

**Association of Centers for the Study of Congress  
Annual Meeting 2017  
Session 7: Researchers, Teachers, Oh My!**

**May 11, 2017**

**Sarah D’Antonio Gard (SDG):** Okay, great. Hi, everyone. So, this is going to be “Researchers, Teachers, Oh My!” where we’re going to hear about some of the ways congressional collections have been used in the past year. So, I am the newly renamed Sarah D’Antonio Gard, and I am also the archivist at the newly renamed Robert and Elizabeth Dole Archive and Special Collections at the Dole Institute of Politics located at the University of Kansas. And my three lovely panelists over here – we have Hope Grebner Bibens, and she is the political papers archivist and assistant professor of librarianship at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. She is currently processing the papers of Senator Tom Harkin there. She holds a bachelor’s degree in history and nineteenth century studies from Monmouth College in Monmouth, Illinois; a master’s degree in American history; as well as an MLA, both from Indiana University. She is active in the Society of American Archivists, Congressional Papers Section; ACSC; and the Midwest Archives Conference. She serves on ACSC’s Communication Committee, Membership Task Force, and Digital Exhibit Task Force. She also serves on the Steering Committee for CPS. Prior to her arrival at Drake, Hope served as the project archivist at Indiana University.

Down on the end, we have Dr. Brad Owens, and he is a veteran news reporter and editor. He is a senior lecturer in the journalism department at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He has covered thirty-six elections from 1984 to 2016 and worked on several reporting

assignments in Russia in the early 1990s, writing his dissertation on a pro-Democratic newspaper in Kazan. He teaches courses in media and politics, international communication, editing, reporting, and other topics. He holds a bachelor's degree in religion and journalism from Baylor, a master's degree in Latin American studies from the University of Texas at Austin, and a doctorate in government from Georgetown University.

And then in the middle we have the wonderful Caitlin Rathe. She is a history graduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and she's working on a dissertation on food policy in the U.S. and Britain during the 1970s and 80s. Her dissertation uses changes in public and private food programs, like food stamps and food banking, to make an argument about the changing welfare state more broadly. In doing research for this project, she has visited the National Archives in both the U.S. and U.K., presidential libraries, congressional libraries, and regional and city-based collections in both countries. And her favorite research experience of all time was at the Dole Institute.  
(Laughter)

**Caitlin Rathe (CR):** True. For real.

**SDG:** She was also one of our ACSC Grants for Researchers recipients, and she received her bachelor's degree in economics and French from Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. So we're going to give everyone about ten minutes to talk about their own

experiences and I'll ask them a couple questions, and then we'll open it up for you guys.  
So take it away, Hope.

**Hope Grebner Bibens (HGB):** Just to get started, I wanted to give you a little bit of information about Drake and our library and our work with the Harkin Institute for those of you who might not be familiar. So Drake University is a mid-sized private university. We have about 3,300 undergrads, 1,700 law and graduate students. We're located in the beautiful capital city of Des Moines, Iowa. We're about two miles from downtown. The city of Des Moines is a national hub for the insurance industry, publishing, politics, so the majority of our students – I think it's something like 90 percent – have some sort of internship in the community. So our most popular majors are journalism, marketing, business, pharmacy, actuarial science, and law.

Political papers at Drake are housed in the University Archives and Special Collections in Cowles Library, which is our main academic library on campus. It's the largest private academic library in the state of Iowa, but despite that distinction, we have a relatively small staff. We have twelve faculty librarians, one faculty archivist; that would be me. And so, our archives at Drake is relatively new. The university was founded in 1881, but our archives was not officially established until 2013, around the time they found out that the Harkin papers were on their way.

