



# *National Archives and Records Administration*

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
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## ***Annual Reports of the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1857–1927***

In February 1857, the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb and the Blind began operations to provide primary education and moral training to deaf, mute, and blind children. Located in the District of Columbia, the school soon attracted students from all over the United States. In 1865, the institution established the National Deaf Mute College, now known as Gallaudet University. Children from the District of Columbia comprised a large portion of the student body.

### **Annual Reports**

Congress required Federal agencies to write an annual report providing an overview of their accomplishments. Because the Columbia Institution was situated administratively within the Department of the Interior (DOI), the school's president wrote the report and submitted it to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary included that report in his annual report to Congress. Each report includes information on the state of school finances, and lists the courses of instruction, as well as the names of and changes in school personnel. The records provide information about the student's routine life at the school, the academic choices he or she had, and the names of the instructors.

The annual reports are much more than mere facts and figures; they also include

- Updates on school improvements, such as new buildings and equipment. Some reports include photographs of school buildings.
- Information on the health of the student body. For most years the report is glowing, but some years report an outbreak of disease or even a student's death.
- Highlights of the annual graduation ceremony such as valedictory speeches, addresses to the student body, titles of senior theses, and a list showing the degree each graduating student received
- Highlights of the school year, including important visitors. For example, Brazil's emperor Dom Pedro visited the school in June 1876. Shimpachi Konishi, director of the School for the Deaf and Blind in Tokyo, Japan, visited in 1897. The French ambassador to the United States visited in 1898, and President Theodore Roosevelt visited in 1906 to address the graduating class.

### **Student Rosters, 1858–1927**

Between 1858 and 1927, the annual reports include student rosters. From 1858 to 1864, the rosters list the state and locality where the student resided; from 1865 to 1921, the rosters only list the state (there appears to be no surviving lists for 1866). Between 1922 and 1927, there is not a complete roster of all students, but there are lists of graduating students. After 1927, the reports rarely list the students' names.

### **How to Find the Annual Reports**

The Columbia Institution's annual reports are usually available at large university or public libraries, and at U.S. Government Depository Libraries. The National Archives and Records Administration

has copies of the reports at its facilities in Washington, DC, and in College Park, MD. The Library of Congress also has a complete set of the annual reports. To identify a local depository library, go to the Government Printing Office web site at <http://catalog.gpo.gov/fdlpdir/FDLPdir.jsp> and select the link to “FDLP Public Page.” The web site will provide you with information to contact a depository library to ascertain if it has copies of the annual reports.

The Secretary of the Interior usually submitted the Institution’s report to Congress as part of the Interior Department’s annual report, so you will need to check the DOI annual reports.

For more information, see the following reference report: *Students and Teachers of the Columbia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in the Federal Census, 1860–1940*.

Rev. August 2013