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## Cataloging the Congressional Serial Set

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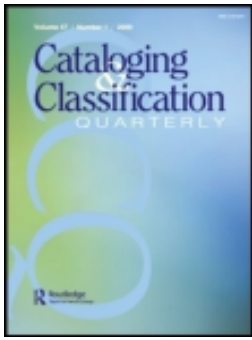
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# Cataloging the *Congressional Serial Set*

Aimée C. Quinn

**ABSTRACT.** Many librarians question the usefulness of the traditional cataloging of difficult historic sets in a time when more and more information moves either to the Internet or is digitized outright. One of the most challenging sets to catalog is the *United States Congressional Serial Set*, a 14,000+ (and growing) mega serial comprised of five monographic sub-series. The *Congressional Serial Set* is an anomaly since it is both monographic and serial in nature. This article examines the intricacies in cataloging government publications in an electronic atmosphere using one House document in the *Serial Set* as a guide and examines the two commercial digitization projects currently underway.<sup>1</sup> [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

**KEYWORDS.** Congressional printing, *Serial Set*, cataloging, U.S. federal documents, federal publishing, digitization, government metadata, government publications, government information, government publications bibliographic control

## INTRODUCTION

The *Congressional Serial Set* is considered by many to be the finest example of Congressional publishing—indeed, the crown jewel in U.S.

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government printing. In its heyday, the *Serial Set* not only included Congressional Committee reports and documents, but also Executive department reports like the *Yearbook of Agriculture* and the *Bulletins of the U.S.G.S.*<sup>2</sup> Materials as diverse as the *Boy Scouts of America Annual Report*,<sup>3</sup> reports of the expeditions of Lewis and Clark,<sup>4</sup> Hayden,<sup>5</sup> and Powell,<sup>6</sup> and Commodore Perry's magnificent report from Japan,<sup>7</sup> can be found in its pages. Each of these publications is important in its own right, but together they form much more than a record of Congressional affairs—they are a history of the birth and growth of a nation. The glories and the mistakes, the triumphs and defeats are all recorded in this deceptively simple series formerly known as the "Sheep Set" because of its original sheepskin binding.

The *Serial Set* is organized in chronological order (like most Congressional documents) and divided into five broad sub-series: House Documents, Senate Documents, House Reports, Senate Reports, and Miscellaneous. These sub-series have been further subdivided between executive reports and documents, and treaty documents. According to Imholtz, "there was only a Documents class in the 15th Congress, the first Congress of the *Serial Set*, on both the Senate and House sides. The House divided its Documents into a Reports series (largely concerned with legislative bills but involving occasional investigations, hearings, and other kinds of materials) and a Documents series in the 16th Congress. The Senate maintained only a Documents series until the 30th Congress at which point it too segregated its 'Reports' from its Documents, thereby creating a Reports series, and also divided the Documents series into Executive Documents and Miscellaneous Documents. The House likewise subdivided its Documents series into Executive and Miscellaneous Documents. This distinction or subdivision of the Documents class into two subclasses persisted from the 30th to the 55th Congresses. Journals, the daily record of the business activity on the floor of each chamber, constitute another class or series of publications in the *Serial Set*. The Journal, in fact, is the only 'Serial Set publication' required by the *Constitution* (Article I, Section 5, Paragraph 3). But generalizations about a collection as large and long-lived as the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* are fraught with exceptions. The Journal publications were removed from the *Serial Set* after 1952, although they of course continued to be printed and published. Finally, there are various classes of miscellaneous materials printed and bound into the *Serial Set* volumes, e.g., Court of Claims Reports, Motions, publications which could have been issued as numbered Documents or Reports but were simply unclassified and unnumbered, etc. Very late in the history of the

Serial Set, Executive Reports and Treaty Document series were introduced.”<sup>8</sup> However, most libraries organize this set of 14,000+ volumes in order by their accession number, which is commonly known as the *Serial Set* number. This classification scheme was devised at the end of the 19th century by Adelaide Haase<sup>9</sup> and retrospectively applied.

Access to the contents is provided by an index originally created and published by the Congressional Information Service, Inc. (CIS), currently owned by LexisNexis, Inc. The *Index to the U.S. Congressional Serial Set* is a tool dictated by historic context. In order to best use the Index, the user must know the correct terminology for the period being studied including how the Congress operated. Sundry items such as the price of a painting is simply entered under “Senate–Expenditures” rather than the name of the painting, the subject of the painting, the painter, or even the name of the person who commissioned the painting.

Until recently, aside from this index and a few traditional depository tools like the *Monthly Catalog of the United States* and the admirable *Documents Catalog*, there has been little to assist researchers in accessing this material. In 2001, both LexisNexis and Readex began investigating the costs and usefulness of digitizing all published volumes of the *Serial Set*.<sup>10</sup> Both companies have outstanding teams working on the digital projects, and both promise their customers better access tools (including expanding the metadata beyond the Index language); yet, it is questionable whether the market can bear two competitive products, and whether digitization alone will solve some of the problems researchers have long noted in their ability to effectively use the *Congressional Serial Set*.

This article examines the difficulty in cataloging government serials by focusing on one document: *House Report 141, Serial Set #808, 33rd Congress, 2nd session*, dated March 3, 1855. The author also examines the digital projects and questions if digitization and the creation of metadata solve the challenges inherent in cataloging large serial sets.