So in a sense, our facility was really built to house the Harkin papers with some room to grow. We have three other full-time people in our unit: our director, digital projects

librarian, and we have a staff member who works with university records retention. So as you can imagine, we have a large backlog of university records, and so I've been pulled into some of that. But we rely heavily on student workers, mostly undergraduate students. And so, while the papers are housed in the library, the library pays my salary, I work very closely with the Harkin Institute for Public Policy and Citizen Engagement, the institute established by Senator Harkin at Drake at the same time he gifted his papers to the university.

The Harkin Institute aims to facilitate collaborative, high-quality, non-partisan public policy research and analysis dedicated to the issues that defined Senator Harkin's legislative career, which would be persons with disabilities, retirement security, wellness and nutrition, and labor and employment. They also aim to foster active and informed citizen engagement and public decision-making through education and outreach that expands the knowledge and understanding of the four issue areas. The Institute sees its relationship with the Archives as a critical part of its mission, and the general public really doesn't distinguish between the Institute and the Archives. So because of this, I've become kind of a de-facto member of the Harkin Institute staff. I attend their weekly staff meetings and National Advisory Council meetings to report out on the activities in the Archives and plan future initiatives and ways that we can collaborate.

So my title is political papers archivist. My main task is to process and manage the Harkin papers, but it also came with additional expectations and responsibilities as a liaison librarian, and to teach credit-bearing courses. So at our library, we have a liaison

program where we are each responsible for working with a specific department on campus based on our own background or our own degrees. I don't have a degree in political science, but I do watch C-SPAN and access the *Congressional Record* probably more than any librarian or human probably should, so I get to work with the political science department.

In addition to this, our library offers credit-bearing courses. Usually these courses fulfill the information literacy component of our general education curriculum. So, per my job description, I'm expected to teach one course each academic year. So far, I've developed two courses for our department, an introduction to archives course and another course titled, "Congress Up Close: Preparing to Be a Congressional Staffer." So up to this point, I've chosen to teach during J-Term, or January term, so it's a month-long commitment. The class meets every day for about three weeks. It might sound intense, and it definitely is, but if you spend a lot of time processing, or you're working with researchers a lot, and you just don't think you can commit to a full semester course like I did, I highly recommend it if it's something that might be offered at your institution or if you have May term or summer courses, something like that.

So the first course that I taught was just a simple introduction to archives course that I taught to fulfill that information literacy requirement. I don't want to spend too much time talking about that, except to say that I really used the Harkin papers as a case study for talking about appraisal and accessioning and processing, arrangement and description, donor relations, reference. And so, the students' main project in that course was to

complete a processing project of a portion of the Harkin papers. So that course was kind of a fun way to expose our students to the archives career field and increase interest in our own collections.

Then for the remainder of my time, I want to talk about the “Congress Up Close” course, which is a course that I’ve developed with the staff at the Harkin Institute. And so, while working with Drake students, their staff wanted to provide something that would make them stand out when they graduate or apply for internships. They also wanted to provide an experience that could help to show students that there are numerous positions within a senator or representative’s office that could open up a new career path that they hadn’t thought of prior to the class. And so, they initially discussed it as a congressional staffing student certification program, where it would either be a course or an extra opportunity that students could sign up for through the Institute. They knew that they wanted the Archives to be part of that course, so they brought me into the loop. I’d also just gone through the course approval process, so maybe that was part of it, too.

We decided that students probably wouldn’t want to take an extra class, especially if they weren’t going to get actual university credit for it, so we decided on a J-Term. It’s co-taught by myself and the executive director of the Harkin Institute, Joseph Jones, who’s here today with me. I’m excited to have him here – who is a former Harkin staffer himself.

So we cover the different functions of a congressional office, from the legislative process, the role of committees, to press, scheduling, constituent services, state and district offices. After spending a couple weeks on campus studying these topics, the course culminates in a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit Capitol Hill, and to Boston, to visit the Kennedy Institute and participate in their Senate Immersion Module. Some of the assignments include a journal where students reflect on the types of jobs that they interact with each day, and how they play a role in our overall democracy, or how all the pieces fit together.

