

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE RECORDS OF CONGRESS**

**MEETING #58**

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2020**

**VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Julie Adams:**

Good afternoon, and welcome all committee members and visiting participants to the first virtual meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. Since we are in a virtual environment, and some visitors have audio, I will introduce myself. I am Julie Adams, Secretary of the Senate, and I am now going to do a roll call of the standing members and appointed members. So if each member could please respond when their name is called. Sheryl Johnson? Sheryl, are you still on?

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Hello?

**Julie Adams:**

Okay. David Ferriero?

**David Ferriero:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Karen Paul? Karen?

**Karen Paul:**

Oh yes, I'm here.

**Julie Adams:**

Okay. Heather Bourk?

**Heather Bourk:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Richard Hunt?

**Richard Hunt:**

I'm here.

**Julie Adams:**

Betty Koed?

**Betty Koed:**

I'm here.

**Julie Adams:**

Matt Wasniewski?

**Matt Wasniewski:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Debbie Skaggs Speth?

**Debbie Skaggs Speth:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Denise Hibay?

**Denise Hibay:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Sheryl Vogt? Sheryl, do we have you?

**Sheryl Vogt:**

Yes.

**Julie Adams:**

Okay. Danna Bell?

**Danna Bell:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

Gunter Waibel?

**Gunter Waibel:**

Here.

**Julie Adams:**

I would like to officially welcome Gunter to the Advisory Committee. Gunter was appointed since our last meeting and serves as Republican leader McCarthy's appointee to the committee.

Unfortunately, John Lawrence is not able to join us today.

Typically, the Advisory Committee would have met in June of this year, but uncertain times and technological challenges prompted

us to push this meeting to today. There will be another virtual meeting of this committee in December.

A special thanks to Amy Camilleri who you all have been in close contact with, and Dan Kulnis in my office, as well as Jerrod Williams with the Senate Sergeant at Arms for their assistance in organizing this event.

All of us have been striving to continue our work during this time of national crisis. I'm speaking to you today from my office just off the Senate floor. And here in the Senate, our archivists and historians have been soldiering on with accessioning our historical records and making our history available to staff and the public through this extraordinary time. Like all aspects of our working lives, archiving during a pandemic has presented challenges, particularly archiving textual records. But I'm happy to report that archival work related to electronic records has continued on pace. The Senate's community of archivists has done an admirable job of keeping the process running smoothly, and as always, we are grateful to the staff of the Center for Legislative Archives for their assistance.

While Senate archivists continue to telework on most days, the Historical Office has opened for limited office hours, allowing us to better facilitate record transfers, and assist Members and staff with their archival needs. Senate Archivist Karen Paul and Deputy Archivists Alison White and Elisabeth Butler Seelinger continue to collaborate with their colleagues in committee and Senators' offices to ensure preservation of Senate records, and to adapt practices to meet the unique needs of this time. Teleworking has also provided unforeseen benefits; while some projects have been put on hold, others such as updating archival guides and toolkits progressed ahead of schedule.

Likewise, the Senate historians have to fulfill their responsibilities during this unusual time. Oral history interviews continue now by way of Skype, and historical talks and presentations go on, although in a virtual environment. A few weeks ago, for example, Senate Historian Betty Koed offered a virtual presentation for the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education speaking on the topic of Senator Charles Sumner and the Civil Rights Act of 1875.

Historians have maintained a rapid response to the many reference requests from Senators, staff, and the public, have continued with the reorganization of historical content on

Senate.gov, and also have made great progress on several upcoming publications.

In February, just as the pandemic hit, the Historical Office launched a new monthly history blog that is posted on the Senate website each month. And I encourage you all to check it out.

It not only relates interesting information about Senate history, but has also shared items from the Senate's rich archival collection. This month, to commemorate Constitution Day in a virtual way, the Historical Office posted a special blog post that explains the origins of the annual event, and recalls the many ways in which we've celebrated it since 2005.

In recent months, staff in my office have been compiling for publication the records of this year's Presidential impeachment trial, a process that has presented unique challenges because of the novel and extensive use of visual aides during the trial.

In order to produce the complete and accurate documentary record of the trial, we were using the video recording of the trial proceedings to identify each visual aide as it appeared at any given point in the trial. Notation for each item will appear directly in the trial transcript which will guide future researchers to all such exhibits compiled in a related volume, and this has really been a big team effort in my office. I

would like to give special thanks to Sydney Butler, Vanessa VandeHey, Robert Craig, Dan Schwager, Dorothy Rull, Suzie Nguyen, Laura Rush, and Betty Koed for their extraordinary work on this. This is a big task to do when there's no pandemic, and during a pandemic, it has been a big undertaking, so I appreciate all of their hard work.

As Richard Hunt will report today, we are pleased to note that progress has been made with the renovation and occupancy of a new Congressional archival storage space on Capitol Hill, phase one of a planned two-phase project. In late 2019, the renovation and redesign of a large space within Building A of the Government Publishing Office was completed and testing for environmental controls were successfully met to ensure compliance with NARA standards.

The Center for Legislative Archives opened a new space in mid-February, and new House and Senate record accessions, as well as records temporarily stored at the Washington National Records Center began to be transferred directly to this new space, and then came the lockdown due to the pandemic. So, we're looking forward to resumption of accession activities as soon as possible, and we are now looking ahead to phase two of this project.



Today I look forward to hearing reports from the House and Senate archivists, as well as from Richard Hunt at the Center for Legislative Archives. And at this time, I would like to recognize my distinguished colleague on the other side of the Rotunda, Clerk of the House, Cheryl Johnson.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Thank you, Julie. Can you all hear me?

