

CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS SECTION NEWSLETTER



Psst... Have a favorite photo you'd like to showcase? Send us photos when we ask for submissions for the next CPS newsletter!

Welcome to the Congressional Papers Section Fall 2025 newsletter! In this edition, we will go over upcoming events, announcements, introduce you to our new and returning members of the Congressional Papers Section steering committee, and hear from Lori Schwartz with a case study!

CPS Events

Please join the **Congressional Papers Section's Electronic Records Committee** for a virtual meetup on the topic of appraisal of electronic records. The meetup will be on Wednesday, October 15 from 2-3 pm Eastern.

The format will be a series of lightning talks, with presenters sharing three challenges and three takeaways from their work, with time for Q and A at the end. This meetup will not be recorded.

Here are our presenters:

Rebekah Valentine and Sabrina Gunn, The Dianne Feinstein Senatorial Papers, Stanford University
 Jessica Robertson and David Ferrara, Senator Richard Shelby Papers, University of Alabama
 Sally Blanchard-O'Brien and Erica Donnis, Patrick J. Leahy Papers, University of Vermont
 Katie Jakovich, History Associates, Incorporated
 And here is the zoom information:

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://hawaii.zoom.us/j/89364363851>

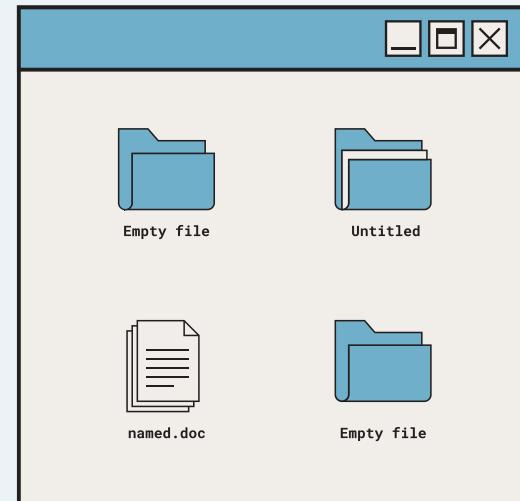
Meeting ID: 893 6436 3851
 Passcode: 216663

EVENTS AT-A-GLANCE

October 15, 2-3p Eastern

- **CPS Electronic Records Committee: Appraisal of Electronic Records meetup**

CPS Special Election



Annoucements: New hire

"The Office of Art and Archives in the Office of the Clerk at the U.S. House of Representatives is pleased to announce that Amanda May joined our staff in early September as the Electronic Records Archivist. Amanda has previously worked in digital preservation at the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Library of Medicine, and the Library of Congress."

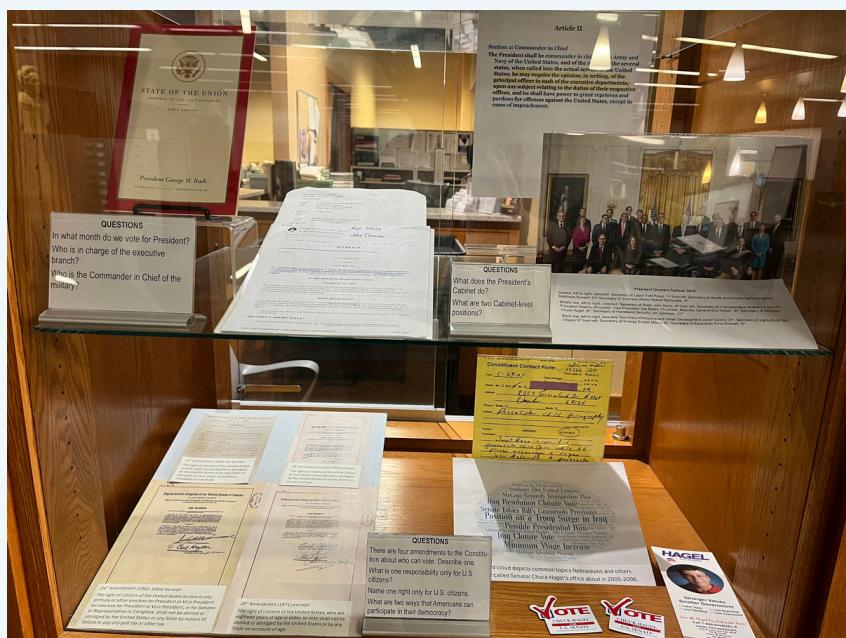
- Heather Bourk, House Archivist, U.S. House of Representatives

Case Study: "Rekindling exhibit work"

A gentle but pressing question I ask myself too often is "What exhibit are you doing next, Lori?" Lately, it's been a challenge to get excited about this aspect of my job. I can get jazzed up about crafting a narrative, selecting items, writing text, and teaching students about the work, but the challenge for me is using the same senatorial collection. Every. Single. Time.

If you create exhibits at your job, perhaps you pull from a variety of collections. At my repository, we have one large political collection with a dedicated exhibit space of twelve shelves across three columns, which I swap out three times a year. I love working with this collection, but after ten years, there are only so many biography-themed exhibits I can do, and there are only so many exhibits I can do based on a record type like speeches or campaign ephemera or artifacts. So, I turn to topical exhibits, many with relevance for today. These excite me. Climate change. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The relationship between senators and POTUS. Trade. Development.

A year ago, I started working on one such exhibit inspired by those articles that pop up from time to time about the U.S. naturalization test. They all ask, "Could YOU pass the test." The answer, dear reader, is many could not. I've discovered this among my friends and family (no judgement, loved ones). Years ago, a well-educated family friend insisted to me that U.S. senators serve four-year terms (this question is on the test). At the time I was the project archivist for a senator. I still chuckle about that. (Read more on the next page!)



Photos taken after exhibit installation, by Lori Schwartz

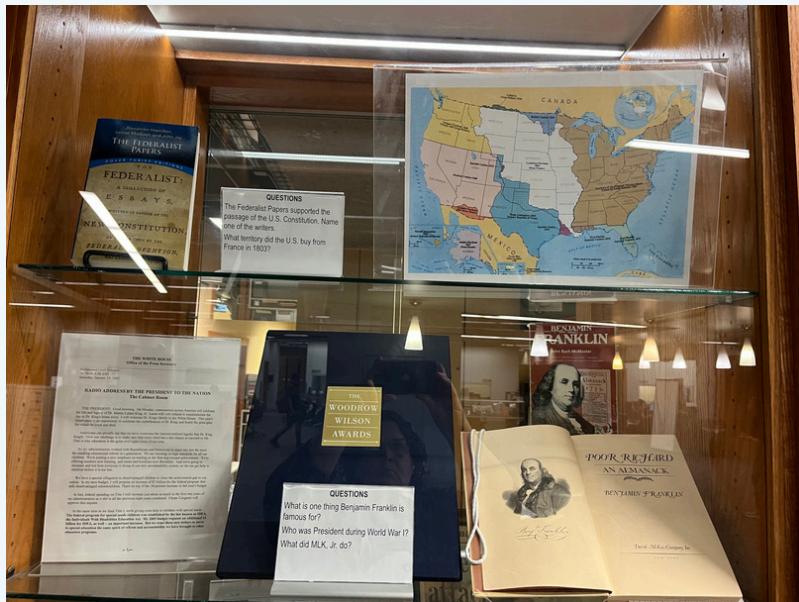


Case study (cont.)

I decided to create an exhibit, American Civics, based on questions from the test. Of the many things prospective citizens must do, they must pass a test covering American history and government and integrated civics. They are asked ten random questions from an official list of 100, and they must answer six correctly to pass. Making it more challenging, the test is oral, and the answers are NOT multiple choice as you see with most practice tests.

I ended up having room to ask 45 of the questions, balanced across the test categories. I found documents, books, and visuals from my collection with the answers—some overt, others more subtle. I added graphics to answer older historical questions since my collection is more recent. Nearby, I provided the official list of questions and answers for visitors to check their work. My hope was that visitors could see the relevance in asking questions such as “What is the ‘rule of law’?” and “What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?”

So, I just have one more question for you...could YOU pass the test? (Couldn't help it; had to ask.)



Photos taken after exhibit installation, by Lori Schwartz

Thank you to Lori Schwartz, Hagel and Technical Services Archivist, University of Nebraska at Omaha, for this case study!

Have something you would like to share with the CPS community? The CPS newsletter welcome all submissions, including case studies, announcements, events, and more! Look out for a newsletter submission call on the CPS section page.

Meet the CPS Steering Committee!

Sending a big welcome to new and returning CPS Steering Committee members. Find out who they are and see some members share their favorite part of working with congressional papers.

- **Chair - Dawn Sueoka**

- Congressional Papers Archivist, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Library
- My favorite thing about working with Congressional papers is working with and supporting researchers from different disciplines. Since congressional collections can be challenging to navigate, I tend to work more closely with researchers than I did when I managed other types of archival collections. I learn so much from what researchers are investigating, from their approaches to research, and from their reflections on and questions about what they are discovering.

- **Vice Chair - Lori Schwartz**

- Hagel and Technical Services Archivist, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- My name is Lori Schwartz, newly elected vice chair of CPS. I'm the cause of the recent special election to find a new Steering Committee member! I'm the Hagel and Technical Services Archivist at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. These days, my favorite thing about working with congressional papers is teaching student assistants and interns how to process portions of them and discussing the evergreen issues contained in them.

- **Immediate Past Chair - John Caldwell**

- Political and Public Policy Papers Archivist, University of Delaware
- My name is John Caldwell, and I'm the Political and Public Policy Papers Archivist at the University of Delaware. My favorite thing about congressional papers is their complexity. All collections are like puzzles, but these collections are puzzles in puzzles in puzzles, and it keeps the work engaging and fun.

- **Steering Committee Member - Shir Bach**

- Congressional Papers Archivist, University of Vermont
- Hi all! My name is Shir Bach, and I'm a CPS steering committee member. I'm a congressional papers archivist at the University of Vermont, where I'm working on a grant project to process the papers of former Senator Patrick Leahy. My favorite thing about working with congressional papers is how much I learn about local history through processing collections!

- **Steering Committee Member - JA Pryse**

- **Newsletter Editor - Alexis Miettinen**

- Archivist for Political Collections, Bentley Historical Library
- Hi everyone! I enjoy working with congressional records as it allows me to see how politics, campaigns, and issues have changed over time. There are always interesting records and ethical considerations that make for dynamic and enjoyable processing projects.

Meet the CPS Steering Committee! (cont.)

• Ex Officio Member- George Apodaca

- Archivist - Senate Historical Office - U.S. Senate
- What I enjoy most is the sheer variety of perspectives and formats congressional papers contain; from legislative drafts and correspondence to photos, digital files, and audiovisual materials. I especially appreciate working with committee records, which document the institutional side of Congress and add another layer to how we understand governance and public service. Each collection tells a multilayered story, and I value the challenge of preserving that complexity in ways that remain authentic and useful for future researchers.

• Ex Officio Member - Heather Bourk

- House Archivist, U.S. House of Representatives
- Favorite thing about working with congressional records: Working with records at the House of Representatives offers the dual reward of preserving and providing access to records that support current legislative business while also helping to document the institutional memory of the House. The congressional records field also provides the opportunity to collaborate with incredibly dedicated archivists committed to preserving and promoting this rich category of records documenting the history of representative government. "

• Ex Officio Member - James Wyatt

• SAA Council Liaison - Bryan Whitledge

- Public Services Librarian, Clarke Historical Library
- My name is Bryan Whitledge and I am the SAA Council liaison to the Congressional Papers Section. I work as the Public Services Librarian at the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University. As a public policy wonk who works at an archives with a couple collections related to legislators (Sen. Robert Griffin and Rep. Elford Cederberg), I am delighted to liaise with CPS during my time on SAA Council. I am particularly pleased to see the thoughtfulness and energy in the CPS steering committee. This group does a lot to bring the congressional papers archives community together and share information that can empower all of us to do excellent work in our institutions.

Join us on the CPS Steering Committee! Please see the SAA Connect site for information about the upcoming special election.

