

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE

NEWSLETTER

Society of American Archivists

August, 1994

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR THE ROUNDTABLE

Herb Hartsook has served as Chair since 1992 and newsletter editor since 1991. He will relinquish these duties after our meeting in Indianapolis. During our business meeting, the Roundtable will elect a new Chair and replace Hartsook on the Steering Committee. That committee will nominate Sheryl Vogt of the University of Georgia's Russell Library to fill the committee vacancy and serve the Roundtable as Chair. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted. Vogt, or possibly one of her staff, has offered to take on the newsletter as well.

Roundtable Meeting Program

Brian A. Williams of the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library will speak on "Constituent Correspondence and CMS." His presentation will be based upon his work at Oberlin College with the papers of Representative Don J. Pease of Ohio [1976-1992]. Williams will consider Oberlin's handling of Pease's constituent correspondence, prior to and during the use of CMS in the Pease office, as well as appraisal strategies.

Williams received an M.L.S. degree from the University of Michigan in 1990. He worked as Assistant Archivist at the Oberlin College Archives from 1990 to 1993. He currently works on the Archives and Records Program at the Bentley.

Naomi Lynn Nelson of Emory University will speak on the use of computer software to produce and to manage constituent correspondence. She suggests that archivists and records managers must now document an on-line database in addition to the paper correspondence files. This challenge is made more complex by the proliferation of such systems, the different implementation strategies followed in the House and Senate, and the new informational possibilities opened by this technology. To serve the interests of the Members today and of researchers in the future, we need to understand the changes in the mail systems, to clarify the kinds of information we will need to document the systems, and to preserve the indexes and reports available on-line. Nelson will discuss the components of the automated mail systems, the history of their implementation, and the encouraging possibilities for good access and useful summation provided by these systems. Nelson received her M.L.S. at the University of Pittsburgh. She has served as Emory's Congressional Archivist for the past three years and is a doctoral candidate in American History at Emory.

NEWS FROM THE CARL ALBERT CENTER

During the past year, the Albert Center made its first venture into RLIN. We've come through relatively unscathed, and now forty of our collections can be searched in the database. These

include the papers of Carl Albert, Helen Gahagan Douglas, Robert S. Kerr, and Elmer Thomas.

The Spring 1995 issue of the Center's biannual journal, Extensions, will focus on women members of Congress. We would like to open the "Archives Report" section to members of the Roundtable. Interested parties are encouraged to contribute brief articles about their holdings concerning this topic. For more information, contact either Todd Kosmerick or Danney Goble at the Carl Albert Center, 630 Parrington Oval, Room 101, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73019, (405) 325-6372.

submitted by Todd Kosmerick

NEWS FROM THE JESSE HELMS CENTER ARCHIVES

Former Helms Archivist Jack Ralston reports that the Center has phased out the archives program due to the adoption of "new priorities." Senator Helms' papers at the Center have been indexed in the MARCON program and most are in secure storage in the Wingate College Library. If and when the archives program is reinstated, the Center has stated it intends to use contracted services on an hourly basis.

FINDING IT ON-LINE: EMORY'S CONGRESSIONAL DATABASE INDEX PROJECT

The Special Collections Department of Emory University is developing an on-line finding aid and index for its congressional collections, beginning with the Sam Nunn Papers. Nunn began his Senate career in 1972. In 1981, he signed an agreement to deposit his papers at Emory University, where he had attended law school. His office began transferring records immediately with the understanding that Emory would provide document retrieval on demand, and the Special Collections staff and Senator's staff continues to work closely together to appraise and arrange records before they are shipped to Emory.

Our goals for the on-line database project include the following:

- faster access through key work and subject searching
- generate indexes and labels without having to retype information
- ability to move between levels of description

software compatible with that used in the Senator's office, allowing us to incorporate the record descriptions they create directly into our database.

We developed a set of linked tables using Borland's Paradox software that together serves as a series-level description, box list, shelf list, and folder list, and we generate box labels directly from the box list. Users can search for key words or phrases using the following fields individually or in combination: subgroup, series, year, CMS document number, folder title, processing notes, and shelf location.

