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United States General Accounting Office

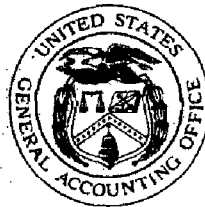
Report to Congressional Requesters

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January 1994

# THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

## Issues Related to Display and Preservation



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United States  
General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Resources, Community, and  
Economic Development Division

B-254192

January 26, 1994

The Honorable William F. Goodling  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
The Honorable Harris Wofford  
United States Senate

Five known original manuscripts or drafts of the Gettysburg Address, in President Lincoln's own handwriting, still exist. Of the five drafts, the Library of Congress (the Library) acquired two, and the Illinois State Historical Library, Cornell University, and the White House ultimately purchased or otherwise acquired the remaining three.

Beginning in 1979, the Library's two drafts generally have been alternately exhibited during the spring and summer months at the Gettysburg National Military Park (the park), managed by the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. The Library, however, intends to terminate its agreement with the Park Service to display the drafts at the park after 1994. In place of the original drafts, the Library has offered the park a high-quality facsimile of one of the drafts. Park Service officials, on the other hand, view exhibiting the original drafts at the park as fulfilling the Park Service's mission to interpret for visitors the battle at Gettysburg and its place in American history.

At your request, we agreed with your offices to identify (1) the risks inherent in exhibiting a draft at the park or elsewhere, (2) whether the Park Service has met the Library's exhibition and preservation requirements and has the capability to meet future requirements, and (3) the estimated cost of exhibiting the document at the park in the current or an upgraded facility versus the cost of constructing a comparable facility at the Library.

You also asked us to obtain information on the ownership and condition of, as well as public access to, the remaining three drafts of the document. This information is presented in appendix I.

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## Results in Brief

The risks inherent in exhibiting a draft of the Gettysburg Address—whether at the park, the Library, or elsewhere—are related to its environment, safety and security, and handling. Paramount is the risk of

accelerated degradation caused by exposure to light. Other environmental risks include the need to control temperature and humidity. Safety and security risks involve fire, theft, vandalism, and accidents en route to the exhibition location. In addition, repeated handling of the drafts further adds to the overall risks of exhibiting the manuscripts.

Document exhibition and preservation techniques remain an evolving rather than a proven science. Within this context, Library officials believe that the Park Service has met, and sometimes exceeded, existing exhibition and preservation requirements. Likewise, virtually all of the curators, conservators, and other professionals with whom we spoke believe that the Park Service could meet future requirements as well, provided that sufficient funding is available.

The estimated cost of exhibiting the documents at the park in the current or an upgraded facility versus the cost of constructing a similar facility at the Library is difficult to determine, primarily because the former exists solely to exhibit a draft of the Address, while the latter is intended to exhibit all of the Library's items, including those classified as irreplaceable national treasures.

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## Background

Historians generally believe that President Lincoln began to draft the Gettysburg Address in Washington and completed it at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, before the November 19, 1863, dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, now Gettysburg National Cemetery. Historians generally believe that Lincoln wrote a second draft some time after he returned to Washington and subsequently wrote three additional drafts in response to requests for Civil War-related fund-raising purposes. No two drafts are exactly alike in that the President revised words or punctuation marks each time he rewrote the speech.

In 1916, the children of Lincoln's private secretary, John Hay, gave the first and second drafts to the Librarian of Congress as a gift to the federal government and made no conditions concerning their use. The Library began exhibiting the documents in 1951 and continued to exhibit one or both of the drafts almost constantly through 1973. At that time, the Library determined that it should limit exhibits to preserve the documents, to the extent possible, for future generations.

Legislation was introduced in 1975 and 1977, but did not pass, to permanently transfer one of the Library's drafts to the Secretary of the

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Interior for the purpose of display at the park. In 1979, the Library and the Park Service entered into an agreement to alternate drafts for temporary exhibit at the park during the spring and summer months through 1983. As a result of subsequent agreements, the alternating drafts were exhibited at the park annually through 1991. The park did not exhibit a draft in 1992 because negotiations between the Library and the Park Service had stalled.

In June 1992, the Joint Committee on the Library<sup>1</sup> supported a 2-year continuation of the agreement, and a draft was exhibited at the park in 1993. The Joint Committee, however, also supported terminating the agreement with the Park Service after 1994 and reaffirmed the Library's 1990 policy, which precludes indefinite, long-term loans of national treasures. These decisions are consistent with the policies of the Library and other custodial institutions that prohibit lending those items that are so valuable and rare that they should not be subjected to the risks attendant upon even the most carefully planned and managed exhibits. In place of the original drafts, the Library has offered the park a high-quality facsimile of one of the drafts.

Exhibiting the first and second drafts at the park during the spring and summer months over the last 14 years afforded almost 2.5 million of the park's total 4.4 million visitors an opportunity to view one of the original manuscripts. The Park Service continues to believe that an authentic draft of the document should be exhibited at the park.

The August 2, 1993, conference committee report accompanying the fiscal year 1994 legislative branch appropriations act states that the conferees believe that leaving an original draft of the Gettysburg Address at the park is fitting. The report encourages the Librarian of Congress to reopen discussions with the Park Service for the purpose of extending the loan of the Address for an indefinite period. In an August 5, 1993, letter to selected members of the conference committee, the Librarian of Congress in effect requested that they reconsider these views.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Joint Committee on the Library is composed of five members of the Senate and five members of the House of Representatives. Among other things, the Committee considers proposals on the management and expansion of the Library.

