels like that. But actually, one of our greatest advocates is the library community.

We are working very closely with them to make sure that they are talking to their patrons, whether they are in your average public library, if they are at a university or a law school, so that they are letting their patrons know that these documents are out there.

As I talk with folks both in the library community, the sort of civil society groups, we do a lot of outreach to make sure that folks know about the resources that GPO brings to bear in making government information available to the public.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. You mentioned artificial intelligence. We know that it is developing quickly.

We have had a series of bipartisan meetings here to set up a framework for the United States, putting forward our own rules of the road, and we—including some that are under the jurisdiction of this Committee, involving democracy.

Of course, this is going to affect GPO. In October, GPO released a directive to establish policies of the use of AI at the agency. Can you talk briefly on efforts to address the risk and the opportunities, especially in your area, that come with the use of AI?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. Our directive sets up a framework and sets up a way of approaching the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence or large language models.

To date, we still have not found technology that is sufficient to replace some of our really talented teammates in the work that they do. You know, one obvious area is proofreading. At its most basic level, that is pattern matching, something that AI should excel at. But again, today's technologies are not ready to even supplement one of our talented proofreaders.

The way we are approaching these problems is asking how do we build the foundations so that when these technologies may be ready, so whether that is in three years, five years, eight years, we can be in a position to take advantage of them so that we can free up our really talented human beings out of doing the scut work to make sure that there are the right number of digits in a dollar figure, and they are instead making sure that the overall look and

feel of the document matches the style and do the kinds of things that human beings can do.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. You talked a bit about contracts. GPO manages a large amount of contracts with over 80 percent of its printing performed by private sector vendors who are awarded contracts on a competitive basis.

In its top management challenges report issued earlier this year, the GPO Inspector General recommended the need for a systemic approach as the agency continues to prevent contract fraud.

What steps are you taking to ensure the contracting process is managed efficiently?

Mr. HALPERN. We are working very closely with our IG to make sure that our process is free from fraud. When our teammates find things that they suspect might be issues, we actively encourage them to refer them over to the IG for further investigation.

We run basically two different sets of contracts. One is a set of contracts that we use to buy the materials that we need for our own production needs, and the other is the contracting we do on behalf of other customers, whether it is Congress, the Judiciary, or the Executive branch. Really, the key there is two things.

It is education, making sure that the folks doing the contracting know what to look for. The other thing is experience, because the more of these you do, the more you look at, the more you know where there are problems.

Again, that is the kind of thing where relying on well-trained human beings is really kind of critical. We think we are making good progress on that front. I talk with our IG at least weekly, and we are looking forward to continuing our record on that front.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay. I know Senator Capito is on her way, so I am not filibustering, but sort of. Okay, well, as she sits down, one last question.

GPO's headquarters in Washington, DC. has been in the same location since it opened its doors, and like any historic buildings, requires regular maintenance and repairs.

Can you speak briefly on the efforts GPO is taking to ensure its facilities remain a safe place to work, including your plans to implement the IG's safety recommendations?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. The IG identified a number—in their recent report on our top ten safety issues, they had a number of recommendations, all of which we are in the process of implementing.

One, we have issued a new directive on, and the other two, we are working through. GPO's building is old. Our headquarters that we are occupying now is actually a cluster of three buildings—all built between 1903 and 1940, and they are showing their age. The good news is they have got good bones.

We have a facilities team that is looking at the needs of the building, prioritizing both what we need to do for expansion and what we need to do for safety. For instance, we are well down the road of replacing the fire safety systems in the building.

You know, one area that we are going to need to look at in the coming years are replacing our elevators, which is an expensive proposition. But all of these things are being factored into a larger

facilities management plan, and our plan is to make sure that we are in a position to keep our workplace as safe as possible.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Okay. Very good. Senator Capito has joined us. Just for the new recruits out there, there are a number of people in their program, there are male Senators, they just are not here today. It is just us.

[Laughter.]

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Senator Capito.

Senator CAPITO. Yes. Thanks, Madam Chair, thanks to the Ranking Member, and thanks to Mr. Halpern. For those of you who do not know, we are getting reunited on the Rules Committee because we were on the House Rules Committee.

He was there as a great staffer as I was in my first two years on Rules Committee. It is very nice to see you again, as always. Let me ask you, I will kind of jump on to the—about the safety of the building.

I noticed in your remarks that you discussed the telework policy. I am sure, and if this question has already been asked, I apologize, but I am interested in it. There was a GAO study that showed that 17 of the 24 Federal agency headquarters that were reviewed are utilizing an estimated average of 25 percent or less of their respective building's capacity.

Obviously, it is very costly to the taxpayer to be paying for the full use of the buildings that are not actually being utilized. What is the percentage of your employees that are working remotely? I will ask that first.

Mr. HALPERN. Sure. About two-thirds of our teammates come to work every single day. They are manufacturing or production employees. It is about a third of the agency that works either remote or hybrid.

Senator CAPITO. Then what are those policies for the remote workers? Is it a certain amount of days a week, hours? How does that—?

Mr. HALPERN. We are focused on getting results. It is—unlike a lot of typical agencies, the GPO operates as a business, so it is really easy to see whether we are being successful or not. We do have a telework and remote work policy in place.

For telework folks they need to come back into the office a couple of days a week. But for some of our remote folks, they are working fully remote and doing it successfully.

Let me give you one example. Prior to the pandemic, we had about 12 regional offices, and they were put there because originally our customers needed to come to those offices to review things.

Nobody had been doing that for years. When we shifted to a remote model during the pandemic, we figured out that actually worked for that group. That is about 100 folks. They are now fully remote and——

Senator CAPITO. Are the 12—not to interrupt, but are the 12 offices still open then?

Mr. HALPERN. No.

Senator CAPITO. You closed that?

Mr. HALPERN. We closed them. Saved the taxpayer about $1 million a year in rent and overhead. We are still having great success.

