

March 1990

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE NEWSLETTER

Library of Congress Exhibition and Publication

To celebrate the bicentennial of the United States Congress, the Library of Congress has mounted two versions of a major exhibition, "To Make All Laws: The Congress of the United States, 1789-1989." One is on view in the James Madison Memorial Building of the Library of Congress through February 18, 1990. A traveling version, currently on national tour to 30 sites until January 31, 1991 (see schedule below), is being circulated in cooperation with the American Library Association and is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Designed to communicate the story of the United States Congress and its impact on American life, the exhibition reviews the creation of the Congress and illustrates how it works through the use of photographic reproductions of portraits, cartoons, maps, posters, manuscripts, photographs and other material, drawn largely from the collections of the Library of Congress. In a video component six current members of Congress discuss their jobs, tell how they got into politics, and explain how they serve their constituents. Educational materials for teachers and librarians accompany the exhibition.

Complementing the exhibition is a 128 page, illustrated volume, To Make All Laws, written by James H. Hutson, chief of the Library's Manuscript Division. The first short history of the Congress to be published in recent years, it tells the story of Congress thematically. The first half of the book discusses Congress as an institution, the second half the substantive issues that Congress has confronted. Written to appeal to both scholars and laymen, it presents Congress as an evolving institution in which changes reflect the society it represents. To Make All Laws is available at the Library of Congress Gift Shops and by mail from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office for \$9.50, postage paid (stock number 030-000-00215-6).

Tour Schedule

	I	II	III
Mar. 7 - Apr. 3	Ft. Lauderdale	Charleston, WV	Billings
Apr. 18 - May 15	Dallas	Rochester	Rapid City
May 30 - June 26	Indianapolis	Boston	Omaha
July 11 - Aug. 7	Louisville	Baltimore	
Aug. 22 - Sept. 18	Madison	Portland, ME	Houston
Oct. 3 - Oct. 30	Chicago	New Orleans	Tucson
Nov. 14 - Dec. 11	Atlanta	Detroit	Reno
Jan. 7 - Jan. 31, 1991	Olympia	Cheyenne	St. Paul

The following letter documents the efforts of the Congressional Papers Roundtable Steering Committee to learn why none of the roundtable's sessions were accepted for the Seattle meeting by the SAA Program Committee and to ask for clarification of the Committee's procedures.





## UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA-RENO

February 10, 1990

Donn C. Neal  
Executive Director  
Society of American Archivists  
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Chicago, Illinois 60605

Special Collections Department  
University Archives  
University Library  
University of Nevada-Reno  
Reno, Nevada 89557-0044  
(702) 784-6538

Dear Donn:

We are writing to express dissatisfaction with the fact that the Congressional Archivists Roundtable does not have a session scheduled for the Society's meeting in Seattle. This comes after a series of problems with the Program Committee over the last four years. The Roundtable submitted three proposals this year, one of which was clearly identified as the highest proposal of the Roundtable. It has always been our understanding that sections and roundtables are asked by the Program Committee to submit or sponsor sessions because the committee wants to ensure that the program contains something of particular interest to each group.

Having spoken with the Program Chair and the SAA President, we have concluded that this is not the case. We have been informed by the Program Chair and the President that although it is true that the committee is supposed to pay more attention to such proposals, they are not bound to accept them or even to attempt to work out a compromise solution with the roundtables in instances where the initial feeling of the committee is negative.

If we have a correct understanding of the process, we question whether this is what SAA really wants. Does the Society wish to be on the one hand promoting and nurturing roundtables which focus on special archival problem areas, and on the other denying these groups intellectual input into the program by not allowing them to have a session? We do not know just what the procedures are. We can state emphatically that the Congressional Roundtable's needs have not been met this year, nor was there any attempt on the part of the Program Committee to ensure that they were.

In fact, since the establishment of the Roundtable in 1985, it appears that the program committee's procedures are nebulous and that coordination with SAA groups is lacking, particularly in the area of scheduling and responsiveness. In two instances in the past, the Roundtable had asked for a certain day for their proposed session in order to coordinate with the schedules of non-archivists and professionals in other fields whom we had asked to appear on our sessions. Our roundtable has made a particular effort to build bridges and to reach out to related groups and have used our sessions for this purpose. In both instances, the request was not met initially, but was finally acceded to after a certain amount of "back-and-forth." In every year, scheduling has not been smooth, but this is the first year we have been totally denied a two-hour time slot.

