

# Roundtables as Incubators for Leadership: The Legacy of the Congressional Papers Roundtable

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## Abstract

The Congressional Papers Roundtable (CPR) has pursued an active agenda for the past twenty-five years. It also has produced many SAA leaders. The community, advocacy, and productivity found in roundtables make them ideal breeding grounds for leadership. What roles have roundtables played in archivists' development and within SAA? How will social networking affect those roles? How can we continue to generate new ideas and opportunities? Panelists examined these issues, reflected on the future, and emphasized lessons learned.

## Introduction

*Linda A. Whitaker*

The best way to develop leadership is by exposure to it, exposure even as brief as ninety minutes or as long as a daylong preconference. Why this topic? Why now? The Congressional Papers Roundtable (CPR) turns twenty-five this year. The time has come to reflect and to celebrate. It is a time to explore decisions made and roads not taken; a time to share personal observations, disclosures, and speculations not found in the literature; and a rare chance to converse with archivists who have made and are making a difference.

Session 309 at the 75th Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Chicago, Illinois, Friday, 26 August 2011. Linda A. Whitaker chaired this session, and speakers were Leigh McWhite, Connell B. Gallagher, Naomi L. Nelson, and Mark A. Greene.

This particular roundtable is one of the smallest groups in SAA, ranging between 200 to 250 members in any given year. The membership is fluid; archivists often join CPR in response to a new job or a first job, a change in collection development focus, a recent acquisition, or an infusion of funding to deal with the backlog. Congressional collections generate their own issues and political environments. They are not for the faint of heart. Many of the archivists who initially join CPR do so out of desperation and seeking advice, support, and fellowship.

Those who stay acquire a passion for these collections and gravitate to libraries, centers, institutes, and archives where political papers are a strength, if not the main purpose of the enterprise. CPR members are not outliers but in fact represent a microcosm of the profession as a whole for sheer range of repositories, educational backgrounds, and experience. This begs the question: What distinguishes this small, energetic band of archivists from other SAA affinity groups? First and foremost, members of CPR are activists:

- We study ourselves, our collections, and the institutions and people who create them.
- We talk to and collaborate with users of our collections as well as the records creators—the offices and members of Congress.
- We pursue projects that reflect members' needs and have concrete outcomes.
- We set agendas that go beyond endorsing session proposals.
- We develop projects that span timelines greater than a single meeting.
- We find ways to fund these projects.
- We seek partners within SAA, outside SAA (e.g., the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress), and with other professional or scholarly organizations (e.g., the American Political Science Association).
- We take stands; one cannot do this work and not be an advocate.
- We actively recruit and involve individuals new to the profession, including seventy-one new members this year!
- The very nature of CPR work generates leaders—past, present, and future.

Members of this panel, leaders all, were selected from an impressive list of candidates for their diverse educational backgrounds, gender balance, broad spectrums of practice, and willingness to disclose facts and insights not found in their CVs or in the professional literature. It is significant that they turned down other speaking opportunities at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of SAA to participate in this CPR anniversary session. Note that these panelists represent a career continuum spanning over forty years; approximately a decade in the field

separates each member. From these unique perspectives, they will address the following:

- What brought them to CPR.
- How working with political papers and belonging to CPR informed their practice, ideas, and career paths (or not).
- How they might have contributed to or influenced CPR.
- How this may have influenced their engagement with SAA and their movement within the organization.
- Lessons learned along the way and paths not taken.
- What they need now from this or any other professional organization.
- Observations about maintaining CPR's and SAA's relevancy.

And now for some information you won't find on their CVs:

- Leigh McWhite lives in the country and grows her own food.
- Connell Gallagher runs a retirement home for aging ewes and finds talking to the sheep very therapeutic.
- Naomi Nelson loves to travel and has been to the Amazon six times. Her most memorable moment is swimming with pink dolphins.
- Beyond MPLP, Mark Greene is an ardent dog lover and can recite Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" from memory.

## **Benefits and Obligations**

### ***Leigh McWhite***

In 2004, the University of Mississippi administration, reacting to complaints from researchers and donors' families, transferred responsibility for more than seven thousand linear feet of unprocessed congressional and legal collections from the Law School to the Archives and Special Collections. I reluctantly accepted an appointment as interim director of a new Modern Political Archives unit comprised of material received from the Law School as well as several sets of political papers already in the possession of Special Collections.<sup>1</sup>

My initial charge was to process the papers of U.S. Senator James O. Eastland. A conservative Democrat, Eastland served in the Senate by appointment for a few months in 1941 and won the seat in his own right in 1943, remaining in office until 1978. He chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee from 1956 until his retirement and liked to boast in campaign ads that he had personally killed hundreds of civil rights bills. He also chaired the Internal Security Subcommittee,

<sup>1</sup> The University of Mississippi "Modern Political Archives" website is available at [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general\\_library/archives/political/](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/general_library/archives/political/), accessed 12 August 2011.

the Senate version of the House of Un-American Activities Committee.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, researchers expressed a great deal of interest in this three-thousand-plus linear foot collection...and I had no idea how to begin.

Congressional collections are magnificent beasts, large and complex in both scale and scope. None of my colleagues had ever processed one. Desperate for guidance, I resorted to an intensive examination of the professional literature and in the process discovered the Congressional Papers Roundtable. Months before I officially joined the group, I devoured their entire website, reading every past issue of the group's newsletter and consulting all the sources listed on their bibliography.<sup>3</sup> When the 2005 SAA conference rolled around, I eagerly attended the daylong preconference programming that CPR regularly sponsors.

It was like a drink of cool water after crossing a parched desert. Now I'm sure if I dug out my notes from that conference, I could regale you with an extensive description of the entertaining and informative speakers and tours, but the detail I most remember is the sense of overwhelming relief that I was not alone anymore. Here was a group of warm and welcoming professionals who faced the same set of issues, problems, and quirks that congressional collections often entail. Despite the support of my department, the previous year had left me feeling very much like a lone arranger, and CPR provided me with fellowship and a resource for consultations.

That feeling has never left me, and in the years since my first conference, the roundtable has consistently provided the focus for my professional development. What do I receive? Encouraging words, practical advice, commiseration, insights, and ideas. Relevancy is the key to engaging, recruiting, and retaining membership in the roundtable. In the six years of my experience with the group, CPR has done a great job addressing the pertinent issues facing its members in a variety of venues: a listserv, a twice-yearly newsletter, resources posted on the website, and extensive preconference programming. I'm sure others on the panel will discuss in more detail CPR's involvement in the 2008 SAA publication *Managing Congressional Collections* by Cynthia Pease Miller, a volume I heartily wish had been available when I began working on the Eastland Collection.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, the roundtable has tackled the difficult subject of technology. CPR continues to hold my interest because it continues to meet my needs.

