CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE
NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS

NOVEMBER 1994

Notice: Extended mailing

Please route this newsletter to the appropriate person responsible for congressional collections in your institution.

In order to reach the broad interest group of all those institutions known to collect congressional papers, this newsletter has an extended mailing from the regular membership of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable. It brings news of the recent Portland Conference and presents a survey which may further the cause of documenting the history of Congress.

A Note from the Chair:
MUTUAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE CENTER FOR LEGISLATIVE ARCHIVES

At the May 1994 meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress, committee members discussed a number of ways the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, may interact with the institutions holding congressional papers. The discussion focused on enhancing the access and outreach activities of the Center. The Congressional Papers Roundtable readily came to mind as the natural conduit for such interaction, and this article is a follow-up to that discussion. The Advisory Committee would like to have input from Roundtable members and other congressional archivistsrelating to services the Center may provide their institutions, to information and materials they may provide the Center, to possible cooperative ventures, and to ideas for encouraging research use for all congressional collections.

Since 1985, the Roundtable has been the primary group for coordinating efforts to improve preservation of the historical records of Congress. With the publication of *The Documentation of Congress* in 1992 (U. S. Senate Pub. 102-20), we set an agenda for these efforts. The recent Portland (Maine) Congressional Papers Conference brought us up-to-date from the Harpers Ferry Conference of 1985. Now is the time to move forward. The documentation study recommends a close working relationship with the Center for Legislative Archives. Together, the Roundtable and the Center can do much to accomplish the preservation, management, and use of the official and personal papers of Congress.

Sheryl Vogt, Chair, CPR
Richard B. Russell Library, University of Georgia Libraries

Congressional Papers Conference
Portland, Maine, 1994

On September 16-17, I represented the University of Delaware Library at the Congressional Papers Conference in Portland, Maine. This two day intensive was a sort of update for two earlier landmark conferences for those in the field--the 1978 Conference on the Research Use and Disposition of Senators' Papers, and the 1985 Congressional Papers Project. As the 1985 conference came to be known as the "Harpers Ferry meeting" after its location, the 1994 meeting probably will come to be known as the "Portland conference."

The Portland conference was convened and sponsored by the Margaret Chase Smith Library and Northwood University. Dr. Gregory Gallant, Director of the Smith Library, and his staff expertly organized and graciously hosted the conference. Not a minute was wasted from noon until 9:30 p.m. on Friday, nor from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Saturday. In addition to panel sessions during the day, speakers were scheduled for both the Friday dinner and Saturday lunch. Frank H. Mackaman, Director of the Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum, reprised his role of project director for the Harpers Ferry meeting and effectively moderated the Portland Conference. Mackaman joked about his current association with records of the executive branch of government and being able to excercise authority over those of us related to managing records of the congressional branch, but I think all attending appreciated his insight and benefitted from Mackaman's previous experience as Executive Director of the Everett M. Dirksen Congressional Leadership Center.

The theme of the Portland conference was "Preservation, Use, and Accessibility of the Personal Papers of Members of Congress." Following the successful format of the 1978 conference, audience and panel participants included archivists (the preservers), historians (the users), and congress members and their staffs (the records creators). Included in the materials sent to all Portland registrants was a copy of the project report from the Harpers Ferry meeting. The 1985 project, sponsored by the Dirksen

Congressional Center and the National/Historical Publications and Records Commission, examined issues related to identifying, collecting, and preserving the documentary record of Congress through institutional records and personal papers. The 1985 project identified actions and actors and laid the groundwork for congressional archivists for years ahead. The Portland conference provided an opportunity to revisit the issues, to reassess the problems, to survey the progress made, and to speculate on the future of managing congressional archives.

The format of the conference consisted of four major panels: a field update since the 1978 and 1985 conferences; a panel on the responsibilities of the creators; a panel representing historians/scholars/users of collections; and a panel projecting the future of congressional papers.