The reason given to us was that our topic, the documentation of Congress, was "too complex." This of course demonstrates that the Program Committee feels that it knows best relative to what a roundtable wishes to do in a session. It also, in this instance, shows that the Program Committee was totally unwilling to devise a solution to the divergence of opinion. While



our roundtable has been working on this topic for two years and was ready and eager for the session, individuals who are not interested in the work of the roundtable and who do not care to find out about it, have determined the work not suitable for a session.

The Congressional Roundtable sessions sponsored in past years have drawn large numbers of individuals and have always been extremely well received. In fact, we consistently have more people at our meetings than a good number of regular SAA sessions have attendees. The reason for this is that the group is very responsive to the desires of its membership in terms of its agenda, which includes session proposals. This year is no exception. We are extremely disappointed with the way the program was formulated and with the results; we wonder whether there are other groups similarly affected. It is very disconcerting for a group to plan as far ahead as we have, only to have no outlet to continue the work through a regularly scheduled session.

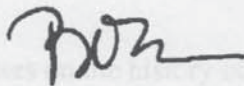
When we contacted the Program Committee about the session we were invited to do our work in our roundtable meeting or to propose a series of sessions at a subsequent meeting. One-and-a-half hours is not enough time to accomplish our basic business, along with holding a serious discussion on congressional documentation. This makes a series of sessions impractical for a variety of reasons. What program committee would want domination by one topic?

There does appear to be either a lack of responsiveness or lack of coordination in the process. It would seem that the sections and roundtables would be ideal sources for session proposals that "advance the work of archivists", and that better cooperation with them might help strengthen the Society from the inside out. We would suggest that the charge of the SAA Program Committee should be reviewed relative to selection and procedures.

A former council member wondered in print recently why greater numbers of archivists do not support the Society. If people feel they are not really finding what they need within the Society's structure and framework, perhaps this is a reason. Indeed, several members of the Roundtable expressed these views as a result of this latest problem, and asked us to communicate them to SAA Council.

We have sent a copy of this letter to the President and would appreciate your sharing it with Council members and next year's Program Committee. We would also appreciate a written clarification of the relationship between program committees and the sections and roundtables so that we can work to avoid this situation in the future.

Sincerely,



Robert Blesse, Chair  
and the members of the Congressional Papers  
Roundtable Steering Committee:

Mary Boccaccio  
Connell Gallagher  
Carla Kemp  
Karen D. Paul

REB:sf  
cc: John Fleckner



## SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable Minutes 10/26/89 St. Louis

The meeting was chaired by Karen Paul and Cynthia Miller. Alden Monroe, 1990 Program Committee, spoke to the group about the Nov. 10 deadline for program proposals. Cynthia and Connie Cartledge will continue to edit the newsletter. Karen introduced the steering committee members present and distributed a mailing list for Roundtable participants to make additions and corrections. The Roundtable was established in 1985 at the annual meeting in Washington. The goals of the group are to develop session proposals, disseminate information from the House and Senate Historical Offices, and to provide a vehicle for communication between archivists working with congressional papers.

### Announcements-House Historical Office

1. The House Rules Committee has held hearings on a resolution that could move the House Historical Office to the Clerk's office. This move should provide a stronger position as this is the part of House that deals with recordkeeping.
2. At the same hearing, the Rules Committee took testimony from Dr. Lewis Bellardo, Director, Center for Legislative Archives, NARA, on the implementation of the 30/50 year access rule for House records that had been adopted in January. (See further discussion below.)
3. A Guide to Research Collections of Former Members of the United States House of Representatives, 1789-1989: Bicentennial Edition should have been received by every repository represented. Information is being maintained to update the Guide which received the MARAC Finding Aids Award. For additional copies, contact Cynthia.
4. House Committee on Governmental Operations has developed a guide to Freedom of Information & Privacy Acts which costs \$1.75.
5. A list of publications compiled by Karen and Cynthia and entitled "Recent Publications Relating to the Congress" was circulated and discussed.

