



Congressional Papers Roundtable

NEWSLETTER

Society of American Archivists

February 2008

From the Chair

Kate Cruikshank

As I prepared to write my first "Notes from the Chair," I engaged in a bit of archival research in past CPR newsletters and was rewarded with new discoveries and a vivid reminder of just what a vigorous history the Congressional Papers Roundtable has. A new addition to our website (<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/cpr/index.asp>) is the "Chronology of Advances in Managing Congressional Papers," which I think may impress even veteran members. Our newsletters on the site track our progress from 1996 and offer important resources for present reference, ranging from a brief bibliography on processing time to efforts to describe the ideal congressional papers repository. A list of some of these resources appears on p. 3-4 of this newsletter. The newsletters bring together news of activities from the Center on Legislative Archives at NARA, the Senate Historical Office, the House of Representatives Office of History and Preservation, the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress (established by Public Law 101-509 to develop long-range plans for the management and preservation of the records of

Continued on Page 2

Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress – January 28, 2008

The Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress held its 34th semi-annual meeting on January 28, 2008, in the Archivist's board room of the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary of the Senate Nancy Erickson, and Clerk of the House Lorraine Miller. Among numerous issues discussed, of special interest was a report from Robin Reeder, Archivist in the Office of History and Preservation, U.S. House of Representatives, on the recent return to House custody of two letters from President Richard Nixon to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino. The letters outlined the President's reasons for not obeying Committee subpoenas for materials relating to the Watergate investigations in 1974.

(A further description of these letters and their travels away from, and back to the House, can be found on p. 3 in the newsletter.)

The Committee also discussed a joint resolution proposed to be introduced in the both the Senate and the House that will encourage members to ensure the preservation of their papers relating to official duties. This resolution will not have the force to compel any member to preserve their papers, but will stand as an additional reminder to members on the importance of this issue. The Clerk of the House has forwarded the proposed text of this resolution to the Committee on House Administration.

Continued on page 3

In This Issue:

Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress	1	Institutional News.....	5
Call for Nominations.....	9	In The News.....	7
From the Chair	1	SAA Annual Meeting Minutes....	10
Guidelines for Managing Congressional Papers Project	8	SAA Pre-Conference Program.....	12

From the Chair (cont. from page 1)

Congress and report to Congress and to the Archivist of the United States), the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress (formally established in 2004), and the many repositories across the country caring for congressional papers. They let us follow the development of models for such repositories, like the Richard Russell Library at the University of Georgia under the leadership of Sheryl Vogt and the South Carolina Political Archives under the leadership of Herb Hartsook. We learn about the longstanding and continuing contributions of such pioneering members as Karen Paul, Cynthia Pease Miller, Rebecca Johnson Melvin, and Jeff Suchanek as task forces were formed to address preservation standards, public policy standards, guidelines for management, and the challenges and opportunities of the worldwide web and electronic records. And we can track the development of the resources we have come to take for granted in the Congressional Biographical Directory and the Center for Legislative Archives' website on congressional collections.

The award last year of an NHPRC grant to the Congressional Papers Roundtable for development of *Guidelines for Managing Congressional Papers* was the culmination of great efforts over a long period of time on the part of several of our members and will be a major contribution to our field, not only for the common ground it will offer all of us but for the channels of communication it can open up among donors, potential recipient repositories, and the archivists who actually manage the collections. Jeff Thomas gives us an update on *Guidelines* progress in this newsletter.

The *Guidelines* will join Karen Paul's *Records Management Handbook for United States Senators* and the new edition of the House of Representatives *Records Management Manual for Members* as basic resources for our work, but I'd like to remind us all as well of the visionary report of the Congressional Archivists Roundtable Task Force on Congressional Documentation issued in 1992 under Karen Paul's leadership, *The Documentation of Congress*. Confronted with the all-too-familiar difficulties of large disorganized collections, insufficient time and resources, and donor expectations that don't necessarily consider any of those, we may forget the larger enterprise of which we are part. Terry Eastwood, in a 2002 article in *Archivaria* (no. 54, pp.

59-71) entitled "Reflections on the Goal of Archival Appraisal in Democratic Societies," suggested that the goal of all archives, public and private, is "to serve citizens of a democratic society with the sources for understanding how they have governed themselves in the past, how they have come to be where they are, and how they may best plot their continued course of action" (71). I'd like to suggest that we try to think about how our particular piece, congressional papers, contribute to achieving that goal.