The field update included three panelists from offices involved with the institutional record of Congress: Richard Baker, Historian, U.S. Senate Historical Office; Raymond Smock, Historian, U.S. House of Representatives; and Michael Gillette, Director, Center for Legislative Archives (NARA). Baker considered two events--the 1971 death of longtime Georgia Senator Richard Russell and Watergate--as the impetus for serious rethinking of how personal papers of public figures are handled. He presented "twenty-five milestones" from the legacy of closing the office after Senator Russell's sudden death to the repercussions of access issues for Richard Nixon's tapes and papers. Volume of materials, funding to preserve, and issues of access were mentioned.

Ray Smock acknowledged the increasing amount of time spent by his office assisting members of Congress on the disposition of their personal papers. With the urgent eye of the historian, in light of funding shortages to manage congressional papers, Smock pleaded for preservation first, and suggested that we address the issues of use and access later. Smock described significant progress made: surveys locating congressional papers, training manuals for congressional archivists, establishment of a Senate Archivist (though not yet one for the House), the *Report on the Documentation of Congress*, and the contributions of SAA's Congressional Papers Roundtable. He suggested that an increased public knowledge of what Congress does might improve public opinion of it.

Michael Gillette described how the Center for Legislative Archives has broadened its role from collecting only the official institutional records of Congress to including supporting documentation such as oral histories with senior staff members of significant congressional committees. Gillette raised the scholar's plaint of dispersed resources and proposed that the Center for Legislative Archives serve as a sort of clearinghouse to let congressional scholars know what is available. The Center has collected a number of oral histories, to which Gillette invited everyone to contribute copies of their own. He also called for copies of congressional finding aids and recommended that the Center take on the responsibility of providing electronic access to these finding aids via the Internet.

Saturday's first panel addressed the responsibilities of the creators. Frank Mevers, Director and State Archivist from the State of New Hampshire, recounted what can only be described as an unfortunate situation where an understaffed, underfunded, unprepared state archives has become the respository for several large congressional collections. Frustrated with the non-involvement of several still-living congressmen whose collections he held, Mevers posed the question of whether these records creators should maintain a supporting interest in the repository. He pled for moral if not monetary support. Perhaps the only positive news from Mevers was of the state's New Hampshire Political Papers Committee, a collaboration between the State Archives, the University of New Hampshire, the Historical Society of New Hampshire, and Dartmouth.

William Brown, Head of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Miami, and the Honorable Dante B. Fascell, former U.S. Representative from the 19th District, Florida, presented a much happier scenario for the relationship between a congressman and the repository which houses his papers. Brown raised several issues related to an institution's collecting policy for papers of political figures. He spoke of the need to view an individual's papers in the context of the larger politcal collection focus, the need to balance emphasis on a high profile individual's collection with lesser ones, the acquistion of congressional collections attracting related collections or drawing additional resources, and the possible leadership role which the insitution could develop for collecting this type of material within its state or region. Brown spoke highly of his experience with acquiring the papers of Dante Fascell--how the transfer of a nearly 2,500 cubic feet collection was used as a publicity opportunity for other collections at the University of Miami, and how Rep. Fascell continued to be involved beyond the physical transfer of his collection.

The Honorable Dante Fascell served in the House for nearly forty years, from 1954-1992, and was a chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs with noted expertise on international law. Fascell described what is probably not an unusual attitude for a serving congress member--that he never had an historical sense of his own papers and that, as far as he knew, the offices of the historians of the House and Senate were the people responsible for polishing monuments. Fascell credits the survival and completeness of his papers to the politician's "survival instinct" or the need to show what was accomplished on any given project. Since donating his collection to the University of Miami, Fascell has provided ongoing support in the form of campus lectures and seminars and fund raising for collection maintenance. He said institutions need to convey the importance of fund raising activities and to convince congress members that it is not a self-serving, egotistical venture. Fascell also recommended that institutions negotiating for congressional collections should get this expectation up front and out early in discussions with donors. Finally, Fascell raised a question about the research value of representatives' papers as opposed to senators' papers. He suggested some house members' papers, i.e. speakers or other leadership members, have more value and plans should surely be made to preserve those collections. Fascell clearly had learned much about the archival value of his own collection and the archival management issues from Brown at the University of Miami. In questions and comments following the morning panel, Fascell was asked to take on an advocacy role supporting the Office of the Historian of the House in establishing an archivist's position. He responded enthusiastically and with good-natured rivalry when he learned that the Senate already had an archivist.