<sup>2</sup>At the request of the Librarian of Congress, we have included a copy of his letter as appendix IV of this report.

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## Risks Associated With Exhibiting the Drafts

Virtually all of the curators, conservators, and other professionals with whom we spoke cited environmental, safety and security, and handling risks associated with exhibiting fragile, organic documents such as the Gettysburg Address. They agreed that, other than the risks associated with transporting the documents, these risks exist wherever the drafts are exhibited, whether at the park, the Library, or elsewhere. According to the Associate Librarian for Collections Services, however, the Library is concerned with the overall inherent risks of exhibiting any fragile item, and Library officials believe that, especially for the items considered to be national treasures, exhibit time must be held to an absolute minimum.

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## Environmental Risks

The need to minimize light exposure was the greatest environmental risk cited. Organic documents progress through various aging processes during which their ink and overall readability degrade. According to the head of the Library's Paper Conservation Section, deterioration from environmental factors and pollutants occurs on a chemical level and may become evident through physical and visual changes. She cited breaks in the cellulose molecule chains that make up the paper as an example of the chemical change and indicated that the paper can become brittle as a direct result. She added that discoloration may also occur, as manifested by the yellowing of paper or fading of inks, and said that there tends to be a link between increased yellowing in paper and an increase in its brittleness and fragility.

While no quantifiable tests of embrittlement exist, the Library expects the relationship between yellowing and embrittlement to occur in the two drafts of the Address. Other measurable tests conducted on the two drafts between 1979 and 1993 indicated decreases in their brightness that the head of the Library's Paper Conservation Section believes is considerable and potentially could be differentiated by the naked eye. This degradation is accelerated by exposure to light, but it also occurs while the documents are being stored in darkness at the Library.

In addition to exposure to light, professionals cited other environmental problems, including the need to control temperature and humidity and to maintain the documents in a stable environment—that is, not to subject the drafts to wide ranges of changes in temperature or humidity within a short period of time.

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### Safety and Security Risks

Safety and security risks include fire, theft, vandalism, or other destruction while the Address is being exhibited, as well as accidents en route to the exhibition location. Professionals we spoke with raised less concern with safety and security risks than with environmental risks, since the former can generally be minimized by multilevel security systems and an overall security awareness by those employees located at or near the exhibition area.

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### Risks of Handling

Library officials also specifically raised the concern about repeated handling of the drafts each time they are loaned to the park. They said that the drafts must be removed from and replaced in the Library vault, tested, and transported to and from the park, as well as installed in or removed from the park's display case. The handling issue, Library officials believe, further contributes to the overall risks of exhibiting the drafts.

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### The Park Service Has Met Existing Requirements, but Its Ability to Meet Future Requirements Is Contingent on Sufficient Funding

Document exhibition and preservation techniques remain an evolving rather than a proven science. Within this context, Library officials believe that the Park Service has met, and sometimes exceeded, existing exhibition and preservation requirements. Likewise, virtually all of the curators, conservators, and other professionals with whom we spoke believe that the Park Service could meet future requirements as well, provided that sufficient funding is available.

Because the 2 drafts are among 18 items that the Library classifies as irreplaceable national treasures, they are subjected to the Library's most stringent exhibition and preservation requirements. The agreements between the Library and the Park Service establish specific environmental parameters aimed at minimizing potential risk to the documents and include, for example, the appropriate temperature, humidity, and illumination levels that should generally protect the drafts from damage. The agreements further identify the security responsibilities of each organization during transport and exhibition. Finally, the agreements set forth the requirements for periodic testing and, if a problem occurs, notification of Library officials. Over the years, the Library has modified some of the requirements to reflect evolving document preservation techniques.

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### Actions Taken to Minimize Environmental Risks

To help preserve the drafts during exhibition, the Park Service constructed an environmentally controlled display case according to the Library's

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specifications. Subsequently, to minimize light exposure, the Park Service installed a motion detector light sensor as well as an hour clock to track the amount of time the documents are exposed to light; an ultraviolet filter also has been included in the lighting unit. The amount of time that the drafts are exposed to light is generally recorded daily and summarized monthly. On the basis of available information, we found that the Park Service exposed the drafts to no more than the maximum of 1,150 hours of light per year, as allowed in the agreements.

To control the temperature and humidity in the display case, the Park Service installed a self-contained cooling system in the base of the case, improved the air circulation, and acquired a propane generator for emergency electrical power. The Park Service also installed two supplemental temperature and humidity gauges in the display case that permit a quick assessment of the environmental conditions without having to open the internal components of the case. To reduce the risk of damage by heat, the display case contains a temperature sensor that closes the air ducts, shuts off all electrical power, and sounds an alarm if the predetermined temperature is exceeded.

According to the agreements, the Park Service must monitor the environment in the display case by using a machine called a "hygrothermograph," which constantly records the temperature and humidity by making tracings on a circular chart. According to the head of the Library's Paper Conservation Section, the Park Service appropriately annotated any aberrations or changes on the charts as required in the agreements and routinely provided copies to her office. She said that she was generally satisfied with the results of the readings. In addition, Library representatives who accompany the documents to and from the park noted that the temperature, humidity, and light levels in the display case were acceptable.

