

VI. ACCESS

Since the first meeting of the Advisory Committee in 1991, research access to the records of Congress has increased significantly. The revolution in electronic communication has expanded opportunities for making more information about Congress available to members of Congress, congressional staff, researchers, students, and other interested citizens. The public's positive response, in turn, has encouraged the Center to explore new ways of making the historical records of Congress even more accessible.

A. Reference at the Center for Legislative Archives

The Center's reference program features a professional staff that has a close working knowledge of the records of Congress and a deep understanding of the legislative process, which they share with a wide-ranging community of researchers. The Center fields more than 5,400 requests annually, with more than half arriving over the Internet today, from congressional scholars and other academics, journalists, lawyers, documentary filmmakers, genealogists, graduate students, amateur historians, high school students, and Federal agencies. The Center also provides a full range of reference services to congressional committees, including expeditious loans of records as needed.

The Center's researchers pursue a wide variety of topics and interests. They include family history, legislative histories, biographies of former members, federal policy toward Native Americans, Japanese internment policy, federal agency history, regulations of commerce and industry, Watergate and Whitewater, endangered species legislation, prisoners of war from the Vietnam War era, political campaign finance and lobbying, and preservation of local landmarks.

The reference program rests on a solid underpinning of published guides, on-line finding aids, on-site and more detailed indexes to significant segments of the records, and a reference outreach program that promotes use of the records in formal workshops, in essays about the records for scholarly journals, and through associations with professional organizations. The award-winning *Guide to the Records of the House of Representatives at the National Archives* and *Guide to the Records of the United States Senate at the National Archives*, published in 1989, provide a comprehensive description of committee records for the House and Senate. Their on-line editions were made available on the Center's website in 1996 and have signifi-

cantly increased the number of requests the Center receives for research assistance and reproductions of documents. The new on-line "Committee Resource Guide" series, which is under development and updates the information in the *Guides*, promises to further expand interest in and access to the records. Similarly, a digital version of the *Preliminary Inventory* to House records will provide enhanced access to researchers by providing chronological entry points and the view of an entire Congress' records.

To disseminate records of high public interest, the Center produces microfilm publications that are distributed throughout NARA's nationwide facilities and are available for purchase. The Center also has a long-term working relationship with the Congressional Information Service, a private publisher based in Bethesda, Maryland, to produce microfiche of congressional publications and unpublished hearings for sale to libraries and research institutions nationwide.

Legislative finding aids, microfilm catalogs, and other publications will become part of the larger NARA Archival Research Catalog (ARC), which will be a national electronic on-line catalog of NARA holdings. The prototype of ARC is the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL), which is now on the NARA web site. The development of ARC will be a significant part of the total NARA effort to provide information to citizens on all the holdings of NARA and will include a core collection of digital copies of selected high interest documents.

Despite the range of activities and products outlined above, the use of the records of Congress has not been fully maximized, and a potential, untapped audience of researchers can still be attracted through a continuation of the Center's efforts to promote the use of the records.

B. Declassification

The Center continues to process declassification requests from researchers seeking access to classified House and Senate records. The declassification of the records of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs is progressing. Declassification review has been completed by all originating agencies except the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Air Force.

As a result of the increased volume of security-classified records, the Center has reviewed its procedure for declassification to ensure that the interests of the House and Senate are adequately protected. Once a request is made to declassify a record created by the House

or Senate, Center staff review that record for congressional equities, i.e., information the committee may have obtained in confidence. If such information is found, that record is then forwarded to the Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the House for review. Upon consent from the Secretary or Clerk, the record is subsequently forwarded to the National Archives' Declassification Division for coordination with the appropriate executive branch agency's declassification review staff. Once the record is returned from that agency and redactions are made, if necessary, the record is returned to the Center, where it is made available for researcher use.

The Center is examining the impact that recent declassification legislation, especially the Kyl Amendment, will have on the declassification of the records of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (JCAE), one of the Center's most heavily used collections. The Center receives more declassification requests for JCAE records than any other collection. With backlogs growing as a result of required re-review of previously declassified executive branch records by the Department of Energy, response time to researchers requesting access to the classified portions of these congressional records will continue to increase.

Pursuant to House Resolution 172 (106th Congress), which authorized the release of the records of the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia (94th Congress), the National Archives is coordinating the declassification of those records.

C. Committee Resource Guides

The Center for Legislative Archives' descriptive program will focus on the Committee Resource Guide (CRG) series, an updated, expanded, and electronic version of the information about committee records contained in the *Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives, 1789-1989* and the *Guide to the Records of the United States Senate at the National Archives, 1789-1989*. The CRG series will feature concise histories of the modern standing committees of Congress based on the committees' records. The CRG will provide congressional offices, committees, scholarly researchers, and the general public greater access to the most recently opened archival records. The CRG will provide narratives of the institutional development of modern committees, highlight their substantive decisions, activities, and accomplishments, and describe their extant records. The records descriptions included in the CRG series will be integrated into the ARC descriptive catalog.

The first in the CRG series to go online describes the Senate Armed Services Committee, and it supplements the description of

the Committee's records by covering records opened since the printed *Senate Guide* was published. It also includes a brief history of the Committee and a list of the Committee's chairmen and their tenure as well as a list of the Committee's subcommittees and chairmen by individual congresses. After suggestions from the Advisory Committee and the Armed Services Committee staff, a final version of the Committee Resource Guide was published on the Center's home page. The Center has begun work on further additions to the Committee Resource Guide for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Agriculture Committee.

D. Publications

Minutes of the U.S. Senate Democratic Conference, Fifty-eighth Congress through Eighty-eighth Congress, 1903–1964. Edited by Donald A. Ritchie, U.S. Senate Historical Office.

Minutes of the U.S. Senate Republican Conference, Sixty-second Congress through Eighty-eighth Congress, 1911–1964. Edited by Wendy Wolff and Donald A. Ritchie, U.S. Senate Historical Office.

These minutes of meetings held by the two Senate party conferences represent a valuable resource on the history of the Senate's institutional development. Unanimously recommended by the Advisory Committee and supported by the chairmen of both party conferences, these volumes make publicly available for the first time extensive information on the internal operations of the party conferences. Covering a span of more than half a century, from the time the conferences first required formal minutes until the mid-1960s, the minutes will serve as an essential research tool for those seeking to learn more about party organization in the Senate.

The Senate Historical Office has added brief head notes to establish the political context for each Congress, as well as explanatory notes, index, and appendices listing the members of the conferences during the periods covered. The on-line version of these minutes is available at the Government Printing Office web site (http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/index.html#senate_publications).

E. National Digital Library at the Library of Congress—A Century of Lawmaking

The National Digital Library Program of the Library of Congress was established in 1993 to identify unique American historical collections and to make selected documents available through the Internet. *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation, 1774–1873*, com-

prises a significant part of this program. (<http://memory.loc.gov>) In 1996, an advisory board made up of staff from the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the National Archives, the Congressional Research Service, and the Law Library of the Library of Congress focused on selecting the contents of the lawmaking section. Approximately two million digital images were projected.

In 1998, the Advisory Committee favorably reviewed the newly released system and encouraged its continued development. The Center for Legislative Archives quickly noted that having the Journals as searchable text would speed their subject searches and enable them to locate information in their archival holdings more efficiently.

The *Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation* includes the following: (available as digital facsimile images and as searchable texts)

- *Journals of the Continental Congress*, vols. I–XXXIV, 1774–1789
- *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*
- *Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution*
- *House and Senate Journals* (1789–1873)
- *Senate Executive Journal* (1789–1873)
- *Journal of William Maclay* (1789–1791)

(available as digital facsimile images accompanied by searchable indexes and page headings)

- *Annals of Congress* (1789–1824)
- *Register of Debates* (1824–1837)
- *Congressional Globe* (1833–1873)
- *Statutes at Large*, vols. I–XVII, 1789–1873
- Selected volumes of the *U.S. Serial Set*—mainly relating to major issues

Several additions are planned through 2002. They include (in order of release)

- Senate and House bills to 1873
- 110 key documents from the *U.S. Serial Set*
- Law Library pamphlet collections on “slavery in the courtroom” from the American Courtroom Collection and Indian Tribal Charters
- *American State Papers* (pre-1816 documents similar to those found in the *Serial Set* from 1816)
- *Letters from the Delegates of the Continental Congresses, 1774–1789*

F. Bioguide Data Base

The Bioguide data base (<http://bioguide.congress.gov>) is a joint project of the Senate Historical Office and the Legislative Resource

Center of the U.S. House of Representatives, working under the direction of the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House.

This searchable data base went on-line in 1998, containing information on over 13,000 individuals who have served in the national legislature, including the Continental Congress, the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives, as well as delegates, resident commissioners and vice presidents. The electronic format allows the data base to be continually updated. Initial data was drawn from four publications: the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (S. Doc. 100-34), the *Guide to Research Collections of Former United States Senators* (S. Doc. 103-35), *Senators of the United States: A Historical Bibliography* (S. Doc. 103-34); and *Guide to Research Collections of Former Members of the House of Representatives* (H. Doc. 100-25).

The new on-line version goes well beyond the scope of the 1989 printed edition of the Biographical Directory. It includes images from the photographic collection of the Senate Historical Office and limited images from the Legislative Resource Center, links to other sources of congressional information, and charts and tables that provide biographical information in clear and easy-to-read formats. The information is continuously updated to reflect recent research on former members and up-to-date information about each current Congress.

The data base is searchable by name, position and state. The ability to search text by subject of the biographies, research collections, and bibliographies is being tested. A great advantage to researchers will be the ability to generate lists of members by Congress, by state, by party or combinations thereof.

