

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE NEWSLETTER

Articles

The following article summarizes the experiences of Connell B. Gallagher, while serving as a staff archivist working on the papers of Vermont's congressional delegation. Mr. Gallagher was on sabbatical from his position as University Archivist and Curator of Manuscripts at the University of Vermont. All members of the Vermont congressional delegation were interested in having an archivist come to help set up the archival component of the office, and Gallagher worked with all three Vermont members. The discussion following relates to Gallagher's work with Senator Robert T. Stafford's papers.

When I arrived in Washington in June 1988 to be Archivist for Robert T. Stafford, I was not really sure how to proceed. I had processed the papers of a number of members of Congress in twenty years as an archivist, but this was my first time on the other side of the door. I studied Karen Paul's Records Management Handbook very carefully, and I had my ideas about series from previous experience. I knew that a special opportunity was at hand, but I wasn't sure how to take advantage of it. I decided to keep a journal of my education, and the first thing I wrote was an assurance to myself that I would fulfill the basic requirement of the job--deliver the Stafford Papers to the University of Vermont before the Senator left office in December.

Dealing with the retrospective records in the attic was familiar ground, so I began there. As the summer wore on, I used the attic as a place of retreat and a place to plan next steps. I made contact with the Senate Historical Office and with two archivists, Carla Kemp and Jane Odom, who were already working on Capitol Hill. Carla stressed the need for staff interviews before I did serious work on the retrospective files, and I found this tip to be useful. I hoped to learn about the process of legislation and the provenance of its documentation, both relatively new areas for me, but knowledge that seemed indispensable and available.

I asked to have a full time intern to help with the heavy work, basic processing and microfilm preparation and my boss, the Administrative Assistant, agreed. The office wanted to have the job done correctly, so they fulfilled all of my needs for staff, space, and supplies.

I quickly discerned that there were two kinds of staff in the office, administrative and legislative, and this translated into clerical and professional. I found that although I had to work with each it was better to maintain my independence and identify with the AA who functioned as a fulcrum between the two. I identified the most important positions in the office, the AA, the legislative assistants (LAs), personal secretary, office manager, press officer, and the caseworkers, and interviewed each staff member to ascertain the

responsibilities of and the records generated by that position. I used the file guide created by the office manager and the information gleaned from the staff to sort the approximately 500 boxes in the attic. First we inventoried the whole attic, numbered each box sequentially, and listed the titles. Most cartons had some form of title, but we did have to open a few to get something to write down. Later we reviewed the titles, placed each carton in a series, and then reboxed each carton with a new label indicating series, dates, and content. We kept a list of missing files and questions to be discussed in a second round of interviews with staff. I copied the appropriate section of Paul's "Plan of Outline" from the Handbook for each staff member, annotated it with comments and questions, and gave it to the interviewee well before our appointment. These printed guidelines gave more weight to the concerns discussed in the interview, for I could preface my remarks with "the Senate Archivist agrees..."

Members of the staff were on the whole cooperative, but many were concerned about the confidentiality of the records. I needed to build trust as well, for I was an outsider. It was important that I was a full member of the staff and that I was working for the Senator as they were. I took part in the current activities of the office, followed the Senator to committee meetings and hearings, and spent time watching activities on the floor when he was present. This interest put me on common ground with the staff, particularly the LAs, and this was important. The LAs maintained most of the files on legislation because it was their job to inform themselves and brief the Senator on all of the issues. Their files contained memos to the Senator with replies, drafts of speeches, and talking points and background material on all of the issues. LAs often consider their files as their own as they did in Stafford's office, and often these do not go to the archives with the records of the office. I spent a lot of time to make sure that we received all of these files relatively intact.

I discussed progress with the AA every week and followed leads that he gave me. He recommended that I talk with Stafford's committee staff, and this resulted in the acquisition of duplicates of important Stafford related files. We received 109 reels of microfilm from Stafford's Environment and Public Works Committee for instance.

I followed the same procedure in the Senator's two Vermont offices. I interviewed staff, learned the history and function of the office, and made recommendations on the disposition of the records. All of the pieces are here at the University of Vermont, and I am now in the process of refining the arrangement, appraising the contents, discarding duplication, and compiling the description of the collection. Most of the series will be open and ready for use in a seminar I plan to teach on the Senator next fall, and by that time I will be ready to begin a small oral history project with the Senator and a few of his chief aides.

I began working in the office of Senator Patrick J. Leahy in January 1989, and I hope to write a follow-up comparison in the newsletter next fall. [By Connell B. Gallagher]

Arrangement and Description Bibliography
Compiled by Mary Boccaccio

Abraham, Terry, Stephen E. Belzarine and Anne Frantilla, "What is Backlog is Prologue: A Measurement of Archival Processing." American Archivist, 48:31-44, Winter 1985.

The article is concerned with a numerical analysis of processing in order to develop baseline figures that can be used for planning and comparison.

Baker, Richard A., "Managing Congressional Papers: A View of the Senate." American Archivist, 41:291-296, July 1978.

The organization of Senate offices, work flow, paperwork management, automation, disposition of papers, day to day retrieval problems, retirement/defeat and advance planning are discussed.

Boccaccio, Mary and David Carmichael, "Processing Congressional Collections." MARAC Technical Leaflet No. 4, 1985.

This is a practical leaflet oriented towards physically dealing with a collection from the time the packing lists and boxes arrive at the door to problems with audiovisuals, computerized indexes and the various levels of physical condition of the collection.

Campbell, Fiona, "APPARAT: A Computer Cataloging System for Sound Recordings." Archives and Manuscripts, 8:33-40, December 1980.