We estimate that unit for the last fiscal year will hit just shy of $500 million in total contracts, and that is a new record for them. We expect to see continued growth out of that group.

It has also allowed us to recruit nationwide, which is something that we could not do previously. If we have a group that is servicing East Coast customers, I can have a member of that group who lives in Hawaii, as long as they are willing to work the hours needed to support those customers.

For us, I cannot speak to other agencies, but for us, telework and remote work has helped us with recruiting, it has helped us with retention, and it has helped us with productivity.

Senator CAPITO. Yes. I was going to ask you about that because I noted in your statement that you mentioned about a lot of your workers were reaching the age of retirement, soon to be. Since work has sort of changed since COVID in a lot of circumstances, certainly in the Federal Government, is it—and this is a generalized question.

I think it would be interesting to know just across the board, because I think private sector, too. Is it a requirement now that you offer the flexibility to the newer worker coming in? Is this an expectation? Are you finding that?

Mr. HALPERN. It depends on the role. As I said, about two-thirds of our folks come to work every day because you cannot take a printing press home.

Senator CAPITO. Right.

Mr. HALPERN. I think in our manufacturing role——

Senator CAPITO. Especially if you are printing money, you do not want to take the printing——

Mr. HALPERN. That is a different group, but——

Senator CAPITO. I got you off there, sorry.

Mr. HALPERN. No, no, no. It is—so for our manufacturing employees, for our production employees, there is an expectation that you are going to work those hours.

Senator CAPITO. Right, right.

Mr. HALPERN. I was discussing in my oral statement we are looking at different ways of approaching even that. For instance, for the folks who print passports, we have shifted to a four day a week, ten hour a day schedule. It works for us, works for them.

Similarly, we are really close to standing up a weekend shift, in our Mississippi production facility to see if that can be successful for those of those teammates who may want to work a longer day, but fewer days a week.

That is the same kind of flexibility that we can use in a production environment that we can also use in the more traditional knowledge worker roles. You know, we asked our first class of recent grads, and we have got some of those folks behind me, we said, does the availability of remote work, did that factor into your decision to choose GPO? Almost three-quarters of them said that it did.

Senator CAPITO. Last question, if I could. You mentioned passports. I am curious to know, are we going to—are we going to go to a digital passport? Is that in our future?

Mr. HALPERN. The——

Senator CAPITO. The people behind you are smiling.

Mr. HALPERN. Because they are more closely involved with some of that planning than I am. But the short answer is that the current version of the passport that we just started producing in April for our State Department customer is probably going to be good for about 10 to 15 years. That was the length of the last one.

We are in discussions, both the State Department and GPO supporting them, with all of the other international partners about what the next passport looks like. It is likely that that will continue to be tied to a physical document.

There may be a digital component, but you will still need a physical document to key to that. I think we have got probably a good another 20 years or so of still having some sort of physical document.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Mr. HALPERN. I am good at telling the future, but not that good.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you. Thanks for all the hard work you all do. Thank you.

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Very good. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Mr. Halpern, you were talking about all the really cool things that are happening with technology and what your office is going to be able to do with that.

But I know that you still have certain congressional publications like committee reports and hearing records that use the same format for the last hundred years, and they can be kind of hard to read, really small print.

I understand even the pages are different formatting as well. I assume we are still going to be using printed materials. What are you going to do about getting us up to speed on formatting?

Mr. HALPERN. This is—you will excuse me while I get out my soapbox. I really appreciate the question. I always use the committee report as an example. I either wrote myself or was responsible for the production of probably about 3,000 of them over my House career.

The printed format of that document is designed for the offset printing environment, and each page is the size that it is because we can fit 64 of those along an aluminum plate that fits on an offset printing drum. GPO, as I mentioned, has switched over largely to digital inkjet printing technology.

That means it does not matter to us how many pages we can fit on a drum. We can make that page size whatever we want, from letter-sized to the same size it is now. We have a new kind of printing technology. We are updating that software stack that I talked about earlier.

Congress seems to be willing to reexamine the ways it has traditionally done things. This presents us with an opportunity, and I think one that folks seem to be interested in taking advantage of.

We have started doing the work of saying, if we were building a committee report from scratch, what would that look like? You know, I think folks are indicating to us that something that is centered around a letter sized piece of paper makes a lot of sense. Something that can support color, that uses larger typefaces, that uses more consistent header styles, all of those kinds of things.

We are at the front-end of that project now, but I really hope before the end of the year we will have an idea of what that is going to look like, and then we can start building the tools to help folks easily author those documents.

You know, what—it will be a little harder for us to get to bill text just because over the last 200—almost 250 years, we have developed some bad habits in how we author legislation.

That is going to take us a little bit more work. But I think committee reports are a great place for us to start. Hearings are basically the same format. We can use those as a jumping off point for a lot of other legislative documents, to both make them better in print, and to make them more accessible digitally, so that it does not matter whether you are looking at it on paper, on a tablet, or on a computer.

Senator FISCHER. You know, as you are making the switch over to more and more technology and the benefits that we see with it, how do you see these investments in the newer technologies having a positive, hopefully a positive fiscal impact in the future? If it will be sustainable? Have you begun to see any cost savings improvements that are already taking place?

Mr. HALPERN. Absolutely. I can get you more definitive numbers on what that looks like. But let me give you an example of the shift from offset printing to digital inkjet.

The way that traditional offset printing works, there is a long runway to get that machine set up and operating at peak efficiency. Let us take the Congressional Record as a good example: 15, 20 years ago, the circulation of that document was 20,000, 25,000 copies a day.

When we set that up on these big industrial web offset presses, having essentially 2,000 or 3,000 copies that we throw away every day because that is what it took to get the machine set up and running well, was an okay investment.

That first copy always cost you tens of thousands of dollars, but each additional copy was just pennies. You dollar-cost-averaged that over the entire print. But the problem is that that same Congressional Record that 15 years ago was 25,000 copies a day, today is about—it is less than 1,500 printed copies.