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**Actions Taken to Address  
Safety and Security  
Concerns**

To reduce the risk of damage by fire, a 1-hour fire-rated reinforced wall, electronic monitors for seismic activity and combustion, and a fire extinguisher were added to the exhibition center. The Park Service also installed double-pane safety glass in the display case, modified the exhibit area to include new vault-type security doors and visitor-flow devices, and installed a multilevel security system as well as a monitoring system to better ensure the safety and security of the drafts.



In addition to the safety and security efforts at the park, park officials exercise significant care during the transport of the drafts to and from the Library. According to park officials, they use two well-maintained, air-conditioned vehicles and armed park rangers to escort the drafts. Library representatives accompanying the drafts to and from the park did not identify any problems in connection with the safety or security of the documents.

### The Park Service's Ability to Meet Future Requirements Is Contingent on Funding

Both Park Service and Library officials emphasized that the preservation techniques considered state-of-the-art just 10 years ago may not be considered adequate today. Likewise, techniques in use today may easily become outdated as more is learned about this evolving science. Yet Library and Park Service officials agreed that the Park Service would probably be in a position to meet future exhibition and preservation requirements, provided that sufficient funding is available.

For example, although additional precautions are not required by the existing agreements between the Library and the Park Service, the Librarian of Congress believes that (1) a draft of the Address should be exhibited for no more than 3 months every 3 years, (2) a conservator should be on site whenever a draft of the Address is being exhibited at the park, and (3) the park should be required to have a supplemental storage vault for use in an emergency. According to Park Service officials, they are agreeable to reducing the length of time that the drafts are exhibited, provided that the drafts are still exhibited at the park. However, additional funding would probably be needed if the Park Service was required to have a conservator on site whenever a draft is being exhibited or to have a supplemental storage vault. Currently, the nearest Park Service conservator is located in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, which is about an hour away from the park, and the park does not have a supplemental storage vault. Rather, the Park Service stores the Library's carrying case, used to transport the drafts, within a few feet of the display case so that the document can be evacuated immediately in an emergency.

### The Estimated Costs to Exhibit the Documents Cannot Be Readily Determined

The estimated cost of exhibiting the documents at the park in the current or an upgraded facility versus the cost of constructing a similar facility at the Library is difficult to determine, primarily because the former exists solely to exhibit a draft of the Address while the latter is intended to exhibit all the Library's items, including the 18 classified as irreplaceable national treasures.

The park Superintendent estimated that the environmentally controlled display case cost approximately \$29,000 to construct and subsequently modify and about \$3,000 annually to maintain and monitor. Modifications to the exhibit area in 1979 were estimated to cost about \$51,000.

Conversely, the Library's Jefferson Building in Washington, D.C., is undergoing an extensive, long-term renovation to, among other things, bring the building's heating, cooling, electrical, and security systems up to current standards. One area of the building is being renovated specifically to accommodate all possible future exhibits, including a draft of the Gettysburg Address. On December 23, 1993, the Library submitted its plan for exhibiting the national treasures at the renovated Jefferson Building to the Joint Committee on the Library. This plan included examples of the documents to be displayed and the conditions under which they will be exhibited. In addition, the Librarian stated that the Library will be exhibiting the documents in a specially designed, state-of-the-art display case that cost about \$750,000.

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## **Additional Concerns About Where and When the Drafts Should Be Exhibited**

Both the Park Service and the Library raised other concerns about where and when to exhibit the Library's two drafts of the Gettysburg Address. Overall, Park Service officials expressed dismay over the lack of specific reasons why the Library wishes to terminate the agreement, even though the Library acknowledges that the Park Service has met, and sometimes exceeded, existing exhibition and preservation requirements.

In addition to the concerns identified above, Library officials provided us with the following reasons why they believe that the agreement should be terminated. Specifically, they believe that the continued loan of the drafts to the Park Service violates the intent of the donors. According to the Librarian, the fact that the donors put the drafts in the Library's custody indicates their intent that the documents remain at the Library. Moreover, Library officials believe that the continued loan of the documents to the park could invalidate or undermine the Library's role as a national library and may discourage others from making donations to the Library. Finally, Library officials believe that exhibiting the drafts at the renovated Jefferson Building in Washington, D.C., would afford many more visitors an opportunity to view one of the original manuscripts than if the drafts continue to be exhibited at the park. However, we could not find, nor could the Library provide, any documentation to support the reasons why it believes that the agreement should be terminated.

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## Observations

Exhibiting the two drafts of the Gettysburg Address at the park has enabled millions of Americans to see the original documents in a historical context. Additionally, the Park Service has met and, with sufficient funding, should be able to continue to meet evolving exhibition and preservation requirements. Yet the Library of Congress is responsible for preserving the two drafts and would like to display them at its facility in Washington, D.C.

Where and when to exhibit the Library's two drafts of the Gettysburg Address is a public policy decision for the Congress. While the Joint Committee on the Library has shown support for the Library's efforts to terminate the loan agreement with the Park Service, the conference committee report accompanying the fiscal year 1994 legislative branch appropriations act states that the conferees believe that exhibiting an original draft of the Gettysburg Address at the park is fitting. The report encourages the Librarian of Congress to reopen discussions with the Park Service for the purpose of extending the loan of the Address for an indefinite period.

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## Agency Comments

To verify the information included in this report, we met with Library of Congress and National Park Service officials. In addition, at our request, the Library and the Park Service provided their official positions on the continued exhibition of the drafts of the Gettysburg Address at the park. These positions are reflected throughout the report and presented in full in appendixes II and III.

Library officials generally agreed with the information that we gathered to address the three objectives of our review. However, they believed that the scope of the assignment did not address additional concerns that they have about the loan of the drafts to the Park Service. Because we believe that the Congress should have all available information in reaching a decision on where and when the drafts should be exhibited and because of the Park Service's expressed dismay over the lack of specific reasons why the Library wishes to terminate the agreement, we included the Library's additional concerns. Library officials also provided some technical clarifications that we have incorporated, as appropriate.

Park Service officials also generally agreed with the information that we gathered to address the three objectives of our review. They suggested, however, that additional information be included about their efforts to

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ensure the security and safety of the drafts during transport, and we have included that information, as appropriate.

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## Scope and Methodology

To respond to your request, we met with Library officials from the Office of the Deputy Librarian, Collection Services, the Preservation Directorate, Integrated Support Services, Protective Services, the Interpretative Programs Office, the Manuscript Division, and the Office of the General Counsel and reviewed agency files on the acquisition, maintenance, and loan of the drafts.

We also met with Park Service representatives of the Curatorial Services Division; the regional and park representatives of the Interpretation and Visitor Services Units; representatives from the park's Natural Resources and Visitor Protection, Law Enforcement, and Utilities units; and the park's former Curator. We reviewed pertinent agency files and received a detailed tour of the display vault and exhibit area, including the security systems, at the park.

To assess their role in the continued exhibition of the draft, we met with staff of the Joint Committee on the Library. We also met with representatives from the White House, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Archives, and the Supreme Court to obtain information on institutions owning or exhibiting documents and artifacts important to American history. Additionally, we spoke with representatives from several professional organizations about exhibition and preservation requirements. To determine the status of the three additional drafts, we spoke to curators at the White House, the Illinois State Historical Library, and Cornell University. We viewed the draft maintained at Cornell University and the Library's two drafts—one on display at the park and one in the Library's storage facility. We conducted our work primarily between March and August 1993 in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards.

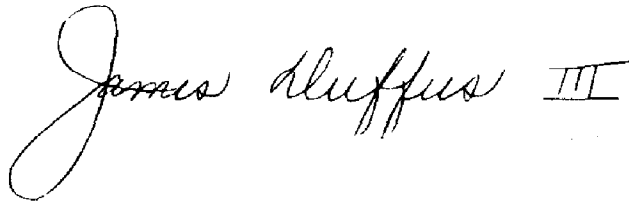
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We are sending copies of this report to the Librarian of Congress; the Secretary of the Interior; the Director, National Park Service; the Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on the Library; the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, House Committee on Natural Resources; and the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee on Public Lands,

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National Parks and Forests, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me on (202) 512-7756. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Duffus III". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James Duffus III  
Director, Natural Resources  
Management Issues

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# Ownership Of, Condition Of, and Public Access to the Other Three Drafts of the Gettysburg Address

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On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln spoke the now famous words of his Gettysburg Address during the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, now Gettysburg National Cemetery. President Lincoln had been asked to make "a few appropriate remarks" at the ceremony consecrating the land where thousands, killed during the great battle fought on July 1-3, were buried. Although it was not entirely well received at the time, this speech went on to be a classic example of simple eloquence.

President Lincoln prepared five handwritten drafts of his famous speech, and he subsequently presented these to key individuals or organizations requesting them. None of the drafts, each named for the original recipient, are exactly alike, in that, each time the President prepared a draft, he revised words or punctuation marks. The Library of Congress acquired two of the five drafts, and the Illinois State Historical Library, Cornell University, and the White House ultimately purchased or otherwise acquired the remaining three. While the American public has had an opportunity over the last 40 years to view the two Library drafts, either at the Library or at the park, access to the remaining three drafts varies by institution.

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## The Illinois State Historical Library's Draft

Mr. Edward Everett, a well-known orator of the day, was the principal speaker at the cemetery's dedication on November 19, 1863. Subsequently, he and Mrs. Hamilton Fish requested a version of the Gettysburg Address as a donation to be sold along with his speech at the Metropolitan Fair to be held in April 1864. Mr. Everett received the draft on March 3, 1864, but it is not known whether the bound manuscripts were sold at the fair. However, the two manuscripts were acquired by Mr. Carlos Pierce, a Boston merchant. After his death, the draft was sold to his sister and descended to her children. An autograph dealer purchased the draft in 1930 and later sold it to Mr. James C. Ames. In 1944, school children in Illinois, with assistance from Mr. Marshall Field, purchased the "Everett" draft for the State of Illinois from Mrs. Ames for \$44,000.

The draft normally is exhibited in the main display area of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The curator estimates that about 350,000 visitors view the document annually.

Currently, this draft is on loan to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, for a co-sponsored exhibit on the life and achievements of



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**Appendix I  
Ownership Of, Condition Of, and Public  
Access to the Other Three Drafts of the  
Gettysburg Address**

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Abraham Lincoln. The exhibit, scheduled to run from October 1993 to August 1994, is one of several that have occurred since 1959. In 1959, the Everett draft joined the other four drafts at the Chicago Historical Society for an exhibit. Other loans involved the Illinois Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1964, the Lincoln Savings and Loan in California in 1967 and 1968, and the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry in 1972. In addition to actual loans, in 1988 the draft went on tour to five Illinois sites in recognition of the 125th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address.