Students are also asked to put together a briefing book for a member of Congress that includes vote recommendations, remarks for a floor speech, subcommittee budget remarks, briefing memos for an event. And so, this assignment requires research in the Archives to find examples of these types of documents and how they're structured and the information that they contain. We've also asked students to work on the rollout of a policy from the initial thought process, introduction vote, appropriation scheduling, floor speeches, press conferences, rallies. So students come to the Archives to familiarize themselves with the different kinds of documents. Certain days during the term are set aside as archives days, where the students have introductory activities and then have time to work on their briefing book or their final project.

So just an example of one of the activities that I've developed that I think might be of interest to this crowd, so we all have awards and memorabilia in our collections, right? Or at least I do, because I couldn't say no to it all. So I wanted to come up with a way to

expose students to using the finding aids and to teach them how to use primary sources to build historical context, and we get to dust off those awards and memorabilia. So the idea is to have the students work in pairs or small groups and give each group an award or memorabilia item, and then ask them to use the finding aids to locate different types of documents to demonstrate why the senator might have received that award or what his legacy in that particular area is.

So that was really quick. We're kind of tag-teaming the course. Joseph's taking care of the staffer side of things, and then I get to work with the students on exposing them to government information and primary sources in the Archives.

**CR:** That sounds very cool. I really want to be a student in this class. Let me pull up my notes. Okay, hold on. Let me pull up my notes. Okay, so, hi, again. I'm Caitlin Rathe. I'm a grad student in the history department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. What I'm going to try and do is just – I hope I'm doing the right thing – give a little overview of my project and then how I've used different archives, and then a congressional archive, in particular.

So let's see if I can remember the title. I know Sarah just said it. "The Transformation of Food Assistance in the Public/Private Welfare State in the U.S. and Britain, 1972-1988," just the most interesting title ever. So broadly, I'm interested in, as my title suggests, the public/private welfare state, and this is a really big topic of study in history. I interpret it as getting at the changing responsibility of public and private organizations to provide

welfare and to provide welfare for different kinds of people. So I'm really interested in this as it relates to food and also like the knowledge that's being deployed to make a case for public or private interventions in welfare.

So there's a long historiography of public/private welfare studies. A lot of early studies focused on why welfare programs in the U.S. were so small or why there were so few of them, especially compared to places like Western Europe. But newer literature that I see myself working in is more focused on analyzing how we got the system that we got, like why is there this kind of hodgepodge of public and private programs that get so many services to the people.

And when I started framing this dissertation project, I was really interested in the transatlantic rise of conservatism, neo-conservatism and privatization that's commonly associated with the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. There's like a small comparative angle. I'm still figuring out exactly how to do that. But as I started going through the records, I realized that to really understand the changes of the eighties, I needed to look back into the sixties and seventies for the context of these programs. And this is also cool because I'm sort of pulling the public/private literature forward. A lot of it has been written through the 1960s, but I'm bringing the analysis up to the '80s.

So food is also a new, interesting lens in public/private welfare analysis. A lot of work has been done on health care, housing, social services, and the ways that private organizations and a lot of local organizations have used public funds to get stuff to the

poor. So in particular, for food programs, I look at food stamps, school lunches, the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children that's commonly known as WIC, and food banking. All of these programs kind of started around 1965 and have gone national by 1980, which explains my periodization.

But the other interesting thing about food, in addition to having like the perfect time period to do what I want to do, it gets at the many different kinds of privatizing the welfare state that I was really interested in exploring. So there's like instances of contracting out in school lunchrooms, where there's private contractors who are now preparing the meals or trucking them into different schools; instances of appealing to volunteerism and charity, while still providing public funds. So I'm sure everyone knows what a food bank is, but a lot of commodities and a lot of food that food banks put out actually comes from government commodities. There's a program that routes these commodities to food banks. So as recently as 2016, one in five meals that food banks provide are based on this public assistance.