Digital inkjet, we have got almost no waste. There is almost no environmental impact. The cost per page is both lower than that initial cost for the offset and more consistent over the entire print run.

We can show you what that math looks like, but that is just one example of how that technology is helping.

Senator FISCHER. Madam Chairwoman, could I ask one more question? Thanks. You talked about being able to close some offices for various reasons. When you have this underutilized space, and as you continue to streamline, I guess, the GPO's presence, what kind of model are you looking at there? What are some of the measures that you are using in order to accomplish that?

Mr. HALPERN. As we have changed how we work, we have changed our space utilization as well. For instance, one thing that we are looking at closely is, can we bring in other partners into our facility?

A really good example of this was supporting Congress and the Center for Legislative Archives through the Archives, the National Archives. Congress was looking for a good place to store its records. Because we had surplus space, we were able to provide a good place for that.

I believe we have got about between 50,000 and 60,000 square feet that we have dedicated to that purpose, both a phase one that is operational today and a phase two that we are looking to build out over the next few years.

We are looking for partners to take up some of that space. But to be honest, at the moment, while we are talking with all of our business units about what their space needs look like, we do not have that much vacant space.

We may undergo some consolidation so that as we have got more folks who are only coming to the DC headquarters a couple of days a week or whatever, we can rearrange space.

Instead of having large cube farms, we can have more meeting space, more collaboration space so the folks can really use those facilities on the days they are in the office.

I think the myth of us having, huge amounts of space just sitting fallow is not the reality. The other thing to keep in mind is often we need pretty substantial swing space as we change technologies.

Passports are a really good example. Right now, we have, as of April, we have shifted over to what is now the current generation, the next generation passport. As we look to build out the manufacturing facility for the passport that we are going to have in another ten years, we need space to start building that facility now so that it is ready when we do the changeover.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you.

Chairwoman KLOBUCHAR. Well, very good. I want to thank Ranking Member Fischer and the Members of this Committee for a productive hearing.

Thank you also, Mr. Halpern, for answering all of our questions, sharing what you have done, bringing many of your new recruits and team members with you. It was very exciting to hear about what you are doing to modernize our government, to bring more transparency.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues on this Committee to support the GPO and its dedicated employees.

The hearing record will remain open for one week. I do want to tell all the people who maybe have not been at a Committee hearing, it is not always this pleasant, so you are really lucky. It is kind of a holiday special for all of you.

As I said, the hearing record will remain open for a year, and we are adjourned. Thank you. For a week. Oh, my goodness. One week. Thank you.

Mr. HALPERN. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:52 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

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GPO

THE HONORABLE HUGH NATHANIAL HALPERN
Director
United States Government Publishing Office

Prepared Statement before the Committee on Rules and Administration United States Senate

Oversight of the U.S. Government Publishing Office

December 12, 2023
3:00 PM
301 Russell Senate Office Building

GPO

Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Republican Member Fischer, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to update you on our work at the Government Publishing Office (GPO). On behalf of GPO's more than 1,600 craftspeople and professionals, I am pleased to be able to tell the Committee that GPO is in good shape and the Agency is poised for continued success.

As you know, GPO is unique in the legislative branch as it operates as business and its budget and resources are largely determined by the products it manufactures or procures for all three branches of the Federal government. This model has served GPO well in the past and is a strong foundation for its future.

My written testimony will provide a comprehensive discussion of GPO's operations since I last appeared before this committee, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

GPO's Finances and Achievements

Finances

While I am still awaiting the final results from GPO's outside audit firm, I expect that Fiscal Year 2023 will be another record year for GPO, likely exceeding last year's $1.1 billion in consolidated revenue.

Revenues grew across GPO's business units with its Security and Intelligent Documents (SID) division leading the way. SID's largest customer, the Department of State, asked that GPO supply 21.9 million passports in FY 2023 and our team met that enormously ambitious goal. SID also saw growth in its secure cards business, taking on a pilot project producing retiree and dependent cards for the Department of Defense, released detainee identification cards for the Bureau of Prisons, and credentials for Inspectors General across the Federal government.

We also saw strong performance in our Customer Services unit, where we contract with vendors in all 50 states to provide printing and related products and services to customers in all three branches of government. We approached nearly $500 million in revenue from this unit and saw a lot of growth in our work providing Federal agencies with solutions to digitize paper documents and we expect that growth to continue in the future.

Hiring

As most of you know, my single biggest challenge is making sure that GPO has a workforce ready to fulfill our obligations in the future. Currently about half of the Agency will be eligible to retire in the next four years and onboarding the next generation of talent is critical to GPO's ability to serve its customers in the future. That task is now harder as the kinds of industries where GPO traditionally recruited in the past, such as newspaper publishing and commercial printing, are shrinking as well, reducing the pool of potential recruits.

Despite those challenges, in fiscal year 2023 GPO onboarded 190 new teammates, 41 percent more than we did in the prior fiscal year. That brought GPO to 1,625 total personnel, a high watermark in headcount for recent years.

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Much of this growth came from our proactive efforts to bring new talent to GPO. We started a second cohort of our Recent Graduate Program, consisting of 34 new teammates, which attracts talented graduates from college and graduate schools to serve GPO in roles from IT to accounting to engineering and human capital. Likewise, we expanded our apprentice program to provide a path to educate people in our trades like pre-press and press operation.

Our most innovative program created a new role—production technician—to work in our SID operation. When faced with a critical shortage of journeyperson bookbinders, we developed this role to hire teammates with a demonstrated aptitude for working in a manufacturing environment and provide a three-year, on-the-job training opportunity. After working alongside experienced craftspeople, these teammates have learned the necessary skills to produce passports and secure identification documents and will become journeyperson bookbinders. Our production technicians are supporting our growth in secure document production while learning valuable skills for the future.