The second Saturday panel represented historians, scholars, and users of congressional collections. Robert D. Schulzinger, Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has visited over forty congressional repositories in the course of his research on the history of the Vietnam War. He spoke for the value of constituent correspondence and the important files of senior staff or legislative aides. Schulzinger often finds committee files more useful than collections of personal papers because they contain position papers and working memoranda. When collections include files belonging to legislative aides, they provide similar useful material. Schultzinger advised saving secondary sources such as clippings and articles within collections becasue they provide convenient access to otherwise difficult to assemble reference sources. Schulzinger recommended that finding aids could be improved by better indexing and by more clearly identifying the legislative position papers and memoranda of chief aides.

Brian Balogh, Associate Professor of History at the University of Virginia, provided a wonderful historiography of political history valuable for considering how congressional collections have been used and how they might be used in the future. He suggested that constituent correspondence is a rich source for historians. Balogh offered three observations: narrative is back in history, thus the returning popularity of biographies and accounts of great political conflicts; historians will be looking to document the story of interest groups and congressional collections can hardly be better sources; and congressional collections provide great backdoor access to classified material by suggesting the key question of what classified information to request.

Some of the challenges of researching in congressional collections were described by Julian Zelizer, a Ph.D. candidate at Johns Hopkins University. He confirmed Balogh's description of historians' renewed interest in politics, in particular an interest in the development of the federal government and how Congress has influenced federal policy. Zelizer's research on former Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee Wilbur Mills has taken him to several congressional repositories and presidential libraries. Other than from the Dirksen and Albert Centers, he noted a great dearth of funding for congressional research as opposed to the support available for presidential research. Zelizer identified obstacles to his research such as classified material, destroyed evidence in the form of missing electronic mail, the need to obtain family permissions for access to some material, the 30 year delay on access to committee records, inadequate indexing, poorly organized collections, and the decentralization of sources relevant to his work. With a nod to the future, Zelizer expressed interest in centralized access to congressional sources via the Internet.

Janann Sherman, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Memphis, is currently working on a biography of Senator Margaret Chase Smith. She described how her research, focussed on one person, has necessarily involved using the papers of several individuals. She examines Smith's career as a senator, a member of the institution of Congress, and her relations with other members of the Senate. Of her experiences with congressional collections, Sherman said that she was dismayed to find original material destroyed and replaced by microfilm; original order of files corrupted or refiled in alphabetical sequences; one senator's collection split with some of the material found out of his home state; the large volume of routine, insignificant files; and over-indexed access to some non-important collections. At one repository she was actually invited to process a collection as she used it.

The final panel of the conference addressed the future of congressional collections. John Constance, Director of Congressional Affairs at NARA, talked further of the possible role of the Center for Legislative Archives, but primarily questioned the impact of the information age on the contents of collections. He asserted that all collections of the future will have an electronic element and gave several examples of current offices' use of email for correspondence, press releases, and other communications.

Karen Paul, Senate Archivist, U.S. Senate Historical Office, acknowledged the progress made in documenting Congress. In fact, she said the concern now was not so much about how much was saved, but about the quality of what was saved. The prevalent use of PCs and LANs in offices, and the fact that many offices are in their fourth generation of systems, complicates identification and retention plans for constituent material. Paul endorsed the Center for Leglislative Archives' clearinghouse proposal and a possible Internet database, recommended collecting policy statements, and suggested oral history programs to capture some of the otherwise fugitive history of Congress.

Cynthia Miller from the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, presented issues relevant to the House which have been largely passed over in discussions and publications on documenting Congress. The greater number of representatives in the House and the district focus of collections are factors for repositories to consider before accepting papers of individuals. Miller said that House members are generally younger when they enter Congress now, and that their length of service is shorter. These changes will affect the traditional criteria of leadership and longevity used to determine research value of collections. Repositories need to continue to examine their collecting policies and appraisal decisions in light of the changing nature of Congress. Miller's office facilitates transfer of collections and emphasizes early contacts with members and their staff while still in office.