So now a little bit about the comparative element. I compare the development of these food programs in the U.S. with income supplements in Britain. While Britain didn't have the same kinds of food programs, they had a few small ones. Well, they have a school lunch program that's very similar to the U.S. in that it's huge and everyone benefits from it, and they have a very small kind of counterpoint to WIC. But they don't have the food stamps or other big things because there's a smaller cultural sector. They don't have the same kinds of commodities to draw on, and they just have a really different approach to

income policies. But it's because of this difference, and it makes a really interesting comparison to the U.S. – like I'm looking at why do they not have the same system of food provision that we do, and then trying to draw lessons from that.

All right, onto the sources. So in the U.K., I have gone to the British Library, where I looked a lot at trade journals around the agricultural industry, in particular, the dairy industry. There's a lot of cows, a lot of milk over there, and that was central to the school meal program. At the Wellcome Library, it's a science library, but there's papers of nutrition and anti-hunger activists. The Thatcher Archive was not very useful because a lot of her papers went missing in transit. That's what one of the archivists told me. (Laughter.) At the London School of Economics, that's like their social and economic archive for the – they fashioned themselves as that for the country – I went through papers of think tanks to sort of get at the changing ideas behind public and private welfare provision.

But the two archives that have been the most useful were the National Archives at Kew, in particular the treasury records, which kind of showed how spending decisions were being made about where to cut and why, like the logic behind it. And then also, the National Council of Voluntary Organizations papers at the London Metropolitan Archive, which is the city archive, but the National Council of Voluntary Organizations is a national sort of consortium of nonprofits, and through that I was able to see how their relationship with the state changed.

So in the U.S., I've gone to the Ford, Carter and Reagan Presidential Libraries, still to go to Nixon. I had a really cool fellowship at the University of Baltimore last year, which has the only publicly available papers of a food bank, which was sweet. I've done a little bit of work in municipal archives, but that hasn't been as helpful. Even the National Archives kind of stop in the mid-seventies in a lot of instances, like the USDA Papers post-'75 aren't open because they haven't been organized. I don't know how that happened. So visiting the Dole Institute was really, really useful for my project. I've also been up to the Panetta Library that's at CSU Monterey Bay, but because he was like head of the C.I.A. and secretary of defense, you're not allowed to take pictures, you can only get like a folder at a time. So that was not as useful as my week and a half at the Dole Institute.

So what was really cool about visiting the Dole Library is I was able to fill in a ton of gaps that I had encountered in these other archives. And I think maybe this is a special case for me because I'm looking at farm and food policy and Dole was such a big player in this, I came to find out that Dole had sponsored or orchestrated, behind the scenes, almost every single amendment to food and farm legislation that I was interested in during the 1970s and into the 1980s. He served on this really important select committee that was started in 1968, the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, along with Senator McGovern. And kind of getting back to what Congressman Frank was talking about earlier today, that showed the importance and possibility of bipartisan cooperation, which is something I'm also really interested in talking about in the dissertation.

So Dole wrote legislation that ended the purchase requirement for food stamps, which dramatically changed the way that the program operated and who could benefit from it. He put together the first study of the Food Stamp Program, and this is useful for understanding or thinking about the ways and kinds of knowledge that are being used to both support and then undercut different welfare programs. Like I mentioned earlier, he introduced legislation that was really important to getting food banks off the ground. It was also cool to – there were some instances where I was able to trace through his papers the way that he changed his mind on certain issues, and I feel like in presidential papers that doesn't happen, so just getting at like a more human-level of the policy process was really interesting.

I started studying food policy because I read a headline about this White House Task Force on Food Assistance that Reagan put together in 1983, and originally I went down to the Reagan Library like four years ago with the intent of finding more information on this. But there was very spotty recordkeeping and maybe because it was a task force, and that's similar to committees, like the Presidential Library just doesn't have them. But Dole kept everything on this task force, I think in part because he was snubbed by the committee and wasn't told that it existed until there were already articles in the *New York Times*, so he was a little upset at being excluded from this important anti-hunger and welfare legislation thing. But he has a ton of press clippings and internal memos just about what was going on and what he thought about it that were cool to see.