The answer may seem obvious, but all congressional papers collections are not equal. The appraisal that is done before the papers leave the office will very likely tend to enhance the image of the member whose office has generated them, but it will not necessarily leave the evidence of the actual processes of decision-making intact. I recently read Eric Redman's *The Dance of Legislation* (Simon & Schuster, 1973), published less than five years after Redman moved from avid supporter of his senator's reelection campaign to almost accidental staff shepherd for a controversial piece of legislation. His book is providing for me both a revelation of all that is missing from a collection of a prominent Congressman recently received well trimmed and a beacon for appraisal and understanding in working with a senatorial collection from which virtually nothing was removed before it was shipped. Redman may help me toward the goal Eastwood lays out for us.

We are receiving support from public quarters as well. Max Evans, in reporting on the restructuring of the NHPRC archival records grants in an August 2007 SAA session stated emphatically that we have an obligation to disclose our holdings to the public. To that end the NHPRC has instituted its Basic Projects grants to help institutions tackle their backlogs and make them accessible at least at a rudimentary level. Once that is accomplished, repositories are eligible for Detailed Processing Projects grants. The NARA Center for Legislative Archives is providing a model for us all in publicly acknowledging its substantial backlog of undescribed materials, for which it is now in the process of developing and implementing a plan for making records at least minimally accessible.

THE NHPRC suggests another fruitful direction for us to pursue, namely collaborations either statewide or across state lines. The Preserving the

American Historical Record (PAHR) initiative to draft and lobby for legislation providing grants to states can serve as a model. In all of our states there are congressional papers collections that we may or may not know about, processed to varying degrees and in varying ways, even within one institution.

Regardless of their current state, these are all potentially valuable for our understanding of how our government works and collectively part of the comprehensive documentation of Congress we seek to build. Developing an awareness of what we have statewide is a first step; beginning to talk about possible collaborations on making them accessible would be a second one and one for which financial support could very possibly be found.

A serendipity of undertaking such conversations might well be that those of us with very little in the way of resources and our members with strong support and experience can more clearly feel part of the same enterprise, struggling with the same decisions and trying to achieve the same goals. While there is a view that congressional papers would ideally be located only in repositories with adequate resources to provide optimum conditions for their preservation, arrangement, description, and use, the reality is that members of Congress will continue to place their papers in accordance with their own wishes and loyalties. Improved guidance from our new *Guidelines* notwithstanding, we can expect papers to continue to be widely dispersed and, if we view citizen access as desirable, that may not be bad. As archivists we can counter that dispersion through our networking and collaboration and a sense of a collective commitment to documenting and making available to Americans the evidence of how they govern themselves through our representative democracy.

Many thanks to attendees at the 2007 CPR meeting for electing me your chair. I am honored and look forward to serving you both this year and next as immediate past chair. Look to our next newsletter for an exciting program planned for San Francisco!

Kate Cruikshank

Some Treasures from past CPR newsletters:

The following by no means constitute all the jewels in past newsletters, which consistently provide updates on a wide variety of issues in the minutes of CPR business meetings and announcements of new resources and collections.

Bibliographies:

Processing Time Bibliography (4 entries), March 1996, pp. 7-8.

Congressional Archives: Selected Bibliography, compiled by Cynthia Pease Miller, March 1997, pp. 1-6.

Classified Documents:

"Federal Team Reviews Henry M. Jackson Papers," by Carla Rickerson, March 2005, p. 11.

"What to Do If: You Find National Security Classified Documents When Processing a Collection of Congressional Papers OR You are Unexpectedly Visited by Agency Declassification Officials," by Karen Paul, July 2005, pp. 1, 3-4.

"Classified Documents in Congressional Collections: What You Should Know," report of presentations by Bill Leonard of NARA's Information Security and Oversight Office and Dorothy Hazelrigg of Modern Political Collections at the University of South Carolina, March 2006, p. 13-14.

Committee Records:

"Congressional Papers and Committee Records: Private vs. Public Ownership," by Karen Paul, February 2004, p. 1, 8-13.

"Rutgers University Returns Labor Committee Records to the Senate," by Karen Paul, March 2007, p. 13.

Electronic Records:

Presentation on electronic records in Congressional offices by Naomi Nelson and Ben Bensman, in Minutes of 1998 Annual Meeting, November 1998, p. 1-2.