## **TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY GOVERNMENT SERIALS**

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

–Nicoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*

A “new order” is underway at the Government Printing Office (GPO) under the direction of Bruce James, Public Printer of the United States. Mr. James is dramatically reorganizing the internal functions, revisiting all current laws, regulations, policies and procedures, and challenging librarians to envision a new way to deliver public access to government information in the 21st century. For example, in his remarks to the Depository Library Council in April 2003, (as reported by Prue Adler of ARL), Mr. James “repeatedly stressed the need to:

- Experiment with electronic and digitization pilot projects in order to test new delivery mechanisms;
- Restructure the current framework of the program significantly to better serve the libraries and the public; and
- Institute a new GPO focus on services to participating federal depository libraries such as training and consulting vs. inspections.”<sup>11</sup>

Missing from this discussion are the best practices to provide bibliographic control and access to the collection, a responsibility of the GPO outlined in 44 USC ch.19<sup>12</sup> even as government information continues to migrate to a “95%” electronic format.<sup>13</sup> This forward thinking is necessary and long overdue, yet some of the fundamental challenges to public access remain unsolved. One such key challenge is the question of the best method to provide bibliographic access and control to the many retrospective, major serial titles. Is cataloging still the best answer to this challenge? If so, what role does the GPO have in this answer versus the role of commercial vendors. Of course, the key serial title with little bibliographic access is the *Serial Set*. GPO does provide a single “mother” record for the *Serial Set*.<sup>14</sup> Jean Hirons wrote of the need to recast the definition of serial in terms of the work, expression, and manifestation. Further in this report, Ms. Hirons maintains “seriality is not a class or format, but a fundamental dimension of the work. This ongoing dimension must be reflected in the cataloging code through a shift in emphasis from the detail of one item ‘frozen in time’ to the identification of the publication or a work as a whole.” This conclusion exactly frames the challenge of cataloging government serials, whether in print or online.<sup>15</sup>

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Now that automated systems and GPO MARC records made the theoretical concepts possible within the constraints of practical op-

erations, librarians are looking for ways to truly mainstream documents in services and operations. The discussion has now moved away from the theoretical issues of the “why” or the importance of access to government documents in a democratic society, to the “how” to efficiently incorporate or mainstream documents in both technical and public service operations. By de-emphasizing the ways in which federal documents are different, and concentrating upon the ways in which documents are similar to other materials, it is possible to make them as accessible as other items in the collection. Treating documents in a manner similar to other materials, achieves the ultimate goal of placing government information in the hands of the citizens in a timely and efficient manner.<sup>16</sup>

While there is an incredibly large body of literature on serials including cataloging, processing, cost analysis, etc., cataloging government depository serials is an area of research that has been largely ignored. For example, the last comprehensive study of cataloging government publications including serials was a 1994 special issue of *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* volume 18, issues 3-4 edited by Carolyn C. Sherayko. Additionally, NASIG hosted a workshop in 2000 entitled “Cataloging Government Online Serials: Challenges and Prospects” where Thomas A. Downing, Chief, Cataloging Branch, United States Government Printing Office served as the Workshop Leader. At this workshop, Mr. Downing gave an overview of the questions articulated in this manuscript as well as the question of multiple versions in multiple formats. It is unknown whether depository serials are seen as an integral aspect of overall serials cataloging, or whether they are deemed too difficult due to the manner in which they are distributed and regulated. Anecdotally, the latter reason seems to prevail. Most of the “current” research and subsequent articles published on this topic were completed in the late 1970s through the early 1990s, when cataloging government information became a higher priority for library administrators and a plethora of articles describing the use of Marcive records to jump start retrospective conversion projects abounded.<sup>17</sup> The advent of the GPO being recognized as the authority for cataloging government information helped make documents more “mainstream” as noted above. A welcome addition to the body of literature is Shuler’s overview of the history of bibliographic control of government documents where he argues that a government publication “is just one example from a wide variety of communication artifacts produced and

distributed through public processes; it is not a creation often borne from discrete (or single) authorship.”<sup>18</sup>

By the late 1990s into the 21st century, the research moved to incorporating electronic access and the development of metadata for government reports and documents.<sup>19</sup> Unlike commercial serial publications, depository serials have an additional layer of complexity due to the publishing nature of depository materials and the regulatory requirements of the GPO. Not only are depository serials subjected to the same dilemmas of commercial titles such as title changes, added entries, inflationary costs in production and so on; they also are subjected to a variety of changes when the parent agency is moved (such as the massive change in organizational structure with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security) or is defunded (such as the U.S. Information Agency). In the later half of the 1990s, depository serial titles were rapidly defunded, classified as sensitive, or published electronically with little thought to long-term access. Depository periodicals virtually all but disappeared being replaced by electronic counterparts.<sup>20</sup>

### ***HISTORY AND CATALOGING CHALLENGES***

The basic difference between a federal government depository serial and a commercial serial (aside from cost and ownership) is that depository items are classified based upon the parent agency producing the material. (This is known as the Superintendent of Documents classification system, commonly called SuDocs.) Historically, all materials published at the U.S. Government's expense (a.k.a. depository items) were approved by Congress and ordered to be printed. In fact, the majority of the government serial titles of today remain official government property and require appropriations from Congress for their production, publishing, and dissemination. This appropriation is the basis for the dissemination of information through the Federal Depository Library Program and is the critical difference from commercial products.

The last thirty years of the twentieth century saw a rapid increase in access to government information. Beginning in 1970, CIS (Congressional Information Service, now part of LexisNexis) began to index legislative and statistical publications. Individual librarians began to collate and publish a title index to depository documents and a subject guide to government information. In 1976, the GPO began to catalog publications using the OCLC network and MARC format. This commitment from



the GPO brought wider access to government information and enabled depository librarians to promote their collections in two ways: by adding holdings and by loading records into local systems. Larger depositories loaded the magnetic tapes directly into their online public access catalogs, either as a parallel database or as an integrated catalog. Many depository libraries used the GPO/MARC tapeload as a springboard to technological growth. Before this time, there was not widespread online access to any government information. The utilization of these new technologies (including CD-ROM) allowed better refinement to online searching and gave government information to a larger audience, leading to a new more sophisticated user interface, the World Wide Web. Traditional indices such as the *Monthly Catalog* and *CIS Annual Index* became arduous rather than helpful.

Even though the GPO took the first step towards automation, a continual lack of Congressional appropriations prohibited the GPO from keeping current with the advances of electronic information technology or from having complete online access to its own materials. Another source for cataloging records for depository materials are private companies (such as Marcive, Inc.), who are trying to fill a void in cataloging of all governmental publications from 1976 forward utilizing the GPO shipping lists as the primary source of information. New questions about cataloging practice continue to surface from frustrated librarians such as the cost factor in time, money, and usefulness of cataloging federal publications as opposed to detailed indexes/abstracts. Librarians disagree on the answer, if discussions in the GODORT Cataloging Committee minutes are any guide.<sup>21</sup>

The GPO recognizes that their cataloging team misses many publications that are distributed directly from the agency. Most documents librarians agree that providing access to these publications is a top priority. Due to agency distribution, thousands of government publications are not included in the *Monthly Catalog*. "Most agencies keep no central file on publications and have no ability to determine accurately and promptly the extent of their publishing activities."<sup>22</sup> That was true before federal agencies adopted the Internet. Today the majority of these agencies have their own internal online systems, but not for tracking their publications, either published or in electronic form. As a result of this lack of tracking, the number of publications released annually is steady, yet the numbers of titles distributed to depository libraries continues to decline. Ms. Judith Russell, Superintendent of Documents at the GPO, released the following data in an e-mail to GOVDOC-L, November 19, 2003:

In FY 2003 (ending Sept. 30, 2003), 7,121 paper titles were distributed to depository libraries, 403 DVD/CD-ROM (tangible electronic) titles, 4,763 microfiche titles and 1,758 USGS maps for a total of 14,045 tangible titles. During FY 2003, 14,188 electronic titles were added to GPO Access and 10,063 additional titles were linked from GPO Access to agency and other websites, for a total of 24,251. . . . Historically, in 1998, we distributed 8,637,116 copies of 19,145 paper titles. The high water mark was 1993, when we distributed 9,660,636 copies of 20,755 paper titles. Starting in 1996, the number of titles distributed in paper has dropped steadily from:

1996	14,268
1997	13,216
1998	12,759
1999	11,867
2000	12,422
2001	8,273
2002	7,159
2003	7,121

Fiche hit a high water mark in 1994-1995 with 29,070 in 1994 and 26,856 titles in 1995. There were only 14,572 fiche titles in 2000 and the number of fiche titles dropped to 4,726 in 2001 and went back up to 5,448 in 2002.<sup>23</sup>

This chart illustrates the decline in distribution to depository libraries but does not indicate the number of publications the agencies put on their web sites and, thus, were not made available for cataloging by the GPO, and are excluded from the *Monthly Catalog*. These are commonly referred to as “fugitive documents.”

A cooperative agreement with the Library of Congress in 1981 established the GPO as the “center of authority for the cataloging of Federal publications. One of the conditions was that GPO agreed to follow LOC’s cataloging guidelines to produce descriptions consistent with those created by LOC.”<sup>24</sup> The GPO sends all depository materials to depository libraries “pre-cataloged” in boxes that include the materials and a shipping list. The shipping list serves as the primary source of cataloging information; it provides the title proper, SuDocs number, as well as the item selection number. Although the GPO follows the established cataloging guidelines such as AARC2 and the MARC format, the

cataloging record can be incomplete. AACR2 does not include a chapter specifically for cataloging government publications, because these materials are issued as monographs, serials, cartographic materials, etc., just like non-governmental works. Most of the MARC record fixed fields and controlled fields are recorded but the variable fields are completed randomly, almost casually depending on the cataloger. Subject headings follow either LCSH, MeSH, USDA, or Sears depending upon the piece in hand, but rarely is one standard reference followed uniformly (again depending upon the piece in hand). Frequently, the GPO will catalog a title as a microform and then distribute as the title as paper or vice-versa.<sup>25</sup> *House Report 141*, a Congressional hearing issued as a report, is a prime example of the difficulties encountered in cataloging any U.S. government publication.

First, a cataloger must decide whether to catalog the document as a monograph or a serial or as part of a monographic series. House Reports, like all Congressional materials, possess some aspect of seriality. “House Report” or “Senate Report” is a series title, but it can also be the title proper of a piece. In this case, it is not. The chief source of information (the first page of this document) places “SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION: Letter of the Hon. Rufus Choate, Resigning the Office of Regent of the Smithsonian Institute; March 3, 1855—Laid upon the table and ordered to be printed” in the position of the title proper. The actual title of the report is “Report of the Select Committee on the Management of the Smithsonian” which is how the entry is listed in the *CIS Index to the United States Congressional Serial Set*.<sup>26</sup> The difference in the two titles is because the letter from Hon. Rufus Choate was reprinted in Serial Set volume 807 to precede the actual report of findings.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, reason points to *House Reports* as subordinate to the title proper, and thus becomes the series statement. (NOTE: Please refer to Appendix I and II to examine the title pages of these publications.)

Initially, the GPO publishes all Congressional documents and reports as monographs. Once these items appear in the *Serial Set*, these items become an individual monographic title, within a sub-series of the larger serial. For example, the cataloging record for Pre-1875 *Serial Set* volumes included annual agency reports which in turn become a sub-series to the main entry of *Serial Set*. Though confusing, this myriad terminology has a purpose; the public record of legislative and in many cases, executive branch, is ensured. Over 90% of government publications are serials; yet, a large proportion of these serials are actually monographic in nature, thus they become a hybrid, monographic se-

ries.<sup>28</sup> Establishing the title proper meets half the challenge in cataloging government publications.

Next, the cataloger must determine the statement of responsibility. One of the most difficult issues for catalogers is whether to consider the statement of responsibility as corporate. According to Michael Carpenter, "the numbers of corporate headings under which entry might be made for government publications could be seemingly endless. In a large file, crowded with all sorts of corporate entries, locating the representation for a particular document could be very difficult. A cut-off can and should be established."<sup>29</sup> In all publications, the official "corporate author" would be the United States. However, using "United States" as the primary author is not useful due to the amount of information retrieved from a corporate author search in an online or print source. The same problem holds true for authors such as "Congress," "House of Representatives," etc. Unless a specific individual is cited as the personal author, corporate entry is frequently not useful and frustrating.

For this example "Rufus Choate" must be the author of the monograph while "Smithsonian Institution" is established for the serial record. The reason for this authorship difference in each type of record is that the statement of responsibility must be open in the serial record in order to place the piece properly within the series. Thus when examining *House Report 141* as a serial, the author must be "Smithsonian Institution" otherwise there would be chaos for the user and the cataloger as well. Once the title proper and the statement of responsibility have been established, the rest of the description is fairly easy. However, subseries treatment is an exception. Subseries are, by their very nature, a cataloging headache. *House Reports* are a subseries of the *Serial Set*, defined as "a series within a series (i.e., a series that always appears in conjunction with another, usually more comprehensive, series of which it forms a section). Its title may or may not be dependent on the title of the main series."<sup>30</sup> Subseries in publications are hard to catalog because there are few rules or guidelines to follow. There exists nothing practical to help either the user or the librarian find the publications by their subseries name.

*House Report 141* is just one small example of the challenge in cataloging large depository documents. In a print environment, this single report is lost if you do not understand the syntax of the times.<sup>31</sup> In a digital environment, syntax does not matter. It is not a typical report found in the *Serial Set* since it is a hearing disguised as a House report. However, the early volumes of the *Serial Set* include other items similar to this one such as Congressional testimony regarding the Amistad case.

Congressional hearings were excluded from the *Serial Set* because they were considered “fact-finding” publications, rather than publications that show Congressional intent. The size of this set may also intimidate some catalogers in addition to the variety of publications found within the collection. It must also be noted that there are several different editions of the *Serial Set* in existence and random chance has made each edition different. In several instances the maps, illustrations, and even reports may vary from edition to edition.<sup>32</sup> Currently, information technology does not access this varied material very well. The LexisNexis Congressional database does include the *Serial Set Index*, but even it is cumbersome to use since it employs the same terminology as the paper index. Until such a time when technology advances and Congressional appropriations to the GPO increase, access to specialized and historic material will be answered only by cataloging. Cataloging, with all its inherent pitfalls, also allows each library to tailor their records to reflect their individual holdings in the library catalog. Private corporations such as Marcive are ahead of the GPO in the development of this technology, yet still are working toward adapting their product for individual client needs. Mr. James, however, is determined to bring the GPO into the 21st century and if successful, will change the entire playing field.

### ***BIBLIOGRAPHIC ACCESS THROUGH DIGITIZATION?***

Traditionally, a library catalog contains records that represent and describe resources held in a library's collection. Each of the records characterizes one of the resources. Users search the catalog to discover descriptions of potentially relevant materials. A locator service exploits the library's paradigm of resource description and resource discovery to assist users in discovery and retrieval of information resources. A record in a library catalog is metadata-structured data that characterizes resources.<sup>33</sup>

Many practicing documents librarians prefer not to catalog the older, serial government publications but agree that in theory, the best approach to solving the problems of access is through cataloging. However, in the online environment of today, what is most important to everyone is access. No longer are statements of responsibility or title proper essential to searching for an item, instead, access to title, author, and subject/key-word is demanded by the user. Many feel that digitization is the key to

complex cataloging and bibliographic access. Whether print or online, guidelines must be established for handling electronic depository collections, if such a collection can exist. A digital document still needs description and there is an idea that the evolution of metadata as the describing tool may replace the library catalog. However, this author believes that metadata is simply an extension of traditional cataloging, an expansion of AACR and MARC; another tool in the arsenal.

The final access question to depository serials lies in whether the older materials can be cataloged for the online environment. Again, one of the potential problems is the *Serial Set*. As a series, it has had portions cataloged. Since GPO started cataloging, the individual reports and documents that comprise the serial set are cataloged as monographs and are thereby included in commercial subscriptions like the Marcive bibliographic service. However, there is not any *single* access point in online catalogs for the entire "Serial Set" because the entire series is an amalgamation of historical materials grouped together in the order they were received rather than by any logical or organized fashion. In other words, some libraries may have bibliographic records for portions of the *Serial Set*, but according to the GPO, all 14,000 volumes have not been fully analyzed or cataloged.<sup>34</sup>

Currently, the Library of Congress (LC) is digitizing selected volumes of the *Serial Set* as part of the *American Memory Project, Documents of American History*. For example, LC digitized *The Journals* from the 1st Congress up to the 43rd Congress (1875). This effort is amazing because LC is continuing to improve the product, offering it free of charge, and providing some description to help the user find information in a different way. Dr. Marilyn Parr, Director of Collections for this Project at LC, gave an overview of the next phase of this Project at the Rare and Endangered Government Publications Committee meeting, ALA Midwinter in San Diego, CA in January 2004. In her presentation, Dr. Parr noted with interest the two commercial digitization projects from Readex and LexisNexis<sup>35</sup> which are both exceeding 98% accuracy in their OCR scanning and having experts determine the metadata. Both companies have procedures to correct the 2% errors although Readex currently visits other depository collections to verify the text and illustrations.<sup>36</sup> Between these three efforts, the *Serial Set* will be one of the most digitized collections around. However, does all this effort and expense solve the researcher's problems? This author believes it does. While the American Memory Project is scanning the documents into searchable OCR, the two commercial vendors are painstakingly adding metadata. Both commercial vendors are diligent



in providing a remarkable product. At present, it appears that Readex has the edge in metadata creation; yet LexisNexis is working hard to improve their description by adding references and cross-references not available in the print Index.

For example, Readex is cross-referencing terminology by updating spelling and syntax. Readex is using *Legislative Indexing Vocabulary (LIV)* developed by Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, and the *Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names* for their authority work. Additionally, Readex has three author categories: Congressional Corporate Author (i.e., the name of the Committee); Congressional Personal Author (i.e., the name of the person reporting); and Corporate Author (any other body represented) which provides better searching capabilities for the user.<sup>37</sup>

Although LexisNexis already has its own standardized thesaurus based upon the print Index,<sup>38</sup> they are investigating the seamless integration of this module with their suite of other databases such as LexisNexis Academic and Statistical platforms. To enhance their metadata, LexisNexis is also enhancing author searching by adding petitioners and witnesses to the searchable fields as well as the title of the document and the CIS descriptive title. Readex, on the other hand, is tying their digital *Serial Set* to other valuable historical digital products in their stable such as the *Early American Imprints*.<sup>39</sup> This integration with other digital products allows users of both products the opportunity for searching across multiple historic sets with a single search. Time is saved and frustration at repeating searches is reduced. The fortunate library is the one who can offer access to all these products. Choosing between the products will be up to the individual library based upon the needs of their users. Unfortunately, the cost to both commercial products makes them available only to a select few large libraries whose budgets can afford the luxury of digital collections.<sup>40</sup> Researchers who are not affiliated with richer institutions or do not have well supported public libraries will be forced to use what is freely available or travel the distance to use the print counterpart thus making all the effort of digitization moot.

