

Surplus Books Program Evaluation

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**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL
LIBRARY**
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MEMO

Date May 7, 2025
To Dr. Carla Hayden
Librarian of Congress
From Kimberly F. Benoit
Inspector General
Subject Final Evaluation Report – *Surplus Books Program Evaluation*, Report No. 2024-SP-104

This transmits the final report for the Office of the Inspector General’s evaluation of the Library of Congress (Library) Surplus Books Program.

Based on management’s written response to the draft report, we consider all the recommendations resolved. Your response to the draft report provided an action plan and timeline for the implementation of each recommendation, in accordance with Library of Congress Regulations 9-160, *Rights and Responsibilities of Library Employees to the Inspector General*, §6.A.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies extended by Discovery & Preservation Services, Acquisitions, Fiscal & Overseas Support Division, and the Surplus Books Program.

cc Deputy Librarian for Library Collections and Services
Associate Librarian for Discovery & Preservation Services
General Counsel

Summary

The Library's Surplus Books Program (SBP) redistributes excess books and other materials to eligible organizations and institutions across the United States.

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) initiated this evaluation to determine whether SBP has (1) clear, measurable objectives, (2) results that achieve program objectives, and (3) comprehensive policies and procedures necessary to effectively implement the program.

What the Evaluation Found

SBP is Fulfilling Its Purpose, However Specific Program Objectives Should Be Developed

SBP has a clearly stated purpose, but not clearly stated objectives, making it unclear whether the program is achieving its intended results. Without clearly stated objectives, determining the extent to which SBP was distributing materials in line with Library expectations was challenging, such as whether the Library wanted to achieve greater participation among members of Congress or expand the number of schools, libraries, and nonprofits that received SBP materials.

SBP's Current Inventory Practices Pose Continuity Challenges

SBP's *Policies and Procedures Manual* (manual) includes procedures necessary to implement the program but does not adequately define what should be included in SBP's inventory during the normal course of business. The lack of sufficient documentation on what should be included in the SBP inventory puts the SBP at risk of not fulfilling the program's purpose to its full potential. Without a clear definition of SBP inventory, potential participants may not have a complete understanding of how the program could benefit their

organizations. Further, the Library's dependence on the head of SBP for knowledge of SBP's inventory management practices poses succession challenges in the event of a personnel change.

Recommendations

We made two recommendations: (1) reassess the Library's expectations for SBP and establish and document objectives to achieve such expectations, and (2) update the SBP manual to include guidance on inventory management practices.

Management Comments

We provided a draft to management and the Library concurred with the report's recommendations. We consider the Library's comments generally responsive and the recommendations will be closed upon completion and verification of the proposed actions.

Appendix B contains Library's management response in its entirety.

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Background

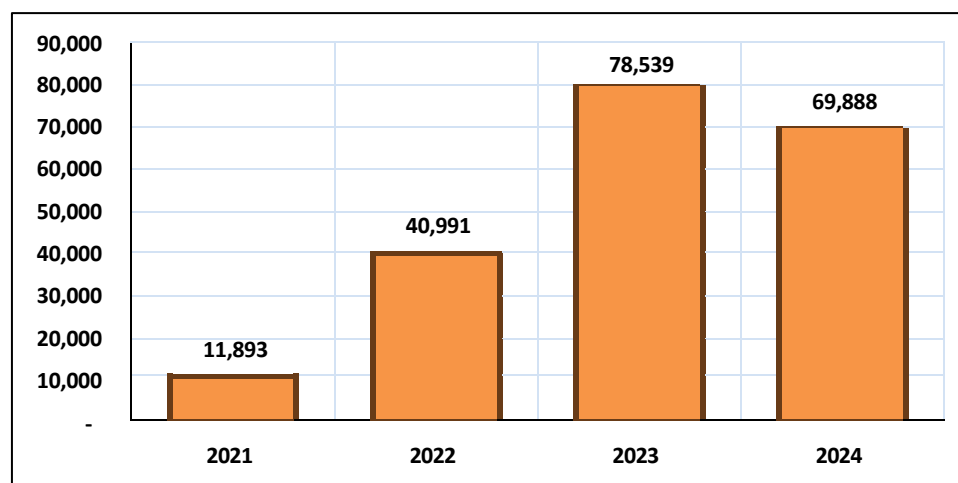
The Library’s Surplus Books Program (SBP) redistributes excess books and other library materials that are not needed for the Library’s collections to eligible organizations and institutions across the United States. SBP is located organizationally within Acquisitions, Fiscal & Overseas Support (AFOS) division within Acquisitions & Bibliographic Access (ABA) directorate under Discovery & Preservation Services (DPS) in Library Collections and Services Group (LCSG) Service Unit.

