S5. From Ballot Box to Document Box: Exploring Contemporary Challenges with Congressional Papers

Rebecca Johnson Melvin, Dianne Oster, Zach Johnson, Sheridan Sayles
Dianne’s Collection

Seton Hall University School of Law

Peter W. Rodino, Jr. Law Library

- Single Collection, processed and arranged, open for research
- Peter W. Rodino, Jr. (10th Congressional District-NJ) 1949-1989,
- Contains documents, artifacts, photographs, audio-visual materials, 1909-2005
Zach’s Collections

Vanderbilt University
- Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) - 2003-present

Rutgers University

University of South Carolina
- Sol Blatt - Speaker of SC House - 1937-1973
- Don Fowler - DNC Chair (‘95-97), longtime figure in Dem. Party
Copyright and Access Restrictions

How much of the collection is considered property of the congressperson? All of it? How do you figure out what’s not?

Sharing photographs on Wikipedia/releasing copyright

Maryanne Trump Barry’s tax returns
Access and Current Officeholders

Reference service for Congresspeople

Donor setting access restrictions

On the plus side, more collections in the hands of archivists
MPLP and Congressional Collections

Size of collections demand physical processing time, but description is possibly of more value.

How valuable is constituent mail?
Sheridan: Rutgers, Lautenberg Collection

Senator Frank Lautenberg
Party: Democrat

Project
Type: Single Collection, Project-based
Funding: 3-year grant from ADP Foundation
Size: initially 2,250 lf, aim to cut to about 1,500 lf
Materials: paper, photographs, AV, born digital, social media
Appraisal and Privacy Concerns

Two institutional imperatives: reduce the total linear feet by $\frac{1}{3}$, mirror processing patterns of other Congressional collections at Rutgers

Sampling best plan
- Constituent Mail - retain 10% of mail
  - other collection retained 66%; too much in this case
- Case Files - completely eliminate
  - privacy concerns outweigh research potential
Archiving Social Media

Web presence: official senate sites; Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook accounts

Web: NARA keeps copies of Congress websites from each session

Social Media: two version of each account (campaign and office use)
- petitioned Facebook for access to that page
- got log in for other sites from old staffer

Working with Digital Curator to maintain archived files, goal to link live pages of social media to finding aid
Outreach and Issues of Trauma

Upcoming exhibit on Lautenberg Collection opening Spring 2018

Collections evoking trauma: 9/11 memorials, Bosnian genocide, Holocaust, drive hunting of dolphins and whales, etc

- Framing exhibit to show value of memorialization
  Audience considerations: visitors with PTSD, children
Migration of Formats

Paper/Tape to CD/DVD

Archiving digital content requires ongoing technological strategy to ensure access.

Analog-to-digital

Remember that the digital version may not exactly represent the analog original

Punch Card--Cassette Tape--5” Floppy Disk--3.5” Floppy Disk--CD--DVD

Betamax Tape--VHS Tape--DVD
Resources

Congressional Papers Section, Society of American Archivists
http://www2.archivists.org/groups/congressional-papers-section

Electronic Records Committee, CPS, SAA
https://cprerc.wordpress.com/

Center for Legislative Archives, NARA
https://www.archives.gov/legislative

Association of Centers for Study of Congress
https://acsc.wildapricot.org/
Resources

http://saa.archivists.org/store/managing-congressional-collections/967/

http://saa.archivists.org/store/an-american-political-archives-reader/1378/

Resources

The Peter W. Rodino, Jr., archives, Seton Hall Law Library
http://law.shu.edu/library/rodino/

The Senator Frank R. Lautenberg papers, Rutgers University Libraries
https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/news/archives-processing-lautenberg-papers

Politics, Policy, and Government Primary Resources in Special Collections, University of Delaware Libraries and Museums
http://guides.lib.udel.edu/spec_politics

South Carolina Political Collections, University of South Carolina Libraries
http://library.sc.edu/p/Collections/SCPC
Resources


To ask for contact: Robin Reeder, Archivist and Deputy Chief, Office of Art and Archives, Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, Robin.Reeder@mail.house.gov

Resources

Zach Johnson
Curator of Special Collections
Special Collections and University Archives
Vanderbilt University Libraries
zach.h.johnson@vanderbilt.edu

Rebecca Johnson Melvin
Librarian
Curator, Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Senatorial Papers
University of Delaware Libraries and Museums
lrjm@udel.edu

Dianne Oster
Serial/GovDocs/ILL Librarian
Rodino Archivist
Seton Hall Law Library
osterdia@shu.edu

Sheridan Sayles
Archivist, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg Papers
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
sls428@libraries.rutgers.edu