**Julie Adams:**

Yes.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Great. Good afternoon, and thank you. Julie, I would like to reiterate your welcome to the Advisory Committee members, and needless to say, our lives have certainly changed since we last met in December. But despite the challenges, my office has continued to seamlessly support the work of the House. I'll highlight some of that work in a moment.

But right now, I want to thank Julie and her staff for organizing today's meeting, and to especially acknowledge the added logistics and scheduling the Advisory Committee's first

entirely remote meeting. I look forward to our continued joint work to address pressing issues affecting the records of Congress.

David, I look forward to our continued collaboration to preserve and provide access to the House official records, and I want to thank you in particular for your leadership in guiding the GPO Building A project to completion. In addition, I'd like to thank the staff at the Center for Legislative Archives for transferring records into the new space, and for their ongoing commitment to provide access to records to support the House's current business while the National Archives' facilities are closed during the pandemic.

I'm delighted to introduce Minority Leader McCarthy's appointee Guenter Waibel, the Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director of the California Digital Library. In this role, he directs the library's innovative work to re-image how information resources are published, archived, and accessed in the face of rapidly changing technologies. Before joining the library in 2016, Mr. Waibel was the Director of the Digitization program office at the Smithsonian Institution, a place that remains near and dear to my heart. He has also taught as an

adjunct professor at Syracuse University and the Catholic University of America's Information Science Schools.

At this time, I'd like to take a moment to highlight some of the projects my office has been working on since December. House archival staff continue their outreach efforts to committee and Member offices, offering records management advice and best practices for preserving and archiving records. This work is especially key as the end of the Congress nears, and at this point, roughly 50 Members have announced that they will be retiring from the House.

With shifts in leadership for several committees and completion of the work of two select committees, we anticipate an increase in accessions throughout the remaining months of the Congress. Therefore, through emails and telephone calls, staff continue to connect with committees, offering records management and archival advice. Staff have also managed several digital and in-person loans for committees and offices in support of ongoing House business.

Again, given the large number of Members who are leaving the House this Congress, archive staff have focused on outreach to these offices for record consultation, participating in

departing Member briefings held remotely by the CAO, and working with Member offices and Washington National Records Center to provide access to records in courtesy storage.

The House Historian's office spent much of the last 11 months undertaking the herculean task of producing a revised and expanded print edition of the Congressionally-mandated publication, *Women in Congress*. This 1200-page volume, and I did say 1200 pages, expands on the 2007 print edition and is scheduled for publication in December. It profiles each of the 366 women who have served in the House and Senate, and also features updated contextual essays that introduce these Members in chronological "generations". In addition, the historian's office has produced a 40-page booklet on the career of Joseph Rainey of South Carolina, the first African American to serve in the House when he was sworn into office 150 years ago on December 12, 1870.

The House Curator will also feature an exhibition on Joseph Rainey, which will include Rainey's election credentials, an anti-lynching petition, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In addition, the House Curator will also have another exhibition that spotlights Congressional campaign memorabilia from the

House collection. Both of these exhibitions are scheduled to open in December.

I appreciate the continued opportunity to work with the Advisory Committee, and I look forward to the discussion this afternoon. I hope everyone remains safe and healthy, and I look forward to when we can meet again in person. Thank you very much.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, Cheryl. At this time, I'd like to recognize David Ferriero for any comments he may have.

**David Ferriero:**

Thanks Julie, and special greetings to you and Cheryl. Sorry we can't be together in person, but it's nice to reconnect virtually. And a very special welcome to Gunter. It's nice to have you at the table. I haven't seen you since your Smithsonian days.

I want to, in my time with you, report on three things. One, the COVID-19 response from the National Archives, our newly-appointed task force on racism, and a little bit about presidential transition. So, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, we shut down 40 sites in 17 states and 23 counties. And now we're in the

process, it's like this gigantic Excel spreadsheet exercise following the gating criteria established by the White House to bring these 40 sites back online. We are now in phase one of that in 36 of those facilities; that means that they have met the requirements for PPE and staffing and cleaning and all that kind of stuff. Factors that go into our considerations have to do with local conditions, what's going on in terms of public health data from those counties, information about school openings, public transportation ability, all kinds of things that staffing depends upon in order to be able to return safely to their sites. This is an elaborate, very deliberate process to make sure that we're paying attention to the safety of our staff and to potential users. As I said, we're in phase one in 36 of these facilities, about to move into phase two for many of them within the next two weeks.

In the meantime, we have been able to provide certain mission-critical services, including our Federal Register delivery of material to the Hill as needed, and most importantly, our service to veterans. All the military records, anyone who's ever served in the military, are housed in a facility in St. Louis. In order for veterans and families to take advantage of certain benefits like medical treatment, or burials, they have to prove that they served, and that means

copies of their DD 214 which are supplied by my staff. So we have for emergency services been able to provide that kind of information with volunteers from the staff in St. Louis coming in to do their work, and we are extraordinarily proud about how people have stepped up to do that.

In terms of when we expect to see people in our facilities again, that's phase three, and it's months out; as I said, this is a very slow and deliberate process. And I must say, we're learning a whole lot about managing and running an agency in a telework environment, and have been very pleased with the fact that we were able to, in the first COVID bill, to get funding for laptops for every member of our staff, so we are in a position to continue many of our services based on that availability. So that's my update on COVID.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is a recently-launched task force on race in response to -- before I move onto that, I also wanted to mention the fact that the National Archives has been a participant in Battelle National Laboratory testing of materials, library and archival materials. They have done a four-phase test of how long the virus survives on paper, book bindings and plastic materials. That information is available on

a site called REALM; if you Google that, you'll find the results of the four tests.