According to the curator, this draft is considered to be in good condition and was last examined by a conservator in 1989. While the condition of the draft is not evaluated on a regular schedule, it will be examined again after it is returned from the current loan. At the time of the 1989 evaluation, the conservator recommended minor preservation procedures and also recommended that the draft be removed from permanent display and brought out only on special occasions. Actions to remove the draft from display began but were never finalized.

The curator said that the state is rethinking its current exhibit policy and that it would prefer to use a facsimile in order to conserve the original document. He said that the current trend in document conservation is to limit exhibition of authentic documents to special occasions and to exhibit facsimiles most of the time. The curator also stated that because of a lack of funding, the current exhibit conditions at the Old State Capitol do not meet document preservation requirements. The display case was specially designed, but it does not specifically control light, humidity, and temperature. According to the curator, these would be additional reasons for not exhibiting the original draft.

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**Cornell University's Draft**

Historian George Bancroft requested a draft of the document for his stepson, Colonel Alexander Bliss, in February 1864. Colonel Bliss and a committee were collecting manuscripts to be included in a lithographed volume of facsimiles entitled Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors to be sold at the Baltimore Sanitary Fair in 1864. The manuscript remained in the Bancroft family until 1929, when it was sold to a New York dealer. Mrs. Nicholas H. Noyes of Indianapolis later purchased the manuscript and in 1949 presented the draft to the Cornell University library at Ithaca, New York, where it remains. Mrs. Noyes gave the draft to the university as an outright gift; her only condition was that the document remain known as the "Noyes" draft.

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The university does not display the draft; rather, it maintains the document in a state-of-the-art vault 55 feet below ground. The university does not loan the draft to external organizations, but it is available to anyone using the library who asks to see it. The draft is viewed in the presence of a staff person in a secure reading room; each time the draft is put into or taken out of the vault, it is visually inspected by a staff member.

According to the curator, the draft is shown about 60 times a year. Most requests come from instructors who bring a class to see it; from library staff who are briefing others on the library; and, to a lesser extent, from researchers. The curator also stated that the draft is in "very fine" condition, and he believes it to be the best preserved of the five drafts.

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## The White House's Draft

The "Bliss" draft was prepared because the editor of the Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors said the Bancroft draft was not suited for its intended purpose since, among other things, it lacked a heading and a signature. After being sent the page size, the desired margins and a title, President Lincoln wrote this draft in March 1864. This draft has come to be recognized as the standard text of the speech since it is the only one that was dated and signed by the President.

The draft remained with Colonel Bliss and his family until 1949 when it was sold at an auction in New York City to Mr. Oscar B. Cintas, a Cuban citizen and former Ambassador to the United States, for \$54,000. Mr. Cintas willed the document to the people of this country, stipulating that the draft be installed in the White House. The White House does not loan this draft to external organizations and, by law, may loan items of historic interest only to the Smithsonian Institution.

The Bliss draft is exhibited in a specially designed and sealed display case on the desk that President Lincoln used in his summer White House, which is now located in the Lincoln Bedroom of the White House. A special cloth covers the display case as an additional measure to reduce light exposure when the draft is not expected to be viewed. Since the draft is located in the private residence of the President of the United States, access by the general public is denied. Instead, only members of the President's family, guests of the first family, and housekeeping staff have an opportunity to view the draft.

The White House worked with both the Park Service and the Library over the years to ensure the best care for the draft. In 1984, the Park Service

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provided a detailed condition report, as well as suggestions for future care of the document. In the 1984 condition report, the conservator assessed the condition of the paper as very good, considering its age. As recently as March 1992, Library representatives viewed, although they did not examine, the document and indicated that it was extremely well preserved. At that time, they offered the White House Curator some suggestions for additional preservation measures.

# Position of the Library of Congress



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540-4000

June 8, 1993

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE LIBRARIAN  
FOR COLLECTIONS SERVICES

Dear Mr. Duffus:

The Library of Congress is the custodian of many unique or rare documents, printed books and other treasures of great significance for the understanding and interpretation of the American national experience, among them two drafts of Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* donated to the Library in 1916. In order to ensure the availability of these treasures to this and future generations, we are committed to providing not only the best possible physical security for them, but also the most advanced methods of preservation for the priceless items entrusted to our care.

In order to fulfill this vital custodial responsibility, the Library has a policy, fully supported by the Joint Committee on the Library, that prohibits (1) placing any of its collections on permanent and/or exclusive loan or deposit elsewhere, and (2) lending those items that are so valuable and rare that they should not be subjected to the risks attendant upon even the most carefully planned and managed loans. The two manuscript *Gettysburg Addresses* are among those top treasures of the Library that must remain on site to ensure their physical security and to provide a stable physical environment. This policy is fully consistent with those of other custodial institutions such as the National Archives. The National Archives does not lend its copy of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and the Library of Congress's copies of the *Gettysburg Address* are in the same category.

We routinely receive requests from other institutions to borrow the few documents that we place in this prized category of special treasures: e.g., Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and the Gutenberg Bible. We have turned down all such requests. We can no longer make an exception for the *Gettysburg Address*.

