



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Technical Information Service**  
5301 Shawnee Road  
Alexandria, VA 22312

September 9, 2014

The Honorable Claire McCaskill, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

Thank you for your letter of August 1, 2014 requesting information about the National Technical Information Service (NTIS, or, the Service) and its operations.

The NTIS mission is to promote American innovation and economic growth by serving as the federal government's central means of collecting and widely disseminating scientific, technical and engineering information to the public and industry, and by providing innovative information management solutions to assist other federal agencies in managing and disseminating information to their users and constituencies. The Service carries out its mission on a cost-recovery basis, and does not receive an annual funding appropriation from the Congress.

The Service has unique statutory authorities to serve the public and industry, including establishing and maintaining an information clearing house; implementing new methods and media for ensuring official federal science information access; entering into cooperative agreements and public-private joint ventures and other transactions to foster the dissemination of information to the public.

All federal agencies are required to transfer to the Service all unclassified scientific, technical, and engineering information that results from research and other activities funded by the government. This ensures permanent public access to federal technical reports, since federal agencies are not required to make these reports permanently available to the public. That permanent repository function is the responsibility of the Service. No other federal agency has the statutory authorities accorded to the Service to perform these critical functions for the public and other federal agencies.

In fulfilling that congressional mandate, the Service has become the largest supplier of federal technical and science research reports (commonly known as "gray literature") that are not commercially published and are not generally accessible to the public. As a result, the Service has assumed a major role in the preservation and dissemination of this valuable reservoir of federal scientific and technical knowledge. NTIS's role as a permanent repository is as critical today, in the Internet age, as it has ever been.

NTIS has embraced calls for change from you and others in Congress, and has significantly adjusted its model as it provides the American public with an open environment for accessing federal science content. Steps already taken include:

- NTIS developed the Public Access National Technical Reports Library (NTRL) service to allow the American public to have free and open access to NTIS electronic technical reports, associated biographic records, other selected research services, and linkage to report data. The beta version of this service was released July 23, 2014, and the full program is anticipated to be launched in October, 2014.
- NTIS features on its website that each of the technical reports and documents in its repository may be available online for free either from the issuing federal agency, GPO, or through search engines. The Service's website also advises the public of free ways to receive a report before processing a purchase for a technical report.
- NTIS is working with other federal agencies to facilitate the collection and dissemination of federal science and technical information by providing enhanced information management and repository services to federal scientific content developers. NTIS, under its Federal Science and Repository Service (FSRS), will be a center of excellence for expertise and capabilities in assisting federal agencies in making the data associated with their scientific and technical reports available for public use in accordance with the Administration's Open Access and Open Data Policy, and the Department of Commerce Data Strategic Goal.
- NTIS has applied for FedRAMP Certification and will submit NTIS shared services for inclusion on Uncle Sam's List.

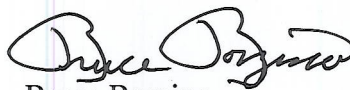
The Service performs valuable and unique functions for other federal agencies and the public, notable examples of which include:

- Access to the Death Master File (DMF), a Social Security Administration (SSA) dataset used by insurance and annuity companies to ensure that death benefits and annuities go to the right people, and by financial institutions to prevent fraud. Many states require in statute that insurance companies utilize the DMF for purposes of determining annuities. Without NTIS, there would be no viable alternative to providing this critical service.
- Controlled access to Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) data, supporting the DEA Controlled Substances Act (CSA). This NTIS System Registrants Database enables HMOs, physicians and health practitioners, insurers, pharmaceutical and medical services firms, and others to prescribe and handle controlled substances.

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The Service's responses to the questions in your letter are enclosed, and I would be happy to discuss any of these further with you or your staff. Please contact Jim Schufreider, Director of Congressional and Legislative Affairs for the National Institute of Standards and Technology at 301-975-5675, should you wish additional information or have further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Borzino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" and last name "Borzino" clearly distinguishable.

Bruce Borzino  
Director

Encls.

Responses to Chairman Claire McCaskill's August 1, 2014, Request for Information about National Technical Information Service's Business Operations

- (1) **Whether NTIS charges for a subscription to the information provided for free on the Wage Determinations Online site ([www.wdol.gov](http://www.wdol.gov));**

Access to and use of the information provided by the Wage Determinations Online site (WDOL.gov) is free.

Separately (not as part of the WDOL.gov site), the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) has offered a subscription service to the complete Wage Determination "raw data file" that provides additional capability and functionality not available through the free WDOL.gov website. The WDOL.gov website offers a "wizard" process, whereby a user is led through a logic model to discover the proper Wage Determination for a single query. The WDOL.gov website only allows one Wage Determination query at a time, and cannot be used for batch inquiries. The NTIS "raw data file" service permits access to the entire data file (without the "wizard" process) to allow for batch processing of multiple queries concurrently. The subscription service consists of a large data file that is pushed to a subscriber's server with updates and corrections.

Currently, there is one non-Federal subscriber to the NTIS Wage Determination subscription service (and no Federal subscribers).

A major WDOL.gov program milestone in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 was to complete development and testing of XML services that will provide users the option of downloading official wage determinations to allow for batch processing free of charge from the WDOL.gov website. NTIS is currently developing this capability. When this XML capability is released (expected in First Quarter, FY 2015), the raw data file service will no longer be necessary, and NTIS will discontinue it.

- (2) **If NTIS does charge for the subscription to the information provided on the Wage Determinations Online site, a list of agencies that have paid for this subscription and the total amount paid to date for the subscription broken out by agency;**

See response to Question 1 above.

- (3) **The amount that the Department of Labor is charged on a monthly or yearly basis by NTIS to host the Wage Determinations Online site, including the total amount charged by NTIS to date, and the year NTIS began hosting the website;**

The WDOL.gov program is a collaborative effort of the Office of Management and Budget, Department of Labor, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, General Services Administration, and the Department of Commerce. The program was initiated during the Administration of President George W. Bush as part of that Administration's E-Government initiative as authorized by H.R. 2458, the E-Government Act of 2002

(P.L. 107-347). NTIS receives all funding to develop, operate and maintain the WDOL.gov website from the General Services Administration (GSA) Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE) program office. NTIS and the GSA IAE established an interagency agreement in July, 2003, for the development, operation and maintenance of a single government-wide site for access to Department of Labor wage determinations. On an annual basis, the GSA IAE and NTIS enter into an interagency agreement for the continued development, hosting, operations and maintenance of the WDOL.gov website.

Attachment 1, WDOL.gov Funding by Fiscal Year, provides a complete breakout of the annual and total funding that GSA IAE has provided to NTIS over the life of the WDOL.gov program.

**(4) An explanation for why NTIS does not provide "fugitive reports" to the Government Printing Office (GPO) for dissemination through the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP);**

The furnishing of publications to the Superintendent of Documents is the responsibility of the "issuing component" agency (44 U.S.C. 1902). With rare exceptions, NTIS is not an "issuing component," that is, NTIS does not itself create publications and, as such, NTIS does not fall within the scope of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP).

**(5) An explanation of the business relationship that NTIS currently has with GPO and any memoranda of understanding between the two agencies to facilitate the sharing of reports, including dissemination to FDLP. Please include an explanation of the materials provided and procedures followed by NTIS for compliance with 15 U.S.C. 3704b (e) (3), which requires NTIS to make "selected bibliographic information products available in a timely manner to depository libraries";**

Over many years, NTIS has worked cooperatively with the GPO FDLP, the GPO Sales Program, and the GPO Printing Plant. One of the highlights of the cooperative agreements with FDLP was the Depository Access to Reports, Technical & Scientific (DARTS) Program. NTIS and the GPO conducted the DARTS pilot project for multiple years, that provided the FDLP with full bibliographic records for 240,000 publications from 1964 - 2000 and the ability to download the electronic documents for which links were available. As more bibliographic information became available freely on the NTIS Website and from other sources, NTIS and GPO discontinued the DARTS program.

NTIS and GPO have also cooperated by ensuring that publications such as the cooperatively published North American Industry Classification System Manual and discontinued Export Administrative Regulations remained accessible in the FDLP and the Sales Program. NTIS currently has an interagency agreement with the GPO Printing Plant to fulfill NTIS's short-run printing needs.

NTIS bibliographic information on all technical documents has been freely available to depository libraries and the general public since 2004 on the NTIS.gov website, in accordance with 15 U.S.C. 3704b(e)(3).

**(6) A date by when NTIS will update its website to include a larger notice of the availability of free reports elsewhere on the internet;**

The larger notice of the availability of free reports elsewhere on the Internet was completed on July 30, 2014.

**(7) A date by when NTIS will release its database to the public using its new free public access model;**

NTIS has two goals with the forthcoming release of its Public Access version of the National Technical Reports Library (NTRL):

1. Significantly increase use and re-use of federally funded research; and
2. Significantly increase the digital availability of NTIS's collection of federally funded technical reports via digital-on-demand service.

NTIS released to the public a pilot version of the NTRL Public Access on July 23, 2014. With simple registration, users of the pilot version can freely access the entire NTIS collection of approximately 2.8 million bibliographic links to federally funded research. Included in this access are over 800,000 full-text (PDF) electronic reports.

On October 1, 2014, NTIS will release the full version of the NTRL Public Access. Registered users in the U.S. will have free access to the NTRL. Registered users outside the United States will be able to subscribe. NTIS will also be introducing premium individual, institutional and corporate subscription services to NTRL for both domestic and foreign users.

**(8) The amount charged to the Department of Commerce for each year from 2003 to 2013 for reports on the NTIS site;**

The following table provides the total funding by fiscal year for technical reports purchased by bureaus within the Department of Commerce:

Fiscal Year 2009	\$4,184
Fiscal Year 2010	\$4,006
Fiscal Year 2011	\$3,025
Fiscal Year 2012	\$2,217
Fiscal Year 2013	\$2,975

- (9) A list of all agreements between NTIS and other federal agencies where NTIS provides any type of customer support or customer service to the other agencies, the specific nature of NTIS 's services, and the total revenues of each joint venture;**

See Attachment 2: List of NTIS Federal Agency Agreements (Including Joint Ventures). Note that Attachment 2 contains information that may concern business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information, and may be subject to exemption from release under the Freedom of Information Act.

- (10) A list of services that NTIS provides to other federal agencies through NTIS's joint ventures or public-private partnerships that NTIS believes cannot be obtained by any other means;**

Federal agencies approaching NTIS for services are often faced with a partially defined problem with limited time and resources to deploy a solution. NTIS quickly and efficiently focuses industry and government resources to help the agency fully define the problem and propose solutions. This methodology recognizes that the requesting agency may not have the background to fully describe the requirements or the possible solutions. Information dissemination is often a supportive or collaborative function to an agency's mission, whereas NTIS's core mission is information distribution. By including industry as a partner, a wide variety of alternatives can be developed, presented, and considered prior to executing the project. This process is intensely collaborative, involving the requesting agency, NTIS, and joint venture partner(s). An NTIS project typically executes from start to deployment in weeks, versus months. This collaborative definition phase may run concurrently with pilot projects, technology demonstrations, or accelerated project startups that are not typically available in traditional Federal Acquisition Regulations procurements. The three examples that follow illustrate the process and the value of the process.