If one considers metadata to be an extension of traditional cataloging, one of its advantages is the ability to use natural language to describe the object rather than following AACR or other cataloging rules. This ability is what most researchers want—to search using their own terms and come up with as comprehensive as possible list of resources regardless of whether librarians consider the objects as serials, monographs, mono-

graphic-serials, or whatever. Cataloging electronic documents, whether born digital or digitized, offers the user a simpler method of research. The next challenge for librarians is to successfully meld the electronic world and the digital collections (piece by piece) into the online catalog. The real challenge is for librarians to harness digital documents, develop authoritative metadata (which is based upon natural language rather than a controlled vocabulary), and seamlessly weave them together into the online catalog. Once completed, the online catalog will offer the best unfettered access to the user regardless of format.

### CONCLUSION

While the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* exemplifies the complexities in cataloging government documents, the intricacy of this process is described using *House Report 141* as a model. The difficulty in determining the nature of this publication (Is it a serial, monograph, or both?) reflects the inherent complicatedness in congressional printing, thus in cataloging government publications. By their very nature, government publications reflect policy and the political world embodied by the document itself. Metadata and digitization provide one solution for the researcher to locate the information should the library community flawlessly integrate this description into their online catalogs. Large scale series such as the *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* really require complete analysis in addition to digitization and metadata for they house the wisdom and knowledge of our nation.

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### NOTES

1. The author has not originally cataloged House Document 141. This article is intended to point out the questions that arise should a collection like the *Serial Set* be retrospectively cataloged.

2. From a presentation by Ms. Virginia Saunders, Congressional Documents Specialist, United States Government Printing Office Congressional Printing Management Division, 1998 Spring Federal Depository Conference in Arlington, Virginia. [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/history/sset](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/history/sset) (verified 7/12/04).



3. *Serial Set* volumes 7743 (1917), 7645 (1918), 7768 (1919), 1987 (1920), 8105 (1921), 8265 (1922), 8271 (1923).
4. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs* vol. 07. Please note that while the ASP is a separate publication from the *Serial Set* many scholars believe it to be the precursor publication to the *Serial Set*. For more information, please see: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lwsp.html> (verified 7/12/04).
5. *Serial Set* vol. 1805.
6. *Serial Set* vol. 1805.
7. *Serial Set* vol. 803.
8. Taken from personal correspondence with August Imholtz.
9. For more information about Ms. Hasse, please see: [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fdlp/history/hasse.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/history/hasse.html) (verified 7/12/04).
10. Information about each product may be found at the companies web sites: LexisNexis: <http://www.lexisnexis.com/academic/serialset> (verified 7/12/04) Readex: <http://www.readex.com/scholarl/serlset.html> (verified 7/12/04).
11. Prudence S. Adler. "Rethinking the Federal Depository Library Program" *ARL Bimonthly Report* 229 <http://arl.cni.org/newsltr/229/fdlp.html> (verified 7/12/04).
12. Commonly referred to as Title 44 of the *United States Code* chapter 19.
13. Ibid.
14. OCLC #03888071.
15. Jean Hiron and Cynthia Graham. *Issues Related to Seriality* presented at the International Conference on the Principles and Future Development of AACR. Toronto, Canada, October 23-25, 1997.
16. Mary C. Bushing and Bonnie Johnson. "Control of Government Document Serials in Local Electronic and Organizational Systems" *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 18, no. 3-4 (1993) p. 86.
17. These articles range from the excellent discourse on cataloging government documents by Bolner and Kile in "Documents to the people: Access through the automated catalog. Marcive upgrade of cataloging on GPO tapes" *Government Publications Review* 18, no. 1 (1991) pp. 51-64 to Copeland and Snyder's discussion of using Marcive's Shipping List Service for acquisitions records in "Marcive's Shipping List Service: Colorado State University Libraries' Experience" *Journal of Government Information* 27, no. 5 (2000) pp. 547-558.
18. John A. Shuler. "Foundations of Government Information and Bibliographic Control in the United States: 1789-1900" *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 35, no. 3-4 (2003) p. 309.
19. Again, the latest effort was the 2001 NASIG workshop mentioned above.
20. For an overview of the disappearing documents problem, please see Linda B Johnson's excellent article "Electronic Moves Center Stage" in the electronic version of the *Library Journal* 129, no.9 (2004) p. 52. <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA415367>.
21. See the minutes from the GODORT Cataloging Committee for 2001-2003 at: <http://www2.lib.udel.edu/godort/cataloging/minutes/index.htm> (verified 7/12/04).
22. Joe Morehead. *Introduction to United States Public Documents*, 3rd ed. (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1983) p. 28.
23. Ms. Russell e-mail to GOVDOC-L 11/19/2003. The decline in the number of tangible documents distributed to depository libraries and the increase in the number of electronic titles linked from GPO Access or added to GPO Access demonstrate the continued need for high quality bibliographic control of government information. No

statistics on the number of electronic Congressional materials were located as of this writing.

24. Judy E. Myers. "The Government Printing Office Cataloging Records: Opportunities and Problems" *Government Information Quarterly* 2, no.1 (1986) p. 35.

25. Ibid., 30.

26. Congressional Information Service. *CIS United States Congressional Serial Set Index 1789-1857, Part 1: American State Papers and the 15th-34th Congresses* (Washington, DC: CIS, 1975) p. 1792.

27. Originally printed as H.Mis.Doc 18, 33rd Congress, 2nd Session, *Resignation of Mr. Choate as Regent of the Smithsonian Institution*, *Serial Set* volume 807.

28. GODORT, Documents Cataloging Manual Committee. *Cataloging Government Documents: A Manual of Interpretation for AACR2* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1984) p. 107.

29. Michael Carpenter. "Corporate Authorship: Its Role in Library Cataloging" in *Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science*, no. 34. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981) p. 174.