More broadly, visiting a congressional archive just helped me to understand how Congress in this period worked in a way that was different from me even visiting presidential libraries or just reading monographs about legislative and political history, like being able to watch the letters flow back and forth between congressmen or the internal memo trail about how decisions are made. And I understand that all offices operate a little differently, but being able to see this case study of the Dole office was super useful.

And I think the most important and the most useful records I got were actually from one of his staffers, Christina Bolton, who was the chief policy advisor on welfare policy and also foodstuff. And through that, I was really able to see how policies developed and what the conversations were like around those. So I'm really thankful that I got to spend a lot of time at the Dole Library on their very nice fellowship, and I can't imagine writing my dissertation without it now. And hopefully it'll be a book someday, but until then. All right. Thank you.

**Brad Owen (BO):** Thanks. The agriculture-Congress connection ties closely to what I've done. I'm a journalist by trade. I came up in the business as a newspaper reporter and then editor; very much the post-Watergate oversupply of journalists at a time when taking a course called "Reporting Public Affairs," it wasn't a required course in most programs, because like almost any major, you were struggling with, we need to require three times as many courses than we have room for. But it was an interesting course. But back in the day, that course involved learning how to cover money, how to cover taxes, how to

basically bust public officials who were misbehaving, and so you spent time in a city council meeting on a regular basis. You covered councils, schoolboards, county boards, all sorts of things. And the course, at a lot of schools, including Baylor, went dormant. There just wasn't a great level of interest. Maybe twenty years ago, we have such a high proportion of PR majors, frankly, who would benefit in many cases, from taking a course like that.

But at any rate, that course just wasn't making any more, and I came in and I wanted to teach undergraduates to love politics, the game. Just to love politics, period. And so what I did, I sort of sneakily avoided the formal course proposal process and I started teaching reporting public affairs as a course in presidential politics in the media. And I'm not going to apologize. We cover the game. We want to have fun. I go back to what *NBC News*' Tim Russert used to always say. He would say, "It's crazy to think politics is boring, because politics is full of crazy people who are not boring."

And so, we put a scoreboard up. I'm a Baptist, so we are used to having a scoreboard at the front of the room. Some of you will know what that means, some won't. But we have a big homemade electoral map and we recolor it based on poll results, and we learn how to look at real clear politics, polling averages, how polling works, how polling design works. We look at the Center for Responsive Politics and Money, limitations of financial reporting, and we work the news of the day, and we have fun with the presidential race. But as a counterpoint and complement to that, while we've got them in there, and we're running thirty to forty students in this class just in presidential years,

although I really think I'm going to teach it next fall because this mid-term election is an unusual election for some of the same reasons that I took the approach this last time that I did.

Anyway, we've got a nice dynamic group. Not just journalism majors, people from all over campus. And we're going to be kind of TV talk show in our style, and I'm okay with that. I want everybody to talk, have their moment, learn how to be civil, participate, but I wanted something depth to complement it. And we have a great opportunity, so I went into the W.R. Poage Legislative Collection at Baylor, and I went into constituent correspondence primarily, and I was looking for a couple of very specific things. I wanted to see how Congressman Poage handled the demands of World War II, and I wanted to see how he handled race. Because in a forty-two-year career, he was a congressman representing a racially-mixed, Central Texas, mostly rural district through the course of the major civil rights struggles and victories. And that includes the 1944 decision invalidating the white primary, as well as the '54 *Brown v. Topeka*, the '64, '65 Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act.