Legislation on Congressional Papers:

"Transferring Senators' Papers: The Consolidated Appropriations Act," by Alan Haeberle, July 2005, p. 7.

Processing Problems:

"Run Into Any Boxes Labeled Redactron or Robo Files Lately?" by Jeff Suchanek, July 2001, p. 6.

"Reappraising Congressional Papers," by Karyl Winn, March 2005, pp. 13-14.

References to new online resources on legislative indexing vocabulary and congressional vocabulary, March 2006, p. 9.

Standards for Repositories:

"Congressional Collections Repositories" in response to the Public Policy Centers task force report asking the CPR to define and set standards for policy centers, March 2003, pp. 7-8.

Users of Congressional Papers:

Reference to the Summer 1998 issue of the Organization of American Historians' Magazine of History on exploring and teaching Congressional History, February 1999, pp. 12-13.

"Political Scientists: Strangers in a Wonderland," by Scott A. Frisch and Sean Q. Kelly about their work within the American Political Science Association to encourage archival research on Congress, July 2004, pp. 5-7.

"Ready to Talk: Political Scientists and Congressional Archivists," by Rebecca Johnson Melvin, March 2005, pp. 11-13.

Reference to July 2005 issue of *Extension of Remarks* entitled *Using Archival Sources in Legislative Research: Choosing the Road Less Traveled*, edited by Sean Q.

Kelly with contributions by CPR members and archivists, March 2006, p. 9

Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress (cont from page 1)

Richard Hunt of the Center for Legislative Archives at NARA presented the Annual Report of the Center to the Committee. He also introduced Ted Clark, an information technology specialist recently hired by NARA, who will be working with CLA to help process the increasing volume of electronic records coming into the Archives.

Since the Committee approved the minutes of their last meeting, held June 25, 2007, those minutes will soon be posted online on the webpage for the Advisory Committee which is maintained by the Center for Legislative Archives.

<http://www.archives.gov/legislative/cla/advisory-committee/index.html>

Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee, going back to June 2004, are also posted, and the minutes of this latest meeting will be available there after they are approved following the next meeting of the committee, scheduled for September 2008.

Alan H. Haeberle

Nixon-Rodino Letters Returned

The Office of History and Preservation, Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, assisted by the Center for Legislative Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, is very pleased to report the receipt of two letters written by President Richard Nixon to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino which were a part of the House Judiciary Committee records during the impeachment inquiry held in 1974. In the letters, written on May 22 and June 9, President Nixon outlines the reasons he will not comply with the subpoenas issued to him to produce tapes and diaries relating to the Watergate break-in. Although the letters are official committee records, which should have remained with the records of the U.S. House of Representatives, the letters ended up in private hands and were scheduled for auction through a manuscript dealer. The National Archives' Office of Inspector General first alerted the Center for Legislative Archives about the impending sale, and attorneys from the House's Office of the General Counsel and the Department of Justice convinced the individual seller and manuscript dealer to relinquish the letters to the House. The letters now reside with the official House Committee on the Judiciary records at the Center for Legislative Archives. Special thanks goes out to staff at the Seton Hall University Law School Library for verifying that the letters did once reside in the Congressional papers of Chairman Rodino, along with other Judiciary Committee records from the Nixon Impeachment Inquiry, since-returned to the House.

Robin Reeder



INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

The Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University Carbondale officially opened the papers of Jeanne Hurley Simon, wife of Sen. Paul Simon and an Illinois state legislator, on October 17, 2007, in conjunction with a Jeanne Hurley Simon Memorial Lecture sponsored by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at SIUC. The lecture was given by Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne Burke. Exhibitions from Jeanne Simon's papers were mounted at SIUC and in Troy, Illinois, the Simons first home.

Rutgers University

The Harrison A. Williams, Jr. Papers project at Rutgers University, originally funded for two years through the end of 2007, has been extended to June 30, 2008. Williams represented New Jersey in the U.S. Senate from 1959 until 1982. He also served in the House of Representatives from 1953 through 1956. Initially totaling over 2000 cubic feet, the collection was formally donated by the late Williams's wife in 2005 to Rutgers, where the papers had been held since his resignation from the Senate.

