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Helpful Hints For Searching the *Congressional Record Index* and the *History of Bills* Online via *GPO Access*

Content and file format:

The *Congressional Record Index* is a publication of the Joint Committee on Printing, Congress of the United States. It is published biweekly when Congress is in session and indexes the daily issues of the *Congressional Record*, however the online version is updated daily. The *GPO Access* service offers access to the CRI from 1983 forward. Each Index entry refers to a *Congressional Record* page number and the date of the daily issue in the format S1234 [19JA]. Each issue of the Index has two parts: the Index proper which lists individuals, organizations and other topics mentioned in the *Congressional Record*, and the *History of Bills*, which lists legislative actions reported in the *Congressional Record*. The two parts are available online as separate databases. The current volume of the *Congressional Record Index* is usually updated the day after publication of the *Congressional Record*. Documents are available in text format only.

Identification Code:

Each document in the CRI database online via *GPO Access* will display in the results list with an identification code followed by the initial words of the title. For example: cri 96 NUCLEAR WEAPONS related term(s) International Atomic Energy Agency. In this example, cri stands for *Congressional Record Index* and 96 is the year of publication.

Maximum Responses:

The default settings for SWAIS and for the WAIS and Web client software is to return a maximum of 40 responses to a query. To locate a larger number of documents (maximum of 350), you will need to change the setting. In SWAIS type a lower case o at the Source Selection menu to change your options. In WinWAIS, select *Edit* and then *Preferences* from the pull-down menu. In MacWAIS, select *File* and then *Preferences* from the pull-down menu. On the *GPO Access* Web Searching Pages a box is provided in which you may change the number of documents returned.

Sample Searches: ¹

Senator by Name:

Query: young ADJ don OR young ADJ donald
Alternative: "young don" OR "young donald"
Alternative: young ADJ (don OR donald)
Results: cri98 YOUNG, DON (a Representative from Alaska)

This search demonstrates the correct phrasing for retrieving a *Congressional Record Index* document using a Senator's name. Both Don and Donald should be used if the preferred form of Senator Young's first name is not known. A phrase may be entered surrounded by quotation marks (" ") or with each searchable word separated by the ADJ operator.

NOTE: The Index entry arranges the name with the last name first, so a search for "don young" will retrieve no results.

The President and Other Prominent Individuals by Title

Query: "vice president" AND gore
Result: cri98 VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (Albert Gore, Jr.)
cri97 VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (Albert Gore, Jr.)

This search demonstrates the correct phrasing for retrieving *Congressional Record Index* documents about Albert Gore, Jr. in the 1996 and 1997 *Congressional Record Index*. Unlike other personal name entries, the President and Vice President are listed by title, with the names appearing parenthetically, so a search for gore ADJ (Al or Albert) would not retrieve these entries. Former Presidents can be retrieved by name, so "reagan ronald" will retrieve the entries for REAGAN, RONALD (40th president of the United States). However, a search for "albright madeleine" will retrieve a cross reference to SECRETARY OF STATE (Madeleine Korbel Albright).

Query : gingrich AND "speaker of the house"
Alternative: gingrich AND "speaker house"
Result: cri96 GINGRICH, NEWT (a Congressman from Georgia)
cri97 SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

If an individual has a title, and you are uncertain how it is treated in the Index, it is best to search for both the name and the title. For example, the search gingrich AND "speaker of the house" in the 1995 Index will retrieve the entries for GINGRICH, NEWT (a Congressman from Georgia) and SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. The stop words of and the may be omitted from the phrase "speaker of the house" without affecting the search results.

NOTE: The complete list of stop words is published in the User Guide for Database Online via *GPO Access*.

Subject

Query: "civil liberties" AND "human rights"
Alternative: civil ADJ liberties AND human ADJ rights
Results: cri98 HUMAN RIGHTS related term(s) Civil Liberties; Civil Rights;
cri97 HUMAN RIGHTS related term(s) Civil Liberties; Civil Rights;
cri96 HUMAN RIGHTS related term(s) Civil Liberties; Civil

This search demonstrates the use of boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT, ADJ) in a query. This query retrieves documents that include the phrase "human rights" (human ADJ rights) AND the phrase "civil liberties". This search also demonstrates the value of the relevance ranking feature. Since the search requested information from three separate databases (1995-1997), the results from each database are sorted and reported together in a single ranked list. Relevance is computed based on several factors, including the occurrence of the search terms in the document title, the frequency of the terms as a percentage of the total document size and conformance with the exact search phrasing.