So, in response to everything that's been going on in the country in recent months, I have launched a task force on racism that will address the employees' experiences at the Archives focusing on issues around recruitment, advancement, retention, assignment of work and access to opportunities are issues that will be identified. There will be two subgroups, one on archival description, which will take a look at how we describe our records -- the language that we use in description of records and artifacts, and whether there are issues of racism involved in our archival description work. The second one is the subgroup of museums which will take a look at how we assure diversity of representation, viewpoints, access and outreach in our exhibits, educations, and public programs. We've had 87 volunteers to serve on the task force, and will be officially launching it in the beginning of October.

The third thing to report is an exercise that the executive branch goes through every four years, the what if exercise, if there is a presidential transition. This is an effort that is managed by the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration to coordinate the preparation of



dossiers by each executive branch agency on the budget, strategic plan, and issue papers in preparation for transition to a new administration. We have been busy identifying what kinds of information that our issue papers should include having to do with transition to electronic records and infrastructure, issues like that. I'm not sure whether the Hill goes through an exercise like that. You deal with those transitions, on a regular basis also, as we just heard.

So that's a little bit about what's going on at the National Archives.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, David. It's nice to see you, at least virtually. It is now time to review the minutes from the last meeting, and if there is any objection to dispensing with the reading of the minutes? Hearing none, are there any corrections to the minutes from the last meeting? Okay, I would entertain a motion to approve.

**David Ferriero:**

So moved.

**Julie Adams:**

A second?

**M:**

Second.

**F:**

Second.

**Julie Adams:**

All those in favor?

**M:**

Aye.

**F:**

Aye.

**F:**

Aye.

**F:**

Aye.

**Julie Adams:**

Okay, opposed? We're going to go with the minutes being approved.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

David, could I ask a question?

**David Ferriero:**

Sure.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Regarding your race study, did you contract out to a third party or is it an independently-run study?

**David Ferriero:**

We're doing it in-house.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Okay. Is there other than financial reasons, was there a reason you decided to do it in-house as opposed to a third party doing it?

**David Ferriero:**

We had the expertise in house. We have an EEO office department and Human Resource facilitation skills.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Okay, thank you.

**Julie Adams:**

At this time, I would like to recognize House Archivist Heather Bourk.

**Heather Bourk:**

Thank you, Julie. Hello everyone. Circumstances have changed significantly since we met last year, resulting in major shifts in how and where we work. Since March, Archives staff have primarily been working remotely, and with support from the Clerk and other divisions within our office, we've been able to seamlessly continue our work on behalf of House committees, Members, and staff, safely and effectively.

I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you some of the projects the Archives Department has been working on since the December meeting. As the end of the Congress approaches, House Archives staff are increasing our outreach efforts to committee offices, reminding staff of their archiving responsibilities, offering records management advice, and explaining procedures for archiving records. We've met remotely with several

committees, including the two select committees wrapping up their work this Congress, and anticipate additional requests for record consultations throughout the remaining months of the Congress. We continue to send regular email tips discussing records management and archiving, as well as descriptions of specific historical House records from the Records Search website database to key committee staff. The emails are well-received, and often prompt follow-up questions. Archives staff have also drafted guidelines for archiving records documenting the impact of the pandemic on the work of House committees, officers, and leadership.

Since the beginning of the year, Archives staff have managed high-volume loans and accessions of records in support of current committee business. Notably, in one instance, the return in June of close to 200 boxes, the equivalent of 150,000 pages of records, loaned to a committee in late 2019, and the accession of almost 500 boxes of records, 375,000 pages, transferred from a single committee. With assistance from staff at the Center for Legislative Archives, House staff loaned close to 240 boxes, or almost 180,000 pages of records back to committees in the preceding eight-month-period, and we accessioned more than 600 boxes of new records representing 450,000 pages. Throughout the closure of National Archives

facilities, the Center has continued to provide access to House records in both digital and textual formats for both remote- and in-person loans. We appreciate their assistance always, but particularly during these challenging times.

With close to 50 Members leaving the House at the end of the Congress, Archive staff have been working on a number of projects related to the management and archiving of personal papers. We worked closely with staff in the office of the chief administrative officer, to review and provide content for their departing Member website, which included creating a new quick guide highlighting which types of papers to save, and options for their disposition. Archive staff have also been on hand at the CAO's remote department Member briefings held each month since May to answer any records-related questions. Archives presented a retreat for staff and department Member offices, and we continue to contact departing Members to offer guidance on records management and archiving best practices.

We've also been working with Member offices and staff at the Washington National Records Center to provide access to papers in courtesy storage. WNRC staff have been incredibly helpful in coordinating records transfers despite closure of the facility and limited staff allowed on site.

Staff continue to research and draft new content for the record search database on the History, Art, and Archives website, with the aim of adding 18 new documents to it by the end of 2020. The new content features a variety of record types, including election certificates, presidential messages, legislation, and petitions among other documents of interest. We're also adding education-focused components to encourage teachers and students to use House records in the classroom, including a primary source analysis worksheet that will accompany each record. These resources will also be available by the end of the year.

Archives staff also continue to highlight House records and blogs. Since the beginning of the year, the staff have published blogs on the centennial of the Women's Bureau, square dancing, Oscar De Priest and segregation in the House restaurant, electronic voting in the House, and the story of a woman who disguised herself as a man to serve in the military during the Civil War.

Archive staff continue to contribute to the House History Twitter feed, and provided tweets featuring House records related to distance learning, and under the #ArchivesAtHome hashtag. Staff also created Twitter polls to find and solicit

user feedback on which types of records we should add to Records Search.