Staffed by two full-time archivists and part-time student work, the Williams project has completed to date over 1450 cubic feet, of which 650 cubic feet were retained, 200 cubic feet of Committee records were returned to the Senate, and 600 cubic feet were discarded. An inventory of the processed papers, including container lists for over 23,000 folders, has been encoded in EAD by project archivist Soo Lee, and will be available in early 2008 via the web page of Rutgers Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives. Constituent correspondence, project files, case files, and much of the legislative files comprised the principal focus of work for the project's first two years.

The collection holds rich material on a tremendously wide variety of international, national, regional, and New Jersey subjects of research interest. Accordingly, a major objective of the project has been to describe the collection in ways that will encourage its use by local historians, undergraduates, and other non-traditional users of Congressional papers. In support of

Another exhibition will be mounted in March for women's history month at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (the state historical library) in Springfield.

SCRC also reports the completion of a preliminary inventory of the papers of U. S. Congressman Kenneth J. Gray (D., Ill., 1955-1974, 1985-1988). Processing continues on the papers of Senator Paul Simon.

Walter Ray

this objective, a key processing strategy has been the use of expanded folder-level descriptions and subject terms for select series in order to facilitate navigation through the collection by researchers across a range of experience. For example, supplementary index terms, such as municipality name, were added to the folder description of project files to increase the discoverability of the contents.

* * *

On April 8, 2008, Professor James A. Wooten of the University at Buffalo Law School will give the Louis Faugères Bishop III Lecture at Rutgers University on the subject "Tracking history in the making: The research value of political papers." The endowed lecture is an annual event featuring diverse topics related to the collection and use of rare books and manuscripts.

To prepare *The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974: A Political History*, which traces the development and passage of a law that affects tens of millions of workers, author James Wooten drew upon many Congressional papers including those of Jacob K. Javits at Stony Brook University and of Harrison A. Williams, Jr. at Rutgers University. In this lecture, Professor Wooten will discuss the research value of political papers and their impact on scholarship in law, history, political science, and public policy. The lecture is free and open to the public. For further information, see the news and events page at www.libraries.rutgers.edu/. To RSVP, call 732-445-5688 732-932-7505 or send email to events@rci.rutgers.edu.

Larry Weimer

Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics

A representative sample of 250 images from the photograph collection of the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics Archive, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas is now online at <http://doleimages.ku.edu>

The Dole Archive houses and makes available the papers, photographs, artifacts and audio visual materials relating to the life and political career of Robert J. Dole, former U.S. Congressman (1960-1969), Senator (1970-1996) and Presidential Candidate (1996).

As part of their summer internship in the Dole Archive, KU students Susan Alig and Sally Campbell selected, described and digitized 250 photographs that best represent Senator Dole's life and career. The images highlight major legislative and humanitarian contributions by Senator Dole, as well as important

South Carolina Political Collections

Since its formation in 1991, South Carolina Political Collections at the University of South Carolina has used oral history to supplement its major collections. Often, donors of collections are interviewed to ensure that their careers are documented as fully as possible. Staff, family, and associates are also good candidates for interviews. In addition to interviews related to specific collections, SCPC is engaged in a major oral history project documenting the rise of the Republican Party in South Carolina. Typical interviews require two to eight hours. All interviews are transcribed and edited.

Late in 2007, SCPC began to make its edited transcripts available in electronic format on its web site <http://www.sc.edu/library/scpc/>. SCPC should have at least fifty interviews on the site by the end of 2009. The first transcripts placed on the web include major interviews conducted by the University's McKissick Museum with powerful state senator

University of Maryland

The University of Maryland Libraries recently required a small collection of family letters belonging to the Honorable Frederick Stone, who was a member of Congress from 1867-1871. This collection dates from 1864-1903 and consists of correspondence to Frederick Stone from his wife, Jennie, and his daughters, especially his daughter Bessie Brown, who wrote to him from New Orleans, and who died after a long illness in 1889.

events in his personal life. KU librarians John Miller and Sarah Goodwin Thiel provided technological assistance for the project.

This online collection, is one of 20 University of Kansas image collections which together contain over 240,000 images in categories as diverse as Art, Politics and Medicine. [See example here](#). Because it uses Luna Insight photo management technology, the images can be searched and examined at high magnifications.

The online collection is available for viewing to anyone with internet access.

For more information about the Dole photograph collection contact A/V Archivist, Judy Sweets at asweets@ku.edu or call 785-864-1420.