Innovating in Our Work Environment

In addition to our efforts to grow our team, GPO has adopted several innovations to improve our work environment and recruit top talent.

Telework and Remote Work

GPO's development of a thoughtful telework policy and early embrace of telework and remote work for certain roles has paid dividends as we grow our workforce. While about two-thirds of the Agency's teammates work in production at our facilities daily, many of our support roles work well in a remote environment.

For instance, as we exited the pandemic GPO started a trial to see if our regional Customer Services teams could operate without being tethered to a physical office. We saw revenue increase in that business unit, and we were eventually able to change that entire team to remote work and close physical offices across the country saving about a million dollars per year on rent and overhead costs.

Similarly, the availability of remote work has been a huge recruiting tool. We recently surveyed our first Recent Graduate cohort and nearly three quarters of those teammates identified the availability of telework and remote work as a key reason why they chose to join GPO.

It also enables GPO to recruit nationwide. If an individual is willing to work the core hours needed to support their customers, it doesn't matter where that person is located. Hiring teammates working remotely may even result in lower Agency costs as their primary location may have a lower locality pay rate than the DC area.

GPO has found this can even work for senior roles. GPO's Superintendent of Documents, the official who is GPO's chief liaison with the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) community, resides in Connecticut with his family, travels to DC when necessary, and visits our member FDLP libraries across the country. Similarly, we hired several librarians to work directly with FDLP libraries who live and work in the regions they serve.

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Other Innovations

The adoption of new technologies is also helping us to expand the labor pool to fill core functions at GPO. For example, GPO's deployment of new digital ink jet printing technologies has dramatically reduced the amount of time needed to train GPO teammates to operate these clean and efficient presses.

Where it used to require several years for our Plant Operations staff to train an employee to run a traditional press, a GPO teammate can be trained to operate the digital ink jet presses in months. The innovations Plant Operations has put into place recently won recognition from the In-Plant Printing and Mailing Association which honored us with their 2023 Innovation and Best of Show Awards for our digital ink jet printing work.

And while GPO's Plant Operations maintains a more traditional schedule to support Congress's publishing needs, the Federal Register, and other similar products, we have used the production environment of SID to experiment and implement some important workplace innovations:

- We implemented a four-day work week with great success both at our DC and Stennis, MS SID facilities. Rather than working five eight-hour days, teammates work Monday through Thursday for 10 hours each day. This benefits our teammates who either get a three-day weekend or an opportunity for overtime on Friday, while the Agency gets the increased efficiency of running our equipment for longer with less wear and tear.

- We are currently in the final stages of working with our unions to standup a weekend shift at Stennis. Those teammates would work three 12-hour days Friday through Sunday, providing the Agency with additional SID production capacity.

These innovations provide our teammates with more flexibility while bolstering our ability to meet our customers' increasing requirements.

GPO's willingness to experiment and embrace new ways of working is one of the reasons why Forbes magazine named GPO one of the best places to work in America and one of America's best employers for veterans for the second year in a row.

GPO's Work for Congress

Chief among GPO's priorities is the work we perform for Congress. I often tell my team that while Congress is not our biggest customer, they are our most important. Every day, we produce Congressional Record pages, committee reports, and many other products for Congress. I'm excited to update you on a few of our initiatives for Congress, all of which will ultimately improve Congress' operations and how the legislature interacts with its constituents.

Congressionally Mandated Reports

Just under one year ago, Congress passed legislation directing GPO, working closely with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congressional stakeholders, to make most of the reports mandated by Congress publicly available via GPO's ISO-certified trusted digital repository, GovInfo.gov.

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This is a hugely important initiative. I remember from my days as a committee staff person that so many of these reports were received, filed away, and archived at the end of the Congress with no one ever having looked at them. This legislation ends that cycle and will make these reports accessible both to staff and the public.

I am pleased to announce that GPO will meet our statutory deadline to make this system operational, and the first batch of reports will be made publicly available soon. Not only is the collection making its debut ahead of schedule, but it will have some important user-friendly features, such as enabling users to perform Browse by Topic searches and download a Table of Reports in multiple formats. I expect this collection to rapidly grow as executive branch agencies become more familiar with the law's requirements and submit more reports for publication.

This effort has been a long-time coming. GPO had been following the development of this legislation for several years and, shortly after enactment of the Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act as part of last year's National Defense Authorization Act, GPO began its efforts to meet the law's requirements.

In June, OMB Director Shalanda Young and I issued guidance to Federal agencies for submission of these reports and those agencies started submitting reports in October. As of the close of business on December 5, 127 reports have been submitted to GPO, and I expect more soon.

We will continue enhance access to Congressionally mandated reports and work with agencies as they endeavor to make more information available in open formats.

XPub Development

Since the 1980s, GPO has developed and maintained the software stack that Congress uses to print official documents. When Senators ask the Senate Office of Legislative Counsel to draft a bill, the PDF they receive is created by GPO's MicroComp composition engine. MicroComp is in use by the Secretary's office and the House as well.

Designed decades ago, to transition from hot-lead typesetting to digital composition, MicroComp was originally put into production in 1982. It has been at the end of its useful life for years now. While GPO has been able to adapt the program to support increased use of digital products, it fundamentally lacks support for features our customers want, such as color or modern document formats. All of us need something better.

Last fall, I announced that the replacement for MicroComp—XPub—reached the version 1.0 milestone after many years of development. XPub fully supports the structured data format used by the legislative branch and new formats and features, such as color. Users and the public alike will enjoy new features enabled by XPub, such as a responsive web display of bill and amendment text.

Unfortunately, like many version 1.0 products, we discovered some performance issues during testing with our customers. Some of this was due to the unique requirements of existing document and table formats; in other cases, we needed to fine-tune our own code.

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Over the past year, we worked with our vendors and developers to improve our code stack and deliver a much-improved product. XPub is in user acceptance testing with our House and Senate customers and should deliver performance equal to or better than MicroComp.

