

Congressional Universe Training Session

Date: April 29, 2010

Times: 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Location: IC Classroom, Main Library, Rm 112A

Contact: [Research Support Librarians](#)

Description:

Make the most of your research! This spring the University Libraries are offering a series of research database training sessions; the final session focuses on the wealth of information available in Congressional Universe.

[Congressional Universe](#): Your source for unique congressional resources including published hearings, Statutes at Large, information about members of Congress, legislative histories, articles from the National Journal, and selected articles from major U.S. newspapers, and the text of Bills.

Training sessions are free and open to the public. Registration not required.

Congressional Universe Training Session Outline:

Introduction:

About me: I attended library school because I wanted to be a reference librarian.–took 3 classes in reference, was an intern in the Central reference department here at the UA Library in 1986, and learned on the job at the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library for six years from 1987-1992.

Over time I developed a very general level of knowledge of government documents. Didn't take class in government documents: 3 unit semester long course. Very difficult class. Why difficult? Pre-automation/everything either on microfiche or microfilm, or paper. Unique classification system. Complicated structure of the federal government. Different publishing practices over the years.

Documents librarianship is a specialty. Many libraries have their own government documents departments. The UA Library had a gov docs unit until 1993, when we reduced the number of departments from 15 to 9. Robert Mitchell was a government documents specialist, as was Atifa Rawan. Please note that I am not an expert, as I do not work with government information regularly. However, as an experienced librarian with knowledge about information resources and an eagerness to learn, I have put this session together that will hopefully help you more effectively do your jobs at the reference desk.

Rank your comfort level with handling government document related questions from 1 to 10, with 10 being very comfortable and one being totally uncomfortable. What types of questions do you usually get?

What do we mean when we say government documents?

Local, State, Federal, International...

At the federal level, there are the three basic units: The Congress, the office of the President, and the Supreme Court. What else is there? (regulatory commissions, the Cabinet, all the various offices like the US Census, the Dept. of Defense, the Dept. of Commerce, the IRS etc. etc. etc. Show chart that is available via the subject guide on government documents.

All of these units produce documents. Almost all of them are "public". What isn't public?

The UA Library has federal depository status. We have an obligation to make government information available and accessible to the general public.

news, including the status of bills in play, behind-the-scenes maneuvering, committee and floor activity, debates and all roll-call votes.

CQ Almanac Online Since it was first published in 1946, *CQ Almanac* has been *the* definitive annual reference for studying the U.S. Congress. Building on the reporting and analysis done throughout the year by CQ's award-winning news staff, the *Almanac* offers original narrative accounts of every major piece of legislation that lawmakers considered during a congressional session. Arranged thematically, *CQ Almanac* organizes, distills, and cross-indexes for permanent reference the full year in Congress and in national politics. Its clear and concise language makes the *Almanac* an essential resource for scholars, journalists, interested citizens, and students of the U.S. legislative system.

Statistical Abstracts: The *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, published since 1878, is the authoritative and comprehensive summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the United States. Use the Abstract as a convenient volume for statistical reference, and as a guide to sources of more information both in print and on the Web. Sources of data include the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and many other Federal agencies and private organizations.

LexisNexis Statistical Insight: *LexisNexis Statistical Insight* provides fast and easy access to statistical information produced by U.S. Federal agencies, States, private organizations, and major intergovernmental organizations. *LNSI* brings together a massive collection of statistical data in a single easy-to-use search interface, with additional features such as descriptive abstracts, detailed indexing, full-text PDFs of source documents and tables, down-loadable spreadsheets containing table data, and integration with our innovative and customizable *LexisNexis Statistical DataSets* interface.

WebJunction: Government Information in the 21st Century: <http://www.webjunction.org/gi21>

Contains useful guides and tutorials for finding government publications.

Assignment: Review the subject guide for government documents. Take class through the various sections. Pay special attention to: Tutorials/Guides section. Show class the chart on government structure. Write down/bookmark places where you find tutorials.

Databases you should know about:

GPO Access (listed in articles and databases section: free service providing access to a wealth of important information products produced by the federal government. Mention links to other sites, like USA.gov

(Monthly Catalog) Catalog of US Publications <http://catalog.gpo.gov>. The Catalog of U.S. Government Publications (CGP) is the finding tool for electronic and print publications from the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the U.S. government. These publications make up the National Bibliography of U.S. Government Publications. The CGP contains descriptive records for historical and current publications and provides direct links to those that are available online. **Scope** More than 500,000 records generated since July 1976 are contained in the CGP and it is updated daily. The catalog will grow to include records for publications dating back to the late 1800s, making the CGP the central point for locating new and historical Government publications.

Monthly catalog of US publications 1895-1976 (see articles and databases list) *The Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications, 1895-1976* was established by the Printing Act of January 12, 1895. It is issued each month by the Superintendent of Documents for the Government Printing Office, and catalogs all publications of the United States government, including those of the Congress and all executive departments (with the exception of administrative and confidential or restricted documents). The government prints thousands of documents each year, and many of these are sent to depository libraries.

CQ Researcher (in list of databases) *CQ Researcher* is often the first source that librarians recommend when researchers are seeking original, comprehensive reporting and analysis on issues in the news. Founded in 1923 as *Editorial Research Reports*, *CQ Researcher* is noted for its in-depth, unbiased coverage of health, social trends, criminal justice, international affairs, education, the environment, technology, and the economy. Reports are published weekly in print and online 44 times a year by CQ Press, a division of Congressional Quarterly Inc. Each single-themed, 12,000-word report is researched and written by a seasoned journalist. The consistent, reader-friendly organization provides researchers with an introductory overview; background and chronology on the topic; an assessment of the current situation; tables and maps; pro/con statements from representatives of opposing positions; and bibliographies of key sources.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly (in list of databases) Each issue of *CQ Weekly* - in your stacks or fully archived to 1983 on the Web - looks forward and back. Your readers get in-depth reports on issues looming on the congressional horizon, plus a complete wrap up the previous week's

And now for Lexis-Nexis Congressional: /

What is it? A huge database that provides access to a comprehensive collection of congressional publications. Committee Hearings/Committee Prints/Congressional Research Service Reports/House and Senate Documents/Legislative Histories/Senate Executive Reports/Senate Executive Treaty Documents/Serial Set Maps/Serial Set. You can use this product to

- Pinpoint expert testimony on the leading issues of the day
- Tap authoritative sources of statistics, projections, and analyses.
- Discover the law's intent by tracing it's legislative history.
- Obtain information about members of Congress.
- Access the full text primary source congressional publications.
- Monitor legislation and public policy on almost any topic.
- Review the Federal regulations that implement legislation.
- Learn the makeup and mission of congressional committees

You need to know something about Congress and something about the types of publications generated by Congress in order to use it effectively. Click on the How Do I? section to find out more about publication types. Lead the class through this.

It isn't a tool you would think to start with, although you could. unless your user is specifically asking for particular documents or information about a congressional action or session you may want to choose other sources.

What it contains...show the content guide at the bottom of the page.

Look at the how do I section.

Look at the sections that cover bills, resolutions and laws.

Look at the section entitled, About the legislative process

How to search? Show practice Search scenarios.

Free text vs. controlled vocabulary...

Help.

Wiki

Help section

How do I section.