

## V. OUTREACH

### V. A. Publications

#### V. A.1. Histories of Standing Committees

As part of the Center's mission to place the documentary records of Congress before the public and to stimulate congressional research, the Center has initiated a Standing Committees History Project. The project seeks to produce concise histories of the major standing committees of Congress based upon the committees' records, thereby introducing researchers to these archival sources as well as facilitating access to them. The project should include a detailed and comprehensive survey of committee records to enable the Center to assess the scope and quality of its holdings and identify records not yet received from the committees, such as committee minutes and executive session transcripts. Where archival records are incomplete, the historian should conduct oral histories to provide supplementary information. As a collaborative effort, the Standing Committees History Project should establish a focal point of contact and communication for other record issues and should promote productive relations between Congressional committees and the National Archives.

Periodically, as the research and inventories of records proceed, the historian should bring material of high research value or broad public interest to the attention of the Center's director to share with the Advisory Committee. The historian should also help establish selection criteria and guidelines on whether to reproduce previously unpublished or difficult-to-obtain documents in print, microfilm or electronic formats for wider dissemination.

The Center has initiated this project with a history of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The quality of that committee's records, a high level of support from its staff, and an identifiable interest among scholars about the committee's role in major events of the recent past, seemed to provide all the necessary ingredients for a model volume. The historian should complete three such committee histories within the next five years. Each publication will permit the Advisory Committee to evaluate the ongoing project and to provide guidance for future volumes.

### **V. A.2. Documentary Publications**

The Center should consider preparing documentary publications of significant events or epochs in the history of Congress that illustrate the scope of the Center's holdings. Within the next five years, the nation will commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of Congress's first meeting in Washington, D.C., the one hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Mexican-American War, the one hundredth anniversary of the Spanish-American War, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Korean War.

### **V. A.3. Educational Document Packets and Electronic Publications**

With the encouragement of the Advisory Committee, the Center's educational outreach staff, created four years ago, has added a public outreach dimension to the Center's traditional archival functions to make the historical records of Congress more relevant to the American people. The Center has demonstrated that its holdings can be used effectively in educational publications and traveling exhibitions that give citizens a better understanding of Congress and the legislative process.

*The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson*, the Center's educational document packet commemorating the 250th anniversary of Jefferson's birth, provided realistic facsimiles of documents drawn from the records of Congress, together with innovative student-centered classroom activities. Teachers have uniformly praised the Jefferson packet as a unique use of archival sources and a source for content-rich materials to supplement skeletal curricula. Private donors in seven states supported the free distribution of packets to every high school in their states.

The Center is engaged in a one-year project to develop an educational document packet as part of the women's petitions project. The recently completed phase of "Our Mothers Before Us" produced a document-based traveling exhibit timed to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of woman suffrage. The document packet should prove equally popular, given the expressed demand from secondary school teachers for original materials from women to enrich the textbook treatment of major themes in American history. The Center's success with the Jefferson packet and the remarkable variety and quality of women's petitions in the records of Congress promise another valuable resource for American schools.

The Center is in the early design stages of an ambitious project to develop educational materials relating to the history and operations of Congress. This two-to-five-year project should produce a document packet, CD-ROM publication, and an exhibit. In its various forms, the Congress project should combine primary documents drawn from the records of Congress; maps, charts, and graphs; contemporary accounts of events from newspapers, memoirs, diaries, and oral histories; photographs and reproductions of period art; narrative histories of events and legislative processes; and guided instructions for teachers. The addition of the CD-ROM component to the project expands the Center's outreach agenda so that it keeps pace with changes in the market for educational resources.

The Center should utilize electronic means in another way to distribute educational materials by taking advantage of the National Archives World Wide Web site. The Center is included in the National Archives' major electronic endeavor, the *Electronic Pilot Project on the American West*, a two-year project that will offer a combination of finding aid information and digitized documents on the history of the American West. Documents selected from the rich collections of House and Senate Territorial Papers and from committee papers related to western history should be scanned and made available through the National Archives web site. Within the next year, the Center should also create its own home page, where digitized versions of landmark documents from the records of Congress could be made available for teachers and students to examine, download, and use in their study of American history and government. The Center should also continue to mine the records of Congress for significant documents related to state and local history, which could be made available as facsimiles or in digitized versions.

## V. B. Exhibits

The Advisory Committee has encouraged the use of exhibits to expand research use of congressional materials. In the past two years, the Center has completed two paneled traveling exhibitions highlighting the records of Congress. "*A Splendid Misery*": *Challenges of Thomas Jefferson's Presidency*, completed in 1993 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Jefferson's birth, and *Our Mothers Before Us*, completed in August 1995 to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of woman suffrage, feature high-quality facsimile documents, richly-colored backgrounds, photomurals,

graphics, and reproductions of period art. Both exhibits showcase Congress and the legislative process, providing an easily accessible, visually stimulating opportunity for individuals around the country to familiarize themselves with congressional records and to develop a greater appreciation for the day-to-day process of law-making. These exhibits, which were supported by private-sector grants to the Foundation for the National Archives, have traveled to locations around the country, including Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol; the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville; the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas; the Ohio Historical Society in Columbus; and the Independence Hall Visitor's Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Within the next three years the Center should develop a traveling exhibition on the history and operation of Congress. Currently in the preliminary stages of research and development, the product would be similar to that of the Center's previous exhibitions. This exhibit should feature a broad selection of primary source material from the records of Congress. Maps, charts, graphs, oral histories, photographs, political cartoons, newspaper accounts, diaries, and narrative histories of events and legislative processes will complement the archival holdings.

The Internet, with its capacity to reach millions of people around the world, offers another important forum for outreach and education about the records of Congress. The Center should explore the possibility of putting entire exhibits on-line and of featuring individual documents with accompanying text. This electronic form of exhibition has the potential to reach a wider audience than traditional exhibits, while continuing to supply the public with important historical documents at a reduced cost to the government.