We expect to deliver the production release of XPub, ready for use with bills, resolutions, and amendments, to our House and Senate users in the first half of 2024. Once delivered it may take some time to fully deploy as users will need to coordinate around congressional workloads and busy periods.

Redesigning Committee Reports and Hearings—Project Common Press

Ben Franklin—the Nation's first public printer—perfected his printing press design which became known as the Franklin Common Press, an example of which is on display at the Smithsonian. I chose this same designation for our project to redesign a basic document format for Congress—the committee report and hearing.

The current design for Congressional committee reports and hearings has been in place since GPO opened its doors in 1862. It uses a non-standard page size, small typefaces, limited heading styles, and only supports black type and greyscale images. Delivering the kinds of features our customers want—such as color—was largely cost prohibitive.

Today, we're at an inflection point—the development of XPub enables a level of flexibility with Congressional documents that we haven't had before, whether they are displayed digitally or in print; GPO has deployed digital inkjet presses capable of cost-effective printing on any size paper with a wide variety of features, including color; and Congress has demonstrated a willingness to reexamine long-standing practices to improve outcomes for lawmakers, staff, and the public.

Project Common Press is a bicameral, bipartisan effort to develop a new design template for committee reports and hearings. With the full support of the Joint Committee on Printing, GPO has started the focus group work of gathering our customer requirements for what a new format might look like. To date, we have discussed options with the JCP staff and House and Senate institutional officers. We have taken the feedback so far and are further refining our designs. Our next steps will be to gather feedback with committee staff and outside stakeholders, such as library and civic groups.

Given what we've seen so far, I expect those designs to include a transition to letter-size paper and include color elements. The goal is to deliver documents that are easier to read and understand no matter the format, print or digital.

At the end of this process, we plan on two deliverables: a style guide describing the look and feel of the documents and specifications—cascading style sheets (CSS)— for digital display. We'll then seek public comment on those documents before we finalize our designs.

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While this project is focused on the design of the documents, we also recognize that we need to improve the authoring process so that committee staff can focus on what they do best—content—and not worry about formatting. Accordingly, the next phase of XPub development will include improvements to support easier authoring of committee reports and hearings using familiar tools, such as Microsoft Word or web-based editors, while also providing a web-based mechanism to generate press-ready PDFs and machine-readable data files.

We are at the beginning of a long road to modernize a decades-old process. I believe the result will be better documents that support the legislative process and inform the public. I am excited for the outcome and thankful for this committee's continuing support.

A New Era for the FDLP

We are in a time of transition for the Federal Depository Library Program. In January 2022, I appointed a task force to examine the future of the FDLP, particularly the role of digital and tangible materials in the future. In December 2022, that task force recommended that GPO move to a digital FDLP model, and we began the process of imagining what that program would look like.

Given the task force's recommendation and the likelihood of future flat funding for the FDLP, we are accelerating the transition of the FDLP to a digital program. In line with trends in many libraries, we expect to significantly reduce the quantity and variety of tangible materials sent to libraries in the coming year.

We are currently in discussions with libraries over how GPO will implement those changes so that we can ensure that the remaining tangible copies of popular publications such as the Code of Federal Regulations are distributed in a way that ensures access to the greatest number of patrons across the country.

We must ensure that while we are reducing the distribution of tangible publications, we are giving our partner libraries and librarians the tools to help patrons find the information they need. GPO hosts a vast store of government information on the world's only ISO-certified trusted digital repository, GovInfo.gov, but we are also increasing our collaboration with agency partners who provide trusted online publications.

Likewise, we are also looking to assist depository libraries digitally convert their unique Federal publications to make them more available to those who might benefit from the information they contain.

Through this two-pronged approach—increased digitization of hard-to-find publications and strategic placement of tangible publications—we hope to provide the best possible access to Federal documents for our partner libraries and their patrons.

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Other Matters of Interest to the Committee

Before closing, there are two other matters that I wish to address: GPO's efforts to explore the opportunities and challenges from emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and GPO's package of suggested legislative changes.

Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models

I know that we provide regular updates on our work to explore the opportunities presented by new AI technologies and believe it may be helpful to summarize those efforts here.

For the past several months, GPO has been developing an overall approach to AI technologies designed to enhance our ability to deliver services while mitigating any of the downstream risks often associated with the adoption of new technologies.

To date, we have created an AI use-case inventory on our website to disclose the applications through which we are currently employing AI technologies and issued an overall AI policy. That policy calls for the creation of an AI Advisory Committee and establishes that any proposed new uses of AI must be approved by GPO's Technical Change Control Board. It also requires that any proposed AI use must align with GPO's values and promote efficiency, increase productivity, and promote the safety of our employees and stakeholders.

In the months ahead, we hope to fill out our AI Advisory Committee, provide our staff with additional AI training opportunities, and pursue some modest proof-of-concept pilot programs with the committee's support.

GPO's Legislative Proposals

Earlier this year, GPO shared its proposals for changes to its governing statutes with this committee and your House counterpart. Those proposals have been stable from the beginning of my term and address two general areas: administrative issues affecting GPO's operations and changes to chapter 19 of title 44 to update the Agency's public information programs.

Administrative Matters

GPO has consistently requested certain changes to its title 44 authorities to improve its operations. These include:

- Updating title 44 to include digital publishing services where necessary;

- Allowing GPO to accept certain limited gifts in furtherance of its mission, similar to the Library of Congress;

- Lowering the threshold where the Agency may utilize simplified contracting procedures;

- Allowing the Director to make a limited number of non-competitive appointments to avoid reliance on the executive branch for schedule C appointments; and

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- Providing leave carry-over authority for employees who are part of GPO's senior level service equivalent to that available to executive branch senior executive service employees.

Thematically, these changes are designed both to update GPO's operational authorities to reflect changes brought about by the transition from traditional to digital publishing, and to extend to GPO authorities that numerous Federal agencies enjoy. We believe each would contribute to our efforts to improve GPO's overall operational efficiency and productivity.

