Behind every major bill there are months, even years, of intensive research. Annually Congress, through its various House, Senate and joint committees, produces a substantial volume of information on a wide variety of topics of interest to the United States Government. The Government Information Service at McGill has an extensive collection of U.S. Congressional documents available in various formats. This guide will show you how to locate them.

I. Congressional Documents Online

There are two excellent sources for more recent congressional records and documents available to McGill: LexisNexis Congressional and Thomas. Although the two overlap in their coverage of congressional records and documents, there are some differences. Check the description of the database before you connect to the web to make sure they cover the dates and the content you want.

LexisNexis Congressional provides full text documents of a wide range of government publications including an online version of the CIS index that dates back to 1970 to the present. LexisNexis Congressional covers:

- Bills (all versions), since 1989
- Committee Prints (selected), since 1995
- Committee Reports, since 1989
- Congressional Documents, since 1995
- Congressional Record, since 1985
- Federal Register, since 1980
- Hearing Transcripts and Submitted Testimony, since 1988
- Public Laws, since 1988

Use Thomas if you are seeking a congressional report or hearing dating from 1995. This database allows you to query information on:

- House Committees (including Committee Reports, and Hearings)
- Senate Committees (including Committee Reports and Hearings)
- Special, Select, & Joint Committees (including Committee Reports, and Hearings)
- Bills and Resolutions
- Public Laws
Thomas offers the full text of House, Senate and Joint Committee reports printed by the GPO and is made available by the Library of Congress for public use.

U.S Congressional Serial Set (http://www.library.mcgill.ca/govdocs/cdinfo/USCongserialset.html) provides historical U.S. government primary sources. It is released in monthly segments with the expected date of completion in 2008. When it is completed it will cover the period from 1817-1980. Check the upper right hand corner under “Search Hints: Now available” on the search page to check the available dates.

This database contains reports, documents, and journals of the U.S Senate and House of Representatives as well as Executive and legislative documents of the Senate and the House for the period 1789-1838. Use this database to search for primary sources on such topics as foreign relations, Indian affairs, finance, commerce and navigation, and military affairs.

II. Library Catalogue (MUSE – http://aleph.mcgill.ca/F/)
If you are unable to locate the document you need because it predates the materials listed in LexisNexis Congressional or Thomas, your next step should be to check McGill’s Library Catalogue. In many instances congressional documents are listed individually in MUSE. Most of the congressional documents found in MUSE are located in the Government Information Service on the second floor of the McLennan Library Building.

III. CIS Index (Coverage: 1975-Present)
If you cannot find what you are looking for on either the Library Catalogue or Thomas, do not despair! The Government Information Service has substantial microfiche collection of congressional reports and hearings that are not represented in the Library Catalogue, Thomas, or the card catalogue. This collection consists of all the publications of the following 3 committees from 1975 onward:

1. U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations
2. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs (renamed Committee on International Relations as of January 1995)
3. U.S. Congress. Joint Economic Committee

The Nahum Gelber Law Library has the complete CIS microfiche collection for 1977-1979 (LAW AV K83A U5831hjh Mfiche cutter).

The only way to access these items is through the CIS Index (GDOC REF KF49 C62).

To use the CIS Index:

1. Consult the “Index” volume for the year of the publication that you are looking for. There you can search for your subject in the “Index to Subject and Names” section of the volume. For example, if your subject were East Timor, you would go to the “Index” volume and look up the entry under E. A sample entry from the 1992 CIS Index appears as follows:

   **East Timor**
   
   Human rights conditions in East Timor, concerns and US policy issues, S381-32

   **Note: In instances where you already have the title, you may search the “Title Index” section of the volume.**

2. You will need to take note of the abstract number at the end of each entry. With this number you can proceed to the CIS “Abstract Volume” that matches the year of your index. This volume contains
abstracts for documents of the House, Senate and joint committees. The abstract numbers for House documents begin with “H,” Joint Committees with “J,” and Senate with “S.” In the above example, the number S381-32, will give you the abstract for the 1992 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations publication entitled: Crisis in East Timor and U.S. Policy Toward Indonesia.

3. Armed with the abstract number, proceed to the Government Information AV room. The CIS collection of fiches is stored in cabinet number 3 under the call number US1 CIS followed by the abstract number given in the CIS Index, and then by year.

IV. Card Catalogue

For pre-1988 congressional reports, documents and hearings that you don’t find using any of the above search techniques check the card catalogue located next to the reference desk in the department.

For first time users to the card catalogue, please feel free to ask our skilled reference staff for their assistance. We are here to help so don’t hesitate to ask us!

V. Still can’t find it?

If you have located an item in the CIS catalogue that we do not own, you will have to put through an Inter-Library Loan request (ILL). The National Library of Canada has a complete collection of the CIS microfiche. In order for you to make your ILL request you will need to provide that National Library with the following:

- AMICUS No. 3317628.
- Abstract number
- Year of the CIS Abstract volume that you consulted
- Also include author/title information found in the CIS Abstract
- Note that this request is at the “in depth” search level

With this information please visit the Interlibrary Loan office, which is located on the main floor of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library building (room M1-55C) to the left of the Circulation returns. They will be happy to assist you in making your request.

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