30. Joint Steering Committee for the Revision of AACR. *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, 2nd ed., revised, edited by Paul Winkler and Michael Gorman. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1988) p. 623.

31. For example, until 1895 with the creation of the Federal Depository Library Program, all government publications had to be "approved by Congress and ordered to be printed" in order to be an authorized version. After 1895, regulations allowed for executive branch publications be published on the authority of the designated authority, usually someone in the Secretary's staff.

32. The author uncovered this information while researching the history of Congressional publishing and printing. This research is currently unpublished. Further evidence may be found in the *Serial Set* Subcommittee, GODORT Rare and Endangered Government Publications Committee June 1999 meeting minutes at: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/GODORT/REGP/sersub.htm>.

33. William E. Moen. "The Metadata Approach to Accessing Government Information" *Government Information Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (2001) p. 156.

34. Verified by phone conversation with Tad Downing, Head of Cataloging Services, GPO.

35. Technically, the LexisNexis Digital Serial Set is a module within the LexisNexis Congressional per e-mail from Andrew Laas dated April 5, 2004.

36. Conversation with August Imholz, Jr.

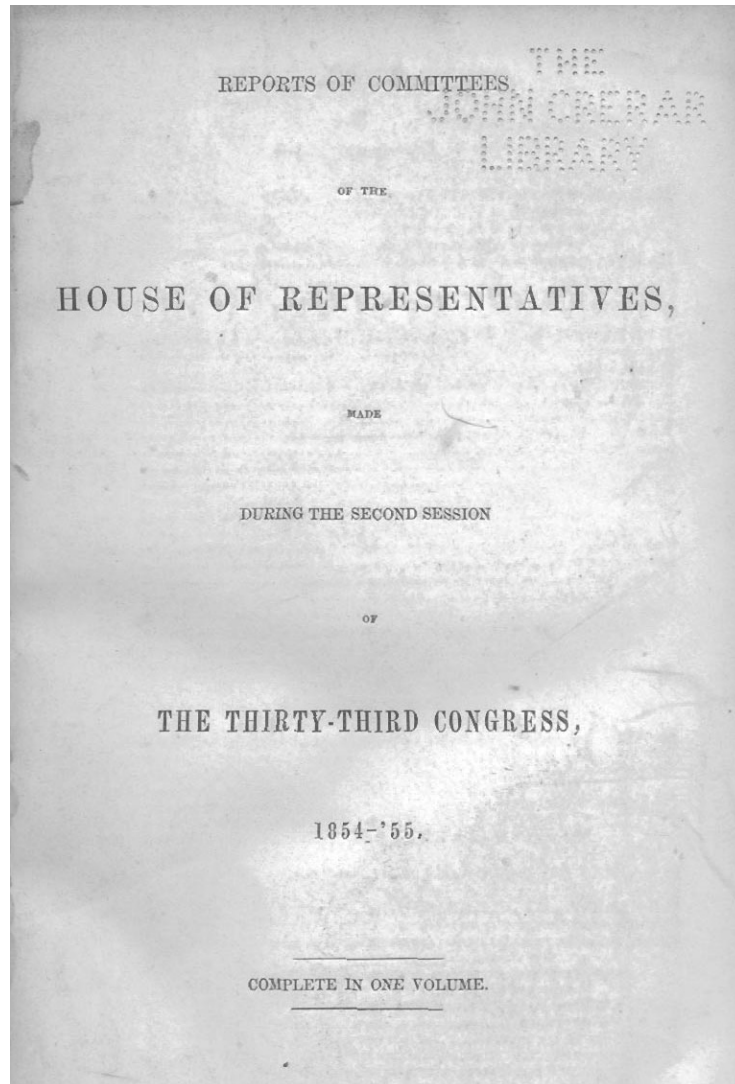
37. For more specific information, please see their web site at: [http://www.readex.com/americana/bibrecords11\\_03.html](http://www.readex.com/americana/bibrecords11_03.html) (verified 7/1/04).

38. Per phone conversation with Andrew Laas, *Serial Set* representative for LexisNexis.

39. See: <http://www.readex.com/scholarl/serlset.html> (verified 3/12/04); August Imholz speech to the Rare and Endangered Government Publications Committee, ALA Midwinter Meeting, January 2002.

40. This statement represents the author's opinion. Both Readex and LexisNexis offer a variety of competitive pricing structures. Interested libraries should contact their local representatives for further pricing information.

APPENDIX I



## APPENDIX I (continued)

33d CONGRESS, } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { REPORT  
2d Session. } No. 141.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

MARCH 3, 1855—Laid upon the table and ordered to be printed.

LETTER OF HON. RUFUS CHOATE, RESIGNING THE OFFICE OF REGENT  
OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

To Hon. JESSE D. BRIGHT, *President pro tempore of the Senate*, and  
Hon. LINN BOYD, *Speaker of the House of Representatives*:

I take leave to communicate to the two Houses of Congress my resignation of the office of Regent of the Smithsonian Institution.

It is due to the body which has been pleased to honor me with this trust for some years, and has recently conferred it for a new term, to say that this step is taken not from any loss of interest in the welfare of that important establishment, but in part from the inconvenience experienced in attending the meetings, and in part, also, and more immediately, from my inability to concur or acquiesce in an interpretation of the act of Congress constituting the actual institution and the Board of Regents, which has been adopted, and is now about to be practically carried into administration by a majority of the Board. That act, it has seemed to me, peremptorily "directs a manner," and devises and prescribes a plan, according to which it intends that the institution shall accomplish the will of the donor. By the earlier law accepting the gift, Congress engaged to direct such a manner and to devise such a plan, and pledged the faith of the United States that the funds should be applied according to such plan and such manner. In fulfilment of that pledge, and in the performance of its inalienable and incommunicable duty as trustee of the charity, that body, after many years of deliberation—from which it never sought to relieve itself by devolving the work upon the discretion of others—matured its plan, and established the act of the Institution to carry it out. Of this plan, the general sketch was sketched with great clearness and great completeness in the law. Without resorting for aid, in its interpretation, to its parliamentary history, the journals and debates, the substantial meaning seems to be palpable and unequivocal in its terms. By such aid it is rendered quite certain. The Board of Regents is created to administer it. Some discretionary powers, of course, are given to the board in regard of details and in regard of possible surpluses of income which may remain at any given time while the plan of Congress is being zealously and judiciously carried into effect; but these discretionary powers are given, I think, in trust for the plan of Congress, and as auxiliary to, cooperative with, and executive of it. They were given for the sake of the plan, simply to enable the Regents the more effectually and truly to administer that very one—not to enable them to devise and administer another of their own, unauthorized in the terms of the law, incom-

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## SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

patible with its announced objects and its full development—not alluded to in it anywhere, and which, as the journals and the debates inform us, when presented to the House under specific propositions, was rejected.

