

Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms for the Government Information Product Assessment Questionnaire

ASCII—An acronym for American Standard Code for Information Exchange, ASCII is an international standard in which numbers, letters, punctuation marks, symbols, and control codes are assigned numbers from 0 to 127.

AIFF—Short for Audio Interchange File Format, a common format for storing and transmitting sampled sound.

ANSI—Acronym for the American National Standards Institute, a voluntary organization that creates standards for the computer industry. In addition to programming languages, ANSI sets standards for a wide range of technical areas, from electrical specifications to communications protocols.

AU—Short for audio, a common format for sound files on UNIX machines.

AVI—A format developed by Microsoft Corporation for storing video and audio information.

Accessibility—The degree to which the public is able to retrieve or obtain Government information products, either through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) or directly through an electronic information service established and maintained by a Government agency or its authorized agent. The other aspects of accessibility include the degree to which these Government information products are available to the public in a useful format or medium and in a time frame in which the information has utility. In the context of the FDLP, accessibility includes the degree to which Government information is accurately identified and described bibliographically, the information's availability is made known to the public, and technological, social, economic, political and physical barriers to gaining access are minimized.

Authentication—The certification of a Government information product attesting to its legitimate official status. Ensuring the authenticity of a product involves product design, planning, and policy development, as well as technical considerations.

Availability—The degree to which information is physically or electronically obtainable through the intentional or unintentional provision of Government information products to the public. In the context of the FDLP, availability includes the measures taken by Government agencies and the FDLP to include Government information products in the program. Accessibility is meaningless if information is unobtainable from its source.

BBS—Bulletin Board System, an electronic message center. Most bulletin boards serve specific interest groups. They allow users to dial in with a modem, review messages left by others, and leave their own message.

CGI Scripts—Abbreviation for Common Gateway Interface, a specification for transferring information between a World Wide Web server and a CGI program. CGI programs are the most common way for Web servers to interact dynamically with users. An increasingly common way to provide dynamic feedback for Web users is to include scripts or programs that run on the user's machine rather than the Web server.

CD-ROM—Compact Disk-Read Only Memory; an optical disk from which information may be read but not written.

DVD—Short for digital versatile disk or digital video disk, a new type of CD-ROM that holds a minimum of 4.7GB (gigabytes), enough for a full-length movie.

Digital Image—An electronic version of a bit-mapped image of a document or other information format that allows text to be searched at the character level; "digitalize" means the process and accompanying technologies required to effect the conversion from bit-mapped (e.g., a fax) to searchable format.

Dissemination—The act of making Government information products accessible to the public through distribution to depository or program libraries or by using a Government electronic information service.

Electronic Government Information—Information that is organized, stored, and disseminated using electronic or optical mediums as opposed to paper-based or microfiche-based mediums.

FTP—An acronym for of File Transfer Protocol, the protocol (agreed-upon format) used on the Internet for sending files.

Format—The manner in which data, documents, or literature are organized, structured, named and described, classified, and arranged. For example, full narrative texts in English language could be in the following forms: books or articles, abstracts of text used in reviews and summaries, indexes and catalogs, maps, photographs, drawings, sound recordings, video tapes, bibliographies, and statistical and other numeric kinds of tabulations. A screen format is the layout of fields on the screen. A report format is the layout of the printed page including print columns and page headers and footers. A record format is the layout of fields within a record. A file or database format is the layout of fields and records within a data file, layout codes within a word processing document, or display lists (vector) or bit maps (raster) within a graphics file. The term is sometimes used to refer to the way digital data is encoded or inscribed. Archivists used the terms "genre" or "form of material" to cover what is meant by format in this context.

Frames—A feature supported by most modern Web browsers that enables the Web author to divide the browser display area into two or more sections (frames). The contents of each frame are taken from a different Web page.

GIF—Pronounced jiff or giff (hard g), it is short for graphics interchange format, a bit-mapped graphics. GIF supports color and various resolutions. It also includes data compression, making it especially effective for scanned photos.

GILS—Short for Government Information Locator Service. A metadata tool for identifying, locating, and describing publicly available Federal information resources, including electronic information resources.

Gopher—A method of making menus of material available over the Internet. Gopher pre-dates the World Wide Web for organizing and displaying files on Internet servers.

Government Electronic Information Service—The system or method by which a component of the Government, or its authorized agent, disseminates Government information products to the public via such means as a network or use of CD-ROMs at a kiosk.

Government Information—Refers to information, regardless of form, medium, or format, that is created or compiled by employees of a component of the Government, or at Government expense, or as required by law. Government information as used here does *not* include information for official use only, information classified for reasons of national security, or information used strictly for administrative or operational purposes (e.g., not of public interest or educational value).

Government Information Product—A Government publication or other work of the United States Government conveyed in a tangible physical medium such as a book or CD-ROM, or disseminated through an electronic Government information service established and maintained by a Government agency or its authorized agent.

Graphical User Interface—A program interface that takes advantage of the computer's graphics capabilities to make the program easier to use.

HTML (HyperText Markup Language)—The authoring language used to create documents on the World Wide Web.

