



Congressional Papers Section

NEWSLETTER

Society of American Archivists

Winter 2022-2023

Message from the Chair

Mary Goolsby

Happy fall! As I write I’m looking forward to working at a local election polling site tomorrow. Regardless of the outcome of the elections, I fervently hope we stay united in our commitment to live in an active democracy.

Elections provide opportunities for congressional centers to acquire new collections and begin relationships to create paths to future acquisitions. With those collections, we will receive analog and electronic records. One of the projects we need to advance is the Technical Supplement to *Managing Congressional Collections*. It is vital to our success in providing access to digital records to researchers and everyday Americans.

Many of us are still feeling the disconnectedness that came with the pandemic. It has been suggested that CPS host a regular section “coffee” break to encourage more interaction and a way to ask our colleagues about best practices in real time. These will begin in January with a date and time to be determined by the CPS Steering Committee. Watch your inbox for more details and may the rest of the semester go well for you.

Serving together,
Mare Goolsby

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CPS Day Recap

Carly Dearborn

On July 19 we gathered for our third all-virtual section meeting and preconference event. This year’s program continued to explore pressing issues facing congressional archivists and focused on creating community among CPS membership.

The session began with lightning talks from CPS’s Electronic Records Committee which covered initiating conversations with congressional staff about technology, social media preservation and recovery, and working with congressional IT. (Details about this session can be found in “Electronic Records Committee Update,” starting on page 2).

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CPS Day, cont.

The second lightning session included speakers Jay Wyatt from the Center for Legislative Archives, Dawn Sueoka from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Kate Gregory from Mississippi State University Libraries, and Jolene Kennah from the Ted Stevens Foundation. This session focused on education and outreach efforts of member archivists as they continue to engage with patrons and the public through the pandemic.

The final session served as an opportunity to build community and utilize the collective resources of this section. Billed as a no-such-thing-as-a-stupid-question session, members were able to ask questions and generate discussion – anonymously or in person – about any topic or pain point. The group discussed donor relations, outreach, and copyright.

A benefit of a virtual section meeting is the increased participation and attendance – 55 members joined our session this year from both inside and outside of our membership. Thanks to all the presenters, moderators, and attendees for making this another successful CPS Day!

Working With Allies: Updates from the Electronic Records Committee

Mary Goolsby

This past summer at CPS Day, the ERC was fortunate to have three seasoned speakers to address everyday (and not so everyday) situations in such a way that we create allies. Networking and knowing who to go to for assistance and expert advice is essential in the success of our work. The presenters each shared practical advice to help us proactively engage with congressional office staff and their technical practices and processes.

Alison White, deputy Senate archivist for digital archives in the U.S. Senate Historical Office, presented advice on working with senatorial offices and staff to ensure all digital files and data from the Constituent Services System (CSS) are transferred.

Emily Graves, electronic records archivist for the House of Representatives, provided tips on helping us when talking to congressional offices about technical issues:

- Discuss your electronic records policy and recommendations with staff to determine preferred formats and storage and delivery methods.
- A single staffer should be responsible for organizing and securing electronic records from various sources, but you can also ask if consulting with office IT staff is possible.
- Having a list of questions at the ready can help you make sure you're hitting all the points you need to make this transfer beneficial and ensure that records are in good shape.
- Ask for the original files of multimedia from social media or elsewhere when they have them.
- Outlining what technology solutions you have at your disposal may help illuminate the process so they can make an informed decision.

Sheridan Sayles drew from her experience working on the Senator Frank R. Lautenberg Papers and her archival position at Seton Hall University. In her presentation on saving social media records, Sheridan explained their two-pronged approach to gain access to the content on the senator's Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts. In her case, the help of a former classmate got her access to his Facebook account, which linked to her personal account. Former staff were able to assist her with the other social media platforms. Here are her tips:

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ERC, cont.

- Include social media crawling into the Deed of Gift when possible to make clear the steps for access, acquisitions, and preservation with the donors.
- Get log-ins from staff members before they leave office.
- When needed, use proprietary services like WebRecorder and ArchiveIt when other options are not available
- Lastly, document everything!

Thanks to these stellar archivists for sharing their wisdom, tips, and tricks for a smooth transition of electronic records from elected officials to our archives.