### Announcements-Senate Historical Office

1. Many have received reporting forms to update the Guide to Research Collections of Former United States Senators, 1789-1982 and its supplement. Expect the new update in 1990.
2. Encyclopedia of Congress project was discussed. It will take 4 years, be a 2 volume set and total about 1500 pages. Donald Bacon is the editor and the project is based at LC. Members of an advisory committee are now selecting topics.
3. A Documentary History of Congress is being prepared and will parallel the Supreme Court project. The project is based in Senate & House HOs and will total 20 volumes in 3 series comprised of chamber and joint institutional histories. The project will use some records in private repositories, so be prepared!
4. Volume 1 of Senator Bryd's addresses on the history of the Senate is available. The addresses are arranged topically in Vol. 1 and chronologically in Vol. 2 (which is underway). Vol. 3 contains statistical information about the Senate and Vol. 4 will contain primary accounts of Congress.
5. Expect the Senate Historical Almanac in Jan. 1990.
6. A May 17 Conference on Senate Leadership is planned for 1990. Nine floor leaders will be highlighted. The Dickson & Ford Foundations are sponsoring the conference and a printed volume of proceedings.



SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable Minutes 10/26/89 St. Louis

7. Proceedings of the February, 1989 Understanding Congress Conference will soon be distributed by Congressional Research Service.

Announcements-NARA

Dr. Lewis Bellardo, NARA's Center for Legislative Archives Division, discussed changes to access rules for records of the House. Prior to the changes, all House records were closed for 50 years. Records are now opened at 30 years excluding records documenting living individuals (privacy) or in the case of national security concerns. Senate records are still closed for 20 years. Access to House records must still be approved by the Clerk's Office even if older than 50 years. This is done on a case by case basis and researchers should be aware of this prior to travel to Washington.

Ways to update the guides to records in the National Archives are under review by an adhoc advisory committee (comprised of former members, Page Miller, etc.) This committee was recently appointed by the Center to advise on the development a 5 year plan. It seems that the feeling is to stick to an improvement of basic description & reference services. (NARA centers provide all archival services from accessioning to reference.)

Roundtable members then discussed funding congressional records processing. It is unlikely that packages will be developed for the appropriation of federal funds to process members collections although there has been some discussion. It is regarded as a perk and perks are controversial these days. Also, would the possibility of an appropriation limit the use of the office account to hire an archivist and reduce early contact with the repository? Options are also limited because of NEH, NHPRC, and DOE's policies not to fund congressional papers. The use of remaining campaign funds was discussed but it was recognized that this is a private negotiation between the repository and the member.

The members decided to ask a working group to study the issue. The charge of the working group is to review options for funding congressional records processing; to review funding agency's policies; and to investigate the possibility of developing grants for model program development.

Congressional Papers Funding Working Group is comprised of Connell Gallagher, Joe Constance, and Gretchen Labor.

Karen discussed the Congressional Documentary Task Force. She circulated a draft discussion of Congress' functions in early October to Task Force members. This document was a brushstroke treatment of Congress. Task Force members have identified their interest in studying specific groups and functions.

The Roundtable then discussed SAA session proposals:

1. Funding--Members of the Working Group will develop a session on funding--how to find it and get it, and successful projects. This could possibly be a special focus session.
2. Appraisal--It was decided to develop a practical session on appraisal of congressional papers. The session would focus on one series such as correspondence or legislative reference files.
3. Documentary Task Force--A roundtable session would be developed to discuss the Task Force's work. [Herbert Hartsook has since agreed to chair this session.]

The meeting ended with a few final announcements. Susan Goldstein, Cranston's Office, is developing a Congressional Archivists Group. Archivists working on the Hill will meet once a month. The Public Affairs Video Archives at Purdue University will be preserving C-SPAN programming beginning 1987. The meeting was adjourned. Submitted by recorder, Carla Kemp.



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

Editors: Cynthia Pease Miller and Connie L. Cartledge

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