Government Information Librarians
University of California/Stanford University (UC/SU GILS)

CQ Databases Report
February 1996

List of databases:

- APN
- Code of Federal Regulations
- Committees
- Comreports
- CQ Researcher
- Document
- Governing
- Info File
- Members
- Schedule
- Staff
- Statetrack
- Testimony
- US Code
- US Press
- Vote
- [CQ] Weekly Report

CQ IN GENERAL (1 of 2)

PRO:

1. Provides focus to political research. It is in one place.
2. Many of the sources selected are outstanding sources.
3. Being available on MELVYL provides an extended number of terminals from which students and faculty can do their work. This library does not yet have great places for people to search the WWW and copy the results.
4. The material is archived and accessible by year.
5. Goes back further than most titles on the WWW.
6. Menu software makes it easier for some people to search.
7. Rarely have trouble connecting with CQ. I have begun to have problems with several popular WWW sites.

CON:

1. Sometimes the help screens are not that helpful.
2. They do not always describe what the file contains. One is expected to know.
3. Because of the MELVYL connection, some of the searching can be frustrating: e.g., knowing when to hit the cursor twice or when the system is just slow.
4. Downloading full session can be a problem. At least, can print one page at a time.
5. Documentation is improving, but needs more work. She seems to be working on it.

CQ IN GENERAL (2 of 2)
CQ COVERAGE VS. OTHER FORMATS:
CQ FUNCTIONALITY VS. OTHER FORMATS:
CQ Con:
Interface not particularly friendly. Works best for known item searching. Amount of text retrieved can be overwhelming. Word/phrase searching almost useless for unsophisticated searchers. Print easier to scan.

CQ Pro:
Online fee-based database access points, search capabilities, manipulation of text, etc. vary with server. Cost usually high, contracts usually provide for very restricted user base. Cost and success closely related to user expertise. Require specialized database training of searches are not mediated.

GPO print version inadequate for most purposes. Annotated code and privately produced indexes are usually needed (not cheap). Refinement of search through CQ 'add on searches' is much easier than testing and redoing GPO Access searches (have to be familiar with Boolean operators). GPO Online adequate for known item searching but success of phrase searching will depend on the users’ familiarity with the US Code on some luck. Display equivalent to current print copy. A well-defined search and retrieval allows limited text storage and print (this can be a major problem at library 'public' stations). BUT, the hypertext connections to CQ produced text are very important to our users. CQ also allows for comparison of versions and new law links.

DATABASE NAME: APN
YEARS COVERED: 1993--
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: I finally found out more about APN and what it provides from the net site, CQ's guides and screens are less than helpful.

The American Political Network, Inc. is a provider of political and policy news and information based in Alexandria, Virginia. The company was launched in 1987 with the publication of the Presidential Campaign Hotline, a 20-page daily news briefing covering electoral politics (now called The Hotline). APN since has expanded its services to include similar daily briefings in three key public policy areas: environment (Greenwire), health care (American Health Line) and abortion (the Abortion Report).

Each APN publication is current (delivered electronically daily), comprehensive (summarizing--in "real-time"--media reports from hundreds of sources across the country) and readable (both concise and lively). Each is also available in searchable database format, offering valuable perspectives on the background of its subject matter.

While the home page is good, subscribers get more faster.

As Linda pointed out in her note, it contains polls.

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: There are some very good WWW sites, including the CQ, APN and Politics USA Home Pages. The APN homepage has more information about what is there and much is available for free. It is easier to limit searches on the CQ database.

Many news services such as Reuters are included.

DATABASE NAME: CFR (Code of Federal Regulations)

YEARS COVERED: Current version, updated biweekly.

WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: The most current version of the CFR, cross-referenced to the Federal Register.

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: GPO Access is the best of the free net versions. Actually searches up to three years of the Federal Register.
PAPER: Print version. Currency varies, relies on supplements and Federal Register (usually 1-2 weeks behind).

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
See above, and report on FEDREGISTER.

CQ Con: Access limited to in-library or affiliated users.

Being able to refer phone queries to a tested search in GPO Access is great (actually, comes up more often for grant, contract etc., info reported to be available in the FR). MELVYL access problems apply (print format can be unreliable).

CQ Pro: Experienced, knowledgeable user can get to and print the title/part/section needed in one search. Again, links to other CQ information and new regulations are important.

DATABASE NAME: Committees

YEARS COVERED: 1990-1996

WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:

- Committee and Subcommittee actions, votes, rosters. Includes cross references to committee reports, hearing transcripts.
• Allows searching by bill number, report number, words/phrases, chamber, date of report, committee issuing report (and query number/item key).
• Can read/print cite, outline of report subdivisions, read text of report, excerpts. Allows graphing relevance of terms, browsing terms in context.

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET:
GPO Access, Congressional Reports - Covers 104th Congress, 1995 - present
Updated irregularly. Contains all (House and Senate) Congressional Reports in electronic format.

http://www.house.gov/Juris-Com_list.html
Discusses jurisdiction and related functions for all committees
Committee Hearing Transcripts Documents of public hearings testimony.
Committee Votes Searchable committee votes to report bills.
Both sites currently under construction

http://www.house.gov/Committees.txt Committee phone numbers; should contain descriptions
(under construction)

http://www.house.gov/CommitteeWWW.html Committee Published Information Each
Committee determines what information is published and how it is organized. Eeek.

CapWeb's Committee Listings http://policy.net/capweb/House/HComm/HComm.html
Includes names/pictures of committee members; if Committee has authorized/created a web or
gopher site, links to that site included
CD: Apparently none
PAPER: Congressional Staff Directory includes Staffs of Committees and Subcommittees
sections.

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
GPO Access only covers 1995-present, paper CSD covers only year printed; CQ covers 1990-
present

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
CQ allows easier searching of more information than the other sites at present (2/96).

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DATABASE NAME: COMREPORTS

YEARS COVERED: 101st Congress-present

WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: All written House, Senate, joint, and conference
committee reports

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: GPO Access
PAPER: individual reports

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
They should be equivalent. "GPO Access" begins with the 104th Congress.

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
"GPO Access" is a full text search.

As long as the search elements are in the file, the search can be done.

Searching either CQ or GPO Access may be troublesome - the slowness that CQ can have through Melvyl, or the amount of time GPO Access may take to bring the files over the internet may be troublesome. Both databases would be helped by dividing large files into sections! Again, CQ has structured itself so that one can search by many elements - bill number, report number etc. One does not have to know the proper commands/format for bill number or report number searching. If I have a quick search to do, however, I use GPO Access. For sophisticated searches where I need to check search results and then limit by elements (such as stage in the legislative process), CQ is the only answer.

As far as the paper reports are concerned, many people do not like to read long reports on computers and prefer the paper edition.

DATABASE NAME: CQResearcher
YEARS COVERED: 8/91 to date
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Text from issues of CQ Researcher

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
Paper issues of CQ Researcher are available at all UC campuses except UCSF (according to MELVYL). Paper issues contain graphics (photographs, charts) not available online from CQ Washington Alert.

CQ Gopher provides summaries of the CQ Researcher issues for the most recent two years.

CQ Washington Alert allows retrieval of CQ Researcher text by word in text and by issue date (and page number). CQ Washington Alert does not provide for searching of the CQ Researcher index. This index allows for retrieval of more pertinent and substantive text than does word searching available from CQ Washington Alert.

MAGS (MELVYL) lets you search for citations to CQ Researcher issues by keyword, title word, subject word, title, and subject. Texts of CQ Researcher articles are not available.
The advantages of CQ Researcher from CQ Washington Alert are:
- people can get the text from their office computers
- an issue isn't missing permanently because it's been stolen
- issues are never checked out of the library
- when whole classes are using CQ Researcher we can find the text for the third, fourth, fifth, etc. person
- people can do a screen dump to get electronic files of text

The disadvantages of CQ Researcher from CQ Washington Alert are:
- graphics are not available
- the yearly index is not searchable online
- subject indexing not available, just word searching

DATABASE NAME: Document
YEARS COVERED: 98th Congress-present
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Notification of documents available from GPO and congressional support offices.
COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: OCLC Firstsearch (or gdoc)
PAPER: PRF (microfiche)

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
This is not a heavily used database (from my perspective). CQ has created an online order information file. There are few reasons patrons would want this information. Order departments may be quite happy, though!

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
PRF is in microfiche, the only other possible equipment (Firstsearch - which is OCLC "Monthly Catalog of US Government Publications" 1976--present) is a cataloging/reference utility. Several of the campuses and CSL have loaded their profiles into MELVYL.

DATABASE NAME: Governing
YEARS COVERED: 10/1/1987 to date
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Text from issues of Governing

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
Paper issues of Governing are available at UCB, UCD, UCLA, UCI, and UCSD (according to MELVYL).

CQ Gopher provides Table of Contents of current issue of Governing and text of the cover stories from the most recent two years' issues.

CQ Washington Alert allows retrieval of Governing text by word in text, by issue date (and page number).

Ulrich's does not indicate that Governing is indexed by a periodical index. Governing does have its own index.

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**DATABASE NAME:** INFO (FILE 99)

**YEARS COVERED:** 100th Congress --

**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** It is called the "Congressional and Political Reference Files" which are subdivided into:

- Committee and subcommittee rosters
- Caucus rosters
- Special reports (by CQ)
- Elections: candidates and results
- Washington Alert Announcements
- Reference files (which seem to a listing of everything in all the files)

This includes directories of all kinds but predominantly Congress. Divides the Congress in to all the Caucuses by gender, race, age, party, etc. Schedules. New bills of importance. Rules of procedure for all committees. Oversight plans of all committees. How Congress votes. Constitution. Contract with American Family, etc. Earlier years had NAFTA, the President's plan for reorganization, etc.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:**
Many of the directories come from their commercially produced paper sources. Some of the appendices from their major reference works are included.

**INTERNET:**
There are political directories on line (including the one at the CQ Home Page) and ones such as "Politics Directory" (http://www.igc.apc.org/igc/politics.html), but none as complete as this. "The Almanac of American Politics" is on Politics USA (http://politicsusa.com/PoliticsUSA/TOC.html.cgi) In fact CGI hosts several items.

**Some comparisons:**
Sometimes the paper is quicker. The CQ lists are kept up to date with the most current changes. Items such as CQ's special files taken from Reference Books are not available anywhere else.
DATABASE NAME: Members

YEARS COVERED: 100th Congress-present

WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: In-depth analytical profiles of members of congress, staff listings, key votes, election returns, campaign finances, district description, ZIP codes and post offices.

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: house (www.house.gov) and senate (www.senate.gov) webs, GPO ACCESS "Congressional Directory" database
CD: CD Equivalent distributed by CQ to go with their "Politics in America" volume
PAPER: Politics in America

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
None (except for Politics in America print and CD) compare well. House and Senate web coverage is uneven. Several Senators have simply marked up the "Congressional Directory" for their web site. The "Congressional Directory," either through the House and Senate webs or GPO ACCESS does not compare well. The biographical information is very brief. Searching on GPO Access results in very large files (for example, to search by a member of the CA delegation, you get the ENTIRE delegation, and need to search again by member name to get to that information in the file).

The information given in CQ (campaign finances etc.) combined with the ability to search by: Member name, Chamber, Word(s), Committee, Subcommittee, State, Zip Code, Post office name, Congressional district, Party, Category, Date of database update is much more detailed and gives the sort of information our students are really looking for. Another point to be made is the evaluative information CQ provides. The Congressional Directory is strictly C.V. information (degrees, marriage, kids, etc.). CQ gives district background, last election, etc.

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
They are fine if you have a known item. CQ allows you to limit your search, or to retrieve only parts of files. CQ offers the ability to search by Zip code (which you cannot do in GPO Access because the file is not structured properly), and has different output options- such as ability to create labels for mailing.

DATABASE NAME: Schedule

YEARS COVERED: 1995

WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Floor and committee scheduling information
COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET:
http://www.house.gov/Schedule.html House Floor Schedules (1996 recess calendar) and the weekly House Floor Schedule (matters the house dealt with this week) and Committee Schedules (listing today's Committee meetings).

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
CQ: updated daily; breakdowns and subtotals by party Includes brief description of the vote written by CQ reporters. Allows searching by members

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
Internet sources allow only display of schedule with little searching.

DATABASE NAME: Staff
YEARS COVERED: 103rd and 104th Congresses
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Provides a listing of Congressional staff members, staff for committees and caucuses of Congress, and staff of Congressional support agencies such as the General Accounting Office. Also provides brief biographical information about some key staff.

COMPARABLE SOURCES:
INTERNET: Web sites for members of Congress sometimes list the member's staff, but not always. (I checked 3 senators.)
CD: No similar CD access to this information.
PAPER: Two excellent reference books cover this information:

  o 1995 Congressional Staff Directory  (Ref JK 1012 C65 v. 1995)
  o Congressional Yellow Book  (Ref JK 1083 B55 v. 21)

HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
CQ's coverage is similar to the two reference books listed above. CQ's list of staff members for a senator includes both the staff in Washington and the staff at state offices, whereas the directories only list the staff in Washington.

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
While searching for the list of staff members for a member of Congress is simple, directory-type information is often easier to scan in paper. The index to names of staff members at the back of the paper directory would allow speedy checking for variations of spelling in a name (Shafer, Schaeffer, etc.), whereas CQ would not.
As is often the case, CQ is easiest to use if one is already familiar with the subject, or is searching for a known item. While it's easy to search for the "Senate Footwear Caucus" if you know it exists, the paper directories allow you to scan a list of all caucuses.

**DATABASE NAME:** Statetrack

**YEARS COVERED:** 1993+

**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** The Statetrack database provides coverage of selected state legislation that includes summaries, stage, and action dates. It does not provide full text of the legislation.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:**

**INTERNET:** Some states, including California, provide Internet access to current legislation. The National Conference of State Legislatures provides access to "Internet Sites of the State Legislatures" at [http://www.ncsl.org/ public/sitesleg.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/public/sitesleg.htm). A survey of several states seems to show that few states provide as complete electronic coverage as California does; few of them include the full text of bills or provide search capability by keyword or member.

**PAPER:** Only UC law libraries provide access to legislation from other states. CQ and Internet coverage significantly improve other libraries' ability to provide this information to patrons.

**HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?**
I checked online legislation for New Jersey and Colorado, then was easily able to find the same information in CQ's Statetrack database. CQ's coverage seems to mirror that which is made available by the state itself.

**HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?**
The searchable legislation database on the Internet provided by the California state assembly and state senate is one of the most functional and user-friendly sites available to reference and documents librarians. While CQ's interface is not as user-friendly as the California site, it provides more options than are available when searching at most other states' sites. Specifically, it allows searching by keyword and sponsor, as well as bill number, state, and date of introduction.

One particularly useful feature is the ability to search for bills on the same subject (e.g., paddling students) across all states that provide electronic legislative information.

**DATABASE NAME:** TESTIMONY

**YEARS COVERED:** 1994-- (updated daily)
**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** All written testimony submitted to all Congressional Committees. No graphics which might accompany testimony.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:**
**INTERNET:** LEGISLATE has only their paid database. I could not locate it anywhere else. The Federal News Service has some testimony for paid subscribers, not on their free web site.
**PAPER:** GPO, of course, provides the printed hearings later. CIS provides the same thing in their microfiche set. Not yet on GPO Access.

**DATABASE NAME:** USCODE

**YEARS COVERED:** Current edition; updated as needed.

**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** Access to the most recent edition of the US Code with up-to-date CQ cross-references to recently enacted legislation.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:**
**INTERNET:** Online fee-based databases (WestLaw, Nexis/Lexis, etc). Currency varies with server, but usually reliable.

GPO Access U.S. Code (and Public Laws) Databases. Current. Best for known item searching but even then, 'automatic' truncation retrieves false drops. Good searcher guides available (both in GPO Access and other sites, e.g. Georgetown Univ. guides).
**PAPER:** Print editions (GPO and private publishers). Currency varies, rely on supplements. Difficult to use without supplementary index.

**DATABASE NAME:** USPRESS

**YEARS COVERED:** 1992- ; updated daily

**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** Congressional and political news stories from major national and regional newspapers.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:** Most [all: Star-Ledger only questionable] of the 16 papers covered have some presence on the Internet. Free access beyond the gateway varies from "today's hot stories" (Sun-Times, etc.) to the Chronicle's 2-year back file. Daily updates.

Fee-based database access (e.g., Dialog); net servers (e.g., AOL); and CD-ROM (e.g. Pro-Quest) versions are available. Currency and back files vary with format.

Print and microform subscriptions are available. Currency varies with format.
**HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ:**

**CQ Con:** Coverage is for 'political news' only and is not always predictable. Newswire stories are not included. You can only search 1 year at a time.

Does not provide the cover-to-cover text of a major newspaper (NY Times; Washington Post) and/or international news. Success with word/phrase searching depends on the expertise of the searcher. Managing text for display, capture and print is beyond most users. MELVYL access can be irritatingly slow, or worse you are dropped and multiple sessions are required to refine and capture a search.

**CQ Pro:** CD, microform and print subscriptions are prohibitively expensive. CD and microform are not current. Print and microform require an additional index. Online and net server costs are difficult to predict or control. Fee-based databases require mediated searching. Free net access is not reliable (free gateways often become subscription-based), back-files are not reliable (1 week - 3 months are most common), and providing enough in-library stations will be a problem for the foreseeable future.

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**DATABASE NAME:** Vote

**YEARS COVERED:** 98th Congress - present

**WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES:** Daily roll-call vote breakdowns for each recorded floor vote; members' positions on issues, member's voting record for all votes taken by year, voting records for committee delegations.

**COMPARABLE SOURCES:**

**INTERNET:**
- GPO Access: N/A
- Politics by the Numbers
- Key Votes includes select information on votes on "key issues," updated irregularly.

[http://www.house.gov/Legproc.html](http://www.house.gov/Legproc.html) will include votes section, including vote tally and how each Member voted on measures for recorded votes in the House of Representatives. Allows searching by bill number, roll call vote number, or by words which describe the purpose of the measure. UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Some information can be pieced together from GPO sources, but most options offered by CQ aren't readily available.

**CD:** None.

**PAPER:** ??

**HOW DOES COVERAGE IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?**

Capweb vote information is very slim, including only "key bills" information. THOMAS gives access to info in Congressional Record, but no separate analysis of votes.
HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
Capweb includes links which allow searching by zip code as well as information on "key bills"; information about these votes are provided from CQ

DATABASE NAME: WR (Weekly Report)
YEARS COVERED: 10/1983 to date
WHAT INFORMATION IT PROVIDES: Text from issues of Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report

HOW DOES FUNCTIONALITY IN OTHER FORMATS COMPARE TO CQ?
Paper issues of CQ Weekly Report are available at all UC campuses except UCSF (according to MELVYL). Paper issues contain graphics (photographs, charts) not available online from CQ Washington Alert.

CQ Gopher provides Table of Contents of current issue of CQ Weekly Report and text of the cover stories from the most year's issues. The text of some special reports are also available.

CQ Washington Alert allows retrieval of CQ Weekly Report text by large subject category (14 of them), bill number, word in text, congress member's name, issue date (and page number). CQ Washington Alert does not provide for searching of the yearly CQ Weekly Report Indexes. These indexes allow for retrieval of more pertinent and substantive text than does word searching available from CQ Washington Alert.

Word searching of the entire text does allow for retrieval of more information (though I've not had any one find this particularly useful as compared to using the paper index).

The CQ Gopher states that the CQ Weekly Report index will be on the CQ Gopher at some future time.

MAGS (MELVYL) lets you search for citations to Weekly Reports by keyword, title word, subject word, title, and subject. Citations are included from 1988 to present. Texts of CQ Weekly Report articles are not available.

The advantages of CQ Weekly Reports from CQ Washington Alert are:

- People can get the text from their office computers
- an article is never torn out of the issue (as it may be at the library) and it is never checked out of the library
- when whole classes are using CQ Weekly Report we can find the text for the third, fourth, fifth, etc. person
- people can do a screen dump to get electronic files of text
The disadvantages of CQ Weekly Reports from CQ Washington Alert are:
- graphics are not available
- the yearly index is not searchable online
- Subject indexing not available, just word searching