Left to right: Sen. Robert C. Byrd, Elizabeth Dole, Sen. John D. Rockefeller and Sharon Percy Rockefeller, Erma Ora Byrd, and Sen. Bob Dole. Photo courtesy the Robert and Elizabeth Dole Archive and Special Collections. Materials from the archives of all three senators are available online through the American Congress Digital Archive Portal.

Institutional Update: West Virginia University Libraries Online Portal for Congressional Archives

Danielle Emerling

In May 2022, West Virginia University Libraries debuted the first-ever [online portal](#) bringing together congressional archives from repositories throughout the United States.

“The American Congress Digital Archives Portal Project represents the most significant proposal that I have ever seen in terms of its promise to bring historical, political, and policy materials to the fingertips of more scholars on more questions,” Douglas Harris, Professor of Political Science at Loyola University Maryland, said. “It is not a stretch to think that this project could revolutionize the study of Congress across multiple disciplines.”

The prototype portal currently aggregates materials from WVU Libraries, the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at The University of Kansas, and the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education. It was made possible with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The archives of Members of Congress document the democratic process, the evolution of Congress as an institution, and narratives related to the country’s social, cultural, and political development. However, practical barriers to using congressional archives mean researchers may struggle to find and use them. Unlike presidential papers, which are centralized in one location with dedicated staff and funding, congressional archives are geographically dispersed among institutions large and small. For researchers, collections may be difficult to use because of limited travel funding and uneven description in and across collections. The pandemic has made these problems worse.

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West Virginia Lib, cont.

The American Congress Digital Archives Portal project addresses these challenges and provides easier, more equitable access to archives for scholars, educators, and the public.

In June 2022, LYRASIS awarded a Catalyst Fund grant to the project for additional portal application development and metadata enhancement. In this phase, WVU Libraries and the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics are working with developers at Scien-tist.com to transform the portal from a content hosting to a content harvesting model. The harvesting model will aggregate metadata and thumbnail images from participating institutions into the portal.

“We aim to have a sizable open access digital portal to reach various audiences for the nation’s 250th anniversary in 2026,” Danielle Emerling, Project Director and Associate Curator of congressional and political collections at WVU Libraries, said.

“Ultimately, we believe this project will expand availability of documentation about Congress, public policy, and representation in America. It will lead to new topics and methods of scholarly research and serve as a resource to advance civic education and knowledge of America’s constitutional democracy.”

Institutional Update: University of Delaware Library Goes “Back to the Fifties”

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin

The University of Delaware Library's [online news notes for November 2022](#) highlighted the audio-recordings of U.S. Senator J. Allen Frear, Jr. (D-Del., 1949-1960).

Throughout his career in the Senate, Frear addressed Delawareans in weekly reports called "The Week in Congress," which were broadcast on radio station



Sen. Frear with Mary-Lou, the March of Dimes Poster Girl from the [Senator J. Allen Frear Jr. Papers](#) in Special Collections.

WDOV in Dover. Two hundred recordings from 1953-1959 are included in his congressional archive.

Originally recorded on acetate disks in the Senate Recording Studio, the disks were mailed to Dover for the weekly broadcasts. When the Frear papers were processed at the Library in the early 1990s, preservation copies of the recordings were made on reel-to-reel tapes with audio-cassette access copies. In recent years, the recordings were digitized and transcribed, with online access provided via [Artstor](#). In these brief addresses, Senator Frear communicated to his constituent audience synopses of the events, discussions, and decisions made during the previous week in Congress. He also used this forum to state positions on international affairs and foreign policy, such as the Korean War, General MacArthur's dismissal, and containment of Communism through a variety of measures.

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Univ. Delaware, cont.

For a glimpse into the 1950s as well as the personality of Senator Frear, "The Week in Congress" is a wonderful component of his archive. For a fuller description of the recordings, visit [Subseries IV.B.1.a. This Week in Congress](#) in the archival finding aid, where you can browse the weekly address titles and find direct links to the streaming audio (housed in Arstor) and PDF of the transcriptions (housed in institutional repository UDSpace).