The guiding principle and purpose of the program is to help build and enhance public print collections. By making surplus books available to educational and nonprofit entities, the program supports literacy, learning, and public access to knowledge while ensuring that excess books serve a meaningful purpose rather than going to waste.

SBP receives most of its materials from the United States Copyright Office. Other sources of materials include the Library’s gift and exchange program, and deaccessioned materials from the Library’s collections.

SBP distributes surplus materials directly to eligible organizations who select the materials in person at the Library. Some congressional offices may participate by facilitating access to surplus books for eligible organizations in their districts. From fiscal years (FYs) 2021 – 2024, SBP distributed approximately 200,000 books, with annual distribution ranging from 11,893 to 78,539 books. During this time, the program served approximately 400 unique participants. SBP’s distribution number was significantly lower than average in FY 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but returned to normal levels in FYs 2023 and 2024.

Figure 1 – Number of Surplus Materials Distributed (FYs 2021 – 2024)



Source: OIG analysis of SBP distribution data from FYs 2021 – 2024.

Currently, SBP operates on an annual budget of \$150,000 and consists of one full-time equivalent staff. The program receives assistance from technicians who are assigned on a rotational basis to help with day-to-day operations.

Findings

The objectives of our evaluation were to determine whether SBP has (1) clear, measurable objectives, (2) comprehensive policies and procedures necessary to effectively implement the program, and (3) results that achieve program objectives. The first finding below addresses the first and third objectives.

SBP Is Fulfilling Its Purpose, However Specific Program Objectives Should Be Developed

SBP has a clearly stated purpose, but not clearly stated objectives, making it unclear whether the program is achieving its intended results. SBP's purpose is to make excess Library of Congress materials available to educational institutions, public bodies, and other nonprofit tax-exempt organizations with libraries open to the public in the United States.¹ Based on our review, SBP was fulfilling this purpose. However, there were no stated objectives for the program, such as in SBP's *Policies and Procedures Manual* (manual), the LCSG and DPS directional plans, or elsewhere.^{2,3} This occurred because DPS management has not established SBP objectives and, if applicable, performance targets to track progress toward achieving objectives.

Establishing objectives would provide a framework for tracking program outcomes, identifying areas of improvement, and ensuring that the program operates in a manner that aligns with the Library's broader mission.⁴ We observed that SBP distributed materials on a first-come, first-served basis in unlimited quantities, which could reduce the availability and accessibility of SBP materials to members of Congress and participating institutions. Specifically, SBP did not have a clearly stated objective to inform members of Congress about the program to help ensure they knew surplus materials were potentially available for their constituents. The Library's Congressional Relations Office (CRO) currently informs congressional offices and their constituents about SBP during transitions between Congresses. According to

¹ *Surplus Books Program Policies and Procedures Manual*, May 2024. 36 CFR § 701.3 allows the Library to donate surplus and duplicate materials to educational institutions, public bodies, and nonprofit tax-exempt organizations in the United States.