Congressman Poage served forty-two years. We had only three men as congressmen in my district, the district not only where I grew up, but where both my parents grew up and lived. And for seventy-six years, only three people had held that spot. And we had several resources we could bring to a depth look at one district. One was the Legislative Archives, constituent correspondence that would show us how, back in the day, a congressman maintains a hold on his district and makes a career. He liked cotton

farming, but he loved being here. And then an associate of his, Marvin Leath, for ten years, and then Chet Edwards for twenty years, and finally, the district got redrawn a second time.

And so, we had several assets. We had the Archives. We had my experience as a journalist, interviewing and covering all three of these people over a period of time and having grown up in the district, and lived through changes in rural life that Poage, in particular, made possible. Then we had Chet Edwards himself, whose collections are being integrated into our library system, and who comes to campus periodically. And I wanted my students to understand retail politics and to understand, in particular, the question that they would always ask about Poage. Well, he was an FDR New Deal progressive. He was a Democrat. He was, by every account, a sweet-tempered, gentle, nice human being.

I interviewed him. I knew him. My mother knew him in his last days when he was in the hospital near us. He was a cold-eyed politician. He won. He forestalled primary challengers. He did not let anything happen in his district he didn't want to happen. And he was a hardcore racist and segregationist. He was. And I knew that the current presidential cycle and some to come is dealing with voter suppression, is dealing with race, is dealing with the language rhetoric symbology, but also with voting, and how people of certain colors voting certain ways affects who wins and who loses.

So I went into the Archives looking for a little. Didn't find very much on the war that was very helpful, but found some really good material on why Bob Poage didn't think it was healthy to do anything that would encourage African Americans in his district to vote. Found some letters. You know, as a journalist, you get somebody to say something. As an archivist, you find it in the bottom of a box. Here we go. So one of his operatives out of one of these towns is in correspondence with somebody else, and he's telling a story about how our rival had a base in the towns, and despicably, this rival was encouraging Negroes to vote. And one of those middle-aged Negro couples came to the author of this letter, asking him if it would be okay if they voted.

And that anecdote, I think, kind of had it. And, as the letter says, Poage's base was in the cotton fields and the towns, what they call in the creeks. His rivals in town, in Waco and in a couple of other medium-size towns, he feared that if African Americans were allowed to vote, his rivals would leverage those votes and he'd be kicked out. On the cultural side, I found his end of a well-documented story that Doris Kearns Goodwin and others have told about Lyndon Johnson's musical tastes. I don't know if any of y'all know this story. But there was a very notorious incident in which Senator Lyndon Johnson, presidential aspirant, was at a big Democratic party banquet in New York and the hotel orchestra was playing various songs. And the story went that Johnson stood when they played "The Yellow Rose of Texas" and he stood whenever they played some song about Iowa – which, evidently Iowa is kind of important in politics, from what you hear – and did not stand when they played "Dixie."

And somebody wrote Congressman Poage threatening to out Johnson for this, and there's this delicate dance of race and the Confederacy, and Poage danced it. He said, "Well, I just stand up for everybody's song." But what we're really saying is we doubt Lyndon Johnson's commitment to white-only government in the South. Nobody would come out and say that. They would talk about their ties to the Confederacy, they would talk about everything in the world except say what they meant.

And I think I was able to come into the class with living human beings who worked for these guys and with this story and have them try to understand some of it is cultural and you can't really fight it unless you're an unusually courageous and visionary person.

And some of it's personal, and some people are mean about it like Theodore Bilbo was, and some aren't mean but yet the ideas are harmful. And then some of it's hardcore politics, "I don't want to lose. I'm not going to get beat in a Democratic primary by black voters. Thus, I'm going to do what I've got to do."

And so, that's what I wanted. I felt like I could get them engaged in the game and in the moral developments of it through story, and I felt that they could translate from those calculations back in the day and the current calculations being made about what kind of votes we want and what kind of votes we don't.

**SDG:** Great. Thank you. So I just have a couple of questions and then we'll open it up to you guys. My first question is for Hope, and I'm just wondering that in designing and

teaching your classes, do you find it helpful to be an archivist, or do you sometimes wish that you could just ask another archivist for help?

**HGB:** Right. So it's kind of a blessing and a curse. No one knows the collection better than you, but at the same time, no one knows the collection better than you, so it's easy to get overwhelmed with just the sheer volume of documents that you could use in designing activities. And so, what's helped for me is to just focus on very specific topics or very specific pieces of legislation where the collection is well-documented, and that might not always be the piece of legislation that you initially think that it might be.

So, for example, in the senator's collection, we have expansive documents on his work for individuals with disabilities, and so you'd think I'd naturally go to the ADA, his kind of landmark piece of legislation. But instead, looking at the finding aid, I saw we had really great correspondence on the Television Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990, which essentially is what requires every television to have the little chip in it that allows for closed captioning to be displayed. So, you know, we have a really good set of letters of support, letters against, and while very specific and maybe not one of the senator's most well-known achievements, it works really well as the catalyst for a debate activity where two groups of students examine documents on both sides of the issue and then come together at the end of class for a debate.

**SDG:** Great. So, Caitlin, part of why I asked you to be on my panel is because you were a delightful researcher to work with, but also it's because I nominated you and you

received one of our awards from ACSC. So I was just wondering if you could talk about the impact or how that award has helped your project a little bit?

**CR:** Grad students are always very happy to find money, so in that way it was really helpful. It helped offset some of the other costs associated with the trip out to Dole. I'd been at the Carter Library before that, and then also rolled into my last big research trip, which was to London in January. That was an expensive trip that was very helpful. (Laughter.)

**SDG:** Great. And then maybe for Brad, and Hope could kind of chime in, how did you end up featuring these congressional documents in your class? Did you preselect these? It sounds like, Brad, you did some preselecting.

**BO:** I went looking for material where he dealt with race, knowing they would be kind of elliptical and knowing – you know, he was a good politician. He knew how to write a constituent letter and not leave himself vulnerable. But I was pretty open-ended, and I went through a lot of constituent files over twenty, thirty years. And I'd done archive work before, and I have a student in that class who's done some great stuff on how Baylor and this congressman and federal authorities wiped out several large African American neighborhoods in Waco in order to run I-35, right, basically, through campus. And so, kind of knowing what was there and knowing the tenure and knowing what was going to go on. And I was really looking for sort of smoking gun-type letters, two different kinds. One is somebody just straight up saying, "We think this is going to cost us votes. We can't really afford this."

What I'm going to look at this summer, if I can find good material more recently, ultimately, Poage thrived after the Voting Rights Act. And ultimately, these were loyal voters for him, and ultimately forgave whatever he did say that was in poor taste during the previous era. But I was looking, and pretty open-ended in the general topic, and then I think you know it when you see it. And then this whole story about the song. There's a long exchange between this – it's basically a veiled threat, and so it's a four or five letter exchange, and it makes a great story to tell in class because you can read the code. I mean, it's fairly obvious when you see these letters up on the screen what's not being said explicitly, but what they're really driving at. And the students can really kind of work that out themselves.

So I had one graduate student who was in this over-under class who went to Poage himself and found archive material for a project he was on. Otherwise, I kind of showed them the raw stuff that I had found and let them kind of say, what do you think he means by that sentence, that kind of thing.

**SDG:** What would you guys say is the challenges that you encountered delving into doing research in congressional collections?

**BO:** You have to be open-minded and patient. It's the same as I teach in journalism, which, again, is one of the reasons I want to do it. Whether you're doing a live interview with a newsmaker or whether you're going into boxes, just listen. Just don't make up your mind

too quick. More data points. Wait 'til you are sure you know. And it's going to be partial, so don't feel like you failed if you didn't get what you went looking for. Just keep looking. Look. I think that's a good lesson for my students, but for me also, every day.