Judith Sweets

Rembert Dennis (1915-1992), and by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History with governor Robert E. McNair (1923-2007). The other interviews feature Charlie Boineau (1923-2005), the first Republican elected to the South Carolina General Assembly since Reconstruction; Watson Dorn and Steve Griffith recalling the 1950 congressional campaign of William Jennings Bryan Dorn (1916-2005); Martha Edens, former Republican National Committeewoman; Marshall Parker (b.1922), former state senator; Tom Pope (1913-1999), prominent Newberry attorney and Speaker of the SC House; Ted Riley (1900-1994), Democratic Party Chairman; Dan Ross (b.1923), state Republican Party chairman; and John West (1922-2004), Governor and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Herbert J. Hartsook

Former congressman Daniel B. Brewster died on August 19, 2007 at the age of eighty-three. His family recently donated additional materials to include in Brewster's papers, which are housed at the University of Maryland Libraries. These new materials will be incorporated into the already-processed collection, the finding aid to which is available online at <http://hdl.handle.net/1903.1/1701>.

Jennie Levine

Carl Albert Center

The Carl Albert Center recently acquired the papers of James R. Jones. A native of Muskogee, Oklahoma, Jones had a distinguished career in politics. At the age of 28, he became the appointments secretary (now known as chief of staff) to President Lyndon B. Johnson. In 1972, Jones was elected by Oklahoma's First District to the U.S. House of Representatives. During seven terms in the House he served on numerous committees, including Armed Services, Interior and Insular Affairs, Ways and Means, and Budget. Jones later served as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, 1993-1997.

Carl Albert Center Archivist Jeanene Letcher, who has done extensive work in the Center's William H. "Alfalfa Bill" Murray Collection, was interviewed by Oklahoma City television station KWTU for a news piece celebrating the centennial of Oklahoma statehood. Letcher displayed several pieces of memorabilia from the Murray Collection and explained their significance. One of the most colorful politicians in Oklahoma history, Murray (1869-1956) is considered the father of the Oklahoma state constitution. A Democrat, he served in the U.S. House from 1913-1916.

Archivists Carolyn Hanneman, Erin Sloan, and Jeanene Letcher attended the premiere of the film, "Dream No Little Dream: The Legacy of Robert S. Kerr," in Oklahoma City. Most of the photographs used in the film were from the Carl Albert Center's Robert S. Kerr Collection. A Democrat, Kerr served the state of Oklahoma as governor, 1943-1946, and then in the U.S. Senate, 1949-1962.

A traveling exhibit, created by Carl Albert Center archivists in celebration of Oklahoma's statehood centennial, was viewed by 66,000 people at thirteen different sites across the state in 2007. The exhibit, "We Know We Belong to the Land: A Hundred Years of Oklahoma and the Congress," can also be viewed on the web:

<http://www.ou.edu/special/albertctr/archives/exhibit/centennial.htm>.

Carolyn Hanneman

Senate Establishes In-House Listserv for "Archivists"

The Senate has established an in-house listserv for "archivists" to discuss record-keeping problems and solutions, distribute helpful announcements, and otherwise create an informed network of professional archivists and those tasked with performing archival duties in a Senate office. Karen Paul invites any CPR members who have something to share to this group to send an announcement directly to her at karen_paul@sec.senate.gov. If it fits the goals of the group she will post it. Items that CPR members might wish to communicate could include notices of exhibits, mention of donations of collections, announcements of a speaker series or oral history projects, in short items that will demonstrate the significance of and varied uses of congressional collections.

Karen Paul



In the News:

Library's Delaware Collection Spans 2 Centuries of First State Politics (UDaily, August 7, 2007)

The Delaware Collection, housed in the Special Collections Department of the University of Delaware Library, is the perfect place for historians and students of Delaware politics to research the personal papers of Delaware politicians and their families. The library has a strong record of collecting these sources to document the history of Delaware, including politics and government. ([full story](#))



SENATE HISTORICAL OFFICE SEEKS RUSSELL BUILDING PHOTOGRAPHS

In 2009 the Senate will celebrate the centennial of the Russell Senate Office Building, with an exhibit and a booklet on the history of the building. The Senate Historical Office is seeking photographs of various senators' offices and committee rooms in the Russell Building, from any time period, particular photographs that show the daily routines of the offices, such as senators and staff at their desks, holding meetings, and greeting visitors. Please contact Senate photo historian: [Heather Moore@sec.senate.gov](mailto:Heather_Moore@sec.senate.gov) (202) 224-0754.