In 2002, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) asked the General Services Administration (GSA) to use the Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE) to create a system that would issue Wage Determinations to federal agencies writing contracts under the Davis-Bacon Act and the Services Contract Act. The IAE had six months to discover what the system might look like, to define the functionality of the system, and to develop the multi-agency support required by the concept. The IAE came to NTIS to develop and deliver a government-wide electronic solution within six months because NTIS had a private partner with Wage Determination experience and NTIS had a relationship with the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division. With IAE as a client and OMB an interested participant, NTIS created a project team that included members from several agencies, including the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Department of Health and Human Services, and others. The requirements definition, development, testing, training, and deployment were all blended activities as the client, participating federal agencies and the joint venture partner engaged in a collaborative, active, hands-on approach to each phase. Using the expertise of the partner in harmonizing the extensive dataset and the disparate requirements of all the agencies, a wizard-based system was developed, tested, and by

consensus deployed as an open, shared service for all contracting entities requiring Wage Determinations.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) approached NTIS with a business problem: provide assistive media to citizens with vision impairment so that the citizens would have access to their SSA statements. This court-ordered requirement became the SSA Special Notice (SNO) project. SSA had four months to define the problem and deploy a system that would meet the court-ordered schedule and avoid SSA being in contempt of the court's order. Through its talent management relationships, NTIS had industry and government expertise in assistive technology, and created an integrated project team that included SSA, NTIS, and joint venture partner subject matter experts. In a highly collaborative environment, NTIS developed and deployed a very secure system that converted raw SSA data into Braille, large print, or audio files. The phases of the project were very evolutionary and required constant modification to systems and processes. Neither NTIS or the joint venture partners, nor SSA had previously created a responsive system such as SNO. Given the court deadline and mandated need, requirements were adjusted, work was fine-tuned, systems were changed, and the collaborative development process ensured that the court mandate was successfully met.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided the USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) with \$7.2 billion with the objective of expanding access to broadband services in the United States. The funds were to be distributed through grants made by RUS and NTIA from public applications, and the timing to go live to the public was very compressed. NTIS was approached because it had the assets and the technical and programmatic infrastructure to stand up the program quickly. During the definition phase with RUS and NTIA, NTIS worked with a joint venture partner that maintained a grants management application. NTIS and the partner tailored the application, tested the functionality and security, and deployed the "Easy Grants" Broadband system within 30 days of initial notice of the requirement. The system was deployed on time, was extraordinarily complex, and met the very high public demand for access.

As these examples illustrate, the joint venture programmatic authority that Congress granted to NTIS has greatly benefited the Executive Branch and the American public.

- (11) A breakout of the costs of each joint venture from 2009 to 2013, including the fee charged by NTIS to the serviced federal agencies, the total amount charged to NTIS labor, and the amount paid to each "partnering" contractor for services in the joint venture;**

See Attachment 2: List of NTIS Federal Agency Agreements (Including Joint Ventures). Note that Attachment 2 contains information that may concern business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information, and may be subject to exemption from release under the Freedom of Information Act.



**(12) A copy of each joint venture agreement file from 2009 to 2013;**

See enclosed CD: NTIS Joint Venture Partner Agreements. Note that the CD contains information that may concern business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information, and may be subject to exemption from release under the Freedom of Information Act.

**(13) An explanation of how NTIS monitors its library to ensure that reports are exclusively scientific, technical and engineering information, and how the NTIS ensures that reports from private sector organizations are not included in the repository.**

The acquisition process is defined collaboratively with the major source agencies: Department of Defense; Department of Energy; Environmental Protection Agency; NASA; and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Additionally, NTIS provides to the public a content management standards guide entitled, *Search Guide for the NTIS Database*. This guide can be found on the NTIS website: <http://www.ntis.gov/pdf/dbguid.pdf>. In May of 2014, NTIS technical information specialists reviewed and validated the current acquisition guidelines for scientific, technical and engineering information. Concerning “reports from private sector” organizations, NTIS is authorized to collect such reports, and in that regard, there are two major sources: technical reports; and journal articles. NTIS collects technical reports that are the result of federally funded research, but for which the reports are published by a private laboratory or organization. NTIS does not independently collect references to private sector journal articles unless those articles are supplied to NTIS by the source agencies (e.g., NASA) via cooperative agreements with the publisher.