This article concerns the computer system which assists in the preparation of finding aids for the oral history collection at the Imperial War Museum in London. This is quite a detailed description of the computer program and the several sorts of finding aids which are available through it.

Hurley, C., "Personal Papers and the Treatment of Archival Principles." Archives and Manuscripts, 6:351-365, February 1977.

This is a very interesting discussion of original order and arrangement of records in archives and in manuscript collections, from an Australian viewpoint.

Lanac, David, "Sound Archive Development and Practice: A Case Study." Archives and Manuscripts, 8:9-16, June 1980.

This article describes setting up the program for the Imperial War Museum, London. It concerns formats, systems of cataloging and indexing, describes the computer based catalog and gives some information on the kinds of tape and cassettes used. It is a companion piece to the Campbell article.

Lucas, Lydia, "Managing Congressional Papers: A Repository View." American Archivist, 41:275-280, July 1978.

This very useful article discusses the increasing volume and changing role of congressmen, includes a list of what can be expected in a collection, lists of things usually found incomplete and/or elsewhere, the kinds of things that can be weeded with an idea of the kind of documentation to leave behind and then sampling, various kinds of bibliographic control and ends with a discussion of the unique character of the member, his interests, style and contribution and the importance of being able to reflect those relationships.

McKay, Eleanor, "Random Sampling Techniques: A Method of Reducing Large Homogeneous Series in Congressional Papers." American Archivist 41: 281-289, July 1978.

This article is the result of a Midwest Archives Conference Task Force on congressional collections. It discusses random sampling of large and homogeneous series like constituent correspondence and implies a trend towards statistical research. McKay supports selection on the basis of bulk and homogeneity rather than administrative convenience.

Perez, Madeline, Andrew Raymond and Ann Swartzell, "Preparation of Archives and Manuscripts for Microreproduction." Library Resources and Technical Services, 27:357-365, October 1983.

This article discusses editorial and physical preparation for micro-filming which is a fixed arrangement. The article concerns both printed materials as well as archives and manuscripts and is technical to microfilming rather than specific to collection problems. A bibliography is included.

Powers, Thomas E., "Processing as Reconstruction: The Philip A. Hart Senatorial Collection." American Archivist, 46:183-185, Spring 1983.

This article concerns a disrupted collection and discusses getting it in order both physically and intellectually.

Sahli, Nancy A., "Interpretation and Application of the AMC Format." American Archivist, 49:9-20, Spring 1986.

With a helpful introduction to the AMC's development, this article discusses format characteristics, implementation and future action.

Walsh, Timothy. "The Processing and Storage of Microfilm." Archives and Manuscripts, 8:15-23, December 1980.

This article is concerned with film types, film processing and film storage. It also includes a select bibliography.

News from Capitol Hill

IMPROVED ACCESS AND HISTORY OFFICE APPROVED BY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The rules of the U.S. House of Representatives of the 101st Congress include some changes that are important to archivists and congressional scholars. When each Congress convenes, it adopts the rules under which it will operate for the following two years. The general practice is to adopt the rules of the previous Congress with any necessary or desirable amendments.

One amendment adopted by the House on January 3 establishes a general rule to make records of the House and its committees available after 30 years. This is a change from the 50 year rule which had governed access since 1953. The 50 year rule is, however, retained for records of closed sessions, personnel records, and investigative files relating to an individual. The new rules also authorize a committee to establish shorter or longer limits for its own records or portions of those records.

Any records that have been previously published or otherwise made available in accordance with law or rule of the House shall be made available immediately.

The records of the House of Representatives housed at the National Archives remain the permanent property of the House and subject to its rules.

For those who have followed this access issue through the Rules Committee hearings of the 99th and 100th Congresses, the new rules incorporate the text of House Resolution 419 as reported by the Committee on Rules on a bipartisan basis late in the 100th Congress. A full description may be found in the Congressional Record of January 3, 1989, under the discussion of House Resolution (H.Res.) 5.

Another amendment of the rules of the House established a permanent office of the Historian in the House of Representatives. The intent of this change is to make the present Office for the Bicentennial of the House permanent and to change the name of the office. The office will continue to function as a professional, nonpartisan office to operate under the direction of the Speaker. [By Cynthia Pease Miller]

Recent Publications

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989. Copies may be purchased by check, money order, VISA, Mastercard or Superintendent of Documents Deposit Account from the Superintendent of Documents at a cost of \$82.00, including postage. Please include Sen. Doc. No. 100-34 and Stock No. 052-071-00699-1 when ordering. Credit card orders may be phoned in to (202) 783-3238. Mail orders should be sent to The Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

A Guide to Research Collections of Former Members of the United States House of Representatives, 1789-1987. Cynthia Pease Miller, ed. Available free of charge upon request from the Office for the Bicentennial, U.S. House of Representatives, 138 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-1153.

Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives, 1789-1989. Available free of charge upon request from the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Guide to the Records of the United States Senate at the National Archives, 1789-1989. Available free of charge upon request from the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. 20408.

Information, notices, short articles, etc. for the newsletter are welcomed. Send to: Cynthia Pease Miller, Office for the Bicentennial
U.S. House of Representatives, 138 Cannon House
Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

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CHANGE IN SAA CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS SESSION

Session #81, "Closing the Office: A Congressional Perspective," has been moved from Saturday October 28, 3:15 to Friday October 27, 2:00-4:00. Roundtable meeting remains unchanged, Thursday, October 26, 11:15.

*Tim, conflicts w/ your
program - shoot. R.*



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