Gabrielle Michalek and Edward Galloway closed the afternoon with a forward-looking demonstration of the HELIOS project for the Senator H. John Heinz, III, Collection at Carnegie Mellon University. A description of the project is included in this newsletter.

These panel summaries are by no means comprehensive, but I hope they convey the scope of issues considered at the Portland conference. Questions followed each panel and discussions continued during lunch, dinner, and breaks. Journalist and "country editor" Hodding Carter, III, spoke at the Friday dinner and Senator William S. Cohen of Maine presented luncheon remarks on Saturday. After two days of intensive congressional thinking, conference participants were rewarded with a ferry ride to Peaks Island and a traditional Maine Lobster bake on Saturday night. *LaughingStock*, an improvisational comedy troupe, provided great entertainment with sketches related to processing congressional collections and other archival adventures. Someone must have clued them into the dangers of pulling staples, the surprises in constituent correspondence, and the world of working with undergraduates,

because they really had us laughing at ourselves. The entire conference was a great success and its organizers are to be heartily congratulated for their work in presenting it. The conference was taped and there are possible plans for a publication of the proceedings. When news of this is available, we hope to post it in the Congressional Papers Roundtable Newsletter.

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin
University of Delaware Library

News from Carnegie Mellon University - The Heinz Archives

Carnegie Mellon University has commenced work on HELIOS (The Heinz Electronic Library Interactive Online System), a first-of-its-kind, digital archive providing computer-based access to the congressional papers of the late Senator H. John Heinz III. This work is supported by a $1 million grant from the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation, Heinz Company Foundation, and the Howard and Vira I. Heinz Endowments, with additional funding from Carnegie Mellon University and CLARITECH Corporation.

HELIOS responds to a number of critical problems:

. Preservation. HELIOS pioneers a digital archival method of high-resolution scanning and image storage.

. Access. Since HELIOS will be available via the Internet, users will not need to travel to the University. The archives can better serve its primary audience -- scholars and public-policy professionals -- and extend the reach of primary source material to new users.

. Scholarship. Researchers can explore the archives in new ways using powerful new text-searching and organizing tools.

HELIOS will support conventional archival access to materials and add powerful new functions of searching and linking across the entire collection. Building the digital archives involves several processes:

. The documents are processed and prepared for long-term physical storage. Finding aids will depict the arrangement and description of the material. Approximately one million pages representing entire series/subseries are then transferred into electronic format.
. The documents are scanned, resulting in facsimile images for display on a computer screen.
. The resulting page images are transformed into searchable text (ASCII) using a process called optical character recognition (OCR).
. Archivists review the page images and text to verify the quality, add notations, construct topical indices, and create links to other documents, subseries and series.
. The documents are automatically content-indexed by CLARIT, a full-text and image-management system developed by Pittsburgh-based CLARITECH Corporation.
. Researchers will access HELIOS through a newly designed graphical user interface integrated into Carnegie Mellon's advanced online library information system (LIS) available on campus and Internet networks.

HELIOS offers unprecedented facilities for browsing, searching, and analyzing an archive's holdings. Researchers will be able to:

. View high-quality images of documents.
. Explore the archive from multiple perspectives using topical indices constructed by archivists with the use of HELIOS tools.
. Work with documents in the context of their original organization (series-, subseries-, and folder-level).
. Issue plain-English queries that search the entire collection for relevant documents and present them in order of relevance.
. Follow hypertext links that weave together documents throughout the archives.
. Add personal annotations, with the option of publicizing them for others to see and respond.
. Obtain printed copies of documents.

The Heinz collection is a rich source of information about the Senator's contributions to the U.S. Congress and the social and political concerns of the nation during his tenure. The digital version of this collection promises to dramatically transform the way in which an archives can serve its users.