Over the course of the last seven years, I have presented addresses at the annual CPR program twice, served two years on the steering committee, regularly

<sup>2</sup> The James O. Eastland Collection finding aid with an extensive biographical note is available online at <http://purl.oclc.org/umarchives/MUM00117/>, accessed 12 August 2011.

<sup>3</sup> The current Society of American Archivists "Congressional Papers Roundtable" website is available at <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/congressional-papers-roundtable>, accessed 12 August 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Pease Miller, *Managing Congressional Collections* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008).

participated on the listserv, contributed material to the newsletter, helped to write and analyze the 2009 member survey on electronic records in congressional collections, and co-chaired the resulting Electronic Records Task Force. I have also attended all CPR meetings. Recently, the members elected me chair-elect of the roundtable, a three-year commitment to serve as vice chair, chair, and then chair of the CPR nominating committee.

The motivation for my professional service lies in part with the immense sense of obligation I feel to the group, as well as a strong desire to help maintain the vitality of the organization for future archivists who will accept responsibility for their first sets of congressional papers. Professional service also gives me a platform to share my own discoveries and experiences so that others may benefit from my mistakes or my hard-earned triumphs.

My decision to join the Society of American Archivists was completely based upon its affiliation with the Congressional Papers Roundtable. In 2005, all the members of my archives belonged to other professional organizations, and it is quite possible that I would have followed suit if not for CPR. I have enjoyed the benefits of my SAA membership: the conferences, listservs, and literature. My exposure to these forums has broadened my professional knowledge and served as a source of inspiration. To be honest, though, I have no overwhelming ambition to ascend the SAA leadership ladder.

I expect to continue working in my current job until retirement. Processing congressional collections forces you to think in terms of the long haul, and I have developed a vision for the Modern Political Archives that requires long-range strategic planning. As a result, it is very likely that I will maintain a strong interaction with the Congressional Papers Roundtable. It only makes sense that I should expend my energy on an organization that contributes so directly to my own professional interests.

Like any archivist, I devoutly wish to clear out my backlog of unprocessed collections. Through careful adaptations of the "More Product, Less Process" approach, I fully anticipate that all collections without donor-imposed access restrictions will be opened within the next five years.<sup>5</sup> Both physical storage space and digital server space are tight. Regular advocacy among university administrators has finally resulted in the formation of a task force to consider additional space requirements for the political archives. While we may never have a separate, large-scale facility like the new Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies at the University of Georgia, that model is certainly inspirational.<sup>6</sup> Monetary resources, of course, would aid expansion of the physical infrastructure as well as fund other undertakings. In development

<sup>5</sup> Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68 (2005): 208–63.

<sup>6</sup> The University of Georgia "Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies" website is available at <http://www.libs.uga.edu/russell/index.html>, accessed 22 August 2011.

matters, I rely heavily upon the example of Herb Hartsook at the University of South Carolina, who has built an impressive million-dollar endowment to support the activities of the South Carolina Political Collections.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I envision a Modern Political Archives at the University of Mississippi that attracts additional donations of significant collections, conducts meaningful outreach programming, actively engages the students and faculty at my own institution, and enlarges the audience of external researchers. In all of these areas, CPR provides a forum for discovery and a conduit for dissemination.

SAA roundtables like CPR provide opportunities for archivists with shared interests to identify, consider, and tackle issues of common concern. In the process, these groups also offer engaged individuals the chance to enhance their leadership skills. For professional newcomers, the smaller scale of the roundtable environment will prove less intimidating than the much larger organization of SAA. Regardless, leadership often requires that you volunteer yourself. I was still relatively new to CPR when I submitted my own name to the nominating committee for a post on the Steering Committee.

Leadership also requires participation in activities that may lack any personal appeal. In 2009, our panel moderator, Linda Whitaker, prevailed upon me to become cochair of a task force on electronic records. Although I protested mightily on the basis of my general technological ineptitude, she convinced me to accept with the argument that someone needed to serve with the specialists as the lowest common denominator, so that others like myself could utilize the resulting resources. In the process of working on the task force, I gained a greater understanding of a format that all political papers archivists will be forced to confront in the very near future.

I am grateful for the education, experiences, and growth that CPR has provided me in the past, and I look forward to the opportunities to continue working with this group in the future.

## **The Evolution of a Roundtable and a Career**

**Connell B. Gallagher**

Richard A. Baker, former head of the U.S. Senate Historical Office, wrote a succinct history of “congressional papers fever” as the introductory essay in *An American Political Archives Reader*, published in 2009.<sup>8</sup> In it, he traces the growth of this fever from the creation of his office in 1975 on the eve of the

<sup>7</sup> Herbert J. Hartsook, “Raising Private Monies to Support Archival Programs,” *An American Political Archives Reader*, ed. Karen Dawley Paul, Glenn R. Gray, and L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 347–54.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Baker, “Reflections on the Modern History of Congressional History,” *An American Political Archives Reader*, 1–15.

nation's bicentennial, to 2008 when the House and Senate passed resolutions "expressing the sense of Congress that Members' Congressional papers should be properly maintained, and encouraging Members to take all necessary measures to manage and preserve their papers."<sup>9</sup> Baker describes a number of events and publications surrounding the bicentennial of the Congress in 1989, and he mentions one of the landmark events closest to our hearts: the creation of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable over the period 1984 to 1986, with our first formal meeting in Chicago in 1986.<sup>10</sup> So here we are again, twenty-five years later and stronger than ever thanks to the hundreds of congressional archivists who have served and continue to serve this important mission. I think that the roundtable has been one of the most productive, interesting, and exciting groups in SAA.

My involvement came through a confluence of events happening at the University of Vermont (UVM) and in my career. The university had acquired a number of manuscript collections over its two-hundred-year history, and I was hired as the first processing archivist shortly after these papers were brought together as part of Special Collections in a new library building in the 1960s. The history faculty at UVM was young and filled with a passion for the new social history crafted by poring over original documents, and they wanted their students to be trained to use them.

One of the first collections I processed was the papers of Warren R. Austin, who served in the U.S. Senate from 1931 to 1946 and then as ambassador to the United Nations (U.N.) from 1946 to 1953. This was a big collection, 110 cubic feet, and it was in demand by scholars and graduate students because of its rich content. It documented the Great Depression, World War II, the Korean War, and the creation of the U.N. Sitting U.S. senator Winston Prouty died in 1971 after spending twenty years in both houses of Congress (1951–1971), and his papers measured approximately four hundred cubic feet. Prouty was known for his support of health care, education, worker training, programs for the elderly, and the expansion of Social Security coverage and benefits. He was an early backer of Amtrak and of the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Because we had no room for this collection, it sat on the floor in the photocopying office until 1974, when the next senator left office.

The university purchased an old office building in downtown Burlington as an annex for the library just before the papers of U.S. senator George Aiken arrived in 1975. Aiken retired in 1975 after thirty-four years in the Senate (1941–1975), and his papers measured over eight hundred cubic feet. Aiken was the ranking member on both the Agriculture and Forestry Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee for most of his Senate years. He is most

<sup>9</sup> Baker, "Reflections," 1–2.

<sup>10</sup> Baker, "Reflections," 8.

known for his championing of the St. Lawrence Seaway Act (1954) and the “Food for Peace” program (PL 480), and for his Vietnam War proposal to declare victory and get out of Vietnam as a balance between the “hawks” and the “doves” in the Senate. Space and the lack of processing staff became an issue. We knew that it wouldn’t be long before the next senator would retire, and then the next, *ad infinitum*. In the meantime, the university acquired the papers of two short-term U.S. House members, William H. Meyer and Richard Mallary, who had occupied Vermont’s single at-large seat. In 1984, Senator Robert Stafford announced that he would leave office in 1989 after a combined twenty-nine years in the House, where he was a proponent of an all-volunteer army, and the Senate, where, as chairman of the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee, he was known for his work on the Superfund Cleanup Act and for preserving the provisions of the Clean Air Act. He was also chairman of the Education Subcommittee of the Health and Human Services Committee, where he helped to protect funding for the U.S. Department of Education and sponsored the Stafford Student Loan Program. The university had built a Library Research Annex with a reading room on the edge of campus by the time Stafford retired, so there was plenty of room to house what promised to be another huge collection.

Political papers as a subject appeared on SAA programs and in the *American Archivist*, but it was not until 1984, a pivotal year, when the Society met in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the National Archives, that a full session was dedicated to this topic.<sup>11</sup> Dick Baker chaired the session, Records of Congress: Recent Trends in Appraisal and Control, with Senate Archivist Karen Paul giving us “A View from Inside the U.S. Senate.” Though at this time I was chair of the College and University Archives Section and of the new SAA NOTIS<sup>12</sup> User’s Group, I attended the session with a strong desire to learn more about congressional collections, met some of the other congressional archivists, and was later invited to attend the special retreat-style Conference on Congressional Papers that was held at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, a year later, from 31 July to 2 August 1985.

Things seemed to crystallize in Harpers Ferry, where fourteen experienced congressional archivists and five historians and administrators discussed standards for collections and repositories, improved records management and relations between congressional offices and repositories, the training of congressional archivists, publishing about congressional records, and marketing. A call arose for the creation of a group to continue these discussions and to

<sup>11</sup> See SAA *Annual Meeting* program, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> NOTIS (Northwestern Online Total Integrated System) was an integrated library system first created at Northwestern University in 1968, implemented in many other institutions, and purchased by Ameritech in 1991. For additional information, see *Wikipedia*, s.v. “NOTIS,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NOTIS>, accessed 1 October 2011.



make progress on the issues we had raised. One archivist, I imagine this was Karyl Winn, noted that “my brightest hope would be that the meeting would lead to the establishment of a [group] that would continue to bring together those of us with special interests in congressional papers...without such a group I doubt that much concrete action can be accomplished outside the efforts of the Senate Historical Office and the NHPRC.”<sup>13</sup>

The participants agreed that SAA should be queried about conferring official status on such a group. Action for creating the Congressional Papers Roundtable began in earnest at this moment. We returned to Washington on 2 August. I was really energized by the retreat, and I remember that Karyl asked me if I would chair an informal group of archivists interested in congressional papers at the SAA Austin meeting that fall. I did and later agreed to chair the first Congressional Papers Roundtable meeting the following year in Chicago.

The year between September 1984 and August 1985 was a pivotal one for me as well as for congressional archivists in general. I made appointments to visit the three members of my congressional delegation in September to propose that they hire me to work on their papers in their Washington offices during an upcoming sabbatical. The idea came from reading Patricia Aronsson’s article “Appraisal of Twentieth-Century Congressional Collections,” which appeared in a volume edited by Nancy Peace and published in 1984.<sup>14</sup> Aronsson was one of the first archivists to work on Capitol Hill. She recommended that archivists work with members of Congress and their staffs while they are still in office to get a handle on their collections before they were dropped on our doorsteps. Wisconsin State Archivist F. Gerald Ham also explored this idea of “pre-archival control” in a second article in the Peace collection.<sup>15</sup> All three Vermont members of Congress were interested in my proposal, but Senator Stafford’s administrative assistant hired me on the spot to begin work in the spring of 1988, the year before the senator planned to leave office. From this point on in my career, working with congressional papers became my main interest and passion.

How did my experience with congressional papers inform my practice? The one thing that affected my professional life the most was that sabbatical in 1988–1989. I spent one semester working as archivist for U.S. senator Robert T. Stafford (R-VT) and the second semester working for U.S. senator Patrick J.

<sup>13</sup> *Congressional Papers Project Report*, sponsored by the Dirksen Congressional Center and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, Frank H. Mackaman, Project Director (Washington, D.C.: NHPRC, 1986), 30. Available online via the HathiTrust Digital Library at <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015071445970>, accessed 18 September 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Aronsson, “Appraisal of Twentieth-Century Congressional Collections,” *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance*, ed. Nancy E. Peace (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1984), 81–101.

<sup>15</sup> F. Gerald Ham, “Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance,” *Archival Choices*, 133–47.

Leahy (D-VT).<sup>16</sup> My goal was twofold: 1) to appraise Stafford's papers before they came to the university and reduce the bulk by disposing of unwanted series and microfilming at least one of the most voluminous ones, and 2) to have the papers processed before they left Washington. I had a full-time intern to help with this. Following Aronsson's dictum, I learned how a congressional office worked through observation and by interviewing all of the records creators and the principal actors from the senator down, including committee staff. I learned about the structure of the office, with administrative staff on one side and legislative (professional) staff on the other, and I discovered that I had to balance my attention on both sides to retain credibility with each. Thank God for the Senate Historical Office and the advice I received from Karen Paul and her *Records Management Handbook for United States Senators and Their Repositories*, which became my bible.<sup>17</sup>

I attended many hearings and committee meetings with the senator's staff to watch the way these worked and the way staff prepped and primed senators with records at each meeting. I learned that the staff generated most of the records, unlike those in the earlier congressional collection of Senator Austin and others I had processed, which had the imprint of the senator on them. It was important to learn what staff members actually did in the office, how they related to each other, and how this contributed to the outcome. Who were the principal recordkeepers? How did they arrange the records and why? These were more corporate records than personal papers. I brought this knowledge to processing and found that I was able to better understand all of the different series and how the records fit together. There were few series in the Austin papers, which really comprised a large subject file. Austin had only one staff member, a secretary! Some of Stafford's legislative staff felt that the records they produced belonged to them and could be taken to their next job. The records that documented Stafford's actions on the EPW Committee, for instance, were in the files of his chief legislative assistant for this committee. I had long discussions with the administrative assistants for both Stafford and Leahy about these "tangential files," and they agreed that all of the records belonged to the senator. Having an archivist in the office really heightened everyone's awareness of records.

My work with CPR focused on collecting a critical mass of the congressional archivists so that we could have wide-ranging discussions of the myriad issues we all faced. According to my memo of 29 July 1986, I hoped "the major activity of

<sup>16</sup> Connell B. Gallagher, "A Repository Archivist on Capitol Hill," *An American Political Archives Reader*, 27–38.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Dawley Paul, *Records Management Handbook for United State Senators and Their Repositories*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate, 1985). Available online via the HathiTrust Digital Library at <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011697276>, accessed 18 September 2011.

our first formal meeting would be a free-for-all” of ideas.<sup>18</sup> We needed a forum where archivists and other professionals such as lawyers, conservators, political scientists, and others with special expertise could address these topics. We needed to create programs for SAA to educate archivists about congressional papers, and we needed to draw on the other groups in the Society to cosponsor programs on topics of mutual concern. We also needed to create a handbook of practice for congressional archivists, and we needed to publish articles and books about our experiences working with these fascinating collections. Working with the group and with congressional papers piqued my interest in privacy and confidentiality, and I went on to help found the Privacy and Confidentiality Roundtable and to create cross-fertilization between the two groups.<sup>19</sup>

Over the past twenty-five years, the Congressional Papers Roundtable has accomplished all of these things: offering an annual workshop, publishing the handbook, publishing many books and articles on congressional papers, and sponsoring many roundtable and SAA programs. Still, it appears to me that the real strength of the group has been in the interactions of the members. We still learn a lot from each other.

## **First Encounters, Lasting Impressions**

**Naomi L. Nelson**

I first encountered the CPR in 1994. I was then a temporary part-time archivist hired by Emory University to bring some order to the voluminous congressional papers of Sam Nunn, a four-term senator from Georgia. This was my first job out of library school and my first time at an SAA annual meeting. I asked my director, Linda Matthews, and our university archivist, Ginger Cain, what sections or roundtables I should attend. Both, without hesitation, urged me to go to Congressional Papers Roundtable because it was obviously related to my work, and because it was known to be a very supportive group that welcomed and mentored new archivists. I found both to be true at that meeting and all subsequent meetings.

Early on in my membership, Herb Hartsook encouraged me to conduct research and present the findings at the roundtable meeting. That first presentation got me actively involved. The experience gained over the nine years I worked with the Nunn papers shaped my career in important ways, as did my participation in CPR. During that time, I served on the Steering Committee,

<sup>18</sup> Connell B. Gallagher, Chair, memorandum to the members of the Congressional Papers Roundtable, 29 July 1986, Connell B. Gallagher Professional Papers, University of Vermont Archives.

<sup>19</sup> For additional information, see Society of American Archivists, “Privacy and Confidentiality Roundtable,” <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/privacy-and-confidentiality-roundtable>, accessed 18 September 2011.

acted as CPR chair, organized SAA sessions, and contributed the Senate's Constituent Mail System archiving plan. I was invited to contribute a chapter about the latter to the award-winning *An American Political Archives Reader*.<sup>20</sup>

Working with congressional papers provides broadly applicable archival skills and experience. It can also pigeonhole an archivist in a very specific subgenre of personal papers. Congressional papers are legally classified as personal papers despite the widespread public belief that they are government records. The donor agreement is negotiated with an individual, and the collections often include family papers and other materials that document a senator's or a congressperson's life before and after he or she holds office. Members of Congress are VIPs (at least in their own minds and the minds of university administrators). Working with congressional papers gives archivists experience in managing those kinds of relationships and in managing their own administration's expectations.

At the same time, congressional collections have much in common with corporate or organizational records. The collections tend to be very large—commonly two thousand linear feet—and to include records created by numerous staffers. Most office holders now voluntarily follow records management principles set out by the senate archivist or the House Office of History and Preservation.<sup>21</sup> The size of congressional collections encourages archivists to think big, to process efficiently, and to look for ways to collaborate.

Most congressional collections are similar because 1) congressional members are engaged in similar work, 2) the Senate and House find it cost effective to narrow the number of recordkeeping options, and 3) the Senate archivist and House archivists work hard to create and promulgate best practices. In addition, collections from the same state tend to have components that overlap, containing information on the same issues and themes. This means

<sup>20</sup> In 1996, Senate Archivist Karen Dawley Paul gathered together archivists and records managers from the offices of retiring senators, archivists from the repositories scheduled to receive their records, and representatives from the Senate Computer Center to discuss how the databases used to manage constituent correspondence might best be preserved (given what we knew at the time). The Computer Center also planned to use these policies and procedures for any records moved offline in working offices. For more on the history of the Congressional Constituent Mail Systems, see Naomi Nelson, "Taking a Byte Out of the Senate: Reconsidering the Research Use of Correspondence and Casework Files," *An American Political Archives Reader*, 235–52.

<sup>21</sup> Guidelines published by Senate Archivist Karen Dawley Paul include *Records Management Handbook for United States Senators and Their Archival Repositories* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate, 1985, 1992, 1998, 2003, and 2006) and *Records Management Handbook for United States Senate Committees* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate, 1988, 1999, and 2005). Most of these are available online in the HathiTrust Digital Library, <http://www.hathitrust.org/>, accessed 21 September 2011. Guidelines published by the House Office of History and Preservation include *Records Management Manual for Members of the U.S. House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives); the current edition is available at <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/cpr/publications/Manual%20for%20Members.pdf>, accessed 20 September 2011. See also Karen Dawley Paul, *The Documentation of Congress: Report of the Congressional Archivists Roundtable Taskforce on Congressional Documentation*, available online through the HathiTrust Digital Library at <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002785898>, accessed 20 September 2011.

that seasoned congressional archivists think of these collections as variations on common themes and as pieces of a larger whole. The end result is openness to best practices and to common solutions that span repositories nationwide.

Congressional papers, however, can be somewhat insular. The collections are more like each other than like other kinds of archives or manuscript collections, which can discourage congressional papers archivists from looking outside their own community for best practices or solutions. At the time I was active in congressional records, little interest existed in exploring common interests with international repositories collecting the records of elected representatives.

Congressional papers in general are not sexy in the way that literary papers or Civil War collections are. People's—even other archivists'—eyes tend to glaze over when the talk turns to congressional papers. The arcane details that are so important to our work—such as how subject files were arranged, or what correspondence numbering system was used—are irrelevant to others. The most intriguing materials are often closed for long periods (these are, after all, politicians with public personas to protect), and the great volume of the materials can make it time consuming to locate information of interest.

Despite those caveats, I found congressional papers to be a great place from which to start my archival career. I learned to build effective relationships with VIPs and to manage large, living collections. I gained important experience with born-digital records of various kinds, including large databases, common office documents, and digital photographs. I also saw the results of early large-scale digitization projects on the Hill and learned about what to do and what not to do.

The CPR turned out to be a great place for me to launch my participation in SAA. Most importantly, it shaped my expectations about what a professional organization should be. It was a good size—large enough to network yet small enough to know most everyone. It had a nice balance between those with years of experience and those new to the profession. The roundtable also planned social gatherings at SAA where we could get to know each other. The periodic symposia allowed us to debate and discuss developments in congressional papers with congressional staff members and with scholars and students. The sustained participation of Senate and House archivists and the Senate and House historians has provided a thread of continuity to the roundtable. The CPR leadership encouraged research and publication, and supported initiatives to publish the latest best practices for congressional papers. These significantly extended the roundtable's reach outside of SAA, encouraging nonmembers to join.

Looking back on my more than twelve years in CPR, I count a number of ways in which I believe it exemplifies the best of SAA:

- This roundtable has created a national network of professionals working in congressional papers from a broad spectrum of repositories. The network serves as a knowledge base for this genre of archives, and those who suddenly find themselves responsible for congressional collections consult its members on a regular basis. This network not only serves as a gateway to SAA itself, but also to the highest levels of this nation's institutions.
- Those new to archives or to congressional papers will find a welcoming community here. The mentoring I received went well beyond the mechanics of arranging and describing congressional papers. It included timely advice on how to advance my career, how to raise funds, how to develop a program, and how to approach change.
- CPR provides a variety of opportunities for its members to participate, from presentations, to publications, to grant writing, to leadership. These opportunities are part of a purposeful program that collects and shares information, not only about congressional papers, but also about archival management.

The sustained commitment of those working in congressional papers has ensured that CPR continues to be an important network and knowledge base within SAA. Its vitality has not dimmed over the past twenty-five years. I'm grateful for the start it gave me, and I look forward to seeing what CPR will bring to the profession in the next twenty-five years.

## **Reflections on Congressional Papers, the Roundtable, and Leadership**

**Mark A. Greene**

I joined CPR in 1989 following my change from small college archives lone arranger at Carleton College to curator of manuscripts acquisition for the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). At the time, MHS had manuscripts collection holdings of about 35,000 cubic feet. The largest subset by far was the records of the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads, but the second largest subset, also by far, was congressional papers at 6,200 cubic feet, 95 percent of which was generated after World War II.<sup>22</sup>

Having no experience with congressional papers, CPR was an obvious source of information. What I also found in CPR was just as important: mentors and friends. I found an interest group with energy, imagination, and vitality. I

<sup>22</sup> This total for congressional papers does not count the papers of state legislators, governors, U.S. ambassadors, and two U.S. vice presidents, or the records of state political parties. The vice presidents are Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale. Mondale was the last vice president to have personal control of his official records, prior to the Presidential Records Act coming into effect.

found a small portion of SAA where it was much easier to integrate, volunteer, and get my feet wet in leadership. And I found a group of professionals with whom I could, and often did, disagree about matters of practice and even of principle without drawing personal attack or enmity, a group where professional debate was encouraged.

Linda has asked each of us to comment briefly on “how working with political papers and belonging to CPR informed our practice, ideas, and career paths.” I can honestly say that political papers, and particularly congressional papers, had a profound impact on my ideas and practice. My views and application of donor relations, gift negotiation and restrictions, appraisal, processing, and reappraisal and deaccessioning have all been influenced by my work with congressional collections.

For example, in dealing with congressional collections I came to believe much more generally that archivists tend to save too much and reject or throw away too little. Negotiating deeds of gift for congressional collections convinced me archivists have much more influence in setting terms than is often supposed. A political collection at MHS first suggested to me the expedience of intellectual rather than physical arrangement of collections, particularly large collections that continue to grow for years.<sup>23</sup> Finally, political collections did much to convince me that a donor’s expectation of what “processed” means largely depends upon what the archivist led the donor to expect. I discussed all these ideas with CPR colleagues over the decades, which helped me to refine and improve my approach to method and practice.

The direction in which political papers informed my professional work was probably due to the particular intersection of congressional papers in the context of a state historical society’s acquisition activities. There is, I think inevitably, a disjuncture between those congressional papers archivists who work within congressional or political papers repositories<sup>24</sup> and those archivists who work within general repositories that also include significant numbers of congressional papers.<sup>25</sup> The distinction arises at least in part from a difference in priority: A state historical society of necessity must prioritize congressional collections against collections documenting every other aspect of human culture within

<sup>23</sup> Specifically it was the records of Minnesota’s Democratic Farmer-Labor Party. Such intellectual arrangement overriding physical arrangement is discussed in Greene and Meissner, “More Product, Less Process,” 241–42.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research and Studies, the South Carolina Political Collections, and the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics. Other more general repositories with major aggregations of political collections include the Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Delaware Special Collections, and Arizona Historical Foundation. There is a third category of congressional papers repositories too, those (usually university archives and special collections) that acquire (often at the direction of the university president, with no consultation with the archivist) the papers of a single congressperson.

<sup>25</sup> I believe a similar distinction can be seen in the approach to authors’ papers between curators of literary archives and archivists of more general repositories.

that geographic area, whereas a center of congressional studies has by definition identified political papers as the highest possible priority.

In response to Linda's question about how I might have contributed to or influenced CPR, you might suppose I would simply cite my service on the steering committee and as chair in the mid-1990s. Actually, however, as chair I don't seem to have succeeded in influencing the roundtable much at all. If I contributed to CPR, it was by influencing SAA's conception of the roundtable.<sup>26</sup>

1997 and 1998 were years of intense scrutiny of the role of sections and roundtables within SAA, years during which the organization moved significantly toward treating the special interest groups as important assets rather than as insignificant annoyances. As chair of CPR, I was vocal in telling SAA just how vital the units were during two strategic planning sessions for SAA "leaders," in my newsletter columns, and in my conversations with SAA's leadership.

I also tried to influence SAA's perception of CPR from my positions as member of SAA Council, and then as vice president and president, by encouraging SAA leadership to approach the roundtable when national issues arose on which the Society wished to influence Congress. Nobody has better connections to sitting members of Congress than the CPR membership, I frequently pointed out, but I had little luck in convincing the rest of SAA leadership.

If I had any direct influence on CPR itself, it was as a rank-and-file member, and my impact probably came from 1) my arguments concerning collection development, appraisal, and reappraisal, 2) the survey I assisted Jeff Suchanek in creating, distributing, and summarizing for the roundtable in 1998–1999, and 3) my later writings on processing. My appraisal arguments, first published in 1994, were at the time fairly controversial, so I was surprised when I learned they had become respectable enough to be reprinted in *An American Political Archives Reader* in 2009.<sup>27</sup>

The 1998 survey focused primarily on conservation (writ broadly) of congressional collections, with results summarized at the 1999 CPR meeting. I don't have any evidence that the survey itself directly swayed CPR membership, but its

<sup>26</sup> As chair I also tried to influence the decision by the U.S. House Oversight Committee to eliminate the position of House archivist, held at the time by Cynthia Miller. I wrote letters and I encouraged CPR members to write letters, but to no avail. I obviously had even less influence with the House leadership than with CPR. It was close to a decade, I believe, before the House re-created the archivist position. I was also unsuccessful in trying to get the roundtable's bylaws changed to reflect the change in the House.

<sup>27</sup> Mark A. Greene, "Appraisal of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," *Archival Issues* 19, no. 1 (1994): 31–44, republished in *An American Political Archives Reader*, 181–95.



questions and the responses did help drive the MPLP repository survey that Dennis Meissner and I did several years later.<sup>28</sup>

I have had my most controversial impact on CPR via MPLP. Some roundtable colleagues' objections to minimal processing made the earlier disagreements over appraisal seem like love fests. But Mike Strom is not the only congressional papers archivist to apply MPLP and to consider it an essential tool; he was only the first one to publish about his experience. But I will save everyone the heartburn of expanding any further on the connections between MPLP and CPR.<sup>29</sup>

I can answer the question "How [involvement in CPR] may have influenced [my] engagement with SAA and [my] movement within the organization" quite unequivocally by saying "immeasurably." Whenever I suggest to new members of SAA what steps they can take to most quickly feel well integrated into the Society, I encourage them to "join and volunteer for service in sections and roundtables," and I say emphatically, "and be particularly sure to find ones that are interested in doing more than proposing or endorsing conference sessions."<sup>30</sup> "The friends you make in the sections and roundtables," I continue, "are likely to be your firmest and longest lasting connections in the profession." The special interest units are also tremendous training grounds for SAA leadership, assuming that the units are engaged in creative and substantive projects that the steering committees and chairs must coordinate, ease forward, and mediate.

While I can only speculate that my service on the steering committees and as chair of CPR and the Manuscripts Repository Section was partly responsible for my being nominated for SAA Council and president, I can say with certainty that as SAA vice president, when I went looking to appoint chairs for committees,

<sup>28</sup> Jeff is completely blameless of this connection, which I point out because he is, to say the least, no fan of MPLP. See, for example, Jeffery S. Suchanek, "More Product, Less Process: One Size Does Not Fit All," Society of American Archivists, "Session 501," [http://saa.archivists.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/events/eventdetail.html?Action=Events\\_Detail&InvID\\_W=1081](http://saa.archivists.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/events/eventdetail.html?Action=Events_Detail&InvID_W=1081). I must note, even in regard to his paper title, that the original article states again and again that MPLP would not fit all collections or parts of collections.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Strom, "Texas-Sized Progress: Applying Minimum-Standards Processing Guidelines to the Jim Wright Papers," *Archival Issues* 29, no. 2 (2005): 105–12, available online at Minds@UW, <http://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/45900>, accessed 18 September 2011. Not surprisingly, both my repository and Dennis Meissner's have also applied it.

<sup>30</sup> Here are two other examples of such subunits within SAA. The Acquisition and Appraisal Section is currently developing guidelines for reappraisal to submit to SAA's Standards Committee for endorsement. Another active section I was privileged to be part of was Manuscripts Repositories, which developed the SAA brochures for donors of family papers and organizational records and, in conjunction with Acquisitions and Appraisal, the SAA brochure for donors about deeds of gift. These brochures are available online at Society of American Archivists, "Brochures," <http://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures>, accessed 18 September 2011.

I first considered the people I worked with in the leadership of roundtables and sections.<sup>31</sup>

Linda's final request is that we provide "observations about maintaining CPR/SAA relevancy. . . . Include comments about the role of social networking. (Do you use it? How and why?)." CPR will continue to be relevant as long as it provides to newer professional cohorts what it provided to me: socialization, volunteer leadership opportunities, mentorship, specialized knowledge, a forum for respectful debate and discourse, and the chance for involvement in activities more meaningful, substantive, and far-ranging than submitting or endorsing session proposals.<sup>32</sup>

While on the SAA Council and as vice president and president, I was forced, uh, privileged to read all the section and roundtable annual reports, so I have a pretty good idea of just how out of the ordinary the activities of CPR have been. The leadership of the roundtable wrote a successful grant for, oversaw the writing of, and published a major volume on managing congressional collections, a stupendous achievement by my reckoning. Not to mention the online bibliography and resource links. Nor should we forget some tremendous efforts that didn't entirely pan out, for example, the congressional papers workshop, the attempt to write the management manual by committee, and the efforts so far on electronic records.<sup>33</sup>

Would I wish for more? I would like to see the CPR newsletter evolve into something more than a venue for reporting on newly processed collections and new grants received. What about "point-of-view" essays or point-counterpoint pieces based on topics chosen either by the editors or by CPR members attending the business meeting? Additionally, CPR is large enough that members could discuss a semiformal mentorship program, linking those new to congressional

<sup>31</sup> Program Committee cochairs are possibly the most important appointments that the SAA vice president makes; one of the cochairs I selected was Sheryl Vogt, with whom I worked in both CPR and the Manuscripts Repository Section. Sheryl and I have disagreed about significant matters of archival practice, but my respect for her is unbounded and, indeed, she proved to be a superb coleader of the Program Committee. In addition, whenever I have made suggestions to the SAA Nominating Committee over the years, I began by thinking about the individuals who ably led the sections, roundtables, and committees on which I served.

<sup>32</sup> Of course, to remain relevant, many of these must incorporate the growing opportunities and challenges relating to born-digital records in political collections. I must say I have some reservations about the process and products of the most recent CPR task force on electronic records in congressional collections, but the concept was spot on, and we can't stop with this one task force. We should, for example, ask someone in the roundtable to research and create a bibliography of publications and commentaries about work on the computer records of members of parliaments in English-speaking countries. For example, I know there is important work going on in the United Kingdom that is not reflected in the current task force's "resources."

<sup>33</sup> For more detailed information on CPR's many research, publication, and outreach efforts over the years see the roundtable's annual reports online at Society of American Archivists, "Congressional Papers Roundtable," <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/congressional-papers-roundtable>, accessed 18 September 2011.

collections with more experienced practitioners. Archivists facing their first-ever congressional collection might particularly welcome such a connection.<sup>34</sup>

I don't use social networking personally (lest I taint my entire generation, I must note that my wife, Kathy Marquis, is an enthusiastic Facebooker), but of course the repository I direct does employ it. Do I have comments about its role? Web 2.0 is to me only one more in a growing number of potential sources of information that have multiplied far beyond my poor capacity to keep up. It's bad enough that the number of refereed North American archives journals has almost doubled since I joined CPR.<sup>35</sup> Add to them the unreviewed content now available on YouTube, Facebook, blogs, discussion lists, and tweets, not to mention online reports, conference papers, and PowerPoint presentations...social networking sites have provided us with too much available information. As a result, we can no longer count on any single one of our peers having read more or less the same professional literature that we've read. I see social network sites, therefore, as further isolating us, one from the other, the exact opposite of what is intended or expected.

We also no longer have any consensus about quality. Who's vetting the blogs, the conference papers, the PowerPoints, the YouTube videos, the Facebook observations, and on and on? When everyone is an expert, there is no such thing as expertise. Perhaps CPR might offer to evaluate online sources relating to political papers, as a service to roundtable members?

Let's return to the genesis of this session, which was to suggest why CPR might be something of a model for other SAA roundtables and sections. Ultimately, I think, it is because CPR has long had ambitious goals and, no matter how ambitious, found a way (sometimes after trial and error) to accomplish them. CPR is proof that the subunits of SAA can accomplish great things. It is proof as well that there is nothing wrong with trial and error; it is the trying that counts. CPR has long been willing to reach beyond the traditional activities of SAA sections and roundtables, and I can only wonder what our profession might be like if all SAA units did the same.

<sup>34</sup> From a very personal standpoint, I wish CPR would consider moving its business meeting and session(s) back to the conference site. I realize I'm among a small minority, but having to change venues from the conference hotel can be a barrier to participation.

<sup>35</sup> The five in 1990 were (in alphabetical order): Society of American Archivists, *The American Archivist* (<http://www2.archivists.org/american-archivist>), Association of Canadian Archivists, *Archivaria* (<http://archivists.ca/content/archivaria-english>), Midwest Archives Conference, *Midwestern Archivist* now *Archival Issues* (<http://www.midwestarchives.org/archival-issues>), Society of Georgia Archivists, *Provenance* (<http://soga.org/publications/provenance>), and Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association, *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship*, now *RBM* (<http://www.rbms.info/publications/index.shtml#rbm>). Currently, I would also include the following: Taylor and Francis Online, *Journal of Archival Organization* (<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wjao20>), University of Texas Press, *Libraries and the Cultural Record* (<http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/journals/jlc.html>), *D-Lib Magazine* (<http://www.dlib.org/>), and *Journal of Western Archives* (<http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/>). One might also add Springer, *Archival Science* ([http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+\(default\)/journal/10502](http://www.springer.com/new+%26+forthcoming+titles+(default)/journal/10502)) to the present list; though not strictly a North American publication, North American editors and authors dominate it.

## **Additional Commentary by Speakers on Their Archival Education**

**Leigh McWhite**

I was just beginning work on my master's degree in history at the University of Mississippi when the Archives and Special Collections Department hired a friend as a part-time student employee. I vividly remember her telling me one evening that she had found a Groucho Marx letter in a collection; I decided to try for a job the following semester. In my first week, I uncovered an Order of Cincinnati membership certificate signed by George Washington, which no one in the archive knew about! After that I was completely hooked and remained a student worker throughout graduate school, until the then head of the department hired me full time. If you count my years as a student worker, I now have the longest institutional memory in the department!

Working in the archive was a tremendous boon while I researched and wrote my dissertation. I utilized many different resources in my own repository and elsewhere that otherwise I would not have known existed. In turn, my personal experience as a researcher has played a significant role in how I process and describe collections, as well as in my work in reference and instruction with both individual scholars and in the classroom. I have supplemented on-the-spot archival training by reading widely in the field's literature and taking advantage of professional development opportunities. I personally believe that having a PhD is not sufficient for this career, but neither is formal archival or library certification. Experiencing repositories as users and consumers benefits archivists regardless of their educational backgrounds.

**Connell B. Gallagher**

I was working on a PhD in English with a minor in nineteenth-century European history at Wisconsin in the mid-1960s, with a plan to teach on the college level. I needed to find a part-time job in my fourth year, which is when I discovered archives. I loved the work so much that I decided to pursue an archives career. I also got married in that last year of graduate school. Luckily, UVM hired me as a manuscript librarian in August of 1970. I thought about trying to write a dissertation to finish my degree, but I actually lost interest. I started taking some American history courses since my collections were all in that field, but I realized quickly that another MA wouldn't help me much. What I really needed was a library degree if I was going to stay in university libraries. So I took a sabbatical and went to Illinois (Urbana) for the MS in library science. I think the PhD in history would be helpful for an archivist because of the research and publication

training. I thought about taking some classes in political science once I got into congressional papers, but I never did. I did do a lot of reading, however.

**Naomi L. Nelson**

When I was considering becoming an archivist, I talked with archivists I knew and asked what kinds of degrees I might need. They advised me to pursue either an MLS or a degree in history (MA or PhD), as some institutions require credentials in library science and others credentials in history. I wanted to keep my options open, so I decided to get one of each. I've found the experience gained in research and teaching through the PhD program to be incredibly helpful as an archivist. Earning a doctorate also gives one some additional credibility with faculty and can be helpful for moving into archives administration in an academic setting. I'm glad I persevered and got both degrees, but I know many wonderful archivists who only have one graduate degree. I think what we do with what we've learned is what makes the difference.

**Mark A. Greene**

Had I known in my thirties that I would one day wish to direct a major repository, I might well have pursued a PhD, because many such positions require a doctorate. By the time I realized it would expand my job prospects, however, I was far too old and set in my ways to go back to being a graduate student. I was lucky to decide I really wanted one of the relatively few such positions that did not require a PhD. I suspect the requirements for my current position did not include a doctorate at least in part because the two previous directors had PhDs, but did not work out well in the end. The second director got into trouble in part for activities he could not have pursued without that advanced degree, so perhaps hiring someone with a terminal MA seemed safer.