The Department continues to support the work of the Curatorial and Historian's offices through research into primary sources for use in exhibitions and publications. Archives staff provided records research and editorial assistance in support of the Joseph Rainey exhibition, which features, among other historical items, official House records. And House Archives staff also contributed to the Historian's Office *Women in Congress* book project by researching, updating, and adding manuscript collection information from Members.

We continue to actively collaborate with our colleagues at the Center and in the Senate on the Government Publishing Office Building Project, and we're pleased to report that renovations at Building A, the first phase of new storage for congressional records, are completed, and the Center has occupied the space. Initial records transferred into the new space began in February.

After the combined House, Center, and Senate task force charged with identifying an updated Archival description tool wrapped up its work in 2019, the House selected ArchivesSpace as the



successor to Archivists' Toolkit. ArchivesSpace has been fully implemented, and the legacy data from Archivists' Toolkit has been successfully migrated, including over 900 accession records and almost 1500 descriptive records.

In these challenging times, I hope everyone's healthy and managing well, and I look forward to when we can all meet again in person. I'm happy to answer any questions the Advisory Committee has, or to provide any additional information on the work we've been doing. Thank you.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, Heather. I would now like to recognize Senate Archivist Karen Paul.

**Karen Paul:**

Hello, everyone. Although largely teleworking since March, we have been able to carry out most, if not all of our archival functions by communicating via email and Skype, supplemented by onsite presence when needed. And I send thanks to the dedicated staff on Senate committees and Senate technical support staff who have really aided us throughout this process.

We worked closely with four offices scheduled to close at the end of the Congress, and are pleased to report that all have selected repositories for their archives. Working with the Sergeant-at-Arms Business Services staff, we recently updated a closing office checklist and other forms. These are to be used in the 60 days up to the closing of the office. We are in the process of updating our handbook, *Preserving Senate History: Closing a Senate Office*. This handbook includes an updated Records Disposition Schedule that reflects changes in office recordkeeping systems, including expanded use of Constituent Services Systems, and use of collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams.

So much of our time has been devoted to assisting offices with records management issues, which really are becoming increasingly complicated as systems have evolved, and following are some of the issues and areas that have occupied us since our last meeting in December.

So an important project nearing completion is a thorough review and update of *our Senators' Office Archives Toolkit*, which contains guidance on many aspects of records management.

As previously reported, we have completed a script for an e-learning course on preserving Senate records, what staff need to know. It highlights the difference between Senate and Senators records, and the role staff play in their preservation. This project unfortunately has been slowed by technical difficulties, as well as our current teleworking status, but we're hoping to move forward with final production soon, and it's certainly needed at this time.

We updated and revised a seminar on records management for state offices, which is given virtually, and is particularly relevant now as state offices are performing much of their work with constituents.

The Senate's rapid switch to teleworking due to the pandemic led us to create new advice for staff on the preservation of new types of documentation, such as recordings of virtual hearings, agency briefings, meetings, and business-related conference calls.

We also are urging offices to preserve documentation of all aspects of work, whether it be legislation, oversight, or constituent services, which are very, very heavy, relating to

COVID-19, and all of the other pressing issues of this absolutely extraordinary year.

Of special interest to repositories acquiring Senatorial collections are guidance and forms made available to committees for use when they authorize a Senator to obtain a copy of committee records for his or her personal archival collection. The completed form documents the fact that a copy of a committee record has been made and informs the archivist at the repository that what they are receiving is a copy and not the original and official committee record. Making this distinction clear at the time the record is sent to the repository will avoid later confusion, which we have experienced quite a bit in the past.

We addressed an issue with encrypted records being sent to the Center for Legislative Archives, and so reminded all Senate offices not to try to archive encrypted records without first decrypting them or including the key.

We also updated a *Senator's Office File Plan*, which we first issued in 2016, and this is aimed to help new offices set up their share drive and their electronic records management processes.

Archiving committee records has always been our core responsibility, and we are pleased to report that it is progressing smoothly. We successfully acquired and are completing accessioning from each committee all non-current electronic records of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Since January 2020, we have archived 79 new accessions, 236 cubic feet, from 13 different committees, and have processed 45 loans, 282 boxes of textual records back to committees. We also transferred 672 gigabytes of records in 82 accessions from eight different committees, and there were four loans of electronic records that went back to three different committees totaling 62 gigabytes of records.

I'm particularly pleased to see that committees are now beginning to borrow back and use their electronic records which hopefully will reinforce them to preserve these records going forward on a regular basis. Those record transfers all took place prior to lockdown, and in March. So as you can understand, we are now accumulating a backlog of records ready for transfer. Deputy Archivist Elisabeth Butler Seelinger has continued to accession records, but they are awaiting physical transfer to the Center for Legislative Archives. Loan requests have been processed throughout this period of closure, however,

and we are very, very grateful to all of the staff at the Center, but in particular, to Senior Archivist Thomas Eisinger for his help in this regard.

Of course, we continue to respond to all other requests from established offices for assistance with specific issues, such as ShareDrive organization, archival storage of digital materials, use of processing software, or that always familiar request, "Where can I find archival assistance? Please help!"

A central mission of our office is to communicate the value and importance of preserving the Senate's archival record, and we constantly seek new ways to communicate this message. Last year, we initiated a Historian/Archivist dual briefing that we offered to Member's offices. These have proved to be very popular and effective. A Senate historian opens the meeting with a brief, sometimes humorous talk about the state's history in the Senate, then an archivist follows with information about what they, the staff, must do to preserve the historical record needed for compiling that history going forward. We have not yet moved to virtual with this, but it's probably something we should think about, and perhaps move forward with.

With our archivists in the Senate, we have been exploring a topic we referred to as "Senate Archivists' inreach to office staff." This effort in collaboration with committee and Member office archivists examines various ways in which archivists can connect with, and assist the staff in their offices. This has included an excellent presentation by Archivist Dina Mazina on her staff training PowerPoint for the Senate Finance Committee, which many of you previewed at the December meeting.

Our own in-house message is clear and remains: "At all times, and particularly during times of national crises, preserving the authentic records and information included in the Senate's Archive is of vital and lasting importance," and this message does resonate with staff.

Our accessioning activity has remained robust. Since December, Elisabeth has been archiving the paper, electronic, and audio/visual records of the Senate impeachment trial. Elisabeth also has participated in discussions and working groups on the necessity of capturing and archiving Senate offices, staff shared documents and chat files from the Senate's recent deployment of OneDrive storage and Teams applications in Microsoft Office 365. Despite interruptions due to the pandemic, Elisabeth continues to accession committee paper and

electronic records, process committee electronic records, assist committee archivists, and work with archivists at the Center for Legislative Archives on loans back to the committees. In fact, I want to specifically thank Elisabeth as she has been the archivist who holds regular office hours in our office and we certainly appreciate her doing that.

The Historical Office has tackled numerous digital initiatives. Deputy Archivist Alison White worked with Photo Historian Heather Moore and Historian Betty Koed to select a Digital Asset Management system to preserve and manage the office's large collection of photographs, oral history recordings, and other digital assets. They chose an Extensis Portfolio product, and Alison is now working on metadata requirements for oral history that will go into the DAM. Alison has met monthly with the House archivists and Center archivists to develop a new archival accessions database as we move away from Archivists' Toolkit. After selecting Alfresco, a content management system used by the Secretary of the Senate's Office of Web Technology, Alison worked with Deputy Webmaster Liz Horrell to create a database within Alfresco that maps to the fields we were previously using in Archivists' Toolkit. Over 2500 accessioned records have been uploaded into the new database. Alison is also working on metadata application for Historical Office materials, including



on the Senate website, assisting with social media and web archiving processes and guidance, and working with committees on digitization of legacy media. Alison will be giving her report on that topic following my remarks.

We continue to track implementation and use of new recordkeeping systems. Deputy Archivists White and Seelinger are monitoring the Senate use of OneDrive/Teams, and I'm monitoring a possible update to the OTIS personnel record-keeping system to capture more information about staff portfolios such as position, titles, and areas of expertise that could then be available for incorporation with descriptive metadata and archived records. This would be both for committee and Senators' records.

Collaboration with entities that collect and preserve Members' papers is a very high priority. The Congressional Papers Forum met virtually on July 28<sup>th</sup>. The two-hour meeting included a lot of information and drew more than 60 attendees. Four panels focused on: Transferring Political Collections to Repositories During a Global Pandemic; An Updated Records Retention Schedule for Senators; Practical Advice on Talking about Electronic Records with Office Staff; and here is my favorite: Archiving the Senate When You're Stuck in the House. As you can tell from the titles, the collective focus of discussion was on how to

acquire, manage, and implement the preservation of Congress' historical records under these difficult conditions. So if we can do it now, it might be easier when we all return to normal, hopefully.

So looking ahead, I want to say that this has been for all of us a much, much too eventful year, and the year is not over, but we want everyone to know that we're standing ready and continuing to meet the challenges as they come along each day. And we will strive to be of assistance throughout the current crises during the upcoming election season and beyond. And I'm happy to answer any questions that you have. And that concludes my report, and I'm happy to introduce Alison White, Deputy Archivist for Digital Collections, who will deliver her report on "Digitization of Legacy Media: Lessons Learned." Alison?

**Alison White:**

Thank you, Karen. As Senate technology has changed over time, legacy media can be left behind at many points in the form of backup tapes, floppy disks, various forms of microfiche or microfilm, VHS and Beta tapes, audio tapes, CDs, et cetera. And we were inspired by the Society of American Archivists' "Jump-In Initiative," the Senate Historical Office archivists reached out to Member and committee offices to encourage them to locate such

material, particularly those that may no longer be accessible, so that when possible, they could be digitized and appraised for access. Responsive offices located floppy disks in drawers, backup tapes in closets, and boxes of tapes that had been relegated to attic storage. The point that we wanted to make to these offices was that these materials may not be accessible much longer, and that it was important to determine if there were records that should be saved and preserved.

Committee backup tapes were the most problematic, because the systems on which they were created no longer exist. We worked with Brandon Hirsch of the Center for Legislative Archives to determine if they might have the tools to access this material, but we were largely unsuccessful. For committees that had been properly handling and archiving their records, backup tapes were unlikely to contain anything unique, but for committees that have had a spotty archival record in the past, there may have been materials of value. Fortunately, there were only a very few instances of this. We've had mixed success using a converter with 3-1/4-inch floppy disks, but the biggest problem has been disk formatting and Windows upgrades, so we can largely manage these. Our advice was to save the physical backup tapes, or floppy disks in case a better means of access could be secured in the future. This was also a good opportunity to

remind those offices that continue to use backup tapes that backup tapes exist as a means of backup while in use, and are never meant to be a replacement for saving or properly archiving digital records.

The bulk of time spent on this broad initiative has gone towards at-large conversion of old videotapes for the Policy Committee, a project that is ongoing. This has been a slow and steady process over the last few years. The first steps involve rearranging the tapes into chronological order as much as possible based on information written on the box or on the table. The earliest tapes from the 1980s were U-matic beta tapes which presented multiple issues. Fortunately, the beta tapes were not a huge part of the collection of tapes, and with the assistance of specialists, we were able to get digital versions of most of them. The Senate's Printing, Graphics, and Direct Mail department, we refer to it as PGDM, has been able to convert Beta and VHS tapes, a service that they also provide to Member's offices. Before tapes are sent to PGDM for digital conversion, they're labeled and photographed, and this information is placed in an online folder. Most tapes from the 1980s and early 1990s were accompanied by a log sheet identifying the content. This log is scanned and also placed in the metadata folder. In the mid-1990s, tapes no longer

contained that accompanying log sheet, and that meant creating one, which has slowed the process down considerably. We are currently working on 1999. The boxes of tapes that have been digitized that we are currently completing will take the project into material from the year 2002.