Edward Galloway
Carnegie Mellon University

CENTER FOR LEGISLATIVE ARCHIVES REACHES OUT

Sheryl Vogt has invited me to elicit Roundtable members' and other congressional archivists' suggestions on potential areas of cooperation among our institutions. I believe that we have an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and develop cooperative projects as the Center for Legislative Archives prepares to move into its new research facility overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue. The Center, which administers the official historical records of Congress, has a multifaceted mission: to serve the ongoing needs of Congress by preserving its records and providing timely access to them, to document as fully as possible the history of Congress and the legislative process, to encourage and facilitate scholarship on Congress, and to make the legislative records more meaningful to the public, especially in educational applications.

By advancing this agenda in imaginative ways, we can help overcome some of the significant obstacles to congressional scholarship while promoting greater public understanding of the legislative process. These obstacles include diffusion of documentation on Congress among hundreds of institutions throughout the country and the failure of the written record to capture the whole story behind the legislative process. I would like your thoughts on how the Center can assist scholars and other institutions by serving as a national clearinghouse for information on congressional documentation.

The initiatives described in the attached survey represent opportunities for the congressional papers community to coordinate efforts for the benefits of congressional research. I shall welcome any feedback on these plans as well as additional suggestions for further cooperation.

Michael Gillette
Center for Legislative Archives, NARA

CALL FOR NEWS

The February (?) issue of the newsletter will contain minutes from the CPR meeting at the annual SAA conference held in Indiannapolis, September 7 - 11, 1994 We also hope to include excerpts from the two presentations by Brian Williams, University of Michigan, and Naomi Nelson, Emory University. Please send other news and contributions to the editor:

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DATED MATERIAL: PLEASE RETURN SURVEY BY NOVEMBER 30

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS ROUNDTABLE - CENTER FOR LEGISLATIVE ARCHIVES
SURVEY

Making finding aids more easily accessible offers one way to address the problem of dispersed congressional sources.

1. Should the Center make its finding aids to standing committee records available online?

2. Would repositories of congressional papers like to have printed copies of these resources?

3. If so, which committee finding aids would your institution prefer?

4. Would you be willing to provide the Center with copies of your finding aids to congressional papers so that we can make them available to our researchers?

5. If so, in what format, print or media, would you prefer to provide the copies?

6. In what other ways can the Center utilize finding aids to serve as a clearinghouse for resources on Congress?

The Documentation of Congress **report provides an excellent roadmap to realize a more complete documentation of the legislative process. As the Center strives to implement the report's recommendations, beginning with the acquisition of the records of legislative support agencies, special interest caucuses, and party conferences, your ideas will be appreciated.**

1. What suggestions do you have regarding the Center's role in fulfilling the report's recommendations?

2. How can the Center help repositories of congressional papers advance the report's ambitious agenda?

The Center has recently launched a pilot project to establish an interview collection on Congress and its members. The collection includes interviews conducted by individual scholars and journalists as well as oral histories undertaken by other institutions. The transcripts are being scanned onto an infotext database so that word searches may be conducted throughout the universe of text. We also hope to offer this resource online in the future and to supplement it with additional Congress-related oral histories conducted by our office. The selected software will enable us to supply participating repositories with statistical reports tracking research use of interviews from their collections.

1. Will you provide the Center with transcripts or diskettes of your congressional interviews for the infotext project?

2. What concerns or requirements do you have in considering participation in this project?

3. How can we encourage additional congressional interview projects to document more fully the legislative process?

Looking to the future:

1. As a clearinghouse for information on congressional documentation, should the Center pursue setting up a national electronic database?

2. If so, how do you envision such a database would work?

3. Five years from now, how do you envision the Center and your repository working together?

4. Any other ideas, suggestions, or concerns for consideration?

Please detach and return completed survey to Sheryl Vogt (Richard B. Russell Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA 30602-1641; 706-542-0619, fax 706-542-4144) **by November 30, 1994**. We intend to give the Advisory Committee members the survey results at their December meeting. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration in answering the survey.

Sheryl Vogt
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