## **Audience Testimonials on CPR**

**Bernard Forrester (*Barbara Jordan's House papers*)**

I did not attend CPR in my first year as a congressional archivist. While I looked in on CPR in New Orleans, I did not become a member until the next year. I was invited to attend the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress and found out there about the activities of the roundtable. I joined the listserv with the help of Chris Burns. Being new to the area, I found the listserv a wonderful place to learn and to upgrade my skills and knowledge. Also at that

time, so many people welcomed me to CPR, people to whom I could go with my problems, who listened and understood, and who provided answers to my questions. CPR members seemed to go out of their way to converse with me either one-on-one or in a group to offer their solutions and concerns. The roundtable has been a tremendous tool to get me into the best practices for congressional archives.

**Ben Primer (*Bill Bradley's Senate papers*)**

My experience on SAA Council suggests that some members really don't understand the importance of the roundtables in getting people involved in SAA. At the time, there was extended discussion about lessening their roles, especially at the annual meeting. I became actively involved in SAA because of my need at that point in my career for a group like CPR. I especially appreciated the collegial dinners outside the roundtable meetings and the many times we went off-site to see congressional papers repositories and collections. I cannot overstate how influential Patti Aronsson's article was in shaping my own view of congressional papers, both in terms of appraisal and processing. I learned to do Greene-Meissner (MPLP) before it had a name out of sheer necessity and volume. The two tractor-trailers of Bill Bradley's papers is a case in point.

**Jeff Thomas (*John Glenn's Senate papers*)**

When I joined the Congressional Papers Roundtable twelve years ago, I did so, like most new members, to further my education and gain insights into the acquisition, processing, and administration of congressional collections. What I found was a welcoming group of people not only experienced in this particular area of the archives profession, but also actively seeking to identify common problems and formulate solutions to these problems. In short, CPR produces results that have direct relevance to its members. I was impressed in particular by the forum CPR held in Washington, D.C., prior to the 2001 SAA Annual Meeting, focusing on improving archival practices in congressional offices and developing research centers for congressional collections.

That forum prompted me to become more involved in the roundtable, starting with joining an *ad hoc* committee called for by the forum to draft a document detailing standards for an ideal congressional papers research center. From this beginning, I had the great good fortune to become chair of CPR in 2006–2007, when CPR submitted and won a NHPRC grant to hire Cynthia Pease Miller to write *Managing Congressional Collections*, published by SAA in 2008. The work by Cynthia and the members of the editorial advisory board on this project serves as a shining example of what a group of knowledgeable people can accomplish when motivated by a common goal.

As others have mentioned, a notable attribute of CPR is the willingness of members to be active leaders in the roundtable. The result has been a continuing series of significant preconference sessions and task force projects focusing on particular issues of interest to members. I, for one, look forward with optimism as the next generation of CPR leaders and members comes to grips with the issues and problems produced as congressional offices shift from paper-based to electronic records.

***L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin (Joe Biden's Senate papers)***

This bears repeating from the CPR preconference meeting. Members of the early congressional papers community found each other out of self-interest, seeking to benefit from much-needed appraisal and processing guidelines, but equally out of distress, concerned that some repositories were totally unprepared to manage such large and complex collections. Our founders sought a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas, experience, and questions. When I arrived for my first SAA meeting in 1988, I didn't realize the group was so new. I had just started my first job as a project archivist. I quickly found the roundtable and joined the "romper room" of congressional archivists who had formally organized the group just two years earlier. So, there I was, a newcomer, rubbing shoulders with key contributors to the archival literature and speaking with archivists attached to institutions with impressive collections.

I appreciate everyone on this panel talking about their leadership opportunities; the professional development opportunities they pursued, such as writing projects or the exploration of an archival issue such as electronic records; their success stories on how meaningful projects were developed; and how they benefited from working with SAA as a professional, member-driven organization. What our panelists offered today has implications for the organization and the profession as a whole. So where are the members from other roundtables, sections, or even the SAA Council? Does "congressional" scare people off or somehow suggest that we are too narrowly focused or specialized? Should we just remove the word "congressional" from any session description so we can draw in non-CPR members? What could or should we be doing to broaden our appeal, or to succeed in getting more session proposals accepted?

***Jill Severn (Richard Russell's Senate papers)***

As CPR moves into its next twenty-five years, its members and its leaders will be incredibly fortunate to be able to build on a robust foundation established with great care and passion by the founders and subsequent leaders of the roundtable. CPR is a calling, not a membership. As the current chair of CPR,

I feel this great sense of responsibility and honor to be part of something that so many have labored to make valuable, interesting, and useful.

That said, I think that CPR must continue to look for new ways to meet the future and its requisite challenges and opportunities. For example, the current economic climate underscores the continuing need to find new ways for CPR to connect with members who cannot travel to CPR meetings: by keeping the newsletter robust, with a broad range of voices; by maintaining an active discussion of issues, problems, and opportunities among members on the listserv; by encouraging participation on committees and task forces by new and enduring members; by developing the nascent CPR intern program to provide new members a chance to become involved in a wide range of activities; and finally, by being a vigorous advocate to SAA Council to support and encourage use of technology that allows members from around the world to participate virtually in the annual meeting sessions, including roundtable and section meetings.

It will be important for future CPR leaders and members to address the enduring challenges and opportunities of changing technology. CPR has demonstrated that it has the practical will and energy to take the challenges of electronic records issues head on. This must continue, and CPR is well positioned to play a leading role in doing so. CPR must also take full advantage of the technologies that allow greater and greater amounts of content to be stored and accessed efficiently and elegantly online. Gray literature, video interviews, demonstrations, and photographs—all the stuff that helps congressional archivists of today make sense of the past and imagine the future.

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#### About the authors:

**Connell B. Gallagher** is library professor emeritus at the University of Vermont, where he served as curator of Manuscripts and head of Special Collections for 36 years. In the course of this work, he was an archivist for two U.S. senators and for the Senate Judiciary Committee, and he was a founding member and first chair of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable. He is a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists.

**Mark A. Greene** has been director of the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming since 2002. He is a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists and has served on Council and as vice president and president of SAA. A member of the Congressional Papers Roundtable since 1989, he has chaired the roundtable, the Manuscripts Repository Section, the Committee on Education and Professional Development, and the Program Committee; he also has served as



a mentor and on the Intellectual Property Working Group. He is the author of more than two dozen articles, which have been published in the U.S., Canada, U.K., Switzerland, and Japan.

**Leigh McWhite** has a PhD in history from the University of Mississippi, where she serves as the political papers archivist and assistant professor. Currently, she is chair-elect of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable.

**Linda A. Whitaker** is a certified archivist and librarian at the Arizona Historical Foundation and past chair of the SAA Congressional Papers Roundtable Steering Committee. She was a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for *Managing Congressional Collections* (SAA, 2008) and served on the Appraisal and Acquisitions Section Steering Committee. She is a member of the SAA Reappraisal and Deaccession Development and Review Team and serves as the Congressional Papers Roundtable's liaison to the SAA Standards Committee.