G. Home Pages

The development of home pages accessible via the Internet has greatly enhanced public access to congressional information. The following discussion details the status of home pages that promote access to congressional sources.

Center for Legislative Archives

As recommended by the second report of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress, the Center's web site went on-line in May 1996. Its main features are links to a web version of the *Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives* and, at the time, the gopher version of the *Guide to the Records of the United States Senate at the National Archives*.

The site also provides information about access rules and citation guidelines. Links are made to general NARA information about conducting research at the National Archives and to a set of web sites concerning Congress and Congressional studies.

Subsequent additions to the Center's home page have provided further assistance to researchers. Since the summer of 1996, links exist to the Federal Depository Library Program of the Government Printing Office for those researchers interested in publications of the U.S. Government (RG 287). A new section on "Special Collections of the Center" provides access to the research interviews of Professor Richard F. Fenno of the University of Rochester, one of the major scholars of the legislative process. The Senate Historical Office's oral history with George Tames, photographer for the *New York Times*, was added to the Center's "Special Collections" page in fall 1996. Since then, the Senate Historical Office has been publishing their interviews on-line, and they have a direct link to the Tames interview. The Committee Resource Guide series, the latest addition to the Center's web site, will also be offered from the Center's home page.

Early in 1999 conversion of the on-line *Senate Guide* from the gopher to the web began. To date, ten chapters in fifty files have been converted. At the same time, conversion of the on-line *House Guide* to a new NARA web template has also begun. This latest conversion has allowed the Center to take advantage of NARA's Electronic Access Project, which digitized more than 500 pages from the records of Congress for the National Archives Information Locator (NAIL). Updated files from the two *Guides* now feature these digitized images of records to enhance the appearance and usefulness of the descriptions found there.

The Center has begun publishing on-line the *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States House of Representatives, 1789-1946 (Number 113)* that was originally published in 1959. This comprehensive description of the House records is organized by Congress, allowing researchers interested in particular time periods to gain an overall view of existing records for each Congress. The *Preliminary Inventory* serves as an important complement to the *Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives, 1789-1989*, which is organized by committees. Conversion of the *Preliminary Inventory* from paper to electronic text was made possible through the generous assistance of the Office of the Clerk whose staff digitized, proofread, and initially designed the on-line format.

The Center has also participated in publishing on-line materials from the records of Congress for other congressional web sites.

Senator Byron Dorgan's web site, "Lewis and Clark in North Dakota," features several digital images provided by the Center, including Thomas Jefferson's message to Congress of January 18, 1803, requesting funding for what became the Lewis and Clark expedition. The House Agriculture Committee's web site now features a digital image of the 1820 resolution creating the committee that was provided by the Center. The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee's web site also features a digital image of the resolution which established the Senate standing committee system in December 1816.

Senate

The Senate web page has been on-line for several years now, but over the last two years it has been redesigned and expanded. The current site has three major components:

1) Access to senators' home pages and links to all committee pages.

2) A "Legislative Activities" section provides explanatory essays about the legislative process, bill-tracking options, a daily calendar of business, announcement of hearings, and roll-call votes for the last decade.

3) The "Learning about the Senate" section offers general information about the institution of the Senate, its current rules and procedures, a glossary of terms, and information on each state's role in the Senate. Components of the "Learning" section include Senate Art and Senate History, the latter providing in-depth information about the Senate's institutional history.

Regularly updated, the Senate History site includes Briefings on institutional development, unique powers and procedures of the Senate, Senate leadership, officers and key staff positions, and a set of frequently asked questions. The Historical Minutes, by Richard A. Baker, are brief essays covering all eras and aspects of Senate history. The oral history component provides descriptions of the interviews completed by the Senate Historical Office. To date, the complete texts of five interviews are available on-line, with new transcripts being added regularly. The ongoing Leader's Lecture Series is available on-line, with accompanying RealPlayer video coverage of each of these events in the old Senate chamber. Other Senate History features include statistical tables, a chronology, "This Week in Senate History," a Senate quiz, information on the historical photo collection, and a "Senate News" box that keeps visitors up to date on recent events and publications. In the planning stage are site maps, new statistical tables, and a special section for teachers and students.

Clerk Web Site

The Office of the Clerk inaugurated its first web site in 1997. In the summer of 2000, that site was replaced by a significantly expanded, redesigned and ADA compliant site. The Clerk's site provides the public with Internet access to a wide array of congressional information resources, including official lists, roll-call votes, and election statistics. The site also offers instructions and forms for a variety of statutory filings, including the Lobbying Disclosure Act and the Ethics in Government Act. In addition to the currently offered Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, the Clerk's reconstructed site will offer a broader variety of institutional historical information and data, virtual tours of the Capitol building, and educational resources for teachers and children.