² The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) created a framework for federal government strategic planning and performance reporting. Under GPRA, federal agencies are required to develop strategic plans that include a comprehensive mission statement, goals and objectives, and strategies to achieve goals and objectives. As a legislative branch agency, the Library is exempt from GPRA. However, Congress has expressed its expectation that legislative agencies will follow the spirit of GPRA. Pub. L. No. 103-62.

³ Directional plans are the basis for determining performance goals, targets, and strategic and operational risks at the Library.

⁴ The Library's mission, as stated in its strategic plan entitled, *A Library for All, the FY 2024-2028 Strategic Plan for the Library of Congress*, is to engage, inspire, and inform Congress and the American people with a universal and enduring source of knowledge and creativity.

CRO, CRO has referenced SBP in materials provided to new members of Congress. When members have questions, CRO provides them with a flyer, which is also available on SBP's website.

Without clearly stated objectives, determining the extent to which SBP was distributing materials in line with Library expectations was challenging, such as whether LCSG wanted to achieve greater participation among members of Congress or expand the number of schools, libraries, and nonprofits that received SBP materials.

As stated previously, SBP distributes materials on a first-come, first-served basis in unlimited quantities. One participant, for example, requested approximately 19,000 surplus materials. Additionally, we found that two members of Congress accounted for approximately 25% of the total distribution of SBP materials over the past four fiscal years.⁵ As a result, without clear objectives, we couldn't determine whether this was in line with the Library expectations.

Recommendations

We recommend the Library:

- 1) Reassess the Library's expectations for SBP and establish and document objectives to achieve such expectations.

SBP's Current Inventory Practices Pose Continuity Challenges

SBP distributes surplus materials to eligible participants. These are materials the Library does not need for its collections because they are either duplicate materials or fall outside the scope of Library collections. For example, when publishers send the Library multiple copies for their collection, the extra copies are sent to SBP. The Library eventually disposes of those materials not selected by any of SBP's participants. Books considered to be overlooked and too valuable to dispose may be held for longer periods of time.

SBP's manual included procedures necessary to implement the program but did not adequately define what should be included in SBP's inventory during the normal course of business. We observed books on shelves that had been in the inventory for a prolonged period and materials in the SBP storage area, where SBP patrons select materials that did not represent "books," including

⁵ Based on a review of SBP distribution statistics for FYs2021 – 2024.

posters and vinyl records (Figure 2 and 3). Additionally, we were informed during our fieldwork that SBP did not distribute electronic materials, which was not addressed in the SBP manual. We attributed this situation to the Library not defining what materials were appropriate for the SBP inventory in line with SBP's objectives in the SBP manual. SBP is dependent upon the personalized knowledge of the head of the SBP, the program's only consistent full-time equivalent, who exercised broad discretion in managing the inventory, to identify what materials were appropriate for SBP's inventory.⁶

Figure 2. Posters



Figure 3. Vinyl Records



Source: OIG pictures taken in the SBP area in September 2024.

The lack of sufficient documentation on what should be included in the SBP inventory puts the SBP at risk of not fulfilling the program's purpose to its full potential. Without a clear definition of SBP inventory, potential participants may not have a complete understanding of how the program could benefit their organization. Further, the Library's dependence on the head of SBP for knowledge of SBP's inventory management practices potentially poses succession challenges in the event of a personnel change.

Recommendations

We recommend the Library:

- 2) Update the SBP manual to include guidance on inventory management practices.

⁶ SBP is also supported by another full-time equivalent on a rotational basis. These technicians come from the Acquisitions, Fiscal, and Overseas Support Division.

Management Response and OIG Analysis

The Library concurred with the recommendations within this report but provided clarifications. The Library agreed to document programmatic objectives and stated that SBP staff will “efficiently and effectively distribute or dispose of items...” To determine whether SBP is efficient and effective will require the Library to measure performance against objectives which have not been established for the program. Establishing programmatic objectives would be a first step toward developing the capability to assess SBP performance.