The Library is eager to make all of its collections, including these valuable materials, accessible to the public through publications and facsimiles. We have offered to provide the *Gettysburg National Park* with a high quality facsimile of the *Address*. In addition, we have offered to provide to the Park Service for display on a temporary basis original primary source materials from our collections--manuscripts, drawings, photographs, etc.--that help to interpret the *Gettysburg* battle and make a trip to the site more meaningful.

The Library cannot continue to lend these two documents to the *Gettysburg National Park* without seriously compromising two specific and very weighty

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responsibilities--to preserve the documents for present and future generations; and to comply fully and faithfully with the intentions of the donor.

Our concern over the physical stability and preservation of the manuscripts stems directly from their fragility, and we intend to follow strictly what our preservation scientists recommend to halt degradation of these irreplaceable treasures. The two Gettysburg Address manuscripts in the custody of the Library of Congress are written with inks on paper that change as a result of exposure to light, pollutants, and unstable environmental conditions. This is evident from the alterations that are visible today. The two documents show discoloration in different areas of the manuscripts. Although both the exhibition at Gettysburg and the storage conditions at the Library ensure stable relative humidity and temperature, and pollutants are filtered, the regular display of the manuscripts exposes them to continued degradation from light. While preservation science has not yet determined precise numbers to indicate ultimate limits on light exposure, it is clear from the documents themselves that the effects of light exposure on fragile documents such as the Gettysburg Address manuscripts are cumulative and do have a negative effect. Given the current evolving state of preservation knowledge, the most responsible approach to exhibition of fragile materials must be a conservative one.

Additional preservation concerns for exhibition of the Gettysburg Address relate to the risks of physical damage from increased handling that accompanies exhibition. Each time one of the documents is put on display, it must be removed from and replaced in its housing twice--before and after exhibition--in order to inspect the item and monitor changes with colorimetry readings. The documents suffer further handling during packing and unpacking, checking packing arrangements, and yet again during mounting and removing from exhibition. Each move exposes the document to a change of environment, which is itself a well-known risk to materials of this fragility.

Additionally, there are increased risks to the documents in transporting them to and from the Library. These include, but are not limited to, exposure to theft, mechanical breakdowns of transport vehicles, and accidents during transit. Finally, in the case of an emergency at any time during the loan, Gettysburg National Park does not have a paper conservator on site who could deal with an immediate problem.

Beyond the Library's commitment to preserving the artifacts of American history, we are also committed to honoring the intentions of the donors who, motivated by patriotism and devotion to the American people, settled upon the Library of Congress as the permanent home for their most prized possessions. The Library's copies of the Gettysburg Address were donated in 1916 by the children of John Hay, President Lincoln's assistant secretary, as a covenant. They deliberately chose the Library as the permanent home and conservator of both documents. Since the donors specified that they be left in the custody of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., rather than in another institution or location, it was clearly their intent that they not be placed on loan elsewhere.

Appendix II  
Position of the Library of Congress

-3-

A continuation of this loan would undermine the Library's expanded exhibition program, which began this past January with our acclaimed exhibition of treasures from the Vatican, "Rome Reborn," and which will be expanded when the Jefferson Building reopens in 1995 with greatly increased space dedicated to displaying Library treasures. Thousands of patriotic citizens and foreign visitors will be able to visit the Library of Congress each year to view the principal documents on the birth and sustenance of this republic. Clearly, the Gettysburg Address would be a cornerstone of such a program. But the continuation of this ill-advised loan to Gettysburg would make it impossible to display either of our two copies of the Address to the public travelling to the nation's capital. Guidelines established by conservators for the preservation of rare items mandate a rest period of three years between exposures, and a limit of three months per exhibit. This would effectively mean that the gift of the Hays family to the nation would never be available to the public in the place and manner they intended.

For all the reasons enumerated above, the Library of Congress has determined that the most responsible way to discharge its duty to the American public to preserve these unique and irreplaceable artifacts of our history is to expose them to no unnecessary risks, to keep them in as stable an environment as can be provided in the Library's conservation laboratory, and to make them available to tourists at the Gettysburg National Park through a high quality facsimile. The Library has been quite forthcoming in offering to lend from its collections such items as Civil War diaries, photographs, and maps to the Park in order to make visitors' trips there more meaningful and memorable.

I hope I have conveyed the seriousness of the Library's custodial responsibility and the gravity of our concerns about putting these precious documents at unnecessary risk through an off-site exhibition program.

Sincerely yours,



Winston Tabb  
Associate Librarian  
for Collections Services

James Duffus III  
Director, Natural Resource Management Issues  
Room 1842, GAO Building  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20548

# Position of the National Park Service



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H1817(408)

JUN 30 1993

Mr. James Duffus, III  
Director, Natural Resources Management Issues  
General Accounting Office  
441 G Street  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Duffus:

We are responding to a telephone request made by General Accounting Office (GAO) Auditor Linda Harmon on June 17, 1993, to National Park Service Chief Curator Ann Hitchcock. Ms. Harmon requested a summary of the National Park Service position on the loan of the Gettysburg Address draft from the Library of Congress to Gettysburg National Military Park for exhibition.

The National Park Service believes that the opportunity to view the Gettysburg Address only a few yards from the place where President Abraham Lincoln delivered it is an unparalleled experience that cannot be offered outside of Gettysburg National Military Park. At Gettysburg the draft of the Address serves Lincoln's purpose as a moving memorial for those who died at Gettysburg and as an incisive expression of the costs and values of change. In the Address, Lincoln made sense of the tremendous losses suffered during the battle at Gettysburg, explaining the 51,000 casualties as the birth pangs of a new Nation. The document still illuminates these issues for park visitors today, just as it did for the Gettysburg audience 130 years ago.

The Gettysburg Address is the ultimate interpretive document for the war, the battle, and the park. Gettysburg National Military Park provides the best context for understanding Lincoln's manuscript, just as the Gettysburg Address is perhaps the supreme interpretive document for understanding the battlefield park and cemetery. Neither the park, nor the Address is as powerful or as comprehensible when viewed separately. Taken together they go a long way toward providing insight into America's bloodiest and most bitter war.

Gettysburg visitors expect to see the Address in the park to which it is so closely linked. Visitors come to the park to learn about the battle and to see the Address. Visitors experience an enhanced feeling of the reality of history when they are in the presence of an authentic document. Knowing that the manuscript was handwritten by Lincoln as he came to terms with the battle gives the viewer a direct link to the past. Seeing the document in the context of the battlefield and cemetery, to which it is inextricably linked, provides the visitor with a sense of the immediacy and enormity of the war.

Only at Gettysburg can the visitor understand the scale of the loss and the level of despair the Nation experienced. The size of the battlefield and of the cemetery force the visitor to face the immensity of the tragedy, just as Lincoln did. Nowhere else can the document function so effectively. Lincoln prepared the speech to help the Nation come to terms with the battle. Seeing the manuscript in the Gettysburg National Military Park provides a sense of the enormity of the battle, the grief of the Nation, and the power and poignancy of Lincoln's response. Such a complete understanding of the Nation's loss is not possible outside of the park and cemetery.

Appendix III  
Position of the National Park Service

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At Gettysburg, the Gettysburg Address is at the center of the park's interpretive and exhibition program as the key document in a group of related Gettysburg and Civil War materials. The Library of Congress is a mammoth institution, in which the two copies of the Gettysburg Address compete with 98 million other diverse items for the attention of staff and scholars. The Library's mission is "to sustain, to celebrate, and to preserve for future generations a universal collection of knowledge and creativity." Interpretation of a single Civil War battle or of a single Lincoln speech is not the central mandate of the Library.

The NPS was established to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects . . . therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The park's mission is "to interpret, for the benefit of visitors to the park and the general public, the Battle of Gettysburg in the larger context of the Civil War and including the effects of the war on all the American people."

Thus, the park concentrates its resources strictly on the subject matter of the manuscript--making the Gettysburg Address draft a very high priority for park interpretation, exhibition, and research purposes. The Address is also a high park priority for care. The park has made extensive modifications to the Gettysburg Address exhibition space and provided care for the document that has earned the park praise from the Library of Congress staff. The costly modifications were made because the Gettysburg Address draft is the crown jewel of the park exhibitions--receiving significant attention from conservators, security staff, environmental control personnel, and curators.

Over the last 14 years the Library of Congress has set stringent standards for the security, environmental storage space controls, exhibition case construction and operation, and monitoring of the draft of the Gettysburg Address when it is housed at the Gettysburg National Military Park. The park complied with the Library's detailed requirements and, on occasion, instituted even stricter controls. Since the park regards the draft of the Gettysburg Address as the crown jewel of its exhibitions, the staff has gone to great lengths to care for the manuscript. The care of the document has involved sizable financial and personnel investments on the part of the park. Duplicating these expenditures by constructing a similar exhibition case tailored to the document's needs at the Library seems unwarranted.

For security purposes it seems wise to consider moving one draft out of the Library. Three copies of the Gettysburg Address are housed within a few blocks of each other in Washington, D.C.--one at the White House and two at the Library. Placing a draft of the Address in Pennsylvania ensures that a single major disaster is less likely to destroy all three documents.

Having three copies in Washington, D.C., does little to maximize access to these historic documents. In the Library, access to the two drafts of the speech is limited--particularly since the document(s) are not routinely on exhibit as one would be at Gettysburg. Library visitors must be over high school age or have special credentials or introductions in order to use Library collections--unlike the open access provided through Gettysburg's exhibit area which has, to date, made the Gettysburg Address available to 2.2 million visitors, including over 450,000 school children.



Appendix III  
Position of the National Park Service

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The Gettysburg exhibition space has long been built. The park staff is trained. The oversight and management procedures are in place. Park visitors look for and visit the space in record numbers. Why change a successful program now? Why duplicate these same expenses and facilities at the Library of Congress? Why risk leaving three of five handwritten copies of the Gettysburg Address within a few blocks of each other in Washington, D.C., where they may be destroyed in a single disaster? Where better can the Gettysburg Address be stored and exhibited than at Gettysburg, where the author, Abraham Lincoln, intended the speech to be understood by a grieving Nation?

Over the last 14 years the park staff has met the Library of Congress' environmental, exhibition, and security requirements at substantial cost to the park. The NPS hopes that the Library will now recognize the responsible custody of the park by either permanently loaning one copy of the Gettysburg Address to Gettysburg National Military Park--thus avoiding the hazards of regular transportation back and forth to the Library--or by loaning first one and then the other draft manuscript to the park for 10-year periods in perpetuity.

