

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 1993

Roundtable Meeting, September 16, 1992, Montreal

Roundtable chairman John Caldwell was not at Montreal. As mentioned in our last newsletter, John has at least temporarily left archival work. Herb Hartsook chaired the meeting in his absence.

Jim Cross, Rebecca Johnson and Karyl Winn were elected to the steering committee and Hartsook was elected chair for 1992-1993.

Waverly Lowell appeared in her capacity as liaison with Council. She encouraged feedback from the roundtables and sections on Council activities.

A session was proposed for next year: The Center for Legislative Archives is developing as a Congressional resource. It was recommended that they develop a database or a methodology and work more closely with collecting repositories. Karen Paul suggested a session with representatives of the Center, collecting repositories and the computer industry.

The following announcements were made at the meeting:

The University of Delaware will receive Thomas R. Carper's papers. Carper was first elected to the House in 1983, and is running for governor.

The University of Texas will assume responsibility for the Sam Rayburn papers and museum.

Sheryl Vogt at the University of Georgia expects to receive the papers of four to five retiring members.

The Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress will meet in late October. They issued their first report, a five-year plan for the Center for Legislative Archives. The Center expects to collect leadership records when such records are not scheduled for collection in the leader's home state.

JFK Assassination Archives legislation is under consideration. The Assassination Archives will be considered to be archival records, although additions will be solicited from private sources.

Senators have two months to clear their offices after the conclusion of their terms.

The report on the documentation of Congress is to be published following the receipt of final critiques.

An update to the guide to senators' papers is being prepared. Please send new or revised entries to Karen Paul.

Cynthia Pease Miller, who was unable to attend the Annual Meeting, sent reminders of the mid-December deadline for the clearing of offices by retiring members. This year will witness the highest turnover in Congress since 1974 and possibly since 1948. This has placed a severe strain on the services offered by the House. The early shipment of Member's papers is being encouraged.

Jim Cross, Clemson University's Strom Thurmond archivist, is planning a review of memorabilia in the Thurmond collection. He will be assisted by a University curator. Together, they will develop formal appraisal guidelines for the memorabilia.

Karen Paul mentioned a change in Senate policy whereby memorabilia, rather than being auctioned off through GSA, will instead be offered to repositories.

Following these announcements was a program on the appraisal of senator's papers. Participants included Susan Goldstein, Senator Alan Cranston's archivist; Jim Cross, Thurmond Archivist; and Rebecca Johnson of the University of Delaware. Goldstein spoke on her work with the records of a retiring senator, Cross on working with a member still in office, and Johnson on appraising the papers of a member long out of office, Senator John Williams. Cross also summarized a paper by Robin Colodny, a political scientist at Temple University, who could not attend. Colodny had presented the paper to the American Political Science Association. Copies of the fifteen page paper are available from Cross at University Libraries, Clemson University, Clemson, SC, 29634.

The Documentation of Congress

The report of the Task Force on Congressional Documentation is out. The culmination of several years of work, the report should prove a valuable tool in focusing archival efforts on developing a cohesive strategy to document Congress, allied organizations, members, and other individuals. The report may also serve as a model for studying the archival effort in other areas.

The project was conceived and directed by Karen Paul and she deserves every credit for seeing this important project through. A dozen archivists contributed to the report, which runs over one hundred and seventy pages in length. The report is divided into seven chapters. The first six chapters define and then discuss the sources documenting: the Legislative Process, Representation, Political Activities, External Relations, and Administration and Support. The final chapter concerns research use. Appendices include a bibliography of finding aids for the official records of Congress.

The report contains detailed analyses of the records being generated, their value in documenting the activities of Congress, and current collecting. The report goes further, in recommending steps and procedures necessary to ensure that the archival record does document the actions of and influences upon, Congress. Ninety-five recommendations outline a series of coordinated actions to be undertaken by three major interest groups: members of Congress and their staffs, the Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives, and archivists in the hundreds of repositories around the country whose holdings include congressional collections.

Distributed as a working document, it is hoped the report will stimulate discussion and form the basis for developing goals and priorities and planning coordinated action to preserve and make available information about Congress and the legislative process. Copies of the report are available on request from Archivist, Senate Historical Office, Washington, DC 20510-7108.

Session Approved for New Orleans

The session proposal sponsored by the Roundtable, titled: The Appraisal of Memorabilia and Museum Objects or 'What Do I do With This Rusty Samovar', has been accepted for presentation in New Orleans. The session will be chaired by Karyl Winn and feature presentations by roundtable member James Cross, Thurmond Archivist, Clemson University, whose paper is titled "Evaluating the Thurmond Memorabilia: Appraisal Standards for Political Memorabilia"; Catherine Horne, Chief Curator, McKissick Museum, The University of South Carolina--"Through a Different Set of Eyes-Appraisal, Interpretation and Public Use of Material Culture Artifacts"; and James Morris, Archivist, Louisiana State Archives--"Archival Materials at Louisiana's Center for Political and Governmental History". The session will present guidelines for the appraisal of the ephemera and museum items often acquired with congressional and other manuscript collections, and discuss their historical significance and research use. It will build on a well attended session on ephemera presented in Montreal. Donor relations and outreach will also be discussed. Cross will discuss recently developed guidelines for the appraisal of the ephemeral items being received with Senator Strom Thurmond's papers. Horne will speak on museum collection standards and the research and exhibit value of these materials. Finally, Morris will discuss research in archives using archival records and related museum materials. We hope this session will be well received and draw a good audience.

Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress

The problems encountered in closing the offices of Members of the House of Representatives leaving at the end of the 102d Congress and the subsequent transfer of papers to repositories were the subject of a report by Cynthia Pease Miller, Assistant House Historian, to the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress at its semiannual meeting on December 15, 1992.

While 63 of the departing 110 Members sent their papers to repositories, at least six Members, including one very senior Member, destroyed their papers. The remainder kept selected papers in their personal custody and destroyed the bulk. Miller asked the committee to examine four problems: size of collections, types of papers within the collections, the repositories, and funding.

Size of Collection: Few repositories can accept collections as large as the 1,600 boxes generated by one retiring committee chair. Yet many repositories want certain congressional files. To avoid a situation where a repository refuses to take a collection because of its size, can a way be found to help congressional offices better manage their non-current files and to categorize them so that they do not intimidate a repository and ensure that they are transferred in a form that facilitates processing?

Types of Papers Transferred: Already most repositories do not accept and Members do not want to transfer case files. Increasingly the same is true for constituent correspondence. A major problem this year was offices "sanitizing" (selectively destroying) papers before transfer. This lack of trust is unfortunate and shows a misunderstanding about deeds of gift and access restrictions. The right of a Member to dispose of papers as he or she chooses must be respected while still insuring the preservation of important files. Are there ways to affect better records management practices in the offices? Can historical offices and repositories agree on a hard core of materials essential to the documentation of Congress?

Repositories: The 63 House collections went to 56 different repositories, 19 of which have no other congressional papers. Most papers were placed after it was known that the Member was leaving the House. How can these repositories be involved earlier in a Member's career? How can historical offices know ahead of time which repositories are willing to accept papers?

Funding: At least two Members who sought to place their papers at repositories in their districts were asked for funds for processing. Unable or unwilling to provide them, the Members destroyed the papers. Also repository archivists are increasingly unable to come to Washington to provide hands-on assistance with closing the office. How can funding needs be met?

The Advisory Committee is willing to address these issues and asked Miller and House Historian Ray Smock to prepare a report for the next meeting offering recommendations to the House leadership, the Members' offices, and receiving repositories. Miller will report on this work at the Roundtable meeting in New Orleans. For more information, please contact Cynthia Pease Miller, Office of the House Historian, 138 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515.

Congressional Papers of Another Kind

Karen Paul is establishing a reference collection of papers delivered at SAA meetings relating to congressional papers. She is beginning the collection with copies of the papers presented at Montreal, both the formal session and at the Roundtable meeting. She will maintain the collection at the Senate Historical Office and will regularly send lists of what is available to the Roundtable membership. If you have delivered a relevant paper please send a copy for the collection to Karen Paul, Senate Historical Office, Washington, D.C. 20510.

The Senator Howard Henry Baker, Jr. Collection

The Howard Baker Collection at the University of Tennessee is no ordinary senatorial collection. Baker's positions as minority and majority leader, and the key roles he played in important issues of the time such as the Watergate hearing and the Panama Canal Treaties make this collection particularly significant. The several hundred boxes in the collection primarily contain records from Baker's three terms in the senate, 1967-1984, but also include Baker's speaking engagement files from the time between leaving the senate and becoming President Reagan's White House Chief of Staff, 1985-1987, and records from his campaign for the Republican nomination for president in 1980 and 1988. Additional records from his 1980 presidential campaign are expected at the library.

Much of the collection was reviewed by the Library of Congress before coming to the University of Tennessee and it is estimated that about 90% of the reviewed material was removed. Some of the boxes in the collection came from other locations and had not been weeded before its arrival in Tennessee. The collection includes audio and video tape, microfilm, computer records, photographs, as well as manuscript material.

Joslyn Quinn, Special Collections Assistant, and a part-time student assistant, are identifying, arranging, describing and preparing the collection for research and archival storage. Karen Paul's Records Management Handbook for US Senators and Their Repositories and guides and finding aids to other senatorial collections have been a great help in making decisions about the collection. A guide to the Baker papers should be complete by the fall of 1993 and the collection will open to the public in 1997 as per the donor agreement. This collection from an East Tennessee native and University of Tennessee alumnus should prove a major asset to the University and the public. submitted by Joslyn Quinn

Carl Albert Center Visiting Scholars Program

The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center at the University of Oklahoma seeks applicants for its Visiting Scholars Program. The program provides financial awards, usually \$500- \$1,000, for on-campus work in the Center's archives. Emphasis is given to post-doctoral studies although graduate and undergraduate students and lay researchers are also encouraged to apply. The Center's holdings are comprised of the papers of fifty-one members of Congress, most of whom served during the twentieth century. The collections are particularly strong in subjects of special interest to Oklahoma. To obtain more information please contact: Archivist, Carl Albert Center, 630 Parrington Oval, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019.

General Accounting Office

The History Program of the U.S. General Accounting Office seeks information about any GAO reports dating from 1921 to 1976. They would like citations to GAO reports contained in congressional collections and to receive any reports being weeded from collections. Please contact Elizabeth Poel, U.S. General Accounting Office, 441 G St., NW, Room 6725, Washington DC 20548. (202) 275-1976.

Next Issue

I hope to get our next issue out in late July or early August to give you current information on the Roundtable's plans and activities for New Orleans. If you have any news or comment for the newsletter please send it to me any time before July 15, 1993.

You may recall that in the past two issues we asked you to let us know if you still wanted to receive this newsletter. As a result of our survey we removed nineteen names from the Roundtable's mailing list. At the same time we added fifteen new names of people actively working with congressional collections and vitally interested in the Roundtable's activities. The letter is now received by one hundred and thirteen individuals and the SAA office.

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