Using the US Congressional Serial Set for researching historical, congressional, and legislative information
(presented for the Franklin County Law Library – Oct 10, 2018)

Historical, political, economic, and genealogical gems are hidden in the US Congressional Serial Set. Our founding fathers wanted citizens to know just what the government was doing and what Congress was studying.

The US Congressional Serial Set covers a broad range of topics that appear to be inaccessible--hidden behind complex citation styles and the ever-changing structure of our governmental agencies. Learn how to find sets and reports and discover historical and congressional records that are freely available for your use.

Attendees will have the opportunity to:
- Discover freely-available content
- Learn where to find these historical and congressional government publications, including the American State Papers.
- Understand the scope and content of online tools, freely available like:
  - HathiTrust https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006228203,
  - A Century of Lawmaking http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/, and
  - Internet Archive https://archive.org
- fee based services like Proquest (formerly Lexis/Nexis) Congressional and Readex and Hein-Online.

Presented by Miriam Kahn, MLS, PhD of MBK Consulting, Columbus, Ohio.
US Congressional Serial Set

Described by the Library of Congress:
Prior to the 97th Congress, the serial set had no official name; it was popularly known as the Congressional serial set

The set has also been known variously as: Congressional serial set, Serial number set, Congressional edition, Congressional set, Congressional series, Congressional series of United States public documents, Congressional document series, Sheep set, Sheep bound set (owing to its distinctive sheepskin binding), and Serial set

Numbering began with 15th Congress, as the publications of the earlier congresses were not assembled in book form


Two Categories: American State Papers and US Serial Set
American State Papers covers the first fourteen congresses from 1789 to 1817 and is divided into 9 classes:
   I. Foreign Relations
   II. Indian Affairs
   III. Finance
   IV. Commerce and Navigation
   V. Military Affairs
   VI. Naval Affairs
   VII. Post Office Department
   VIII. Public Lands
   IX. Claims and Miscellaneous

US Congressional Serial Set (1818 to the present) is composed of six types of documents
I and II: House Reports and Senate Reports including Public and Private matters; measures and investigations and committee reports;
III and IV: House documents and Senate Documents including Presidential messages, explanations about vetoes, memorials, State of the Union Addresses,
Biographical dictionaries of the US Senate and Reports to Congress from Federally chartered corporations such as the DAR, TVA, Amtrak, Disabled Veterans
V: Senate Treaty Documents (since 1977)
VI: Senate Executive reports (since 1977) including the public papers of the
President and the Congressional Record.

Historical research on wars, explorations, foreign relations, canals and railroads, etc.
Legislative histories, especially background about why a law or legislative issue
was considered
Genealogical research for names of individuals who came before Congress, particularly for private matters and restitution, reparations and pensions, and those in government positions and offices, especially with the Post Office.

Ways to Access the US Congressional Serial Set either in part or in toto
In print: the State Library of Ohio has a ‘full’ set in paper
On microfiche: the State Library of Ohio has the CIS microfiche and all the indices
Online: Access by subscription through Proquest Congressional (at State Library of Ohio), Century of Lawmaking 1774-1875, HathiTrust,

Examples of types of questions you could answer are:
History of the exploration of a geographical area like the Grand Canyon, the
Louisiana Purchase, or a National Park
Congressional reports and investigations such as:
Watergate
Starr Report
9/11
Numerous topics and reports dealing with Native Americans / Indians
Military expeditions and maneuvers such as: “Camels and military operations” in the 1850s”

Treaties:
NAFTA

Executive Reports
Presidential papers

Use ProQuest – search by subject

Miriam Kahn, MBK Consulting, 60 N Harding Road, Columbus, OH 43209-1524
614-239-8977 mbkcons@gmail.com http://www.mbkcons.com
Find terms “National Parks” and Yellowstone and boundaries

Use HathiTrust for viewing full text documents
Example: infectious diseases
DAR

Using the Internet Archive, search "Serial Set"
Find the report of the Library of Congress about the US Congressional Serial Set

To learn more about the US Serial Set:

http://www.llsdc.org/serial-set-volumes-guide#overview
Part of the LLSDC’s Legislative Source Book
http://www.llsdc.org/sourcebook
Congress.gov https://www.congress.gov/

Congress.gov search for a Committee Report
ProQuest Congressional

Document Types

Congressional Publications - Advanced Search

ProQuest – search by subject
Find terms “National Parks” and Yellowstone and boundaries
HathiTrust https://www.hathitrust.org/

On HathiTrust – search for infectious diseases
IRS hearing on HathiTrust
Search for “United States Internal Revenue Service” mismanagement

A Century of Lawmaking
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/
Indian Land Sessions 1784-1894 - United States Serial Set, Number 4015 which contains the Royce Maps

A close up
US Serial Set through Internet Archive
https://archive.org

An example of the US Serial Set documents retrieved through Internet Archive