

U.S. Government Printing Office Raises Program Awareness and Increases Publication Sales Through Creative Promotion

Since its inception in 1861, the United States Government Printing Office (GPO) has provided Congress, the courts, and government agencies with a set of centralized services that enables them to produce printed federal government documents easily and cost effectively. In addition, GPO offers these publications for sale to the general public through the GPO Sales Program, and also makes publications available at no charge through its Federal Depository Library Program. Critical to its core mission of “Keeping America Informed,” GPO implemented GovDelivery’s Email and Digital Subscription Management solution to expand program awareness and reach a larger audience.



“There was a strong correlation between the rounds in which email reminders were sent to the subscriber list and the number of votes received. It was gratifying to note that the number of votes increased for successive rounds, indicating that excitement and participation...grew as the promotion progressed.”

- Jeffrey Turner, Director of Sales & Marketing, Publication & Information Sales, GPO

Situation

The [U.S. Government Printing Office](#) is the single authoritative source on all federal government publications. GPO estimates that as many as 50% of all U.S. government documents are now born digital; as fewer publications are physically printed and bound, GPO has had to refocus its vision for the future. While GPO’s mission remains essentially the same, the introduction of digital technology has changed the way the agency meets the needs of the federal government and consumers of government information. As more publications move online, so should the services and processes for obtaining publications.

GPO markets to a diverse nationwide network of customers. Many U.S. organizations, including libraries, government agencies, businesses, and law firms purchase government information as a reference or guidance tool for the workplace. Citizens may also purchase federal government publications through the U.S. Government Online Bookstore (www.bookstore.gpo.gov). Military history publications, National Park Service books, and Senate art publications are among those that appeal most to this market.

Given that GPO has many types of customers in different markets, most promotions feature titles targeted to specific market niches. Broader-based promotions, featuring a wide variety of titles, are used to heighten general awareness of publications. The objectives of sales promotions include increasing program awareness and site traffic, delivering federal informational products and services from a digital platform, and offsetting the ‘stodgy’ image of government publications.

GPO created the “Sweet 16” promotion based on NCAA basketball’s “March Madness.” The format was similar to an NCAA tournament bracket; 16 titles competed “head to head” in a single elimination contest. The winners of the first round, based on participant votes, advanced to the “Elite 8” round, through the “Federal Final Four” round,

and so on, until a champion was chosen. To build excitement, participants were given an incentive; the top two finalist titles would have their selling prices reduced by 50% for 30 days following the selection of the winner.



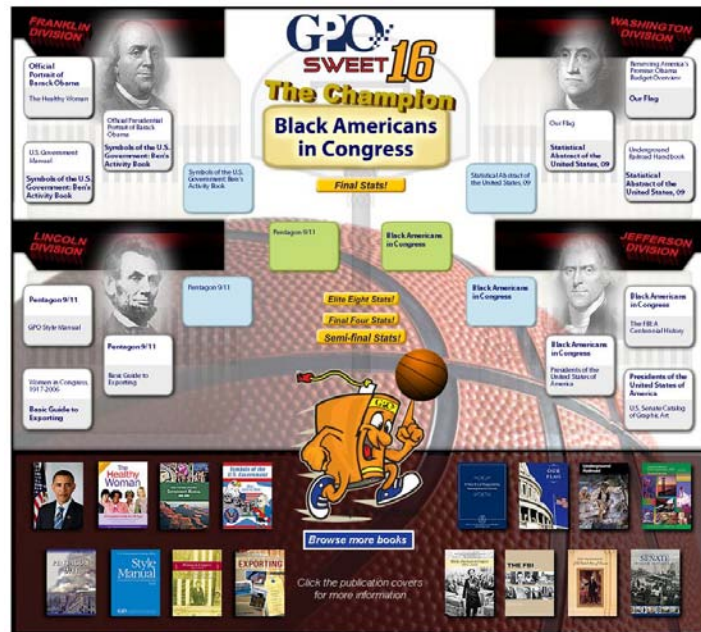
GPO RESULTS

Since launching GovDelivery in February 2009 GPO has:

- Sent more than **2.5 million** emails to subscribers.
- Signed up more than **82,000** subscribers.
- Incorporated subscription items on **110+ unique** topics.

“Sweet 16” RESULTS

- **More than 139,000** votes were received during the 11 day promotion.
- Rounds with email reminders garnered on average **4.68 times more** votes than the round without.
- Sales of the winning title **increased by 231%**.



Solution

GPO needed to effectively introduce the promotion to the public in order to increase awareness and participation. Email was chosen as the primary communication channel to keep costs down, provide a broader reach, and communicate quickly as the rounds progressed. In February 2009, the U.S. Government Bookstore launched GovDelivery Email and Digital Subscription Management (EDSM), becoming one of many government agencies using GovDelivery for proactive communication with the public and its stakeholders. GPO Bookstore is unique because in addition to its goals of improving communication and increasing awareness, the agency must operate on a cost recovery basis and bring in sales.