We also recommended updating the SBP manual to include guidance on inventory management practices. The Library agreed and yet stated “the Program itself does not set the policy or control the flow of inventory into the Program” and “there is no measure to accurately determine the inflow of materials that are sent to the SBP...” Nevertheless, what we observed firsthand were materials that did not appear to belong. Determining what should or should not be part of SBP’s inventory will better inform recipients about how they can best benefit from the program.

Management’s full response can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of our evaluation were to determine whether SBP has (1) clear, measurable objectives, (2) comprehensive policies and procedures necessary to effectively implement the program, and (3) results that achieve program objectives.

To gain an understanding of the program, we conducted a review of applicable laws and regulations, reviewed a prior OIG report,⁷ reviewed FYs 2023-2024 DPS’s Directional Plan, FY 2023 Acquisitions, Fiscal, and Overseas Support Division’s (AFOS) Annual Report, SBP’s FY 2021-2023 Annual Report, and SBP’s Program Manual. We also interviewed key personnel from DPS, AFOS, SBP, and CRO.

We assessed the following Library of Congress Regulations (LCR) relevant to the evaluation’s objectives:

- LCR 1-610, *Planning and Organizational Performance Management*
- LCR 2-140, *Evaluations of Library Materials*
- LCR 2-230, *Exchanges*
- LCR 2-330, *Marking Ownership*
- LCR 2-620, *Passes and Stamps for Removing Materials from the Library*
- LCR 2-710, *Disposal of Surplus Collection Materials*
- LCR 9-1720, *Conduct in Official Positions*

We assessed the design, implementation, and/or operating effectiveness of internal controls as appropriate. As shown in Table 1 below, we utilized the Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* as part of this assessment and determined that several GAO components and principles of internal control were significant to the engagement. The issues we identified are discussed in the report’s findings.

Table 1. The Components and Principles Significant to the Evaluation Objectives
<p>Risk Assessment 6. Define objectives and risk tolerances.</p> <p>Control Activities 10. Design control activities.</p>

⁷ *Low Cost Enhancements Will Protect Surplus Collection Materials’ Movement to America’s Libraries*, Audit Report No. 2010-PA-106, September 2011.

Monitoring

16. Perform monitoring activities.

Source: GAO's *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-14-704G, September 2014.

To determine whether SBP had clear, measurable objectives and results that achieved program objectives (objectives one and three), we interviewed officials from DPS, AFOS, and SBP to gain an understanding of the program's goals and objectives. We also obtained and assessed relevant documents. We determined that the internal controls referenced in Table 1 above were significant, along with associated principles. These included that management should (1) define objectives clearly to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances, (2) design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks, and (3) establish and operate monitoring activities to monitor the internal control system and evaluate the results.⁸ We also reviewed SBP's FYs 2021–2024 surplus materials distribution and participant data to understand how the program was operating and gained an understanding of how SBP data were managed.

To determine whether SBP has comprehensive policies and procedures necessary to effectively implement the program (objective two), we reviewed and assessed SBP's manual, interviewed officials from AFOS and SBP to gain an understanding of how SBP inventory is recorded and managed. We determined that the control activities and monitoring components of internal controls were significant to this objective. This includes the underlying principles that management design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks. It also includes the principle that management establish and operate monitoring activities to monitor the internal control system and evaluate the result.

We initiated our evaluation in April 2024 and completed our fieldwork in December 2024. Our activities took place in the Library's Madison Building in Washington D.C. We conducted this evaluation in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation* (December 2020), issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) and with LCR 1-140, *Inspector General*. CIGIE's standards require that we obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained provides such a reasonable basis.

⁸ According to the GAO *Standards*, Principle 6, management should define objectives clearly to enable the identification of risks and define risk tolerances. According to attribute 6.04, management defines objectives in measurable terms so that performance toward achieving those objectives can be assessed. Principle 10, states that management should design control activities to achieve objectives and respond to risks and Principle 16, states that management should establish and operate monitoring activities to monitor the internal control system and evaluate the results.