Updating GPO's Public Information Programs for the 21st Century

Just as important as changes to GPO's administrative authorities are our proposed updates to chapter 19 of title 44 which governs most of GPO's public information programs. This package of updates has been worked on with many of our FDLP partners, the library community in general, and GPO's Depository Library Council, and advisory group that represents the FDLP community.

These changes update key elements of GPO's authorities to include digital publications and establish the National Collection of United States Public Information. These are important improvements that both codify common practice in the FDLP and pave the way for new products and services for depository libraries and their patrons.

Enactment of these authorities will be a significant improvement to the FDLP and is long overdue.

Conclusion

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Fischer. I appreciate the opportunity to update the committee on GPO's recent progress. I look forward to any questions you may have.

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Senate Committee on Rules and Administration
Oversight of the U.S. Government Publishing Office
December 12, 2023
Questions for the Record
The Honorable Hugh Nathanial Halpern

<u>Chairwoman Klobuchar</u>

The U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) released a five-year strategic plan in June 2022 with key goals such as working efficiently across offices, providing additional services to generate revenue, and continuing to develop GPO's workforce.

- Can you provide an update on the progress that has been made over the past year and a half to implement the strategic plan?

Throughout fiscal year 2023—the first full year of operations guided by our FY 2023-2027 Strategic Plan—GPO enjoyed significant success in advancing our four strategic goals to develop our workforce, achieve operational excellence, ensure financial stability, and modernize and innovate.

Develop the Workforce. Thanks to the dedication and focus of GPO's Human Capital staff, we were able to onboard 190 new GPO teammates in fiscal year 2023—a 41 percent increase over the 135 we added in fiscal year 2022. As a result, after years of steady attrition, GPO has now ended two consecutive fiscal years with overall workforce increases.

One key component of GPO's efforts to attract, develop, and retain a high-quality workforce has been our willingness to explore creative work arrangements to expand the pool of individuals who might be interested in working at GPO. For example, in fiscal year 2023 we engaged our labor partners to create a four-day work week for our Security and Intelligent Documents (SID) production staff, through which they can either eliminate one commute to the office each week or pursue overtime opportunities. We are also exploring the possibility of initiating a Friday, Saturday, Sunday workweek for individuals who might be attracted to the idea of working three long 12-hour shifts a week.

Another component has been the creation of programs that can help motivated individuals develop the skills needed to thrive as GPO teammates. Our Recent Graduate Development Program, now in its second year, allows us to recruit and develop well-educated and highly motivated individuals to fill critical, hard-to-fill professional positions. It provides paid on-the-job training over a three-year period to recent graduates of qualifying educational institutions, with the first two years designed as a "train-learn-do" approach to acquiring specialized skills. In the third year, successful trainees can convert to career conditional positions within the civil service.

GPO welcomed our first 24 participants in the Recent Graduate Program in the fall of 2022 and focused on several key position areas—Contract Specialists, Human Resources Specialists, Information Technology Specialists, Printing Services Specialists, Program Planners, and Accountants. In the fall of 2023, another 34 entered the program, and we are excited about future growth.

We also restarted our Apprenticeship Program to provide opportunities for teammates to acquire the education and skills needed to advance their careers and help GPO meet emerging workforce needs. GPO has a long history with apprenticeship, with GPO's original program having begun back in the 1880s. This new approach, called the Next Generation Apprenticeship Program, will focus first on developing a new class of proofreaders and keyboarders.

The three-year program consists of both on-the-job and classroom training on all operations, work processes, and practical and technical aspects of the job series/trade. Eight apprentices initiated the program this past winter and we hope to both increase enrollment in fiscal year 2024 and broaden the number of trades participating in the Apprenticeship Program.

Another innovative workforce development program created a new role—production technician—to work in our SID operation. Faced with a critical shortage of journeyperson bookbinders, we developed this role to hire teammates with a demonstrated aptitude for working in a manufacturing environment and provide a three-year, on-the-job training opportunity.

By working alongside experienced craftspeople, these teammates learn the necessary skills to produce passports and secure identification documents and can become journeyperson bookbinders. Our production technicians are supporting our growth in secure document production while learning valuable skills for the future. We onboarded 50 production technicians in fiscal year 2023 and hope to hire eighteen more in fiscal year 2024.

Together these initiatives are helping GPO bolster our reputation as a quality place to work with a number of opportunities for highly motivated individuals and have earned us well-deserved accolades. For example, in fiscal year 2023 GPO was recognized for the 2nd year in a row as both one of America's Best Midsize Employers and one of America's Best Employers for Veterans.

Achieve Operational Excellence and Ensure Financial Stability. Achieving operational excellence, requires having the quality people in positions of leadership, and this past year and a half has presented GPO with a number of important leadership changes. First, there were critical retirements which presented both great challenges and important opportunities for growth. Among them were the well-deserved retirement of Customer Services Managing Director Sandy MacAfee after 34 years of dedicated service and that of Chief Human Capital Officer Dan Mielke, who had spearheaded a number of important reforms including the creation of the HC Dashboard and the Recent Gradates Program.

Long-time Customer Service professional Ted Priebe, who has held several key positions at GPO over more than three decades of service, succeeded Sandy as Managing Director. The Chief Human Capital Officer position has been capably filled on an interim basis by a succession of three Human Capital professionals while the search for a permanent replacement continues.

Beyond retirements, the Agency saw several executives growing into newer, expanded roles and key promotions of deputies into leadership positions since our Strategic Plan was released in June of 2022. SID Managing Director Steve LeBlanc moved into the Agency Chief of Staff role after having successfully standing up the Next Generation Passport production line, handing the reins of SID to long-time SID Operations Manager David Ford.