As this project continues, additional lessons learned may appear, but a few obvious ones have already surfaced. There's a tendency for people to look at old forms of media and not know what to do with them, hence the inclination to box them up and set them aside. In the Senate, this unfortunately can lead to storing such materials in the attic, which is not climate controlled and is subject to the vagaries of DC weather, particularly, the hot and humid summers. When these tapes came into our hands, they were in dirty boxes, and sometimes the dust had infiltrated the tape itself. The very old ones were most problematic, because they'd been in the attic longer, so we now emphasize the unsuitability of attic storage for any media in our guidance to all offices.

Another lesson learned is the value of documentation, handling hundreds of tapes, cleaning, labeling, photographing them, identifying dates, sending them out for conversion and managing the digital files upon return requires a great deal of capable

documentation. Also, we did not realize how many tapes were missing log sheets, and as I mentioned, that slowed things down. The steps taken to photograph the tapes and their cases have proven helpful on more than one occasion, particularly when issues about tape content and dates have arisen for tapes without log sheets. Understanding how the tapes were originally used has been particularly helpful, as tapes were sometimes recorded over, and on occasion, inexplicable content would show up.

Important lessons learned: first, there is never an ideal time to tackle such a project. But rolling up your sleeves and getting started is more important than waiting until you think you have enough time. And second, when you do start, keep your original media. Over the course of this project, PGDM changed the formats that they offer for digital conversion. Originally, we were only able to get MP2 digital files, but now we can get MP4. MP2 was not ideal, but it was our only option if we wanted to keep costs down and do the work in-house. Given that the original quality of taped-over VHS and Beta tapes was not very good in the first place, we thought MP2 was an acceptable option. However, because we kept the original tapes, if there were a need to improve the quality of digital recording in the future, we would have that option.

And here's one last unanticipated lesson learned: creating the metadata for tapes lacking log sheets is a great pandemic chore, especially if one had the forethought to load all the digital files onto an accessible server in advance. Thank you.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you Karen and Alison. At this time, I would like to recognize Richard Hunt, for the report from the Center for Legislative Archives. Richard?

**Richard Hunt:**

Thank you, Julie. I would like to start by applauding my staff at the Center for Legislative Archives for their positive response to the changed conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they have remained dedicated to the work and mission of the Center while they had to tele-work. It is a pleasure for me to lead a highly-motivated, talented, and committed professional staff.

I would like to make brief remarks on five areas of Center activity and accomplishments, the first being an already-covered topic, and that was our occupancy of the GPO third-floor spaces in February, and our initial records moves into that area. I

want to acknowledge and thank House and Senate Archivists' staff for volunteering; they have no particular responsibility to do so, but to help the many hands on my staff to move 20% of the records that were stored in the Washington National Records Center. The pandemic interrupted those moves, but we plan to resume them as soon as is safe to do so. But I should let you know that I've asked staff twice this summer to go into the GPO spaces and to check the environmental monitoring equipment even during the extended heat wave we had, and all areas were still compliant with our standards, so the records there are safe, they've been visually inspected, and the environment continues to meet our standards.

Prior to the pandemic, our Center reference staff responded to over 500 research inquiries and pulled 1400 items for researchers traveling from around the globe. Beginning in March, the reference team shifted from traditional on-site reference to telework service as we adapted to the safety measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reference staff developed a fully remote reference model while sustaining excellent levels of service.

Since the beginning of August when Archives I entered phase one of the agency's reopening plan, volunteer reference staff have



been able to enter the building one or two days a week to access records to fulfill requests for scans or copies of records. For the entire period since March when the building was closed, staff have entered the building once a week to conduct inspections of our stacks, records, and office areas.

Researcher feedback has been appreciative of staff efforts to respond promptly and as fully as possible despite the limitations we face. For example, one researcher wrote: "I'm also a federal employee, and I only go into work once a week. I really appreciate that you and others on our staff have taken the time to respond in such a thoughtful manner despite all the COVID restrictions."

Also noted, we have maintained our records loans services to the House and Senate throughout the entire pandemic period, providing 49 loans and over 670,000 pages of records to committees to support the current business of the Congress. For the period of October 2019 through August 20, we have provided 160 loans and over 1.5 million pages to committees.

With the transition to remote work in March, Center staff had the ability to devote more time to description, and to work on a variety of projects, including item description, data cleanup,

name authority description, and tagging and transcription.

Center staff have added over 950 tags and transcriptions to the National Archives' Catalog for congressional records and created 110 new name authority records for House and Senate committees and congressional Members.

In a major effort, Center staff completed descriptions of more than 250 9/11 Commission audio interviews totaling over 400 hours of recordings that are now available in the Catalog for researchers. In preparation for the migration of pre-accessioning data in Archivists' Toolkit, the Center completed the initial requirement solicitation process as part of an NARA-wide working group and performed data cleanup to facilitate that migration of data from Archivists' Toolkit to NARA's Holdings Management system.

On the educational outreach front, the Center refocused its outreach program on virtual workshops and digital media. This shift in retooling challenged outreach staff to learn to engage audiences in new settings and to create new programs and resources, but the experience has been positive and rewarding.