The recent Library news feature is located here: <https://library.udel.edu/news/2022/11/07/the-week-in-congress-with-sen-j-allen-frear/>

Senate Archivist's Report

Remarks the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. December 5, 2022

Karen Paul

The past six months have been exciting and challenging for us as we interviewed to fill three deputy archivist positions in the Senate Historical Office and identify partners for our Preservation Partnership Grants program established under Public Law 117-103, Division I and the Explanatory Statement for the Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 2022, (p. 19). This, combined with establishing a Secretary of the Senate account with the Federal Records Centers system to provide secure temporary storage for senators' official records, has produced some rewarding experiences.

Needless to say, none of this could have happened without the advice, assistance, and *perseverance* of a number of individuals including Secretary of the Senate Ann Berry who approved the addition of two new archivist positions; Assistant Secretary Robert Paxton, whose input and suggestions have been invaluable along every step of the way; Chief of Staff Sydney Butler, who has helped execute our plans; General Counsel Tremayne Bunaugh, who has provided wise advice and counsel throughout our negotiations; Senior Executive Accounts Administrator Zoraida Torres, who manages new sources of invoices; and, within our own office, Senate Historian Betty Koed, who has taken significant amounts of time from her historian duties to strongly support these new archival initiatives. Thank you all so very, very much.

First, I am pleased to introduce two of our new Deputy Archivists: Deputy Archivist for Senators' Offices Keri Myers and Deputy Archivist for Archival and Records Management Training and Services Dina Mazina. Dina joined our staff in mid-October, having previously served as Senate Finance Committee Archivist. Keri joined in mid-November from Senator Patrick Leahy's office. Our third new Deputy Archivist, George Apodaca, will be joining us January 3 to fill the position vacated in August when Alison White retired as Deputy Archivist for Digital Archives. Following my report, Dina will share with us her first training message.

Senators Office Assistance

The end of a Congress is a busy time with all of us working with offices that are closing. We follow a finely tuned procedure using a detailed checklist, standard forms to execute specific tasks, and a large team provid-

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Senate, cont.

ing archival services and other help with everything from closing accounts and subscriptions to returning furniture, IT equipment, and phones from DC and State Offices. Closing an office is a big job.

We happily report that all retiring senators have designated an archival repository to receive their records. Of the offices that are closing, three of the designated universities are receiving Preservation Partnership Grants, which were awarded by seniority, to help preserve the senatorial records that are coming their way.

The grant-receiving repositories are informing us that the funding is especially welcome given the costs that are incurred with preserving electronic records. Congressional collections have always been complex and have become more so with the inclusion of an ever expanding number of systems containing historical record content. The grants are funding staff, services, and facilities costs ranging from purchasing processing stations, renovating space, adding digital archivists to the staff, format updating, and paying for cloud storage.

Grant recipients are required to file progress reports on a regular basis, and we are acquiring information on costs, best practices, challenges, and lessons learned that will be shared within the Senate community and with this committee, the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress (ACSC), and the Society of American Archivists Congressional Papers Section (CPS) to better inform and prepare both congressional donors and archivists in their mission to preserve and make available senators' records of service.

Committee Assistance

Since June we have transferred 112 new textual accessions totaling 234 cubic feet, sent by 18 different Senate committees/offices. We have transferred 4.22 TB, in 95 accessions, from 9 different committees. We processed 17 textual and 1 electronic record loan requests. The textual loans totaled 28 boxes (14 cubic feet). The e-record loan was 985 files totaling 7.11 GB.

We are in the process of holding our end-of-Congress meetings with Committee Chief Clerks, Systems Administrators, and Archivists to discuss current archiving issues and to discover any new applications or software being deployed and not yet on our radar screen. One of our constant challenges is to keep current with records management and archiving advice for data residing in evolving and new systems.

Collaborations

One such system is Quill, which is a task management application for Dear Colleague and other letters used by senator offices and committees. Former Deputy Archivist White began discussions with the Sergeant at Arms Quill development team on archiving the data. These discussions continued throughout the development phase and subsequent to her retirement. Discussions focused on appropriate metadata for extractions and support for once a Congress downloads for committees in addition to end of service downloads for senators. This export feature was finalized in October for senators' offices and will be activated in the next Congress for committees.