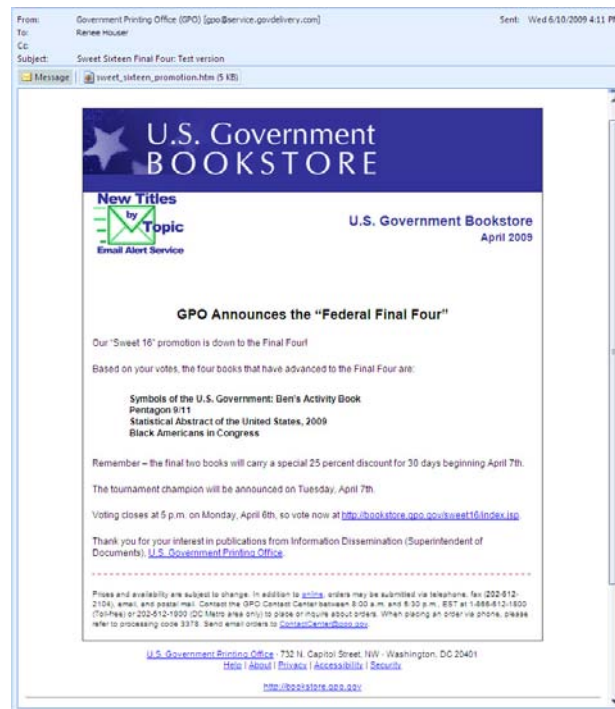
After launching GovDelivery, the U.S. Government Bookstore was able to communicate with its stakeholders on more than 110 unique opt-in topics, compared to 12 previously. Additionally, the Bookstore leveraged GovDelivery's Collaboration Network to further increase its reach. The GovDelivery Collaboration Network allows government agencies to link up with other agencies to cross-promote content, making informational topics available to subscribers of partner agencies during the signup process. By partnering with the [IRS](#), [EPA](#), [DOL](#), [USA.gov](#), [FBI](#), [NASA](#), and others, the Government Printing Office is able to reach a larger audience than ever before!

During the “Sweet 16” promotion, email notifications inviting people to come to the GPO Online Bookstore to cast their votes were sent to recipients who had subscribed to receive notifications of new federal government publication titles. During the planning phase it was decided that results would be measured by counting the number of votes received on the U.S. Government Bookstore website. A secondary success indicator would be customer, government agency and media feedback from the promotion.



“Sales of the winning title, “Black Americans in Congress,” increased by 231% during the promotional period (compared to the previous 3 months average).”

- Jeffrey Turner, Director of Sales & Marketing, Publication & Information Sales, GPO



Results

More than 139,000 votes were received during the 11 day promotion. The top vote-getter, [Black Americans in Congress](#), received 62,225 votes. The other finalist, [Pentagon 9/11](#), received 23,169 votes.

There was a strong correlation between the rounds in which email reminders were sent to the subscriber list and the number of votes received. Email reminders were sent for the Sweet 16, Final Four and Finals rounds. These rounds received 35,018 votes, 44,036 votes, and 51,264 votes respectively. The Elite 8 round (for which no email was sent) garnered only 9,260 votes, demonstrating a nearly 79% drop-off in voting from the previous round. This indicated to GPO that email reminders were needed at each stage to sustain and build excitement.

Qualitative feedback on the promotion was especially positive. GPO received kudos from representatives of the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Defense, among others. *The New York Times* “Economix” business blog reacted to the promotion the day it was

launched, informing readers of the GPO “Sweet 16” promotion, and providing a link to the GPO Online Bookstore. The blog also mentioned four of the titles included in the promotion.

The “Sweet 16” promotion was a huge success relating to title sales too. Sales of the winning title, *Black Americans in Congress*, increased by 231% during the 4-week promotional period, compared to the previous 3 months average.

Since launching GovDelivery, in February 2009, GPO has collaborated with 20 other Federal agencies to enhance communication efforts, thereby increasing subscribers by over 38% and subscriptions by 680%!

To receive GPO's free email updates, go to www.gpo.gov or www.bookstore.gpo.gov for information on the most recent federal government publications.

GovDelivery is the world's leading provider of government-to-citizen communication solutions. GovDelivery's Email and Digital Subscription Management solution is a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform that provides organizations a fully-automated, on-demand public communication system.

Sources:

U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), “A Strategic Vision for the 21st Century.”
<http://www.gpo.gov/pdfs/congressional/04strategicplan.pdf> (accessed June 8, 2009).

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