Similarly, Plant Operations Managing Director John Crawford moved into a new role overseeing Agency Support Operations which includes responsibility for the management of the extensive

number of facility renovation and development projects currently underway. Greg Estep succeeded John as the Managing Director of Plant Operations with Ravinder Birdi, formerly the Manager of Press & Bindery, taking on the Deputy Managing Director role.

A new Deputy Managing Director for Acquisitions was hired with contracting professional Christopher Bellini joining GPO after two decades of acquisition experience in the U.S. Navy. And, in June, I appointed former Deputy Inspector General Nathan Deahl as GPO's new Inspector General following a period of his service as Acting Inspector General.

Beyond personnel matters, GPO moved forward on several key facility modernization efforts that are designed to improve our operational efficiency. First, GPO secured approval from the Joint Committee on Printing (JCP) to begin an overall space utilization study to determine how best to optimize our facilities to support, sustain, and grow revenue-generating activities; encourage the adaptive reuse of former industrial spaces; and promote prudent investments from life, safety, and business perspectives.

We also relocated the GPO Federal Credit Union from its previous home on the 8th Floor near the cafeteria to more contemporary space where the GPO Bookstore used to be located. This change should improve access to the Credit Union for GPO retirees and help the Credit Union promote its services and attract new members. It should also enable the completion of the next phase of the long-awaited modernization of the eighth-floor cafeteria area.

The first step of that project, now completed, provides GPO teammates with new, modern space to meet, take breaks, and enjoy meals. The next phase will include a renovated café area, new conference room space, and workspaces to accommodate those teammates who, because of our expanded telework options, may no longer require permanent offices.

Perhaps the most significant change to GPO's facilities over the past eighteen months has been the closure of the remaining 11 GPO regional offices. With the JCP's approval in 2022, GPO began a pilot project to see regional offices could be closed without detrimental effects on Custom Services' operations. Following encouraging initial results, JCP granted GPO approval to close all 11 regional offices and transition our regional Customer Service employees to full time remote work in 2023.

That consolidation was completed with the closure of our Columbus, OH office in the summer of 2023, and our 58 regional representatives were reorganized into region-based teams. The results have been quite positive from a productivity standpoint—GPO stands to save an annual $1 million on rent going forward while our teleworking regional reps processed a 20 percent increase in orders generating 14 percent higher revenue over fiscal year 2022.

The quality of GPO's work was also recognized by industry peers in 2023. In June, Plant Operations skills were honored by the In-Plant Printing and Mailing Association (IPMA) at their Annual Education Conference in Bonita Springs, Florida. IPMA awarded Plant Operations digital ink jet printing work with both their 2023 Innovation and Best of Show Awards.

Closer to home, GPO teammates also conveyed their general satisfaction with the Agency's operations as GPO conducted its first ever climate survey to assess agency morale and identify challenges. The survey, which saw an encouraging 42 percent response rate, found that 90 percent of respondents are proud of the work they do at GPO and 76 percent agree that respect is high among teammates. While there is always room for improvement, the survey provided encouraging results we hope to build on in the years ahead.

With regard to our strategic goal of promoting financial stability, fiscal year 2023 was a great success. GPO earned $1,229.8 million in revenues in fiscal year 2023 with net positive income of $58.4 million. Further, our independent auditor issued a clean—or unedited—opinion on our financial statements for the 27th year in a row!

Modernize and Innovate. Continued focus on our strategic goals of modernization and innovation is the hallmark of GPO's approach to planning and touches every aspect of GPO operations, from the deployment of new technologies and processes in support of operations to the development of new products and capabilities to better serve our customers.

Last winter, as part of its efforts to explore opportunities to innovate, GPO Leadership travelled to Rochester, New York to tour the famed Xerox research and development facilities where some innovations central the digital revolution were conceived. Then, in June, Chief of Staff Steve LeBlanc convened a technology discussion of GPO's Executive Leadership team were each Managing Director shared their business unit's technology needs, challenges, and dependencies with the goal of promoting awareness, collaboration, and best practices.

Possibly the most visible evidence of our commitment to modernization and innovation over the past eighteen months was the major project to remove the massive 25-year-old Group 98 Web Presses that had been rendered obsolete by six new highly efficient inkjet presses. This significant undertaking required 50 days to dismantle the decommissioned web presses, which had been used for decades to produce the Congressional Record, Federal Register, some IRS publications, and additional congressional documents and bills. Once the presses were removed, the contractors then assembled a crane to remove the associated oxidizers from GPO's ninth story roof over the Memorial Day weekend.

GPO also made our first investment in 3-D printing technology to experiment with the printing of plastic machine parts. Because of the broad range of machinery employed at GPO it is often necessary to purchase replacement parts, which sometimes encounter delays that result in the suspension of certain GPO operations for a few days. Such delays can negatively impact our productivity and operational efficiency. Our new 3-D printer offers the possibility of printing some new replacement parts in just a few hours' time, however, and can help alleviate production disruptions while we wait for replacement parts to ship. In the coming years, we will be looking to evaluate whether it makes sense to expand our promising initial investments in 3-D printing technology.

GPO also began closely monitoring the emergence of artificial intelligence technologies and the possible opportunities and challenges AI may post to GPO's operations in 2023. To ensure that we consider these technologies in a thoughtful way, GPO developed an overall AI policy as well as a landing page on our website where we disclose the uses of AI technologies throughout the Agency. With their pattern-recognition capabilities, AI seems to present some opportunities to support core GPO functions like proofreading and IT security threat detection, which is why GPO is developing an AI Governance Committee at the present time.

One of the more significant innovation milestones in fiscal year 2023 was the adoption of the Task Force for a Digital Federal Depository Library's recommendations. In February of 2023, I wrote to the Task Force members conveying my intention to do so, and committed to take following steps, among others, to make the vision of a Digital Federal Depository Library Program a reality:

- GPO will work with libraries to explore specific needs of communities moving to a digital FDLP.
- GPO will identify and engage a consultant to assist with implementation planning and change management for finding, managing, and curating digital collections.
- GPO will participate in dialogue to mitigate digital divides and disparities and provide access to individuals with disabilities.
- GPO will build on existing partnerships with the Library of Congress to expand collaboration and coordination with national libraries and agency publishers.

Still, another initiative that demonstrated GPO's commitment to innovate was our multi-disciplinary, team-based approached to developing the Congressionally Mandated Reports web portal authorized by Congress in FY 2023. Throughout the year, GPO teammates worked intensely and collaboratively on the complex project and brought the public website to life before the statutory deadline of December 23, 2023.

In terms of deployment of new technologies, GPO also put some state-of-the-art equipment into service by installing the RTB–480, a "roll-to-book" automated line. The RTB-480 is designed to significantly improve the efficiency of publishing adhesive bound publications printed on our inkjet presses. It consists of four separate pieces of equipment—a Hunkeler Generation 8 unwinder and PF7 folder, a Horizon BQ–480 binder and Horizon HT–1000 trimmer, and enables the automated conversion of printed rolls from our inkjet printers into a finished product, eliminating multiple touchpoints and additional handling required for transportation to other binding equipment.

Previously, rolls of paper were printed on inkjets and then transferred to the Kolbus folder for book block production before moving to the Bolero binder for cover application and three-side trimming. With the RTB–480, however, rolls are printed on inkjet printers and directly transferred to the unit, which produces the book block, applies covers, and trims all three sides in one go, without requiring any human intervention or transportation. By consolidating the finishing process into a single unit, the RTB–480 reduces the make-ready time required for multiple pieces of equipment.

The enduring nature of GPO's commitment to modernization and innovation was also evident as we marked the 30th anniversary of the signing of the GPO Electronic Information Access Enhancement Act. This law chartered a new future for GPO and encouraged our transformation from a paper-based enterprise to the digital age. Signed into law by President Bill Clinton on June 8, 1993, the Act directed GPO to put Government information online for the first time.

Within a year of its signing, GPO made the Congressional Record and Federal Register digitally available for the public to access on its first-generation GPO Access website. From those humble beginnings, as the 30th Anniversary of the Act neared we celebrated the 10 billionth retrieval of information from GPO's online public access systems centered on our cutting-edge GovInfo online repository.

At the hearing we discussed how GPO works with over 1,100 libraries across the country to improve public access to government information.

- Can you expand on GPO's work with libraries to digitize important historical documents so that they are more accessible to the public, as well as on GPO's ongoing historic preservation work for print materials?

The Library Services and Content Management (LSCM) business unit of the U.S. Government Publishing Office (GPO) began digital imaging works of the U.S. Government in 2016. The overall objective of digital imaging is to increase public access to historic Federal Government information by making it available digitally on GovInfo, and ultimately to make the entire National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information available digitally. LSCM utilizes two avenues to acquire digital images: digital imaging through contract vehicles using publications from Federal depository libraries and content digitally imaged through formal Digital Content Contributor partnerships. GPO's Preservation Librarian consults with these partners to ensure that the digitally imaged publications they provide to GPO meet current FADGI, Federal Agency Digitization Guidelines.

GPO's System of Online Access Collection Development Plan supports GovInfo to make it the "most comprehensive information repository serving the information needs of Congress, Federal agencies, and the public" and entails the ingest of current and historical content. LSCM reevaluates the Plan's deliberate priority setting and planned collecting activities and goals annually.

LSCM also works with libraries to preserve print publications in the National Collection of U.S. Government Public Information. These partner libraries are called Preservation Stewards. Preservation Stewards make a commitment to retain specified print depository resources and take on the additional responsibilities for preserving that material. This includes activities for preventive maintenance and conservation treatments. There are currently 53 libraries serving as Preservation Stewards.

A Preservation Plan for the National Collection of U.S. Public Information is in development. The plan will assess the physical condition of the National Collection, establish preservation priorities to ensure public access, and complement the Collection Development Plan by creating condition-based, long-range plans for digital imaging.

Information on GPO's digital imaging and print preservation efforts are shared through email notices to the Federal depository library community, GPO press releases, and presentations at meetings and conferences.

Below are highlights of our digital imaging and print preservation efforts.

- As part of a multi-year collaboration with the Law Library of Congress, over 2,400 volumes of the United States Congressional Serial Set, which contain over 30,000 individual Congressional reports and documents are available on GovInfo. This ongoing collaboration covers publications from 1815 through the 20th Century and volumes are added as they are available. When complete, this will provide no-fee public access to the entire run of Congressional reports and documents.
- During fiscal year 2023, 111 volumes of the United States Statutes at Large, containing over 141,000 pages, were digitized. The digitized volumes will be available on GovInfo later in

2024. A contract to make historical volumes 1-115 available in United States Legislative Mark-Up (USLM), a modern XML schema, is also underway.

- We are working with Utah State University to catalog and digitally image 812 publications from the Franklin Roosevelt administration, which are being preserved as part of the library's print Preservation Steward collection. Digital imaging is underway, with 28,366 pages digitized so far. Once all the digitization is complete, the publications will be made freely available on GovInfo.

- As another example of GPO's collaboration with libraries, we are working with the University of North Texas to digitally image and preserve the print copies, as a Preservation Steward, of several hundred 20th Century military technical manuals. Acquisition for digital imaging is underway.

- Auburn University digitally imaged 472 information circulars from the Air Information Service. To increase access to this digital content, GPO links to the Auburn site and will add cataloging records for the individual circulars to the Catalog of U.S. Government Publications. Auburn is also serving as a Preservation Steward to preserve the print versions of these publications.

- Libraries have had local events that imperil government information collections, like flooding in collections or HVAC failure. GPO's preservation librarian consults with the depository library staff and offers expertise, and in the case of key or unique materials can assist with physical preservation or conservation services.

A complete list of GPO's collaborations with libraries to increase access to content in the National Collection and to preserve print material is available at https://fdlp.gov/about/partnerships.

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