If a draft of the Gettysburg Address is transferred to the park or if the loan program is formalized, the park and NPS agree to meet any future Library recommendations for ensuring the permanence of the draft. The NPS will also ensure that the exhibition environment and security systems meet the highest professional standards, while making the Gettysburg Address available to the broadest possible audience of citizens and scholars.

The NPS appreciates the high degree of trust which the Library has placed in the park over the last 14 years. The NPS now proposes that the cooperative relationship long honored in practice between the two agencies be formalized by a permanent loan of the Gettysburg Address to the park which now manages and interprets the place for which the Address was created.

Sincerely,



Roger G. Kennedy  
Director

# The Librarian of Congress' Letter to Members of the Conference Committee on the Legislative Branch Appropriations



THE LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540-1000

August 5, 1993

Dear Senator Reid:

The conference report accompanying HR 2348, the Legislative Branch appropriations act for FY1994, contains language encouraging the Library to "reopen discussions with the National Military Park [at Gettysburg] for the purpose of extending the loan [of the first draft of the Gettysburg Address] for an indefinite period."

This direction contravenes the loan policies established by the Joint Committee in 1990 to protect the Library's treasures, such as the Gettysburg Address, "that are so valuable and rare that they should not be subjected to the risks attendant upon even the most carefully planned and managed loans." This direction is also based on a misunderstanding about the critical preservation problems inherent in continuing the regular display of this priceless document.

Contrary to the report language, the environmental and security conditions involved in continuing the display at Gettysburg are not "entirely satisfactory." Although the exhibit conditions at Gettysburg ensure stable relative humidity and temperature, the regular display of the manuscripts under even the most carefully managed conditions exposes them to continued degradation from light. Our conservators have already noted the negative effects of light exposure on both copies of the Gettysburg Address that have been exhibited at Gettysburg; these effects are cumulative, and they cannot be reversed by temporarily removing the manuscripts from display. No matter how carefully the documents are handled, continued exhibition of either or both manuscripts will accelerate and ensure their deterioration. This noticeable degradation has given urgency to our attempts to cease lending the original manuscripts.

Instead, the Library has repeatedly offered to provide Gettysburg National Park with a high-quality facsimile of either or both of our copies of the Address. In addition, we have offered to provide the National Park Service, for display on a temporary basis, original primary source materials from our collections that would help interpret the Gettysburg battle and make a trip to the site more meaningful for tourists. This approach would enable the Park Service to provide the interpretive services to which it is properly committed without accelerating the destruction of these key, irreplaceable artifacts of our history.

Appendix IV  
The Librarian of Congress' Letter to  
Members of the Conference Committee on  
the Legislative Branch Appropriations

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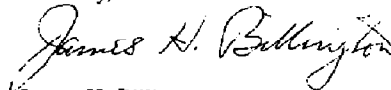
The Library has carefully developed a plan to exhibit the Gettysburg Address at the Library when the Jefferson Building reopens in 1995 with new space specifically dedicated to displaying the Library's treasures. Because conservators' guidelines for the preservation of rare items mandate a rest period of three years between exposures, and a limit of three months per exhibit, the Library must retain both copies to provide regular access to the millions of people who visit the Library. One brief showing every three years at Gettysburg (the maximum defensible exposure) would hardly satisfy the people at Gettysburg; and it would be a disservice to the viewing public not to have the Address more frequently available in one location, the Library, where optimal preservation conditions can be assured rather than episodically available in two sites--in one of which document degradation has already occurred.

Finally, it is clear that when the children of John Hay presented their father's copies of the Gettysburg Address to Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam in 1916, they delivered those copies "into your [the Library's] custody" and intended that they remain there. An indefinite loan of either gift would represent a breach of faith with these donors, who chose the nation's library rather than Gettysburg as their appropriate home, and could encourage the Hay heirs to attempt to reclaim the documents. It would also impair the Library's ability to assure prospective donors that it would fulfill the terms of agreements with them.

All of the issues raised above are now being reviewed by the General Accounting Office, which has also investigated the conditions under which the three additional known copies of the Gettysburg Address are maintained. Given the indisputable importance of the documents and the Library's unique responsibility as preserver of the American memory, I ask you to reconsider the report language calling on the Library to reopen discussions about an indefinite loan with the National Military Park. I assure you that while awaiting the GAO report we will continue to work with the Park Service on a solution that supports the interpretive programs of Gettysburg National Park without destroying the very artifacts that give the site such important resonance in American history.

I will be happy to meet with you to provide additional information or respond to any questions about this important matter.

Sincerely,



James H. Billington  
The Librarian of Congress

The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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# Major Contributors to This Report

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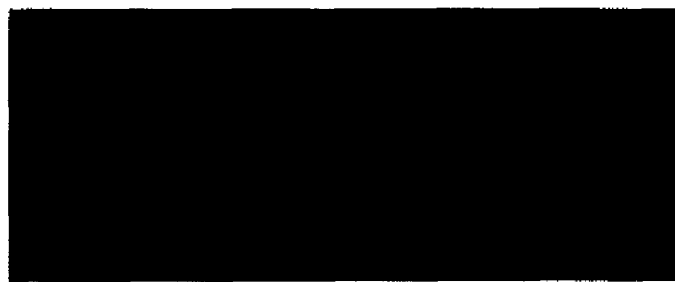
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