Guidelines for Managing Congressional Papers Project

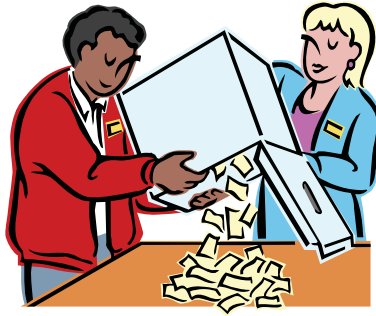
Significant progress has been made towards the publication of the NHPRC funded "Guidelines for Managing Congressional Papers" since I last reported on the project at the CPR meeting in Chicago last August. As mentioned during the meeting, the editorial board met with Cynthia Pease Miller, the publication's author, in Chicago to critique Cynthia's first draft. Following this meeting, Cynthia quickly provided the board with a second draft incorporating the revisions suggested during the editorial board meeting. This second draft led to further recommendations and revisions that culminated in a final draft submitted to Teresa Brinati, SAA's Director of Publications, on November 1, 2007.

The next step in the process was to have two individuals not associated with the project, but highly qualified due to their familiarity with the management of congressional collections, review the November 2007 draft. Cynthia received the comments and suggestions of the reviewers in mid-January 2008. I am pleased to report that both reviews were decidedly positive. The reviews contained a number of helpful recommendations to enhance what both reviewers determined was a well written and solid manuscript.

As of this report, Cynthia is in the process of revising the manuscript to incorporate suggestions provided in the reviews. The revised draft is to be sent to SAA by the first week of March. SAA will then submit the manuscript to a copy editor as the first step in the actual publication process. The goal remains to have the Guidelines published prior to the SAA annual meeting in August.

I fully expect to have further news about the Guidelines project for the next issue of the newsletter. Thanks go out to the members of the editorial board and especially to Cynthia Pease Miller for all the hard work put in to move the project along towards final publication.

Jeff Thomas
Ohio State University



Call for Nominations

The Nominating Committee invites expressions of interest or nominations of candidates for three positions on the steering committee of the Congressional Papers Roundtable: a vice-chair/chair-elect and two new members of the steering committee. **Nominations are due by June 1, 2008.**

The **vice-chair/chair-elect** serves as acting chair in the absence of the chair and participates as a member of the steering committee in all its activities. Candidates should be able to make a commitment for three years to serve one year each as vice-chair/chair-elect, chair, and immediate past chair. (The chair directs and reports the activities of the roundtable, organizes and conducts the annual meeting of the roundtable and the steering committee, acts as liaison for the roundtable to other bodies, appoints roundtable committees as needed, and handles administrative matters. The immediate past chair serves as a member of the steering committee and as chair of the Nominating Committee.)

Two new Steering Committee members, for the term 2008-2010. The Steering Committee directs and coordinates activities of the roundtable and approves appointments made by the chair if vacancies occur. Committee members serve a two year term. They help set agenda for the year, appoint a newsletter editor if necessary, contribute to the newsletter as needed, assist in the planning of the annual business meeting and SAA program sessions sponsored by the roundtable. Steering Committee members are expected to attend the annual meeting.

If you are interested in participating or if you have a nomination please contact any member of the Nominating Committee:

Jeff Thomas, Chair
thomas.1082@osu.edu
(614) 688-8529

Brian Keough
bkeough@uamail.albany.edu
(518) 437-3931

Mary McKay
mmckay@willamette.edu
(503) 370-6764

Annual Congressional Papers Roundtable Meeting

SAA Conference, Chicago, IL August 30, 2007

Meeting was opened with introduction of the Steering Committee. The Nominating Committee then introduced the candidates for the positions of: Chair, Vice-Chair and Steering Committee. Ballots were distributed to attendees.

Sheryl Vogt, an SAA Program Committee representative spoke about plans for the 2008 SAA meeting in San Francisco. The program committee believes that is a pivotal time for our profession, and they are seeking session proposals that address professional issues such as the identity and future of archivists, as well as how archivists are adapting to issues in the preservation and access of electronic records. Special consideration will be given to sessions that are endorsed by roundtables, and selection criteria will be made available.

SAA Council Liaison Ben Primer addressed recent changes to sections and roundtables. He praised the CPR newsletter as being one of the best roundtable newsletters. He also addressed a new SAA legislative initiative known as the Partnership for the American Historical Record. This bill, if passed, will provide \$50 million in grants for preserving historical records. He asked all members to consider discussing this matter with their representatives.