We also have standalone tables containing additional format-specific information for the photographs, video tapes, audio tapes, and speeches in the collection. These tables can be used to generate audio and video cassette labels. Senator Nunn's office maintains similar tables, providing them with improved access to these documents and allowing us to copy their descriptions and indices for these records.

The data manipulation capabilities of database software make it ideal for archival finding aids, and the structural similarities between modern congressional collections make them good candidates for standardized description. We've taken advantage of these factors and created a database enabling us to reduce our processing time and to increase the speed and accuracy of our record retrieval.

submitted by Naomi L. Nelson, Congressional Archivist, Emory University.

NEWS FROM THE HOUSE OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

Cynthia Miller has merged onto the Internet. She can be reached at CMILLER1@HR.HOUSE.GOV.

Cynthia also wishes to share the news that the Congressional Record has gone on-line, with proceedings beginning in 1994, the Index dating back to 1992, and all enrolled bills in the 103rd Congress. Subscriptions are \$375 annually. The database is available at many of the 1,400 Federal Depository Libraries. Via the internet, telnet to "wais.access.gpo.gov", log in as "newuser" with no password. Dialing directly, modem to 202/512-1661 and log in as "wais" with no password. At the second log in prompt, type "newuser" with no password.

Finally, a stockpile of Harpers Ferry reports has been discovered. Anyone wishing to receive a copy of the 1985 report may request one by writing the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, H2-385 Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515 (202) 225-1153.

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

As Conte Papers project archivist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I am currently processing the papers of Massachusetts Congressman Silvio O. Conte. Conte represented the First Congressional District of Massachusetts, 1958-1991 and was serving his 17th term when he died in February 1991.

The collection measured 1,257 linear feet when it arrived, including approximately 6,500 photographs. Eight hundred and forty-seven feet were stored in the Federal Records Storage Center, the other 410 feet arrived from the hastily closed congressional offices. Little records management was practiced by Conte's staff; therefore, most of the collection requires weeding and/or sampling. The 200 feet of case files and 50 feet of accepted invitations are two series currently earmarked for sampling. In the late 1970's Conte's office adopted a computer indexing system to handle constituent correspondence. Unfortunately, the computer tapes were wiped out and there are no surviving hard copies of the indexes, the end result being 90 boxes of randomly filed, unfolded, constituent correspondence and, as I have learned, this is an all-too-common problem.

Planning is underway for a database using the software Paradox, a relational database and we have begun using our newly acquired flatbed scanner to scan the lists and indexes compiled by Conte's staff. I would be delighted to hear about other people's experience with scanning projects, design of a database, and sampling techniques.

submitted by Gail Giroux, University of Massachusetts Amherst, internet: gg@titan.ucs.umass.edu

NEWS FROM CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Special Collections has reopened after closing during the installation of compact shelving. Over 8,600 boxes were moved.

MISSING MATERIALS

In our August, 1992 issue, the Richard B. Russell Memorial Library requested help locating thirty boxes of materials missing from the Herman E. Talmadge Collection. As of April 1994, these records are still missing. However, a manuscript historian from the Library of Congress Manuscripts Division made an interesting discovery while processing the papers of Senator Robert Taft, Jr., coming across Talmadge correspondence dating from 1964 to 1967. The Talmadge material has been transferred to the Russell Library for inclusion in the Talmadge Collection.

CALL FOR FINDING AIDS

Herb Hartsook and Cynthia Miller, in the course of preparing their workshop on congressional papers, solicited finding aids from repositories across the country to illustrate the different ways various archives have handled the problems presented by these complex collections. They will bring these for display at the Roundtable meeting. We'd love to have more to share. Please bring copies of congressional finding aids that you wish to share with your fellows.

S.A.A. Congressional Papers Roundtable
c/o Herbert J. Hartsook
South Caroliniana Library Annex
The University of South Carolina
720 College St.
Columbia, SC 29208

08/04/94 10:17 WILM DE 198 D



L. Rebecca Johnson *Melvin*
Library
University of Delaware
Newark, DE 19717-5267

