

# Raiding lost records

Archival materials are often overlooked by reporters. In most cases, these documents are precisely catalogued, quickly available and extremely helpful. At some libraries, such as the Presidential Libraries of the National Archives system, staffers will locate, photocopy and mail you the documents quickly and for a modest fee.

## ARCHIVAL DIVINING RODS

Your first step is to find out if any archives and special libraries have materials about your subject. There are three good tools for finding out the existence and location of special-subject collections in the United States:

### SUBJECT COLLECTIONS

*compiled by Lee Ash; New York: Bowker; revised irregularly*  
This guide lists some 10,000 special collections in university, college, public and special libraries and museums throughout the United States and Canada. Entries are arranged alphabetically. The guide gives the address of the libraries, the number of items in the collection, and often descriptive notes.

### DIRECTORY OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION CENTERS

*edited by Louis Lenroot—Ernt; Detroit: Gale Research; revised irregularly*  
This guide lists and describes 16,000 facilities in the United States and Canada, complete with a detailed subject index. It has a geographic index, which tells you which libraries are in your area.

### NATIONAL UNION CATALOG OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

*Library of Congress, 1959—present*  
This catalog is an annual listing of thousands of reported collections from across the country. It has name and subject indexes.

### SOURCES OF SOURCES

To give you an idea of the breadth of possible sources, I used these special libraries for my biography of Teamsters President Jackie Presser: The National Archives (papers of various Labor secretaries, Watergate Special Prosecutor files, President's Commission on Organized Crime files); the Department of Labor Library (Teamster Convention proceedings); the George Meany Archives; five Presidential libraries (everything from Nixon's handwritten notes regarding the Teamsters to Robert Kennedy's McClellan committee memos); the University of Nevada at Las Vegas Oral History Collection (stories about casinos, financiers, gamblers and politicians); the Ohio

Historical Society (Jackie Presser oral history); the Western Reserve Historical Society (files of defunct Teamster locals); and others.

## GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

The guide gives you an idea of what record groups are held by the Archives. These records are organized by department or bureau. There are more than 400 finding guides—detailed in-house indexes—for the various manuscript collections in the National Archives. Many are available through inter-library loan.

You can also consult the microfiche set put out by the Chadwyck-Healy company. Part 1 of its *National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United States: Federal Records* reproduces these 400 finding guides as well as 800 finding guides of seven Presidential libraries, and some 200 in the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

## WHITE HOUSE FUNNEL

If your subject somehow touches the White House, you're in luck. The Presidential libraries are a great resource. White House documents are divided into central files and special files, each of which is subdivided into various subject files and name files. The documents are extensively cross-referenced.

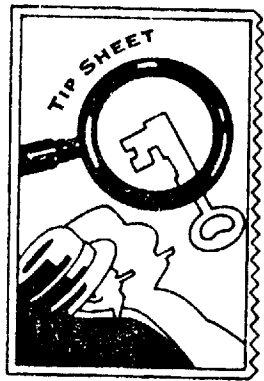
As mentioned, these libraries each have scores of detailed finding guides. You can call and request a name check in the White House Central Files Name Index. A librarian or aide usually lets you know quickly whether material you are searching for exists.

## READY RESEARCH

Congress is not subject to the FOIA, but its research arm, the General Accounting Office, is subject to FOIA-like disclosure, according to the Code of Federal Regulations. If your subject has been in a recent GAO report, you're fortunate.

Think beyond the report itself, which is merely a summary of findings. In most cases, you can examine the primary records of the investigators, including notes, summaries of interviews, memos they compiled as these often-lengthy investigations unfolded, and so on. As we all know from writing our own stories, we include only a fraction of our research. So too for GAO staffers. These so-called working files are supposed to be destroyed after three years, but sometimes they are not.

by JIM NEFF, CLEVELAND FREELANCE WRITER



### PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

- Kennedy Library (617) 929-4500
- LBJ Library (512) 482-5137
- Nixon Archives (703) 756-6498
- Ford Library (313) 668-2218
- Carter Library (404) 331-3942
- Reagan Library

(Open for researchers in February 1992)

~~(613) 211-2126~~  
805-522-8444  
Bush Archives  
409-260-9552