NEWS: SAA will have a session in Chicago 'Documenting the U.S. Congress: A Magical Mystery Tour' The session will examine attempts by the federal government (Senate & House Historical Offices, NARA Legislative Office and Library of Congress), publishers of congressional indexes and repositories to control the apparent mayhem. A political historian will describe patterns of congressional documentation and their usefulness in doing research on the U.S. Congress. Cynthia Pease Miller of the House Historical Office will chair the session. Dick Baker of the Senate Historical Office will speak to the point of 'Chasing the Dragon: What are the Records of Congress.' Karyl Winn from the University of Washington will talk about the 'Gilded Shroud: Coping with Congressional Papers' and C. David Tompkins of Northeastern Illinois will detail 'Footprints in the Dust: Reconstructing Congressional Decisions from Existing Records.' The session is scheduled for Saturday, August 30th at 9am.

Connie Gallagher reports that our request to the SAA Council to become an Roundtable has been approved. Cheers!

Jim Harwood has a poster session at SAA in Chicago on a Guide to Senate Holdings that the National Archives is doing. It's their bicentennial project. The Guide itself is a very substantive report intended to reach a wide audience. It gives a description of holdings, printed resources and a guide to doing research for the non-traditional researcher.

Karen Paul is working on a Records Management Handbook for Senate Committees.

Ben Primer is shy and doesn't like to ask people to help with the bibliography so we all need to volunteer to help. Chances are if we could come up with a really good annotated bibliography we could actually get it published so that it would be widely accessible to all people working in the area of congressional papers. It would be a good idea to consider articles oriented to congressional staff as well as the traditional archives articles.

Jane Hershman responded to my note about little green and red dictaphone disks. Jane didn't have a recording machine come in with the Magnuson papers so she took them to their Music Department where they were able to listen to them on a standard turntable with a specially weighted stylus. The green disks took a SHURE stylus, size 3.0 x 1.0 (mils). "Other than adjusting the weight on the playing arm so that it would not skip over the grooves, he did not do anything else to the turntable. There are no exact instructions about adjusting the arm - just experiment....The disks are embossed and recorded laterally. If you do not have an automatic record cleaner, he suggested using a solution of photo-flo and water to clean the disks, mixed according to the directions on the label of the photo-flo...I found one of the larger red disks and asked John whether he could play it. He could not because it was recorded at 1/2 of the lowest speed on any of the turntables available in the Music Lab. The last suggestion John had if you wish to pursue this any further is to contact Tom Owen, Sound Engineer at the Rogers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound in New York City. He apparently knows something about these disks.
His address is 111 Amsterdam Avenue, NY, NY 10023; telephone 212-870-1609.

Margery Sly is participating in a session at SAA on Case files. Greg Bradsher will talk about FBI files and Eric Pumroy will talk about Welfare files. The session is scheduled for Saturday from 9-11am.

The Minnesota Historical Society has recently received the vice presidential papers of Minnesotan Walter F. Mondale. A total of 763 cubic feet of papers and 50 cubic feet of audiovisual materials arrived last month. The nearly 1100 cubic feet of Mondale’s senatorial files will be transferred from the federal records center in Suitland. They will join 152 boxes of papers dated 1960-1980 that were transferred previously as well as 195 boxes of Mondale-Ferraro Campaign Committee files. Contributions of some of Mondale’s associates will offset the costs of transferring his papers, and these same associates are engaged in efforts to raise sufficient additional funds to support processing and a published guide. The heightened stature of the vice presidential office under Carter/Mondale is reflected in a large and apparently well ordered body of central and subsidiary files, maintained by a vice presidential records office. As well as office operational, central subject, domestic policy, political/legal, personal/political, and various affiliated files, there is a large unit of Mrs. Mondale’s files, reflecting especially her interest in federal support of the arts and the acquisition of art works for the vice presidential mansion. Foreign policy files, the majority of which contain classified materials will remain in the custody of the National Archives until they and the companion Carter files are declassified.

PLEASE COMMENT: Address your responses to Lydia Lucas, Minnesota Historical Society. "Since the congressional collections standards statement changed somewhat, in both form and content, as a result of suggestions and questions raised by several of you, I thought I should circulate the revision for you all to see. I consider the standards statement to be still very much a draft, and still in search of a mission and a sponsor if it were to be validated for any profession-wide purpose. Frank recommends that we wait awhile to see whether NHPRC has specific interests or recommendations for revisions, spin-offs, or other follow-up. In the meantime, I will still collect any comments anyone might wish to make.

There is also the question of what sorts of more specialized standards, policy statements, or whatever might be useful adjuncts to a basic all purpose standards documents. George Vogt expressed interest in seeing a briefer standards checklist, perhaps accompanied by a rating system of some sort to help quantify or otherwise evaluate the relative importance of various factors. Mike McReynolds noted the need for some written criteria/guidelines for segregating Congress members personal papers from those that are really Congress’ official files, and generously offered to draft same. At this point, I’m just sitting back to await further developments, but do keep those cards and letters coming, and encourage your friends and acquaintances to do likewise."
STANDARDS FOR CONGRESSIONAL COLLECTIONS

Assessment of the "value" of any given Congress member’s papers is in large degree a subjective judgment that depends upon a number of variables. These include a repository’s ability and willingness to accommodate and service them, their physical and organizational status, their scope and completeness, the degree to which they duplicate other similar collections, the usefulness of electronically generated portions, the availability of complementary collections and secondary sources, and the archivist’s judgment regarding the richness and uniqueness of their content, both intrinsically and with relation to the member’s career and the operations of his/her office. Given the burgeoning quantities of congressional collections and the repetitiveness of many of their components, it is neither practical nor responsible for the archival community to attempt to preserve all such collections in their entirety, or to devote large amounts of public funds to their processing and preservation. The standards enumerated below provide benchmarks against which the enduring documentary and research values of a Congress member’s papers, or portions thereof, may be assessed.

Member’s Stature on the National or International Scene

- The member attained a position of power or influence within Congress, such as majority or minority leader or whip, caucus leader, or committee chairmanship.

- The member served for a long period of time on a particular committee or subcommittee, especially one of importance in relation to the issues of the day.

- The member served on special committees or task forces, chaired public hearings, participated in investigations, or otherwise was active or influential in current issues and events important to public policy or to the operations of Congress.

- The member cultivated expertise in one or more subject areas of substantial import to national public policy.

- The member was a Senator. Other qualities being equal, a Senator is likely to have enjoyed greater stature in policy matters and to have made contact with a broader spectrum of his/her home constituency than is a Representative.
The member served in Congress for a long period of time. Those who have attained seniority are more likely to have made important political or governmental connections, achieved status among their peers, and received important committee and other assignments, although this is by no means inevitable.

Either before or after serving in Congress, the member held other significant elective or appointive offices at the state or national level, or pursued a private career or interests that regularly thrust him/her into the arena of public concerns.

Member’s Relationships with Constituency

The member hailed from a geographical area or responded to a community of interests that are not adequately represented by other members or their extant papers during the same time period.

The member had close ties with other individuals or organizations active on the public scene, especially in his/her own state. Such relationships are especially pertinent if these associates have generated complementary papers that are, or are likely to be, placed in a public research institution.

The member was closely identified with a particular political or social philosophy, interest group(s), or issue(s).

Content Quality of the Collection

This may be a difficult attribute to confirm in the early stages of inspecting or accessioning the papers, and will always be to some extent a matter of subjective judgment. Nevertheless, an examination of the collection’s structure and file titles will generally reveal the extent to which the factors enumerated below apply. The archivist can best assess content quality and make preliminary judgments regarding which portions of the collection exemplify the Congress member’s role in the governing process if he/she is given the opportunity to survey all extant files at one time, regardless of their origin or medium.

The files offer a comprehensive view of the operations of the Congress member’s office and its interactions with the constituency, as evidenced by a full range of files and file types. Common file types, not all of which the archivist will wish to preserve in their entirety, include departmental, committee, general/subject, legislative/bill, press/public relations, constituent services, issues/
constituent correspondence, alpha/control, and invitations/schedules/speeches.

- The collection includes ancillary files that flesh out the office operations and the member's activities, such as files of principal staff aides, political and/or campaign files, and "personal" files.

- The collection reflects those aspects of a Congress member's career and political relationships that are unique to him/her.

- The collection includes substantive documentation of the non-Congressional components of the member's career.

- The collection includes a substantial body of correspondence and/or background materials on topics in which the Congress member is known to have been interested and involved. Especially valuable are typescript and near-print items not readily available elsewhere.

- The collection contains substantive files that document or emanate from the member's service on important congressional committees, subcommittees, caucuses, task forces, investigative bodies, etc., or that pertain to issues connected with these bodies' spheres of action.

- The collection covers a long time span. Although time and/or bulk do not in and of themselves measure value, the longer the time period spanned by a collection, the greater the likelihood that in this single body of papers will be reflected such factors as the playing out of issues over time, changes in a given constituency's condition and concerns, and the evolution of the member's political philosophy and practice. It also may be more amenable than a smaller collection to sampling procedures that will sustain this continuity while reducing bulk.

- No portion of the member's personal or official papers have been transferred to or committed to another repository.

Manageability of the Collection

A number of structural characteristics influence or govern the facility with which a collection can be organized into meaningful components, appraised and weeded to reduce useless bulk while preserving its evidential and informational values, serviced effectively to subsequent users, and its long-term preservation assured. It should be noted that, by and large, the better organized a collection is upon receipt the less likely it is to need or warrant a large increment of supplemental funding to support its processing.
Manageability

-The collection's components are well defined and in good order.

-Those series that lend themselves to sampling or heavy weeding can readily be distinguished from those that are more substantive, varied, or difficult to appraise.

-There exist texts and indexes and/or summaries of automatically generated responses to routine constituent mail. These are in a format that can be utilized with the technology available in the repository.

-Randomly filed correspondence, whether in paper form or on microfilm, is accompanied by indexes, lists, or other means of access.

-Records produced via office automation systems have been systematically indexed, listed, and/or selections reproduced in hard copy. System documentation, including file codes and procedural manuals, is available.

-Such non-paper media as photographs and tape recordings have been identified, dated, and systematically filed and/or indexed.

-Records intended for permanent retention have been maintained on paper or other media that meet established quality standards; non-paper media have been handled and stored under archivally sound conditions.
REPOSITORY STANDARDS

In accepting custody of a Congress member’s papers, a repository commits itself to provide secure and appropriate housing for them and to present them to the public in a setting in which they can and will be used. The standards specified below outline the criteria by which a repository’s ability to fulfill this commitment may be assessed before a congressional collection is placed in that repository or its acceptance of such a collection is supported through supplemental funding.

Physical Plant and Environment

Minimum standards

- Storage space sufficient to accommodate the collection, including prospective increments.

- Climate-controlled storage areas that can maintain temperature and humidity to archival standards: a constant 70 degrees (+/-2 degrees) and relative humidity of 50% (+/-5%) as an optimum; at the minimum, a constant seasonal temperature and humidity that approach this optimum.

- Secure storage, processing, and reference areas, not subject to unmonitored public access.

- Fire detection/suppression and perimeter security systems.

- Availability of containers designed for archival storage of large collections including, if necessary, non-paper media; shelving suitable to house them.

Optimum conditions

- Access to preservation/conservation facilities, for specialized fumigation, deacidification, repair, and protection as needed, and for microfilming unstable originals.

Administration and Resource Base

Minimum standards

- A demonstrated commitment to stable, permanent support for the archival collections and program.

- Established policies, preferably written, governing access to and use of the collections that permit equal access to all responsible users.
- A demonstrated ability by the archival staff to handle sensitive data and to define and administer reasonable restrictions on access and use of the holdings.

- A demonstrated understanding of the amount of time and resources required to process, store, and service a large collection.

- Facilities and/or equipment to manage non-paper media such as audio and video tapes, microfilm, and computer tapes or discs.

- A commitment to publicize the availability of important collections through notices in professional journals, participation in national databases, and similar means.

- A collection development policy under which a congressional collection is an appropriate addition to the repository's holdings, to be valued and handled as such.

Staffing and Processing Capabilities

Minimum standards

- One or more professional archivists holding permanently funded staff positions.

- Sufficient support staff to establish physical and bibliographic control over all incoming materials in a timely fashion. An established history of doing so.

- A demonstrated ability on the part of the archival staff to manage and service large collections, to the donor if not to the public, and in advance of detailed processing.

- A demonstrated ability on the part of the archival staff to select processing procedures and produce finding aids that are appropriate to various types of materials or records series.

Optimum conditions

- At least one professional staff member with prior experience in processing and/or administering political collections, who can demonstrate an understanding of the priorities and expectations of their donors, of the operations of a congressional office and their relationship to records practices, and of the costs and procedures involved in processing these collections.

- Availability of specific staff member(s) who can be assigned to process the collection by a specific time.
Sufficient resources to support periodic staff visits while the Congress member is still in office, to become familiar with office operations and records management practices, make the acquaintance of principal staff members, and establish procedures for orderly transfer of files.

Reference Services and Research Relationships

The investment of space, time, supplies, and other resources necessary to house and process a congressional collection passes for naught if the repository lacks either supportive reference services or the broader research setting that will nurture its use. The factors noted below define important aspects of such a setting.

Minimum Standards

- Accessibility to potential users, including a convenient location and regular hours of operation.

- Demonstrated ability to respond to mail and telephone reference requests.

- Ready access to photocopying facilities.

- Availability to the staff, and preferably to researchers, of reference materials pertinent to the persons, events, and organizations likely to be encountered in the collection.

- Proximity to complementary manuscript and archival collections, especially those of the Congress member's colleagues and contemporaries in public service, enabling his/her papers to contribute to a matrix of primary sources that enhances the research value and attractiveness of all of them.

Optimum Conditions

- Proximity to a university, graduate school or other research program, and/or opportunities to participate in community programs, that will stimulate use of the repository's holdings.

- Proximity to a university, large public, or other library that contains a substantial body of secondary works and government documents covering the political, social, and economic history of the period encompassed by the collection.
Contract or Deed of Gift

Although not a direct determinant of either the research quality of a congressional collection or the suitability of a given repository to administer it, the terms under which a collection is transferred from its creator’s custody to that of a recipient institution will affect its usefulness as a research resource. An important aspect, therefore, of standards pertinent to the assessment of a collection intended for research use is the willingness of both the repository and the Congress member to enter into a written contract or deed of gift that includes the following provisions:

-Permanent transfer of title to the repository, either upon transfer of the papers or at some specified future time, revokable (if at all) only upon the repository’s inability or unwillingness to provide suitable housing and make the papers available to and usable by the research public.

-Provision for immediate or eventual dedication of copyright, in those materials created by the Congress member, to the repository or to the public.

-Access and/or use restrictions, if any, that have a definite termination date, that specify provisions for granting access prior to that date, and that designate a specific person(s) and alternate(s) who are authorized to approve access.

-Reasonable freedom for the repository’s staff to appraise, weed and dispose, organize, and describe the collection in accordance with standard archival practices, regardless of whether general public use is restricted.