

The British parliamentary microforms collections from the 18th to 20th centuries are among the richest and most valuable collections of government papers in the world. The debates and sessional papers contain important primary source materials for the study of nearly three centuries of the history, politics, and society of the United Kingdom and, more generally, of the British Empire.

General guides to parliamentary documents:

- *A Guide to Parliamentary Papers; What They Are, How to Find Them, How to Use Them*. Ref room CD1063 F67 1972
- *British Government Publications* (University of York) website:
- <http://www.york.ac.uk/services/library/guides/govpubs.htm>
- UK Stationery Office *Official Documents* website (for 1994 onward): <<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/>>

Debates

Proceedings of the House of Lords and the House of Commons were secret until well into the 18th century. Accounts were published by private contractors, notably Cobbett and Hansard into the early 20th century. The reports from 1909 onward are official UK government publications. Though no Hansard family members were involved in these *Official Reports*, the unofficial title of *Hansard* remained in use and has been included officially as part of the title since 1943. Hansard is an edited verbatim report of proceedings: "a full report, in the first person, of all speakers alike, a full report being defined as one 'which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument.'" (For more [about Hansard](#), see <<http://www.hansard-westminster.co.uk/index.asp>>; for access to the [full text](#) of *Hansard* since 1988, see <<http://www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard.cfm>>) **Subject librarian: Bruce Pencek**

Hansard's Debates, Lords and Commons [1066-1918]

Microcard shelves (Note: microcard readers are near these shelves; card printer/scanner is at other end of room.)

Includes *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England, from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to the Year 1803* and its successor, *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates* (also in print: J301 H5 1966). *Cobbett's* is a chronicle of British parliamentary history from the rolls of Parliament, the *Journals* of the Lords and Commons, manuscript sources, 18th -century serials, and collections of debates. Privately published, neither *Cobbett's* nor the vastly larger *Hansard's [Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time]* purported to be a verbatim transcription of parliamentary proceedings. Includes all of series 1-4 and part of the fifth.

House of Commons

- **Debates, 1667-94:** Microfiche J301 P37 1763 ["Debates of the House of Commons"]
- **Debates, 1919-72:** Microfilm J301 K23. 16mm film
- Later debates available in paper with this call number and online: <<http://www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard.cfm>>

House of Lords

- **Debates, 1961-73:** Microfilm J301 J23. 16mm film
- Later debates available in paper with this call number and online: <<http://www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard2.cfm>>

Finding aids and user guides:

- *General index to the First and Second Series of Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: Forming a Digest of the Recorded Proceedings of Parliament, from 1803 to 1830*. Stacks J301 H25 G4 1970z
- Beginning with Series 3, the last volume for each session includes an index.
- *House of Commons Journals* (University of Wisconsin) website:

-
- <<http://www.library.wisc.edu/guides/govdocs/british/comjrn1.htm>>
 - CD-ROM, 1990/91-onward (debates and sessional papers): *British Parliamentary Papers Index: BPP* [CD-ROM]. Electronic consulting area (library tower, room # 3320, just before the Torgersen bridge) J301 B74.

Sessional papers

Sessional, or parliamentary, papers are documents that inform the houses of Parliament on matters under consideration; they do not include the agenda nor debates of the House of Commons. Over the history of parliamentary publications, the organization of House of Commons sessional papers has varied, especially in the pre-1801 *Reports from Committees of the House of Common*. Sessional papers currently include four broad categories for each parliamentary session:

- **Public Bills:** all bills introduced into the House of Commons or brought from the House of Lords
- **Reports from Committees:** standing and special committees of the House of Commons and also from joint committees
- **Reports from Commissioners:** from royal commissions, departmental committees, etc
- **Account and Papers:** includes all returns and act papers and “command papers.” Command papers include “state papers” (treaty series, country series, miscellaneous), policy or “white papers” (statements of government policy) and “green papers” (proposals published as an aid to public debate), annual reports, reports of royal commissions, tribunals and commissions of inquiry, departmental committees, and statistical reports. **Subject librarian: Bruce Pencek**

A few parliamentary papers, ca. 1750-1815, are filed in the unclassified fiche cabinet alphabetically under “Great Britain. Parliament.”

Reports from Committees of the House of Commons Which have been Printed by Order of the House and are not Inserted in the Journals [1715-1801. Also known as the First Series.]

Microfilm J301 K5

House of Commons Sessional Papers

- **1801-1976:** Microcard shelves [“British Sessional Papers”] The first four boxes consist of various indexes.
- **1979/80- :** Microfiche J301 K6 [“British Parliamentary Papers”]

House of Lords Sessional Papers

- **1970-75:** Microcard J301 J6 (*Note:* microcard readers nearby but card printer/scanner is at other end of room.)
- **1976/1977-1996/97:** Microfiche J301 J6 [“British Parliamentary Papers”]

Finding aids and user guides:

- *Checklist of British Parliamentary Papers in the Irish University Press 1000-Volume Series, 1801-1899.* Folio stacks Z2009 I7 Related items in this series (in Storage; titles and call numbers vary by topic) identify sessional papers holdings by subject, e.g., savings banks; military and naval, health: infectious diseases.
- *Subject Catalogue of the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1801-1900.* Ref room DA530 C57 1988
- *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century,* Stacks J301 K625 1975
- *Select List of British Parliamentary Papers, 1833-1899.* Stacks J301 M3 1969
- *Select List of British Parliamentary Papers, 1955-1964.* Stacks J301 M3 1970
- *General Index to the Bills, Reports and Papers Printed by Order of the House of Commons and to the Reports and Papers Presented by Command, 1900 to 1948-1949.* Stacks Z2009 G72x

Primary Subject headings for related resources:

- Bills, Legislative -- Great Britain.
- Great Britain -- Politics and Government
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords