

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-781T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

NTIS was established by statute in 1950 to collect scientific and technical research reports, maintain a bibliographic record and repository of these reports, and disseminate them to the public. In addition, it provides various information-based services to other federal agencies. NTIS charges fees for its products and services and is required by law to be financially self-sustaining to the greatest extent possible.

GAO was asked to provide a statement summarizing its November 2012 report in which it examined (1) NTIS's operations; (2) the age of and demand for reports added to its repository; and (3) the extent to which these reports are readily available from other public sources. In preparing this statement, GAO relied primarily on its previously published work as well as related updates on actions needed to reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in the federal government.

What GAO Recommends

In its 2012 report, GAO suggested that Congress reassess the appropriateness and viability of the fee-based model under which NTIS operates to determine whether this model should be continued. While the Department of Commerce stated that it did not plan to propose any changes to NTIS's fee-based model, legislation recently introduced in Congress may provide a vehicle for reassessing this model.

View [GAO-14-781T](#). For more information, contact Valerie C. Melvin at (202) 512-6304 or melvinv@gao.gov.

July 23, 2014

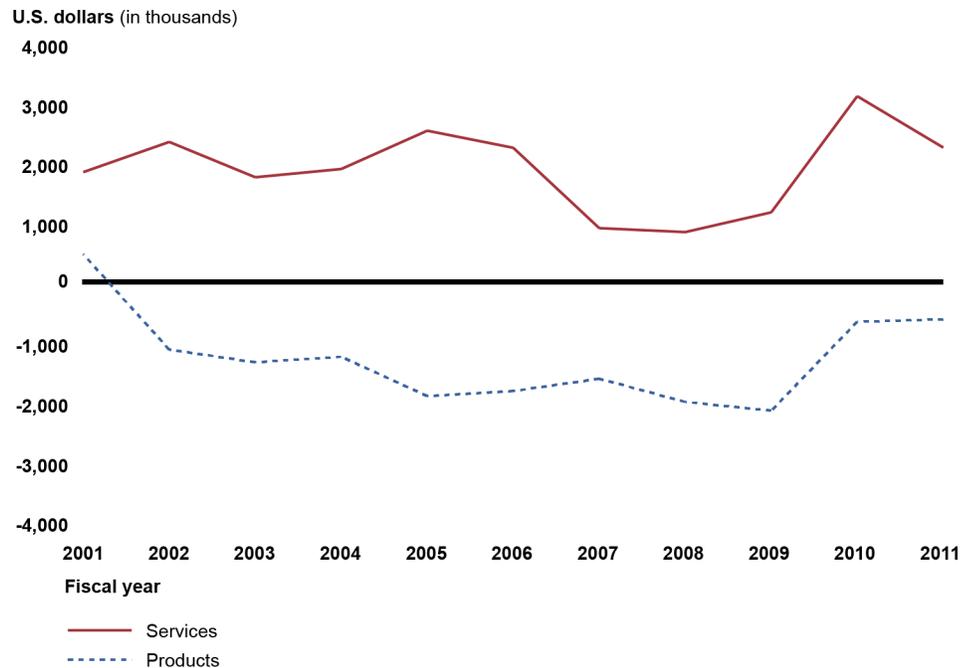
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The National Technical Information Service's Dissemination of Technical Reports Needs Attention

What GAO Found

The Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service (NTIS) offers a variety of products and information-related services. Its products include a repository of scientific, technical, engineering, and business research reports, which it makes available individually as well as through subscriptions to its reports library. However, from fiscal year 2001 through 2011, costs for NTIS's products exceeded revenue for 10 of the 11 fiscal years, and the agency was financially sustained during this period by services it offered to other federal agencies, such as distribution and order fulfillment and various web-based services. (See figure.)

Net Earned Revenues and Net Costs for National Technical Information Service's Products and Services, Fiscal Years 2001–2011



Source: GAO analysis based on NTIS provided data. | GAO 14-781T

In addition, about 62 percent of the reports added to NTIS's repository between 1990 and 2011 were older—with publications dates in the year 2000 or earlier, while about 38 percent were published from 2001 to 2011. However, demand was greater for more recent reports—those published in 2001 or later.

Further, GAO estimated that 74 percent of the reports added to NTIS's collection from fiscal year 1990 through 2011 were available elsewhere, and 95 percent of these were available for free. This calls into question the viability and appropriateness of NTIS's fee-based model for disseminating the reports it collects.