HTTP—Short for HyperText Transfer Protocol, the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web. HTTP defines how messages are formatted and transmitted and what actions Web servers and browsers should take in response to various commands.

Information Intermediary—Refers to any person, institution, or mechanism that adds value to information products so that they are more useful to information users. Intermediaries perform their work at the middle information life cycle stages—that is, between information creation and information disposition or destruction. Federal libraries and information centers are examples of intermediaries.

Information Life Cycle—The various stages through which information passes, including creation, production or collection, review and editing, organization and reorganization, packaging, storage, search and retrieval, communication and re-communication, dissemination, disposition, archiving, and destruction.

JPEG—Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) is an image compression format used to transfer color photographs and images over computer networks.

Java Applets—The use of small Java programs. Java Applets allows Web pages to include functions such as animations, calculators, and other fancy tricks.

Javascript—A scripting language developed by Netscape to enable Web authors to design interactive sites.

MARC—Short for machine-reading cataloguing. The USMARC formats are standards for the representation and communication of bibliographic and related information in machine-readable form. The Library of Congress, in consultation with various user communities, maintains USMARC formats.

MPEG—Short for Moving Picture Experts Group, a working group of ISO. MPEG generally produces high-quality video.

Medium—The physical, chemical, or biological substrate used to create, organize, store, search for, retrieve, disseminate, or permanently archive data, documents, or literature including, for example, paper, microforms, fiber optic cables, photographic film, CD-ROM, floppy diskettes, magnetic storage devices, sound recordings, and videotape.

Metadata—Metadata is data about data. Metadata describes how and when and by whom a particular set of data was collected and how the data are formatted. These data can be collections or individual instances of objects or documents, Internet resources, etc.

Migration—The transfer of an information product from one hardware type, software package, system, network, format, or medium to another. The transfer of an information product from a pre-electronic medium such as paper or microform to an electronic medium such as CD-ROM is an example of migration.

PDF—Short for Portable Document Format. A file format developed by Adobe Systems. PDF captures formatting information from a variety of desktop publishing applications, making it possible to send formatted documents and have them appear on the recipient's monitor or printer as they were intended.

Permanent Public Access—The indefinite, continuing accessibility of Government information products by the public including the policies, programs, formats, mediums, and standards used. Simply because data such as weather and tide information, lists of Government contractors, editions of annual reports, and statistical series are continuously updated with more current information does not necessarily mean that provision should not be made for retaining (making permanently accessible) the replaced information. Care should be exercised in this regard, however, to ensure no harm is done to the public by making available out-of-date information.

Preferred Medium or Format Standard—A medium or format standard that may not be agency mandated but is either common agency practice or applies to a new or promising product format or medium.

Public Domain—A term of American copyright law referring to works that are not copyright protected; free for all to use without permission.

Refreshing—A technical term meaning the manner in which information mediums and technologies are periodically reassessed and upgraded to ensure that they are not becoming obsolete, thereby risking the loss of information and the compromising of Permanent Public Access policies. The term is also sometimes applied to formats and standards (not just mediums) that are in danger of becoming obsolete and need to be replaced or upgraded.

Rich Text Format (RTF)—A standard for specifying formatting of documents. RTF files are actually ASCII files with special commands to indicate formatting information, such as fonts and margins.

SGML—Short for Standard Generalized Markup Language, SGML is a system for organizing and tagging elements of a document. SGML was developed and standardized by the International Organization for Standards (ISO) in 1986.

Standard—An agreed-upon authoritative convention, whether formal or informal, whether official or unofficial, whether de facto or de jure, by which information products are created, produced, formatted, published, stored, communicated, and moved through the remainder of the stages of the information life cycle. Standards (and the more informal concept and term "guidelines") minimize incompatibility and interoperability problems when an information sender tries to move data, documents, or literature into and out of several different formats and mediums to a receiver. Standards may be set by formal national or international standard-setting bodies, or by agencies, or by groups of users informally by common consent.

TIFF—The acronym for Tagged Image File Format, a graphic file format developed by Aldus and Microsoft.

Telnet—A terminal emulation program for TCP/IP networks such as the Internet. The Telnet program runs on a user's computer and connects his/her PC to a server on the network. This enables users to control the server and communicate with other servers on the network.

Type of Data—The general nature of the information content of a Government information product and how it is arranged, structured, and presented for ease of handling in a medium. Some examples include textual data, graphical data, spatial data, numerical data, etc.

WAIS—Short for Wide Area Information Server. A distributed information service that offers simple natural language input, indexed searching for information retrieval, and a relevance feedback mechanism. It has an easy-to-use interface that searches all documents relative to your query, ranks them, and makes them available to retrieve.

WAV—The format for storing sound in files developed jointly for Microsoft and IBM.

WORM—Short for write once, read many, an optical disk technology that allows one to write data onto a disk just once.

World Wide Web (WWW)—WWW is a system of Internet servers that support specially formatted documents. The documents are formatted in a language called HTML (HyperText Markup Language) that supports links to other documents, as well as graphics, audio, and video files.

XML—Short for eXtensible Markup Language. XML is a pared-down version of SGML, designed especially for Web documents. It enables designers to create their own customized tags to provide functionality not available with HTML.