Charlie Flanagan has been busier than ever, as existing and new partners have called on his experience to train a growing number

of teachers. Participant feedback has been favorable, as teachers appreciated the interactive discussion-based format of the webinars and valued the classroom-ready quality of the materials presented.

Center staff work with partners to provide direct instruction to teachers through webinars. From April to September, staff delivered 16 webinars that reached over 400 teachers. These virtual workshops mirrored the number of workshops and teachers we've reached prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a doubling of our numbers and our most effective year on the educational front ever. This has been one silver lining during the dark cloud of COVID. These virtual workshops are hosted by Humanities Texas for teachers throughout the state, and with the regional branches of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta to provide a series of professional development webinars. Six sessions hosted by the Nashville, Birmingham, and New Orleans branches provided professional development to teachers ranging from Florida to Texas. The topics of the webinars were teaching with Congressional records, teaching about the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and teaching about foreign affairs with political cartoons.

Center staff also worked with two Illinois partners: the Graham School at the University of Chicago, and the Illinois Civic Mission Consortium to provide professional development webinars to teachers in that state on teaching about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Center staff also collaborated with partners to create online courses for teachers. These efforts included two courses for Florida teachers created with the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida. The courses provide professional development aligned with Florida social studies standards and remain available on the Lou Frey website for ongoing use.

Center staff also worked with the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education, with support from the West Virginia Council for the Humanities, to develop a course that gave teachers opportunities to earn six hours of continuing education credit from Shepherd University. Center staff presented on teaching about constitutional rights and teaching about foreign affairs. Five sessions of the course were offered between June and September, and 125 teachers from West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania participated. Our educational programs and services remain much in demand, and additional workshops and webinars are scheduled.

I'd also like to offer a few comments on Center participation in the commemoration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The National Archives created a Women's Suffrage group chaired by Deputy Archivist Deb Wall to plan the agency's commemorative program. Center staff member Martha Grove served on the working group, helping to develop and coordinate NARA's activities related to the centennial celebration. NARA presented a month-long series of programs in August including video tributes, book talks, panel discussions, educational presentations for students, teachers, and parents, exhibits and coordinated social media campaigns.

Women's Suffrage, as you know, is largely a legislative story, and this was reflected in Congress's creation of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission. Deputy Archivist Deb Wall served on the commission, and Martha had the opportunity to brief members of the commission on how the story of Women's Suffrage was documented in the records of the House and the Senate. Many of these records of Congress were also featured throughout the celebration across multiple platforms. As part of this effort, Center staff worked with NARA's Innovation Hub to scan House and Senate records from the 64<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> Congresses related to Women's Suffrage. The scanning continues and these images are being added to the National Archives Catalog where

they're available to researchers and are being transcribed and tagged by Citizen Archivists.

I'm happy to entertain any questions or comments the committee might have. Thank you.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, Richard!

**David Ferriero:**

Richard, you forgot to talk about the lighting of the building.

**Richard Hunt:**

Well I hope some of you in Washington drive downtown and see the beautiful purple and gold lighting, and I know many other National Archives facilities including some of the Presidential libraries portrayed that in August as well, so it was really magnificent.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, Richard. At this time. I would like to open it up for any new business, or any questions for members of the committee.

**Betty Koed:**

Julie, this is Betty. I have a comment for David. David, I've been trying to keep track of some of the things that we take for granted on normal times that suddenly have become issues of importance or difficulty for us during regular times, so to hear you talk about the work of NARA staff in St. Louis to help military families with funeral ceremonies and those kinds of things, is one of the things I definitely need to add to my list, because that's actually quite a remarkable story, so thank you for sharing that with us today.

**David Ferriero:**

I didn't say that this is a normal part of the service we provide, but because of COVID, the increase in numbers is just startling; it's very sad.

**Betty Koed:**

That's a remarkable story; thank you.

**Denise Hibay:**

Julie, this is Denise. I don't have new business, but I just want to applaud all the effort that's been made by the archivists in all of your agencies to keep up the really good

work during this really challenging and difficult time; it's really remarkable. Thank you.

**Julie Adams:**

Thank you, Denise. They really have been doing an incredible, incredible job under very trying circumstances, so I certainly give many thanks to my folks; like I said, they've been coming in and certainly thanks to the folks at the Center -- Richard and his team for being able to continue to make things available for our committees and for researchers. It has taken a village, so thanks to all those who have been stepping up during this difficult time.

**Karen Paul:**

Richard, I'd like to just comment how pleased I was to hear that you were testing the environmental quality in the new facility over the summer, and that all of the readings remained consistent and within the acceptable range, because thinking back maybe a year ago, I remember how concerned we all were about the ability of the equipment that was installed in there to do that over a hot and humid summer. I think we're all really pleased at this point to know that we got it right, I guess, and that everything worked, because it was a particularly hot and humid summer.



**David Ferriero:**

Especially since the original installation was incorrect.

**Richard Hunt:**

That's what I was going to say, that extra nine months of work by GPO made the difference.

**Karen Paul:**

That's great. So now I assume we've learned a lot, and maybe going into the next phase, we'll be able to apply everything we've learned.

**Richard Hunt:**

I agree.

**Karen Paul:**

Less of a learning curve. (laughs)

**Betty Koed:**

That is definitely our hope.

**Julie Adams:**

Any other comments, questions, (inaudible) I notice there's a little bit of a delay for folks, but we certainly want to keep an opportunity for folks, other folks to ask any questions they may have on their comments.

