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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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AUG 16 1973



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The Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson III
c/ United States Senate

F Dear Senator Stevenson:

Your letter of January 11, 1973, with attached correspondence from Mr. Donald P. Mullally requested us to determine (1) the number of orders shipped from the Government Printing Office (GPO) within 10 days after receipt and (2) the number of orders which require further correspondence or letters of inquiry. 178

GPO's Office of Superintendent of Documents makes periodic tests to determine how long it takes to fill orders. These tests are performed since overall statistics on this matter are not maintained. The following table shows the test results.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Orders sampled</u>	<u>Average days to fill order</u>
July to September 1972	762	39
October to December 1972	2,488	38
January to March 1973	4,395	26

We conducted our own tests of how long it takes to fill an order. We randomly selected items which were packaged and ready for mailing to customers. From information on the orders for the items, we computed the total days elapsed since receipt, as follows.

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<u>Date of sample</u>	<u>Orders sampled</u>	<u>Orders filled within 10 days</u>	<u>Range of days for remaining orders</u>	<u>Average days to fill order</u>
5-23-73	106	37	35 to 75	35.1
6- 7-73	276	54	11 to 69	29.3
6-11-73	<u>128</u>	<u>1</u>	11 to 65	29.4
Total	<u>510</u>	<u>92</u>		30.4

The Superintendent does not maintain data on orders requiring further correspondence or letters of inquiry. However, he does receive about 2,000 written complaints a day. GPO records show that about 39 percent of these complaints (the highest percentage for all types of complaints) concern nonreceipt of ordered publications. The number of repeat complaints totals about 8 percent.

At recent appropriation hearings the Superintendent stated that "* * * we have not been able to provide the service to all purchasers of Government publications that they have every right to expect and receive." He said some of the reasons for long delays include the plant's layout, the location of warehouses, and requested publications' being out of print.

The Superintendent is taking actions to improve the situation, including hiring additional personnel; increasing the number of shifts worked; and establishing a 21-day target for processing, packaging, and mailing orders.

Mr. Mullally's letter referred to the difficulty he was having in obtaining Federal Communications Commission reports from the Superintendent. We brought this to the attention of the Superintendent, who subsequently contacted Mr. Mullally and determined which reports had not been received. The Superintendent told us the missing items would be mailed immediately.

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As part of our continuing effort in the area of printing, we are examining the Superintendent's operations. Our objectives include identifying the major causes for delays in filling orders.

We trust that this information is responsive to your needs. As requested, we are returning Mr. Mullally's letter.

Sincerely yours,

'Deputy'

R.F.KELLER

Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure