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## British Parliamentary Papers: A Simplified Guide for the Harried Librarian

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# British Parliamentary Papers: A Simplified Guide for the Harried Librarian

The British Parliamentary Papers are a major source of primary documents on the economic, social, and cultural history of much of the world. Over the years, the nature, mode of publication, and tools for indexing the Papers have varied greatly, causing much confusion among researchers and reference librarians. This "ready reference" guide to the British Parliamentary Papers is intended to help nonspecialists chart their way through the complexities of organization and access.

**Jeanetta Druke, Gretchen Holten, and Thomas McFarland**

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The British Parliament is one of the longest-lasting and most influential governmental bodies in world history. Its deliberations have generated a tremendous number of official papers. The scope of the British Parliamentary Papers is extraordinary, beginning in 1066 and illuminating nearly a thousand years of British and world history. Because of Britain's lengthy and far-reaching political and economic dominance, the Papers provide a British perspective on world history and culture that is invaluable to scholars. Parliamentary papers range from transcripts of Parliament's indignant reaction to the upstart American colonists to early western explorers' descriptions of the indigenous peoples of Africa.

It is difficult to assess the holdings of British Parliamentary Papers in American libraries, since early acquisitions and microform reproductions may not be listed on OCLC. While only the most comprehensive collections can be expected to include complete or nearly complete sets, it is likely that most large university and research libraries own a portion of the Papers. Their holdings may be limited by

type of paper or by time period. Library holdings of indexes to the Papers will also vary and substantially affect accessibility to the Papers.

Even the smallest collection is a unique resource for researchers. The Papers are evocative of the past, relevant to the present, and far from dull. They can be chilling. Testimony on the cancerous sores and deaths by suffocation of chimney sweeping boys, for example, is an important part of the history of child labor laws and gives us a fascinating picture of the lives of the poor in nineteenth-century London. The Papers can be highly emotional. Texts of debates on the abolition of the slave trade are as wrenching today as they must have been in 1726. They can also be downright entertaining. In a delightful passage from a speech to Parliament, Prime Minister David Lloyd George complains that the press has treated him badly for his conduct during World War I, crying, "they have drenched me in cocoa slop."<sup>1</sup>

This vast resource, however, may be underutilized, particularly by undergraduate and graduate students researching term papers. There are several reasons why

reference librarians may contribute to this underutilization. First, librarians may not be fully aware of the Papers and their potential value in historical research. Second, librarians may be unfamiliar with the extent of their own libraries' holdings of Parliamentary Papers. A search of the catalog can be unenlightening, if it is without context. Third, librarians may be stymied by the difficulty of understanding that context. The Papers are undeniably complex. Although their form has remained remarkably constant since 1066, their contents, completeness, organization, and access have varied over time and are not immediately apparent. In addition, it was not until the nineteenth century that reliable records for some Papers appeared and that innovations in record keeping established standard formats and indexes.

While several guides to the Parliamentary Papers exist, they are too lengthy for quick reference, are outdated, use unfamiliar terminology, and assume a previous knowledge of British government. Two other factors can make the guides confusing. First, the use of the term Parliamentary Papers is not always clear. It is sometimes applied, as it is in this article, to the entire range of papers produced by and for Parliament. Sometimes, however, it is applied more narrowly and refers only to a portion of the Papers also known as the Sessional Papers. Secondly, the available guides do not always indicate whether a type of paper or title relates to the House of Commons, to the House of Lords, or to both houses. Even with guides in hand, gaining a rudimentary understanding of the Papers' organization and indexing may require painstaking and time-consuming investigation.

This article gives a simple outline of the types of Parliamentary Papers, their scope, and their access tools. It will give a brief description and history of each of the four types of Papers with citations for specific titles, followed by a brief discussion of available indexes with citations to important indexes. We hope to help librarians cope with reference questions about the Papers, whether interpreting a single citation or teaching users to perform extensive subject searches. We also hope to encourage librarians to suggest the Papers as a primary source of material for term papers.

The citations in this paper are selective, limited to important titles likely to be owned by medium-sized and large U.S. libraries. We have included official serial publications, major reprints of the official publications, well-known early collections of Papers, and major indexes, both officially and privately published. In addition, the histories and descriptions of the types of papers and their indexes have been greatly simplified, since the Papers have continually evolved, reflecting both the social and political history of Britain and advances in publishing and information science. Although they are somewhat dated, the following titles were helpful in the preparation of this paper and are useful resources for more comprehensive investigations into the British Parliamentary Papers:

Ford, Percy, and Grace Ford. *A Guide to Parliamentary Papers: What They Are, How to Find Them, How to Use Them*. 3d ed. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1972.

Rodgers, Frank, and Rose B. Phelps. *A Guide to British Parliamentary Papers*. [Urbana, Ill.]: Graduate School of Library Science, 1967.

Rodgers, Frank. *A Guide to British Government Publications*. New York: Wilson, 1980.

#### FOUR TYPES OF PAPERS

All Parliamentary Papers fall into four categories: (1) Votes and Proceedings/Minute Books; (2) Journals; (3) Debates; and (4) Sessional Papers. The first two types of Papers listed here, Votes and Proceedings/Minute Books and Journals (except for the early *Journals*), are not generally found in U.S. libraries. Each of the two Houses has Papers in each category. The House of Commons Papers are generally the most heavily used because important legislation usually originates in the Commons and because only the Commons can appropriate money.<sup>2</sup>

#### Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons/ Minute Books of the House of Lords

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *Votes and Proceedings*. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1680-.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords.

*Minute Books*. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1824-

These are the daily records of things *done* in Parliament. They do not quote what was actually said and might be considered to be comparable to the U.S. *Congressional Index* or to the *Calendar of the House of Representatives*. They are the record of the current session and are used to compile the *Journals*, the second category.

### **Journals of the House of Commons/ Journals of the House of Lords**

Great Britain. Parliament. *Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et petitiones, et placita in Parlamento tempore Edwardi R. I. (ad finem Henrici VII)* (1278-1504). 6 vols. N.P., n.d.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *The Journals of the House of Commons*. 1547-. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1742-.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Lords. *The Journals of the House of Lords*. 1509-. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1767-.

The *Journals* are the official records of things *done* in Parliament and are compiled at the end of each session from the *Votes and Proceedings* and from the *Minute Books*.

From 1278 to 1503, the House of Lords compiled the *Rotuli Parliamentorum* or the *Rolls of Parliament*, the oldest official parliamentary record and the precursor to the *Journals*. Written in Latin, French, and English, they consist of proceedings and petitions. The *Rolls* are a record of both Houses, since the Houses did not meet separately until the fifteenth century. The *Journals* were kept, in manuscript form, beginning in 1547 for the *Common Journals* and 1509 for the *Lords Journals*. For a short period from 1580 to 1620 *Commons Journals* included speeches. These early *Journals* are therefore particularly important, because they contain the only officially recognized record of debates until the nineteenth century. Before 1801, the *Journals* also included some papers later known as the *Sessional Papers* (see below for a description of these papers). Printing of the *Journals* was authorized in the mid-1770s, and earlier *Journals* were then printed retrospectively. New members of Parliament (MPs) routinely received a complete set upon taking their seats. These sets were frequently

sold to booksellers. After a scandal in 1835 over this unauthorized profit making, MPs were issued copies of *Journals* only for the years they were in office. The practice was a boon for libraries, however, since a number of the copies eventually made their way into U.S. institutions.

**Indexes to Journals.** The *General Index* to the *Journals of the House of Commons* was compiled by a series of indexers, beginning in the mid-1700s and covering the years 1547 to 1879.<sup>3</sup> Today, the *Journals* include sessional and decennial indexes. A few other titles provide limited indexing of the *Journals*:

Stubbs, William. *Historical Introduction to the Rolls Series*. Coll. and ed. by Arthur Hasall. New York: AMS Pr., 1971.

Ford, Grace. *A Select List of Reports & Other Papers in Journals of the House of Commons, 1688-1800*. Nendelin, Lichtenstein: KTO Pr., 1976.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *Catalogue of Parliamentary Reports, and a Breviate of Their Contents; Arranged Under Heads According to the Subjects, 1696-1834*. London, 1834.

The last was compiled by Hansard as an index to the early *Sessional Papers* and provides some subject indexing of *Journals*. Known as *Hansard's Breviate*, it provides some subject indexing of the journals.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *Hansard's Catalogue and Breviate of Parliamentary Papers, 1696-1834*. Reprinted in Facsimile. Introduction by P. Ford and G. Ford. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953.

*Hansard's Catalogue* reprints *Hansard's Breviate* (above) with additions.

Lambert, Shelia. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Introduction and List, 1715-1800*. 2 vols. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1975.

This source provides selected subject access to papers and reports printed in the *Journals of the House of Commons*.

### **Debates of the House of Commons/ Debates of the House of Lords**

*Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England from the Earliest Times to the Restoration*

of *Charles II*. 24 vols. London, 1751-1762.

Also known as "Old Parliamentary History," this source was compiled in the mid-1700s, from manuscripts and fragmentary printed records. Especially valuable for years up to 1660, which are allotted only three volumes by Cobbett.

Cobbett, William. *Parliamentary History of England. From the Norman Conquest in 1066. To the Year 1803*. 12 vols. London, 1806.

Also known as "Cobbett's," this source was compiled in the early 1800s, from newspapers, manuscripts, memoirs, etc. After publishing only twelve volumes, which brought the history to 1742, Cobbett was imprisoned for seditious libel for articles that appeared in his *Political Register*. The rights were purchased by Hansard and the work was completed under a slightly different title: *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Times to 1803*. vols. 13-36. London, 1812-1820.

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *Debates of the House of Commons from the Year 1667 to the Year 1694*. 10 vols. London: Printed . . . at St. John's Gate . . . in St. John's Square, 1763.

Also known as "Grey's Debates," this source complements "Old Parliamentary History."

Great Britain. Parliament. *The Parliamentary Register; or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons and the House of Lords During the 14th-18th Parliament of Great Britain, 1774-1803*. 83 vols. London: J. Almon, 1775-1804.

This set complements "Cobbett's" by printing fuller versions of some source material.

Great Britain. Parliament. *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1803-.

—, 1st series (1803-1820) (vols. 1-41).

—, 2d series (1820-1830) (vols. 1-25).

—, 3d series (1830-1891) (vols. 1-350).

—, 4th series (1892-1908) (vols. 1-77).

—, Commons, 5th series (1909-1980/1981) (vols. 1-1,000).

—, Lords, 5th series (1909-).

—, Commons, 6th series (1980/1981-).

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Library. *A Bibliography of Parlia-*

*mentary Debates of Great Britain*. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1956.

Lists many of the printed sources for the debates, diaries, and proceedings of the House of Commons. Particularly useful for information on early debates that were not recorded in full.

The debates are the official records of things said in Parliament and are thus comparable to the *Congressional Record*. The text of the debates includes "Question Time," in which the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers answer questions posed by members of Parliament.

No official records of debates were published until 1909. Although speeches were often published in the early *Journals*, members of Parliament increasingly feared retribution from the King for their opinions, and by 1620 speeches were recorded only in private journals. As a result of public demand, illegal newspaper reports of debates began to appear about 1690, but were incomplete and often inaccurate. Important compilations of early debates, such as "Old Parliamentary History," "Cobbett's," and "Grey's Debates," appeared in the 1700s and 1800s. By the beginning of the 1800s, fueled by public demand and despite arrests, debates were commonly reported, both in the press and in separately issued reports. A number of rival firms issued separate reports, but by the 1840s, *Hansard's Debates*, published by Thomas Hansard, dominated publication. *Hansard's* depended on newspapers for its accounts until 1855, when Hansard became an official contractor to Parliament. Although Hansard was then required to keep a reporter present during the debates, records continued to be inaccurate or incomplete. In 1909, an official verbatim service, published by the government, was established. The official record of the debates continues to be called *Hansard*. Debates in the House of Lords were published as an appendix to the House of Commons debates until 1909, when separate volumes were issued for each House.

Other sets, covering critical periods on important topics, have been compiled from the notes, diaries, and journals kept by members. They are believed to be more accurate than "Cobbett's" or Hansard's early collections. Examples are the Yale

University Parliamentary Papers projects and compilations such as Leo Francis Stock's *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1542-1754*. 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute, 1924-1941).

### Indexes to Debates

*Hansard's Analytical Digest; or Copious Reference to All the Recorded Proceedings and Debates in Both Houses, From the Earliest Period to the Present Time. In Two Parts: Part the Second (But the First Published) Being an Index to the Sixty-Six Volumes of Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, From the Year 1803 to the Year 1830*. London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1832.

This indexes the first and second series of the *Debates*. As is evident from the title, Hansard intended to go backwards in time and publish an index to the *Parliamentary History of England*. The above index was supposed to be the second part of a two-part index. Unfortunately the first part of the index was never created.

Great Britain. Parliament. *General Index to Hansard's Parliamentary Debates in the Sixth Session of the Twenty-Fourth Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*. London: The Hansard Publishing Union, Limited, 1890-91.

This source indexes subjects and names in the third series of the *Debates*.

Although there are no subject indexes for "Old Parliamentary History," "Cobbett's," "Grey's Debates," or *The Parliamentary Register*, rough topical access is available in the table of contents of each volume. Hansard produced separate indexes for some of his early *Debates*. Beginning with the fourth series of the *Debates*, subject and name indexes have been produced for each session of Parliament. These indexes can be found in the last volume of each session.

### Sessional Papers of the House of Commons/ Sessional Papers of the House of Lords

Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *Sessional Papers*. London: H. M. Stationery Office.<sup>4</sup>

Great Britain. Parliament. House of

Lords. *Sessional Papers*. London: H. M. Stationery Office.<sup>5</sup>

*British Sessional Papers. House of Commons, 1731-*. New Canaan, Conn.: Readex. 1943-. [microcard/microfiche].

These sources provide reprints from the "Abbot Collection" (1731-1800) and the Sessional Papers from 1801 to the present, as well as two important early indexes, *Hansard's Breviate and Catalogue of Papers Printed by Order of the House of Commons* and the *General Alphabetical Indexes* of the 1800s (see below).

*British Sessional Papers (House of Lords), Vol. 1-*, 1940/41-. New Canaan, Conn.: Readex, 1940/41-. [microcard/microfiche].

Reprints the Sessional Papers from the House of Lords.

Lambert, Sheila, ed. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*. 145 vols. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1975.

Provides, in facsimile reproduction, the more than two thousand papers presented before the Commons during the reigns of Georges I, II, and III (1715-1800). This is the most complete of all collections of eighteenth-century Sessional Papers.

Cockton, Peter, ed. *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1801-*. Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healy, 1980-. [microfiche].

Reproduces the House of Commons Sessional Papers from 1801 to the present.

*Irish University Press Series of Parliamentary Papers*. 1,000 vols. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1969.

Selectively reprints House of Commons Sessional Papers from 1800 to 1925, arranged by subject or geographical area.

Sessional Papers are also called "Parliamentary Papers," in the narrow sense of the term. The individual Sessional Papers are also called "Blue Books," if they are thick enough to be bound, and "white papers," if they are left unbound. They might be considered comparable to reports and documents of the U.S. Congress. They include two types of Papers, House Papers and Command Papers. When the two types are bound together by session and House, they are called Sessional Sets.

- a. House of Commons Papers or House of Lords Papers. These are produced by the House as reports of its own select committees, reports specifically requested, or reports required by statute. They include bills.
- b. Command Papers. These are not distinguished by House. They are produced outside the House as reports of Royal Commissions or government departments. They are formally presented to Parliament, but are not requested or required.

Before 1801, House Papers were not usually printed. Those that were printed were simply included in the *Journals*, either in the body or in an appendix. Public demand and an increase in activity after the Act of Union with Ireland were the impetus for systematic printing. Charles Abbot, elected Speaker of the House of Commons in 1801, ordered the Clerk of the House to gather and list all the papers in his custody. The papers collected dated from 1731 to 1800. Four slightly different sets of these papers, known as the "Abbot Collection," were then bound for preservation. Only three of these sets remain. Since Abbot's time, Sessional Papers have continued to be printed and to be arranged and bound in a similar manner. The "Abbot Collection" is supplemented by another set of early papers, *Reports from Committees to the House of Commons Which Have Been Reprinted by Order of the House* . . . . 16 vols. London, 1803-1806, which contains selected reports from 1715-1800 and is commonly known as the "First Series." Neither set can be considered to be comprehensive in its coverage of Papers, and later projects such as the Scholarly Resources set of eighteenth-century House of Commons Papers (see above) have done much to fill in the gaps in coverage for this time period.

Command Papers were originally treated in the same manner as other Sessional Papers and were occasionally published in the *Journals*. When Sessional Papers began to be published separately, Command Papers were included in the Sessional Sets of both Houses. Today they are only included in the House of Commons Sessional Papers.

In addition to their official publication, the Sessional Papers have been reissued by

commercial publishers. Both Readex and Chadwyck-Healy publish serial microform sets, and Irish University Press issued a thousand-volume selected reprint of nineteenth-century Papers. These large sets are commonly referred to by the names of the publishers (Readex, Chadwyck-Healy, Irish University Press).

### Indexes to Sessional Papers

Sessional indexes, which appear as the last volume of the Sessional Set, provide subject and alphabetical title access to the Sessional Papers. A series of *General Indexes*, listing titles alphabetically under broad subject headings, have also been published and have been decennial since 1870. Commercially produced indexes also provide access and are commonly known by the name of the compiler (Ford, Cockton, Lambert). Some, like Cockton, are published as part of a reprint set but can be used to access other sets. Some, like Ford, cover limited subjects and years but include other types of papers.

Great Britain. Parliament. *Catalogue of Papers Printed by Order of the House of Commons from the Year 1731 to 1800 in the Custody of the Clerk of the Journals*. London, 1807.

This indexes the "Abbot Collection" and can be used with the Readex Set.

Great Britain. Parliament. *Catalogue of Parliamentary Reports, and a Breviate of their Contents, Arranged under Heads according to their Subjects, 1696-1834*. London, 1834.

The *Catalogue* indexes early *Journals* as well as Sessional Papers. Compiled by Luke and Luke Graves Hansard (father and brother of Thomas) and known as *Hansard's Breviate*. Reprinted in the Readex set and by Irish University Press, it can be used with the H. M. Stationery Office (HMSO) and Readex sets.

### General Indexes

These major compilations of the *General Indexes*, each set covering about fifty years, provide the most efficient title access to the Sessional Papers of the nineteenth century. They are reprinted in the Readex set and by Irish University Press and can be used with the HMSO, Readex, and Chadwyck-Healy sets.

- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *General Index to the Bills, Printed by Order of the House of Commons, 1801-1852*. London: HMSO, 1854.
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *General Index to the Reports of Select Committees, Printed by Order of the House of Commons, 1801-1852*. London: HMSO, 1854.
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *General Index to the Accounts and Papers, Reports of Commissioners, Estimates, Printed by Order of the House of Commons, or Presented by Command, 1801-1852*. London: HMSO, 1854.
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. *General Alphabetical Index to the Bills, Reports, Estimates, Accounts, and Papers, Printed by Order of the House of Commons, and to the Papers Presented by Command, 1852-1899*. London: HMSO, 1909.
- Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons. Library. *General Index to the Bills, Reports and Papers Printed by the Order of the House of Commons and to the Reports and Papers Presented by Command, 1900-1948/49*. London: HMSO, 1960.

*Commercially Published Indexes*

Lambert, Sheila. *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century: Introduction and List*. 2 vols. Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1975.

Lambert's work indexes the 145-volume Scholarly Resources set of eighteenth-century House of Commons Sessional Papers. Can also be used with early *Journals* and the Readex set.

*Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Index*. 8 vols. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1968.

This reprints *Hansard's Breviate* and the *General Alphabetical Indexes* covering 1801-1899. Can be used with the HMSO, Readex, and Chadwyck-Healy sets.

Cockton, Peter. *Subject Catalog of the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1801-1900*. Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healy, 1988.

Cockton indexes the Chadwyck-Healy microfiche set, as well as the Readex and HMSO sets. It is a comprehensive subject index to nineteenth-century House of

Commons Parliamentary Papers and supercedes all other indexes for the nineteenth-century Sessional Papers.

Irish University Press. *Checklist of Parliamentary Papers in the Irish University Press. 1000-Volumes Series, 1801-1899*. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1972.

This was produced primarily as an index to the thousand-volume Irish University Press series. Because it gives the volume and session number to the HMSO Sessional Papers, it can be used with that set as well as with the Readex and Chadwyck-Healy sets, but the coverage is selective.

*The "Ford Lists and Breviates"*

Like *Hansard's Breviate*, this series lists Papers by title under broad subject headings. They cover Sessional Papers that are considered policy documents, as well as related non-Sessional and non-Parliamentary papers and can be used with the HMSO, Readex, and Chadwyck-Healy sets.

Ford, Percy, and Grace Ford, eds. *Select List of British Parliamentary Papers 1833-1899*. rev. ed. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers 1900-1916*. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers 1917-1939*. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers 1940-1954*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961.

Ford, Percy, Grace Ford, and Diana Marshall, eds. *Select List of British Parliamentary Papers 1955-1964*. Shannon, Ireland: Irish Univ. Pr., 1970.

Ford, Percy, Diana Marshall, and J. H. Smith. *Ford List of British Parliamentary Papers, 1964-1974, Together with Specialist Commentaries*. Nendelin, Lichtenstein: KYO Press, 1979.

Marshall, Diana, and Peter G. Richards, eds. *Ford List of British Parliamentary Papers, 1974-1983: Together with Specialist Commentaries*. Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healy, 1989.

*HMSO Catalogues*

Great Britain. *Catalogue of Government Publications*. London: HMSO, 1922-.

This source provides the most current access to titles in the Sessional Papers, since the official Sessional indexes are not published until the end of each session.

### NON-PARLIAMENTARY PAPERS

These papers are produced outside the House as reports of Royal Commissions or government departments and are *not* formally presented to Parliament.

The number and variety of non-Parliamentary papers increased with implementation of the Treasury Circular of 1921, a money-saving effort following the paper shortage and monetary crisis of World War I. The trend has continued; papers that used to be considered Parliamentary are now published as non-Parliamentary papers and are, therefore, no longer included in the Sessional Sets. Unfortunately, non-Parliamentary papers generally are difficult to identify. Some are indexed by the Ford lists and breviatees, which include some non-Parliamentary papers, but they are listed completely only in the *Catalogue of Government Publications*. Once identified, they can be very difficult to obtain.

### CONCLUSION

The Parliamentary Papers have a long and eventful history and one that is particularly meaningful to librarians. It is a story of public demand for information about government, the rise of the free press, and the innovations of a few men, like Abbot

and Hansard, deeply committed to organizing and publishing information.

The Papers can be a challenging resource to utilize. Awareness and identification of a library's holdings of the Papers are just the beginning. Learning to use the access tools to locate specific documents takes practice and perseverance. Fortunately, indexing of the Papers, like indexing everywhere, is becoming computerized. An index to current years of the House of Commons Sessional Papers, House of Lords Sessional Papers, *Hansard's Debates*, and *Journal of the House of Commons* is now available from Readex on CD-ROM. Additionally, Chadwyck-Healy provides subscribers to its microfiche edition of the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers with a CD-ROM index, which is derived from POLIS, the Parliamentary On-Line Information System, generated by the House of Commons Library. The computerized indexes, however, only cover the more current British Parliamentary Papers and are expensive. Most researchers, therefore, will continue to rely on the traditional tools listed throughout this guide.

Integrating the British Parliamentary Papers into the reference repertoire is challenging, but the benefit to students and researchers is enormous. Each access point to the Papers is a window, with its own angle and view, into a storehouse of documents, and each document is a truly exciting window into the past. ■■

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### REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Lloyd George, Speech to the House of Commons, 9 May 1918, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th ser., vol. 105 (1918), col. 2358.
2. House of Lords papers may be underused as a source for historical research. Kenneth Mallabar in "House of Lords Sessional Papers," *Journal of Librarianship* 4 (April 1972): 106-114, discusses the importance of the House of Lords papers and assesses duplication between papers of the two houses.
3. The *General Indexes* were compiled by a series of officers of the House and are commonly known by the name of the compiler. They are Cunningham's Index (1547-1659), Flaxman's Index (1660-1697), Forster's Index (1697-1714), Moore's Index (1714-1774), Dunn's Index (1774-1800), Rickman's Index (1801-20), and Vardon's Index (1820-1852). From 1852 to 1865, the indexes were produced by the House of Commons Librarians, and from 1866 to 1879, by the Journal Office Clerks. The indexes vary in arrangement and quality, and may not be available in American libraries. Standard decennial indexes began to be published in 1880.
4. It is difficult to assign a beginning date for the Sessional Papers of either House, since many early papers have not been collected.
5. See note 4 above.