Of this act an interpretation has now been adopted by which it has seemed to me these discretionary means of carrying the will of Congress into effect are transformed into means of practically disappointing that will, and of building up an institution substantially unlike that which it intended; which supersedes and displaces it, and in effect repeals the law. Differences of opinion had existed in the Board from its first meeting, in regard of the administration of the act; but they were composed by a resolution of compromise, according to which a full half of the annual income was to be eventually applied in permanence to what I deem the essential parts of the plan of Congress. That resolution of compromise is now formally rescinded, and henceforward the discretion of the Regents, and not the act of Congress, is to be the rule of appropriation; and that discretion has already declared itself for another plan than what I deem the plan of Congress. It may be added that, under the same interpretation, the office and powers of secretary are fundamentally changed from those of the secretary of the law, as I read it, and are greatly enlarged.

In this interpretation I cannot acquiesce; and with entire respect for the majority of the Board, and with much kindness and regard to all its members, I am sure that my duty requires a respectful tender of resignation. I make it accordingly, and am,

Your obedient servant,

RUFUS CHOATE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., January 13, 1855.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, U. S.—January 17, 1855.

On motion of Mr. Meacham,

*Resolved*, That the letter of Hon. Rufus Choate, resigning his place as Regent of the Smithsonian Institution, be referred to a select committee of five, and printed; and that said committee be directed to inquire and report to this House whether the Smithsonian Institution has been managed, and its funds expended, in accordance with the law establishing the Institution; and whether any additional legislation be necessary to carry out the designs of its founders, and that said committee have power to send for persons and papers.

The Speaker thereupon appointed Mr. Udam, of Massachusetts; Mr. Witte, of Pennsylvania; Mr. Taylor, of Tennessee; Mr. Wells, of Wisconsin; and Mr. Puryear, of North Carolina, the said committee.



## APPENDIX I (continued)

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

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Mr. UPHAM, from the Select Committee, made the following

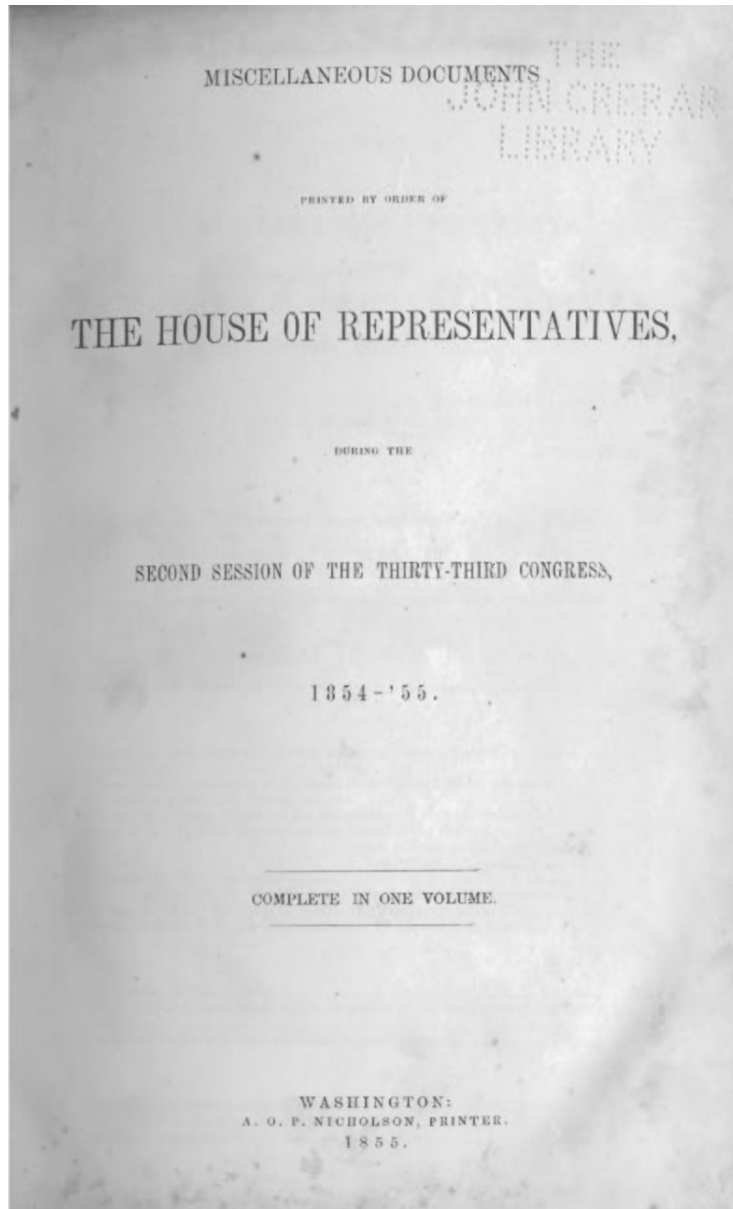
**REPORT.**

*The Select Committee of the House of Representatives, to whom were referred the letter of the Hon. Rufus Choate, resigning his place as a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, with instructions to inquire and report to the House whether the Smithsonian Institution has been managed and its funds expended in accordance with the law establishing the institution, and whether any additional legislation be necessary to carry out the designs of the founder; the memorial of Lorin Blodgett for a remedy against the Smithsonian Institution for labor and researches in physical science, made for the benefit of said institution; and the petition of John Grable and sundry others, citizens of St. Joseph's, Missouri, praying for the publication of a monthly periodical, exhibiting the progress of knowledge and of society, and to be distributed by said institution among the people, beg leave to submit the following report:*

The short time allowed for investigating the matters referred to the committee, and the pressure of other duties during the few crowded last weeks of the session, render anything like a full and thoroughly satisfactory report impossible. The transactions to which their attention has been called are so complicated in their nature and extensive in their details, that it was soon found entirely out of the question to attempt to examine them with sufficient fullness and minuteness to be qualified or justified in pronouncing or even forming a decisive judgment on the merits of the questions involved. The evidence taken and submitted will guide the members of the House to so much of a conclusion on the several points and issues as the committee have been able to reach.

