GOVERNMENT AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

As historical primary sources
Where to start...

Bodleian Guides

– US Government Publications guide: libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/us-govpubs

– North American legal resources guide (Bodleian Law Library) libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/law-usa
Key Finding Aids


**Govinfo** – an online portal to publications from the US Govt Printing Office. Mostly recent publications, the historical material is mainly 1990s – but increasingly also older materials. [www.govinfo.gov](http://www.govinfo.gov)

**HeinOnline** – A legal database which contains many collections relevant to US government history, which will be mentioned in this presentation. Available via SOLO
Colonial/Revolutionary Sources

- A key resource to start with is the **American Founding Era Collection**, which includes the papers of the Continental Congress, and the personal papers of some of the Founding Fathers (Washington, Hamilton, etc.)
- The **Journals and Papers of the Continental Congress** can also be found online ([www.loc.gov/collections](http://www.loc.gov/collections), [www.fold3.com/browse](http://www.fold3.com/browse))
- For the early activities in the British Colonies, such as trade and settlement, try the **Colonial State Papers/Calendar of State Papers (1574-1739)** and the **Foreign State Papers of the Tudors (1509-1603)** available via SOLO.
- The VHL has physical copies of the **Early State Papers** of the states of Virginia, Massachusetts and South Carolina.
- The Pennsylvania Early State Papers can be found on **Evans Early American Imprints**, and you may also find other earlier state and government papers on Evans or **HathiTrust**.
• Reports and documents from Congress (post-1789) are covered in the **American State Papers (1789-1838)**, and then the **US Congressional Serial Set (1817-)**.

• The Serial Set also includes the **House & Senate Journals** which were the daily record of business in Congress. (1817-1952).

• For the verbatim record of debates, use the **Congressional Record (1874-)** or one of it’s predecessors - **Annals of Congress (1789-1824)**, **Register of Debates (1824-1837)** and the **Congressional Globe (1833-1873)**.
• Reports and documents from Congress (post-1789) are covered in the American State Papers (1789-1838), and then the US Congressional Serial Set (1817-1952).

All of these titles are available online via SOLO or ProQuest Congressional – one of our key online databases for studying the US Congress.

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You can also find printed/microfilm copies of the Journals, Congressional Record and it’s predecessors in the VHL.

Some of the records are available online via the Library of Congress/Google Books.
For voting records, texts of bills and general history of bills:

- Congress.gov ([www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov))
- Govtrack.us ([www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us))

Also for voting records:

- Roll Call (held in the VHL) (1969-)
ProQuest Congressional holds a large online archive of Congressional Committee Hearings (1824-1979)

Most post-1990 hearings are available via govinfo.gov

Substantial physical collections in the VHL (focused on mid-20th Century) and the British Library.

(1980s hearings are the trickiest to source – find the Government Printing Office SuDoc number (normally starts Y.4) and give to the VHL/British Library to check.)
Presidential Papers

• **Presidential public papers** are defined as “Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature”

• From Herbert Hoover onwards, each US President has their **Public papers of the presidents** collated and published by the Govt. Printing office.

• The **Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents** covers the rest of the US presidents pre-1929.

• The VHL has both of these in full in print, and online via HeinOnline. Online copies are also available at the American Presidency Project at UC Santa Barbara - (www.presidency.ucsb.edu)
Other Presidential Records

**Presidential Libraries for post-1929 Presidents**, are normally located in home states, and administered by National Archives. Many of them are working on digitisation projects, so it is worth checking their websites. (www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries)

**For Presidents pre-1929**, it can vary between individuals.

- Check if collections have been digitised, e.g. Library of Congress, University digitisation projects.
- Some earlier presidents also have Presidential Libraries (not part of the official National Archive libraries) which may have useful collections.
- The VHL holds many of the published collections for some of the key presidents (search SOLO for the name and “papers”)

**Presidential Recordings Program** contains audio and transcripts of the White House Tapes of meetings and telephone conversations from Kennedy up to Nixon.
The main finding guide for historic executive records is the CIS index to Executive Branch documents, 1789-1909 (print in VHL).

For 20th Century Records, try:
- Federal Register (1936- via HeinOnline & govinfo.gov)
- Code of Federal Regulations (1938 – HeinOnline)
- Budget of the US Govt (1923- FRASER)
- Economic Report of the President (1947-HeinOnline/FRASER)

For other departmental publications search SOLO or the Serial Set.
Judicial Branch

Most documents related to the Supreme Court, federal legislation and the history of law in the US will be in the Law Faculty Library.

Check their online guide on US Law here: https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/c.php?g=422817&p=2887100
Foreign Policy

- Official documentary records can be found in Foreign Relations of the United States (1861-) or FRUS. FRUS is available freely online [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments).

- Diplomatic Instruction and Dispatches from the 19th Century (in microfilm).

- International treaties can be found in US Treaties & Other International Agreements (published since 1950), available on HeinOnline or in print.

- Other treaties and international agreements can also be found in the Congressional Serial Set.

- Foreign Broadcast Information Service (1974-76) is the US record of open source intelligence, distilled into daily reports, and used to inform US policy decisions.
Foreign Policy – UK focused collections

There are several resources focusing on the US-UK relationship as part of our British History collections.

• **Confidential Print: North America (1824-1961)** covers the correspondence and papers held by the British Foreign Office, and housed in the National Archives.

• **The Papers of British Ambassadors** to the US and other British statesmen may sit in Bodleian Special Collections.
• Two main databases include the Digital National Security Archive & the US Declassified Documents Online, both available via SOLO. Both databases start from 1945.

• Also of interest is the CIA’s Electronic Reading Room, available on the CIA’s website. This is where the CIA posts declassified documents in response to Freedom of Information requests.
Decennial censuses for the US have been produced in some form since 1790

- All volumes of the census reports are available online from the Census Bureau website: census.gov/library/publications.html
- The VHL holds printed volumes up to the 1990 census reports.
- Early Census reports can be found in the Serial Set (in ProQuest Congressional)
- If you need to compare and interact with the data more easily, use Social Explorer (www.socialexplorer.com) which also contains other sources of demographic information.

You can only view some of the full census records online:

- 1860 (partial), 1900-1930 via www.fold3.com/browse/ (under non-military records);
- 1940 at 1940census.archives.gov
Two key sources for “macro” datasets are

- **Historical Statistics of the United States** (database available through SOLO & in print in VHL)
- **Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1878-**: (online at [www.census.gov/library/publications/time-series/statistical_abstracts.html](http://www.census.gov/library/publications/time-series/statistical_abstracts.html) & in print in VHL)

For more “micro” datasets, try either [data.gov](http://data.gov), or the [ICPSR](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/) (you will have access through the University, but you will need to create an account.)

For opinion polls, both key databases are available through SOLO

- **iPoll** (1933-)
- **Gallup Analytics** (1933-) for more historic material, click on ‘Gallup Brain’ (bottom right hand corner)
Research Data Oxford website

- Data management plans
- Funder requirements
- Storage and back-up
- Documentation
- Personal and sensitive data
- Preservation and sharing
- Tools and services
- Training

http://researchdata.ox.ac.uk
researchdata@ox.ac.uk
Any Questions?

For subject specific advice on US studies resources at the VHL and Bodleian Libraries, or to organise 1-1s on specific subject topics, contact:

Bethan Davies, Vere Harmsworth Librarian
Email: bethan.davies@bodelian.ox.ac.uk
Phone: 01865 282701

For further resources

- Online guide to US History Sources (libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ushistory)
- US Studies Resources at Oxford blog (blogs.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/us-studies)