Reports from Institutional Representatives

Matt Fulgham, Center for Legislative Resources, National Archives

Mr. Fulgham gave an update on the flooding that occurred in the NARA building in Washington DC. There was some damage to facilities, but no records were damaged.

Budget cuts have forced NARA to reduce research room hours, but they are hopeful that proposed legislation will provide funding to restore hours and repair flood damage

Mr. Fulgham described a significant backlog of description in the Legislative Center. This backlog is created by the tremendous amount of materials being generated in each congressional session. He estimates 2,000 feet of records generated in the House and 3,000 feet of records generated in Senate per Congress. Some of the increase in records is attributed to the growth of committees and subcommittees. To combat this problem archivists are planning a "triage"

processing method to make useful records available sooner.

The records of the 9/11 commission have begun to be transferred to the Legislative Center. The records include over 500 feet of materials plus extensive electronic records. Many of the records of the commission are highly sensitive and in some cases, classified, but archivists are reviewing materials in an effort to make available as much as possible. Legislative commissions are not subject the FOIA laws, however, because of interest in the commission papers, archivists have been given a mandate to make the collection available by January 2009.

The Legislative Center has observed that many congressional committees want to go "all digital," and NARA has agreed to hire an electronic records specialist to work with the House and Senate. There is also significant electronic media found scattered throughout existing collections.

Robin Reeder, House Office of History and Preservation

There is a new Clerk of the House, Lorraine C. Miller. She is the first African-American Clerk, and will oversee the Office of History and Preservation.

The main focus of the office of History and Preservation has been the records of committees. By December of 2006 the office had received about 1100 feet of materials. The office held special meetings for committee members on records management procedures in addition to their continued efforts to provide records management advice to members of the House of Representatives. The office has produced a records management handbook and brochure for representatives. Roundtable members can obtain one by emailing Robin.

There have been two meetings of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. This group is also discussing electronic records issues.

The curatorial portion of the offices work had been focused on acquiring new objects.

The Historical Publications office has been writing and updating the Minorities in Congress series. They also provide reference to Congress members and the public. There were 810 reference requests in 2006.

The office has continued their oral history program, and continues to update the biographical dictionary of congressional members.

Karen Paul, Senate Historical Office

Ms. Paul could not attend. Her report was read in her absence. At the June 27, 2007 meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress the gift tax issue was identified as a priority and discussed. This is pertinent as 5 of the 11 out going Senators in this session have not designated a repository for their records. The committee also discussed electronic records issues.

The Senate website has posted two new oral histories.

Kate Cruikshank, Association of Centers for the Study of Congress Report

ACSC currently has 42 institutional members. The four areas of focus for conference were:

1. Determining how scholars want to use collections
The importance of providing online access is at the forefront of this issue. Scholars want detailed finding aids and item level access. Digitization of audio and video is very much in demand, as are staff lists and contact information. There has been talk of a single point of access to congressional collections.

2. Oral Histories

Oral Histories can contain very valuable information that is not reflected in the archival collection. In order to produce meaningful oral histories the interviewer must be very informed.

3. Website Development

ACSC members presented their own website developments at the meeting. Many members are taking on digital initiatives.

4. Government centers

The director of the Woodrow Wilson Center spoke on their efforts.

Presentation: Senate Correspondence Management Systems

Naomi Nelson, Emory University

Alan Haeberle, Office of Senator Orin Hatch

Ms. Nelson and Mr. Haeberle gave a history and discussion about the various systems and technologies used to create and track congressional correspondence. Computerized Correspondence Management Systems (CMS) are useful to congressional offices because they can generate reports and , mailing lists and indexes. There are down sides to these systems including possible data loss and the potential for human error.

There are currently three CMS available for Senators to use. In the future archives will be responsible for manipulating this data into a useable format. An open source CMS would be ideal for use in archiving this data.

Report on NHPRC funded Guidelines Project

The NHPRC grant was awarded to the Roundtable in July 2007 and runs through June 2008. Cynthia Peace Miller has been hired to write the Guidelines. The editorial board includes: L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin, Kate Cruikshank, Linda Whitaker, Alan Haeberle and Herb Hastook. The first draft has already been reviewed.

The grant provides for printing 500 hard copies of the guidelines. It will also be made available on the SAA website. The target audience for the publication will be Congressmen, administrators and archivists. The Guide will include best practices drawing from the 1985 Harper's Ferry Task Force, cost estimates, and broad topics such as acquisitions, processing, outreach and donor relations.

Congressional Papers Roundtable – Pre-Conference Program

SAA Conference, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago, IL August 29, 2007

The pre-conference session was a panel discussion on the acquisition of congressional records.

Abigail Dixon – History Associates Incorporated

Ms. Dixon spoke about her work with History Associates, a for-profit company located in Rockville, Maryland. She has worked with Congressmen to close out their offices and prepare records for transfer and retention.

According to Ms. Dixon, most congressional staff members are well informed of records management procedures, although she has observed some poor practices. For example, legislative assistant files, which often contain research and background information, are routinely kept by congressional offices even though these files add unnecessary bulk to collections.

Ms. Dixon offered some advice to repositories in dealing with collections arriving from newly closed or soon-to-close congressional offices:

- Conduct a survey of materials prior to their arrival at your facility. In doing so you will know the size of the collection and the media types that you will be dealing with. Do not trust staff estimates of materials.
- Encourage the congressional staff to prepare for the office closing by preparing materials and inventories.
- Maintain dialogue with Congress member and staff in Washington and in the local office. Keep staff members informed about what is happening.
- Make contact early on with the Congressional office and go over collection policies with them.

Chris Burns – University of Vermont

Mr. Burns spoke about the acquisition of the Senator James Jeffords Papers and the future acquisition of the Senator Patrick Leahy Papers. Senator Jeffords is well known for having defected from the Republican Party in 2001, becoming an Independent.

The University contacted Senator Jeffords early in his career and was able to establish a relationship and advise his office of record keeping practices. When it was known that Senator Jeffords would be leaving office, archivists were able to gain access to collections

and “pre-process” them before they even left the office. Senator Leahy has hired a part time archivist to manage his records. Senator Jeffords also hired an archivist when the process of transferring records began.

The Jeffords Papers were about 600 linear feet when they arrived at the university, and contained very few electronic records. It is expected that it will be the last collection of its kind in that respect. Senator Jeffords office contributed much time and staff resources to maintaining and transferring the collection. It is expected that the Leahy Papers will be over 3,000 linear feet.

The university is trying to establish new relationships with incoming congressmen.

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin – University of Delaware

University of Delaware holds an extensive Congressional Papers archive. Ms. Melvin spoke about the acquisition of papers from retiring Congressman, as well as the contacts being made with current Congressmen.

The university has recently acquired the Tom Carper Papers, and has made contacts with Mike Castle’s office to acquire his papers.

Mike Castle was elected in 1992, and has been very good with responding to university requests. He has designated “point people” in his office to work with archives staff. Archivists have also met with DC and local staffers at the university to tour the archives. Archivists routinely visit the congressional office to continue discussions and perform quick surveys of materials.

Other issues brought up by Ms. Melvin include:

- Ensuring that software applications are included with the transmittal of electronic records
- Informing office staff of ownership policies concerning congressional records
- Addressing staff concerns about constituent privacy. In this case, privacy was addressed directly in the gift agreement.

Brian Keogh – University of Albany

The University of Albany currently holds 24 collections of congressional papers and 35 collections of state senate and assembly members. In 2006 many of these collections were received from Syracuse University.

All the political collections at the university at this point have been acquired after the congressman had left office. A decision was made to start to work with members before they actually leave office. Two congressmen announced their retirements in 2006, Sherry Boehlert and Major Owens, and the university was able to work with them in planning their donations to the archives.

The archives contacted Sherry Boehlert's Chief of Staff who had already had a large portion of the office records transferred to the Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland. Mr. Boehlert was originally interested in giving his papers to Utica College;

however, the college was unequipped to handle such a large collection. An agreement was made that allowed Utica College to acquire the memorabilia from the collection, with the rest going to the University of Albany.

There were restrictions placed on the Boehlert Papers due to privacy concerns. The university instituted a policy to allow access to restricted records under certain circumstances.

When Congressman Major Owens announced his retirement in 2006 he immediately began searching for a repository for his papers. Mr. Owens, a congressman who represented Brooklyn and a former librarian, originally approached the Brooklyn Historical Society. However, the society felt the collection was too large to take on. When the University of Albany contacted Mr. Owens regarding the collection, he immediately agreed and quickly returned a deed of gift.