So far as the case of Mr. Lorin Blodgett is concerned, the committee would observe, that he does not claim to have made any explicit contract, in writing or in conversation with the secretary of the Board of Regents; that the compensation he received appears to have been all that was ever expressly or distinctly agreed upon; and that as it respects the value of his labors above the compensation he received, or the degree to which he acquired any separate, private, scientific, or literary property in any papers or documents prepared by him while in the institution, they have been wholly unable to derive any definite ideas from his statements. In reference to his assertion that certain equitable or legal rights are withheld from him, the committee can only say that, although the hearing afforded him occupied a large portion of their time, he failed to make his own view of the point clearly intelligible, and that it is utterly impossible for them, at this period of the session, to enter into such an examination of the vast amount of documents, resulting more or less from his labors, as would be necessary in order to begin to form an opinion. An impartial arbitration by scientific persons would, if the committee may be allowed to offer a suggestion to the Board of Regents, probably be the best way to determine whether there is any foundation for the complaints he makes, or for the claim of rights which he imagines himself to possess. The committee feel it due to candor to say that they have not been able to ap-

APPENDIX II



## APPENDIX II (continued)

33d CONGRESS, } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. { Mrs. Doc.  
2d Session. } { No. 18.

RESIGNATION OF MR. CHOATE AS REGENT OF THE  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

LETTER

OF

HON. RUFUS CHOATE,

*Resigning the office of Regent of the Smithsonian Institution.*

JANUARY 18, 1855.—Referred to a Select Committee, and ordered to be printed.

To HON. JESSE D. BRIGHT, *President pro tempore of the Senate, and*  
HON. LINN BOYD, *Speaker of the House of Representatives:*

I take leave to communicate to the two houses of Congress my resignation of the office of Regent of the Smithsonian Institution.

It is due to the body which has been pleased to honor me with this trust for some years, and has recently conferred it for a new term, to say that this step is taken not from any loss of interest in the welfare of that important establishment, but in part from the inconvenience experienced in attending the meetings, and in part, also, and more immediately, from my inability to concur or acquiesce in an interpretation of the act of Congress constituting the actual Institution and the Board of Regents, which has been adopted, and is now about to be practically carried into administration by a majority of the board. That act, it has seemed to me, peremptorily "directs a manner," and devises and prescribes a plan, according to which it intends that the Institution shall accomplish the will of the donor. By the earlier law accepting the gift Congress engaged to direct such a manner and to devise such a plan, and pledged the faith of the United States that the funds should be applied according to such plan and such manner. In fulfilment of that pledge, and in the performance of its inalienable and incommunicable duty as trustee of the charity, that body, after many years of deliberation—from which it never sought to relieve itself by devolving the work upon the discretion of others—matured its plan, and established the actual Institution to carry it out. Of this plan, the general features are sketched with great clearness and great completeness in the law. Without resorting for aid, in its interpretation, to its parliamentary history, the journals and debates, the substantial meaning seems to be palpable and unequivocal in its terms. By such aid it is rendered quite certain. A Board of Regents is created to administer it. Some discretionary powers, of course, are given to the board in regard of details and in regard of possible surpluses of income which may remain at any given time while the plan of Congress is



being zealously and judiciously carried into effect; but these discretionary powers are given, I think, *in trust for the plan of Congress, and as auxiliary to, co-operative with, and executory of it.* They were given for the sake of the plan, simply to enable the Regents the more effectually and truly to administer that very one—not to enable them to devise and administer another of their own, unauthorized in the terms of the law, incompatible with its announced objects and its full development—not alluded to in it anywhere, and which, as the journals and the debates inform us, when presented to the House under specific propositions, was rejected.

Of this act an interpretation has now been adopted by which it has seemed to me these discretionary means of carrying the will of Congress into effect are transformed into means of practically disappointing that will, and of building up an institution substantially unlike that which it intended; which supersedes and displaces it, and in effect repeals the law. Differences of opinion had existed in the board from its first meeting, in regard of the administration of the act; but they were composed by a resolution of compromise, according to which a full half of the annual income was to be eventually applied in permanence to what I deem the essential parts of the plan of Congress. That resolution of compromise is now formally rescinded, and henceforward the discretion of the Regents, and not the act of Congress, is to be the rule of appropriation; and that discretion has already declared itself for another plan than what I deem the plan of Congress. It may be added, that, under the same interpretation, the office and powers of Secretary are fundamentally changed from those of the Secretary of the law, as I read it, and are greatly enlarged.

In this interpretation I cannot acquiesce; and with entire respect for the majority of the board, and with much kindness and regard to all its members, I am sure that my duty requires a respectful tender of resignation. I make it accordingly, and am,

Your obedient servant,

RUFUS CHOATE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., January 13, 1855.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES U. S.—January 17, 1855.

On motion of Mr. Meacham,

*Resolved*, That the letter of Hon. Rufus Choate, resigning his place as Regent of the Smithsonian Institution, be referred to a select committee of five, and printed; and that said committee be directed to inquire and report to this House whether the Smithsonian Institution has been managed, and its funds expended, in accordance with the law establishing the Institution; and whether any additional legislation be necessary to carry out the designs of its founders, and that said committee have power to send for persons and papers.

The Speaker thereupon appointed Mr. Upham, of Massachusetts; Mr. Witte, of Pennsylvania; Mr. Taylor, of Tennessee; Mr. Wells, of Wisconsin; and Mr. Puryear, of North Carolina, the said committee.