Appendix B: Management Response



Office of the Librarian

MEMORANDUM

DATE April 29, 2025
TO Kimberly Benoit, Inspector General
FROM Robert R. Newlen, Interim Principal Deputy Librarian of Congress *Robert R. Newlen*
SUBJECT Response to draft report 2024-SP-104 – Surplus Books Program Evaluation

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) report on the Surplus Books Program. The Library concurs with the recommendations and, after an internal review of the program, will update guidance documents as necessary.

The Surplus Books Program redistributes excess materials that the Library has determined not to include in its collections. The program and the inventory itself is a byproduct of the Library's implementation of other existing policies, such as Collection Policy Committee determinations and copyright considerations. Accordingly, the program does not fit within or seek to achieve the Library's overarching strategic objectives. Rather, the program executes the Library's disposal authorities in an efficient and economical manner as aligned with Congressional interest.

While we appreciate the OIG's observations that the program may benefit from clarification of its objectives and practices and agree to review the program and consider points raised during the evaluation, we do not believe there is value in establishing or tracking program outcomes or alignment with specific Library goals. For example, the Surplus Books Program Policies and Procedures Manual is a document for internal use that provides baseline procedures around practical management of inventory, such as sections related to bay management and sorting of materials. Thus, the Surplus Books Program policies and procedures are not intended to impose control over the flow of inventory into the program nor apply resource-intensive or itemized tracking of outflow given that by definition the inventory is not qualified to be a part of the Library's collections. However, upon completion of the Library's review, we will refine applicable documentation to facilitate continued implementation of the program in accordance with the purpose to efficiently and effectively distribute or dispose of items not selected for or withdrawn from the collection but may have value elsewhere.

cc: Robin Dale, Associate Librarian for Library Collections and Services Group
Katherine Zwaard, Associate Librarian for Discovery and Preservation
Services
Meg Williams, General Counsel

Management Comments on Draft OIG Report No. 2024-SP-104				
Surplus Books Program Evaluation				
Rec#	Recommendation	Resp. Office	Comments	Target completion
1	Reassess the Library's expectations for the SBP and establish and document objectives to achieve such expectations.	LCSG/ DPS/A BA/AF OS	<p>Library Collections & Services Group agrees, but provides the following clarification.</p> <p>The Surplus Books Program (SBP) is not a desired strategic program implemented by Library Collections & Services Group. The SBP does not fit within the Library's strategic goals primarily because it deals with materials that are technically not Library resources at the point when they are considered to be a part of SBP. These are materials that are not selected for the Library collection; LCSG merely leverages the Program as a means of disposing of or redirecting valuable materials that the Library does not need or want.</p> <p>The goal is to fulfill the program mandate within disposal laws and parameters Congress requests. The staff within SBP efficiently and effectively distribute or dispose of items not selected for or withdrawn from the collection so that their value can be used elsewhere. Upon a review of the SBP, the Library will document additional objectives and expectations as necessary.</p>	FY25 Q4
2	Update the SBP manual to include guidance on inventory management practices.	LCSG/ DPS/A BA/AF OS	<p>Library Collections & Services Group agrees, but provides the following clarification of the inventory control and monitoring measures for the Surplus Books Program (SBP).</p> <p>The SBP Policies and Procedures Manual is an internally used document. It already provides some baseline procedures around managing inventory through sections, such as the ones related to buy management and sorting of materials. The SBP inventory largely depends on implementation of policies that exist elsewhere such as the Collection Policy Committee, the Library's copyright policies, etc., and guided by LCR 2-710. Since the Program itself does not set the policy or control the flow of inventory into the Program, there is no measure to accurately determine the inflow of materials that are sent to the SBP because they are not qualified to be a part of the Library's collections. Also, LCSG does not prioritize certain groups or libraries, or change how materials are distributed. LCSG will determine if there are additional updates that might be relevant for inventory management within the Surplus Books Program Policies and Procedures Manual.</p>	FY25 Q4