**CR:** As someone doing research on the late twentieth century, the problem is sort of like the overwhelming amount of material out there, in, I don't know how many boxes there are at the Dole Institute, but –

**SDG:** Like thousands.

**CR:** Like a lot. Like a lot, a lot. So what was really helpful at the Institute was having a very fine-grained finding aid. I had never been to a place where they had it down to the folder level. I've only been places where they have things organized by box, so that was very helpful for me as a researcher. And I know it's a lot of work on the archiving end, but thank you for doing that. So, yeah, just too much stuff. Too much good stuff to go through.

**SDG:** I'm sure you've faced some unique challenges, Hope.

**HGB:** Oh, I was going to kind of speak to the challenges that I've seen undergraduate students face when they come in to use the Archive. One is they don't know what a finding aid is or how to use it. But they also, even our political science majors, they don't have – I

don't want to say a strong knowledge of government information, but they don't know where to find it. And so, that's why for this congressional staffing course, I wanted to, in addition to the archival research that they do, also have weekly assignments that are kind of like little scavenger hunts to expose students to different kinds of documents that can be discovered through the GPO, the FDLP, Congress.gov, ProQuest Congressional, those other kind of databases, just to expose them to the types of government information and how you go about finding it.

**SDG:** I have never designed a full course, so that's very mysterious to me, but when I teach just like one sessions kind of as a guest for classes, it's really about making the students not scared to use the collections. And then my last question, just for all of you, and we'll turn it over, is, what are you each hoping that the users of your products – your students, the people that are going to read your dissertation – what are they going to get out of your product and their interactions with congressional collections?

**BO:** I think, in my case, one of the things that came home to me – although I had a pretty good knowledge of history in base, I've been doing this a while – was the very slow evolution of civil rights law. The NAACP attorneys team led by Thurgood Marshall challenged the white primary. The Supreme Court decision was in '44. It didn't all happen instantly. And for a person in Congress, they knew the water was changing. They knew the landscape was changing. They didn't know how far it was going to go, whether – and I hope my students got a sense of what it's like to live in changing circumstances in real time, not knowing how it's going to play out.

Also, as Chet Edwards said in my class, “Politics isn’t angels and devils. It’s politicians.” There’s a lot of nuance. There’s a lot of confusion. People act without being sure they’re doing the right thing. People act and decide later they did the wrong thing. Sometimes they’ll even admit it. Sometimes they’ll even put it in writing. So there’s more subtlety in the raw material than in the finished product, and I would hope my finished product article would kind of deal with that, with the ambiguity at the moment.

**CR:** Being a dissertation, I am making like this teeny, tiny intervention in a little, itty-bitty, narrow topic. But I think one thing that the Dole papers, in particular, helped me to do, and that I hope will come out in the final product, is showing the connection between the farm bill and consumer food programs. I think a lot of people forget that the Food Stamp Program was sort of a byproduct of commodity distribution. The School Lunch Program started as a way to get rid of commodities. This thing routing commodities to food banks was a product of surplus stores of stuff in the eighties. So it’s just showing that the way the farm bill gets written and who gets supported really matters for consumer food programs.

**HGB:** Specifically, for the congressional staffing course, our long goal would be that the class – that we’re preparing the future generation of congressional staffers that come to D.C. with a better understanding of how Congress works, and we couldn’t do that without the archival collections, so we’re really kind of teaching about the role of congressional

staffers from the documents up. But just more generally, just in any session that I do with congressional collections, whether it's a full course or just a one-shot, is information literacy skills, so how to integrate those primary sources into their research and how to evaluate those sources, being able to place primary sources in a larger historical context. And then, especially with congressional collections, it lends themselves well to helping students become more engaged citizens, so learning to evaluate the mix of diverse values and interests that influence democratic decision-making and to start to critically reflect on social, economic, and political issues that they might face as citizens.

[End of interview]