

Principles for Circular A-130

OMB Watch Working Group on Information

A well-informed citizenry is essential for the progress of a democratic society. Information fosters political life, promotes commerce, and advances public well-being.

- 1) *The Public has the right to government information and the Government has the responsibility to ensure the flow of information to the Public.*

Government information is obtained, compiled, and maintained at citizen expense. It is a public asset and the public has the right to make use of this information so as to promote public welfare. The right of public use of Government information is also established in the Constitution, the Freedom of Information Act, the Government Printing Act, and the Depository Library Program.

- 2) *The Public shall have timely, complete and affordable access to government information. Public information shall be priced at a level so as to promote widespread dissemination and cost recovery plans shall not be permitted.*

Information products and services should be useful. The distinction between "basic" and "enhanced" information products has effectively required the government to make information less useful than it should be. Pricing should be established so as to promote the goal of equity, recognizing that public information is a public resource.

- 3) *The Government shall ensure the integrity, accuracy, and reliability of public information published by government agencies. Information shall be disseminated in whatever format is most appropriate, most cost effective, and most useful.*

As an information disseminator, the Government should ensure the quality of the information product. Information should also be made available in the most useful format. For example, CD-ROM dissemination may be more cost-effective and more useful to end-users than a paper product.

- 4) *The Government shall notify the Public when it intends to terminate a government publication and shall provide a sufficient reason for the termination of the publication.*

Termination of government publications has been a substantial problem during the past decade. Information products have been discontinued often without adequate opportunity for users to express their need for the product. Notice provides an opportunity for information users to object and for the agency to reconsider its decision.

- 5) *The Government shall ensure a diversity of sources for public information and shall forbid the creation of private information monopolies.*

A diversity of information sources promotes more useful, less costly information products and services

- 6) *The Government shall ensure the development of a locator or indexing system that shall promote public access to government information.*

A locator or indexing system is necessary to promote public access to the full breadth of federal information resources. Rapid changes in information technology and the development of a national network infrastructure require that innovative ways be developed to provide federal information users with information about information products and services. The Government shall ensure the development of an appropriate locator system, though it need not take upon itself the responsibility of actually creating or maintaining this system.

- 7) *The Government Printing Office shall have the primary responsibility for ensuring public access to government information, regardless of format.*

The purpose of the Government Printing Office is well established. It does not change with the development of new technology.

- 8) *The National Archives shall have the primary responsibility to ensure the preservation of government records.*

The purpose of the Government Printing Office is well established. It does not change with the development of new technology.

- 9) *The Depository Libraries shall distribute all government information of public interest or educational value to the public without cost and shall provide for free public access to national information gateways.*

The Depository Library Program is based on the principle that citizens shall have "points of access" to obtain information about their Government and that those who make use of this resource shall not be charged. This principle does not change with the development of new technology. Publicly accessible terminals should be established at the Depository Libraries and the Libraries should become hubs for information redissemination.

- 10) *Classification restrictions on government information shall be relaxed and all records more than 30 years old shall be available to the Public.*

The revised classification order adopted in 1982 has restricted public access to government records and slowed the process of records declassification. E.O. 12356 should be redrafted and records more than 30 years old should be fully declassified.