Executive Communications

Query: "executive communications"
Result: cri98 EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

This search demonstrates the correct phrasing for retrieving the *Congressional Record Index* document listing all Executive Communications to the Congress. Each transmittal is listed by the issuing agency and includes the report title or description, followed by the *Congressional Record* page number, executive communication number and date in the format S 34 (Ec3613) [24JA].

HISTORY OF BILLS

Content and file format:

The Congressional Bills databases contain only the text of the published bills. Additional useful information that does not appear in the text of the bill itself may be found in the History of Bills (HOB) databases. The History of Bills is part of the *Congressional Record Index*. As such it covers only actions on a bill that are reported in the *Congressional Record*. The *GPO Access* service offers access HOB from 1983 forward. The databases are cumulative from the beginning of each session. A typical entry includes the bill number, title, summary, sponsors and co-sponsors, and a chronological list of actions on the bill, each referencing the CR page number and date when the action is reported.

Identification Code:

Each entry will display in the results list with an identification code followed by the bill number and the initial words of the title. For example: hob96 H.R. 449_A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect... In this example, hob stands for *History of Bills*, 96 is the year of publication, and H.R. 449 is the bill number.

Sample Searches:

Subject and sponsor

Query: "national parks" AND boxer
Alternative: national ADJ parks AND boxer
Result: hob97 S. 500 - A bill to authorize emergency appropriations for clean-up

This search retrieves the 1997 History of Bills entry for the National Parks and Recreation bill introduced by Ms. Boxer. It summarizes the purpose of the bill and identifies additional sponsors and cosponsors. It also reports actions taken on the bill as reported in the *Congressional Record*. All references are to the *Congressional Record* page number and date when the action was reported.

Bill Number

Query: "h r 363"
Alternative: "h.r. 363"
Result: hob97 H.R. 363- A bill to amend section 2118 of the Emergency Policy Act..

This search retrieves the 1997 History of Bills entries for H.R. 363. The bill number may be typed with or without punctuation, but a query without punctuation must include a space between h & r.

House Report Number

Query: "h. rept. 105-240"
Alternative: "h rept 105-240"
Result: hob97 H.R. 2378 - A bill making appropriations for the Treasury Dept.

This search retrieves the 1997 History of Bills entry for an appropriations bill introduced by Mr. Kolbe and reported out of committee as House Report 105-240. The report number may be typed with or without the punctuation.

NOTE:The phrase **Public Law** is not abbreviated in this database.

Public Law Number

Query: "public law 105-48"
Result: hob97 S 1211—An original bill to provide permanent authority

This search retrieves the 1997 History of Bills entries for Public Law 105-48. The results contains the entry S.1211, which became Public Law 105-48.

NOTE: The abbreviation for **House Report** in this database is **H. Rept.**

Additional GPO Access Materials:

GPO Access User's Guide & Helpful Hints - Available via:

Dial-in: 202-512-1387- From the Main Menu type B for *GPO Access*; type 4 *GPO Access* WAIS User Documentation & Helpful Hints; select 2 for Helpful Hints. The guide is available in sections or in its entirety & hints are listed by database name. Files are available in ASCII and PDF formats.

FTP: fedbbs.access.gpo.gov or point your browser to <http://fedbbs.access.gpo.gov>. The file is in the HELP directory. Check 00INDEX.txt for the file descriptions.

Online via *GPO Access*: The User's Guide is available as a database online via *GPO Access* and can be accessed through the Web, WAIS and SWAIS. Documents are available in ASCII and PDF formats. The Helpful Hints are available online by searching for the word hints in each database.

The Superintendent of Document's World Wide Web Home Page: The User's Guide and Helpful Hints are available at: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/desc004.html.

GPO Access Training Booklet

Electronic copies of the training booklet are available on the Federal Bulletin Board via:

Dial-in: 202-512-1387- From the Main Menu select B for *GPO Access*; select # 4 *GPO Access* WAIS User Documentation and Helpful Hints; select 1 for User Documentation. The self-executing file names are traintxt.exe for the text version and trainpdf.exe for the Adobe Acrobat PDF version (traintxt.sea or trainpdf.sea for Macintosh).

Web/FTP: fedbbs.access.gpo.gov or point your browser to <http://fedbbs.access.gpo.gov> The file is in the HELP directory. Check 00INDEX.txt for file descriptions.

ENDNOTES:

{1} The results of these sample searches are described as they will appear using SWAIS or the WAIS or Web client software customized for use with *GPO Access*. The searches can be performed with other WAIS client software, but the display of the results may vary.