

Why GAO Did This Study

Federal law requires that, with limited exceptions, all federal printing be performed by or through GPO. The JCP authorizes exemptions to specific agencies to operate in-house printing plants. In its 1990 JCP Regulations, the JCP included a list of authorized federal in-house printing plants. Some agency documents, once published, are required to be submitted to the FDLP, a GPO program designed to preserve government documents and make them available to the public.

GAO was asked to examine how federal printing practices had changed since the JCP Regulations were updated in 1990. This report describes (1) agencies' current printing practices—including the number of in-house printing plant and selected agencies' volumes and spending—and (2) how agencies' current printing practices are reflected in federal printing regulations and statutes.

GAO surveyed agencies that might be operating in-house printing plants, interviewed GPO and agency officials, analyzed agency data on printing volumes and spending, and reviewed printing regulations and statutes. GAO also selected six agencies from those surveyed to interview, based on their printing and reproduction obligations. Findings from these interviews cannot be generalized to other federal agencies.

GAO is not making recommendations in this report. GAO provided copies of the draft report to GPO and DOD for review and comment. GPO generally agreed with the findings and provided a letter and technical comments which were incorporated as appropriate. DOD did not provide comments.

View [GAO-13-636](#). For more information, contact Lorelei St. James at (202) 512-2834 or stjamesl@gao.gov

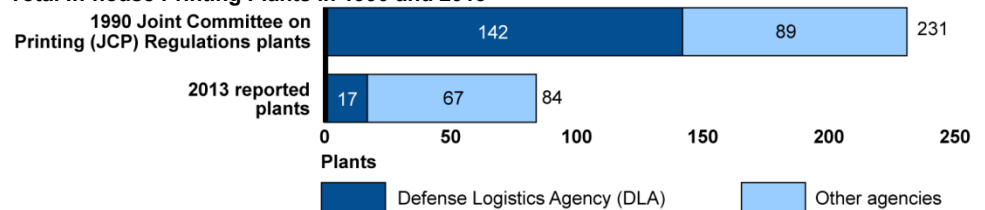
FEDERAL PRINTING

Fewer Plants Are in Operation Than in 1990, and Selected Agencies Reported Declining Volumes

What GAO Found

Agencies GAO surveyed reported operating fewer in-house printing plants than in 1990. Specifically, surveyed agencies reported operating 64 percent fewer plants than the number listed in the Congress's Joint Committee on Printing's (JCP) Government Printing and Binding Regulations, updated in 1990 (1990 JCP Regulations). The Department of Defense (DOD) accounted for the greatest decline in in-house printing plants. The 1990 JCP Regulations listed 142 DOD printing plants; however, the Defense Logistics Agency, which currently manages the majority of DOD's printing infrastructure, reported 17 in-house printing plants in GAO's survey. In addition, most agencies reported operating toner-based high-speed duplication machines, and fewer reported operating ink-based conventional printing presses. Of the 32 agencies operating in-house printing plants, 17 reported that all of their in-house printing was conducted on high-speed duplication machines; another 14 agencies reported operating some duplication equipment in addition to conventional printing presses (the remaining agency did not report its type of equipment). No agency reported having only ink-based conventional printing presses at its in-house plants. In addition, interviews with selected agencies showed declines in printing volumes and total spending, and suggested that agencies spent more on printing sent to the Government Printing Office (GPO) and its contracted private printers than on printing done at in-house printing plants.

Total In-house Printing Plants in 1990 and 2013



Source: GAO analysis of 1990 JCP Regulations and agency data.

Agencies' printing practices have changed, but existing authorities have not been updated. For example, in 1994, Title 44 of the U.S Code was updated to include "duplicating" in the definition of "printing," but the 1990 JCP Regulations do not include this definition. According to JCP staff, the Committee is aware that the 1990 JCP Regulations do not include duplicating in the definition of printing, and the Committee is working to revise the guidance. Also, the majority of government documents are now published digitally, but provisions in Title 44 that require agencies to submit documents to the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) do not reference digital publishing. Selected agencies GAO interviewed reported that they do not submit digital documents to FDLP. FDLP staff have taken a number of steps to address this, including educating agencies about FDLP requirements. In addition, the National Academy of Public Administration recently recommended that GPO develop a plan to preserve and collect government documents, and include a process for ingesting digitized copies into GPO's online government publications system, and GPO reported that it would incorporate this recommendation into its national plan for the future of the FDLP.