Another ongoing collaboration with the Sergeant at Arms Technology Assessment Group focuses on exporting and archiving Microsoft 365 Teams/OneDrive. In October of this year, the SAA informed us that they had finally contracted with AvePoint, a vendor, to perform the export of the Teams/OneDrive data. We are expect-

Senate, cont.

ing the tool to be available in January. At this time, it is designed to capture complete OneDrive files and very limited persistent chat and conferencing in an appropriate archiving format. The SAA believes that AvePoint will further develop export capabilities over time. Our team will stay engaged with SAA, as well as our Joint Office of Education and Training, throughout deployment so we can formulate preservation instructions and guidance for staff.

A final collaboration began in May and June when Deputy Archivists White and Seelinger were invited to participate in an SAA working group to spell out requirements for an e-discovery platform, specifically with regard to exporting data for archiving. Market research and vendor selection is still ongoing for this project, but we are expecting to hear updates soon and will monitor any pilot project offices.

Congressional Video Preservation and Access – Technical Working Group Update

This group is comprised of members from the House, Senate, Library of Congress (LOC), National Archives (NARA), and Government Publications Office (GPO). It has been meeting monthly since April 2022 and systematically is working through a number of possible scenarios and best practices related to identifying the best way forward to preserve and provide access to House and Senate floor proceedings and committee hearings, perhaps eventually encompassing digital transfer of archival records to the Center for Legislative Archives (CLA). Originally founded by Karl Jackson, the Senate Recording Studio director who retired in August, the group is now led by Arin Shapiro, Senate Webmaster. Recent discussions noted that the CLA, unlike the Library of Congress and GPO, remains outside of the CAPNET, the Capitol Hill network hosted by the Architect of the Capital, or any other means of connectivity outside the public internet. The most recent meeting investigated potential ways to integrate NARA and the CLA over CAPNET via their established physical footprint in GPO's North Capitol Street facility, VPN access to Senate and House networks, or leveraging LOC's production cloud transfer for electronic submissions. The LOC cloud transfer system is used by publishers to send data to LOC and seems to be offering promise as a model for this project. The Working Group will produce a final report with recommendations for a system that would meet defined preservation and accessibility goals including identifying workflow(s); areas of responsibility within the workflow(s); technical alternatives that could currently satisfy each step in the workflow(s); opportunities to standardize workflows, file formats, delivery methods, and best practices across all stakeholders; and opportunities to streamline redundant tasks. Report drafting has not yet been scheduled.

Congressional Papers Section Society of American Archivists Meeting

The Congressional Papers Section (CPS) of the Society of American Archivists met on July 19th for the third time virtually and 55 members participated. This forum focuses on exploring pressing issues facing congressional archivists and on creating community among CPS membership. The CPS Electronic Records Committee discussed communicating with congressional staff about technology, social media preservation and recovery, and working with congressional IT. Speakers Jay Wyatt from the Center for Legislative Archives, Dawn Sueoka from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Kate Gregory from Mississippi State University Libraries, and Jolene Kennah from the Ted Stevens Foundation discussed their outreach efforts to engage with patrons and the public through the pandemic. A final session capitalized on the collective resources of the section membership as participants were invited to pose questions and others volunteered to provide answers about donor relations, outreach, and copyright.

Senate, cont.**Conclusion**

To say that the past six months have been exciting is an understatement. This period has been a major milestone in the development of the Senate's archival and records management program and services. I have been keeping a chronology of high points in the program's growth (no use remembering the low points) that includes: mention of publication firsts, notable conferences, the creation of congressional archival interest groups working toward a common goal, and sponsorship of a National Digital Stewardship Archival Fellow. The chronology also notes the addition of two professional Deputy Archivist positions in 2009-10 to help the lone arranger, and the passage of H Con Res 307 in 2008. Nothing on that chronology compares to the entries of the last six months. The addition of two specialist archivist positions and the preservation partnerships program have increased our abilities, knowledge, and enthusiasm a hundred fold. Again, many thanks to everyone who has made this possible.

Register Now for the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress Annual Meeting

[Registration](#) for the 2023 Association of Centers for the Study of Congress (ACSC) annual meeting is now open! This year's meeting will be hybrid, with both on-site and virtual options available.

The annual meeting will take place **May 3-5, 2023** at the new home of The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement, [The Tom & Ruth Harkin Center](#), on the campus of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. A block of hotel rooms has been reserved at the Hilton Home2Suites at Drake University. You can reserve a room by clicking on this [booking link](#).



The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email hope.bibens@drake.edu.

Stay tuned for more information in the weeks to come!