A Survey of Archivists of the U.S. Senate

JAN ZASTROW AND NAN WOOD MOSHER

Abstract: What do archivists in the U.S. Senate do? And how is the role of a committee archivist different from one in a Senator's personal office? Jan Zastrow, Congressional Papers Archivist at the University of Hawaii, was given the opportunity to investigate these questions when she was granted a professional leave of absence to work as archivist in the office of the U.S. Senate Majority Leader. Initially, the plan was to serve as a consultant to set up systems, policies and procedures, and then hire a local archivist to run the operation. Upon arrival, she realized she needed a "menu" of duties to develop her own work plan and to formulate a job description. Finding out what other Senate archivists handled seemed the logical starting point.

Enlisting the help of Republican Leader archivist Nan Wood Mosher, the two researchers queried other archivists in the Senate about their job duties, titles, education and experience. Thirty-five different activities were parsed out and the results were then collated to quantify how many archivists were engaged in similar tasks, and what different types of duties were performed by committee archivists as versus archivists in a Senator's personal office. Some interesting "outlier" responsibilities—those engaged in by only one or two archivists—illustrate the variety and range of activities among Senate archivists, and perhaps point to future trends.

In addition to its intended purpose, this applied research is useful as a training tool for new Senate archivists; to help congressional papers archivists in repositories understand the role of an in-office archivist and how best to work with them; and to encourage archivists to evolve into new territory, such as electronic records management and email appraisal. This poster presentation shows that beyond the routine, the responsibilities of the Senate archivists reflect the individual careers of the lawmakers they serve.

About the authors:

Jan Zastrow is archivist for Majority Leader Senator Harry Reid, on professional leave of absence from the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. There she oversees the Hawaii Congressional Papers Collection and heads the Archives & Manuscripts Department at the University of Hawaii Library, where she is a tenured Associate Professor. Zastrow graduated with her MLIS in 1995 from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and obtained a second master's there in Political Science in 2005. A Certified Archivist, Zastrow has more than a decade of professional experience in academic, government, and corporate archives. She has also served as corporate and academic librarian, web developer, information network director, archives consultant, project manager, and president and owner of a Honolulu-based information management consulting firm.

Nan Wood Mosher has worked for Republican Leader Senator Mitch McConnell since 1987. Starting as an intern, she held a number of administrative positions on his personal office staff, and moved into the position of office manager in 1998. Mosher also served as administrative director in the offices of the Majority Whip and Republican Leader. While in that post, she was responsible for the archival program until the position of archivist was officially created in 2007. In her current role, she works closely with the repository archivist at the Senator Mitch McConnell and Secretary Elaine L. Chao Archives to ensure that records are preserved for eventual disposition and historical research at the University of Louisville.

A graduate of Western Kentucky University with a BA degree in public relations and a minor in government, Mosher also attended the Modern Archives Institute in 2007.