**Guenter Waibel:**

I have a question; this is Gunter. First of all, thank you for the warm welcome to the committee; I really appreciate it. I'm glad to be here and join all of you. My question is related to systems. My ears perked up when I heard in the various reports that there were transitions from older systems to newer systems, or from one system to another, and if I understand the interrelationship between the different offices that are represented correctly, there's a lot of data flow that goes from the House and the Senate then to the Archives, and of course systems are important in supporting that. I'm wondering whether there's coordination around standardizing on systems so data transfer is easier, or whether that is an issue at all. I could imagine that it would be, but I'm happy to also be educated on that. Thank you.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Karen and Heather, can you come in on that question?

**Karen Paul:**

Yes, Guenter, this project to describe and upgrade the descriptions of our records began, oh I want to say in 2012, and at that time, there was a task force and a lot of study went into defining the fields of information that we would be gathering. In creating data gathering forms, which we call our accession forms, that pick up that data and collect it in a structured way. Initially the three of us, the Archives, the House and the Senate were using Archivists' Toolkit, and Richard reported in his section today that they are moving away from that and developing their Holdings Management System. The House reported that they are using a different system now, ArchiveIt, I guess it's called, and then we are using an Alfresco database. However, because initially, the data gathering points and categories were all coordinated, we're now able to push our things to the Archives and they are able to, I don't know the proper terms, but it's to walk these categories into their system, to transfer our database elements into their system. So that was designed initially, to answer your question, to make sure that everything that the House and Senate are doing fits in with what the National Archives needs to upload into their system. Alison, you might want to jump in, because you actually worked on that task force then formed. Do you have anything to add at this point?

**Alison White:**

No, I think what you said was correct, Karen. We put a massive amount of work into the effort. Jackie Coleman at the Center was working with us and also certainly with the House, and one of the things that we were focused on was how to use the user-defined fields in the Archivists' Toolkit to map into fields that they wanted to collect, and also that the House and Senate, because we were doing it differently from one another, didn't overlap on any field. So that work was sort of a crosswalk and took a long time to sort out, but because we put the work in at the beginning, it enabled us to, as long as we support those fields and use them the same way, to use them in almost any application. Is that helpful?

**Karen Paul:**

Yes, thank you. Crosswalk was what I was thinking.

**Richard Hunt:**

I would second that as well, and it has taken many years of effort, but we have been able to map and migrate that data and move it into National Archives' systems, and then on the other front, we've worked closely with the National Archives Catalog folks who've added fields that are specific to congressional

records for searching and describing. We've continued to work on the ERA team which is the major electronic recordkeeping system at the National Archives, and they're very well aware of requirements that need to be met for congressional records. It's been a challenge, but it's one we've tried to stay in front of.

**Heather Bourk:**

I just want to jump in for a second; it's Heather. I was not on the task force, so I want to applaud everybody who was on it, and I really appreciate all the work that you guys put into it. It's interesting to try to think about two very different institutions, the Senate and the House, all of their records going into one single repository, in effect. So I consider it a particular success story that we all, at the end of the day, moved away from using the same system, but that we can still get those records to the Center, and they're able to be used by your cataloguing folks, because obviously, at the end of the day, the most important thing is that people can find what they need in these records. So, I just want to say thanks to everybody who was on that taskforce and contributed to that very important work.

**Julie Adams:**

Any other questions? Any business?

**Danna Bell:**

Can I throw in a non-archival recommendation?

**Julie Adams:**

Sure.

**Danna Bell:**

Just a gentle reminder that starting tomorrow is the National Book Festival. There is a series on Democracy in Action with a number of wonderful speakers, and also one on hearing the black voice, so I encourage you to participate. It's all virtual this year, so you can sit in your comfy chair and not stand in line to get books signed or things like that. They are providing opportunities for you to get books signed if you want, but I hope that all of you will consider participating.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Danna, thank you for that wonderful information, I certainly appreciate it.

**Julie Adams:**

Yeah, thank you for the current event reminder; it's nice to have things to look forward to, and that's an event that I'm

sure a lot of you folks that are participating in this group are regular participants of, so thank you for the reminder. With so much going on right now, it's good to have those reminders.

**Danna Bell:**

It's really cool that for the first time, we're going to be able to be a national book festival, not just get a ton of people at the convention center, so it's been a really interesting, wonderful experience to watch the staff plan and work on this, and though it isn't legislative in nature, there are going to be a lot of incredible speakers talking about American history, American culture, and American government.

**Julie Adams:**

Yes. I will say in a previous job, I did work for First Lady Laura Bush, and that being one of her big projects that she initiated, I appreciate the fact that the Library has been able to continue that important event, and being able to find a creative way to do it in this environment. Kudos to the staff there for being able to continue the tradition.

**Guenter Waibel:**

If I may ask one more question, this is Gunter again, and it's more of a comment than a question, but it has a question in it

too. David, I want to commend you for what you reported on in terms of the task force on race at the Archives, which I find really inspiring and very much of the moment. You mentioned that there's going to be a particular subgroup on archival description looking at whether there are issues on racism systemically in how we use language when we describe records. I think the community as a whole would find that extremely useful to learn what you are finding there. Is there a public component of that work? Will there be a report that we can all avail ourselves of at the end of this?

**David Ferriero:**

Definitely, and the intention is to work closely with the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian in this data-gathering first phase of the work of the task force. All of that information will be public.

**Gunter Waibel:**

Excellent, thank you, appreciate it.

**Julie Adams:**

Any other comments? If there are no other comments, then I wish everyone good health, certainly stay well, and we will meet



again virtually in December. I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

**M:**

Seconded.

**Betty Koed:**

So moved. (laughs) Well backwards, but we're there. (laughs)

**Julie Adams:**

Okay, sounds good. We, the meeting stands adjourned, and we'll meet everyone again in December. Thank you all so much.

**Cheryl Johnson:**

Thank you Julie.

**Betty Koed:**

Thank you everyone.

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