United States Senator Ernest F. “Fritz” Hollings first pledged his papers to the South Caroliniana Library in 1991, leading to the inauguration of the Modern Political Collections division (MPC). Since that time, Senator Hollings and his staff have regularly sent additional material to be included in his collection, and it has become one of the largest and most significant manuscript collections at the Library. Among the highlights of the collection are papers from Hollings’ term as governor (1959-63), Senate papers, campaign records, speeches, and audiovisual materials.

In 2003, Senator Hollings announced his plans to retire after the 108th Congress. He officially left office on January 3, 2005, after thirty-eight years in the Senate and a lifetime of public service.

Over the last year, Modern Political Collections has worked with Senator Hollings’ staff to close his Senate offices, including those in Washington, Columbia, Charleston, and Greenville. Herb Hartsook, the original archivist for the Hollings papers and the current director of the South Caroliniana Library, traveled to Washington on several occasions to help Hollings staff determine which papers were of historical value and to arrange for their transfer.
With large shipments arriving periodically from the Washington office throughout 2004, MPC received approximately 680 linear feet of new material.

In addition, MPC staff visited the Columbia Senate office on several occasions in November, looking through papers, photographs, ephemera, and framed items. Some 60 additional feet of material were selected for inclusion in the Hollings collection and brought back to the MPC facility.

The bulk of the recently received material dates from the last fifteen years, although the additions also contain papers from throughout Hollings’ Senate service.

Senator Hollings’ retirement was the occasion for a great deal of media attention, as well as a number of awards and tributes in his honor. MPC worked with Hollings’ Senate press office to provide photographs used in a feature on “60 Minutes” in December. We also supplied information and numerous photos to local media who were covering Hollings’ retirement. When Columbia’s World Affairs Council presented Hollings with its 2004 Global Vision award, we provided photographs for an exhibit displayed at the December awards dinner. MPC also assisted Charleston’s Chamber of Commerce with an exhibit for their “Welcome Home” reception honoring Senator Hollings in January,
and mounted a third exhibit of photographs and memorabilia from Hollings’ career on the occasion of the unveiling of a Hollings portrait in the State House.

MPC staff, under the direction of Hollings Papers project archivist Lori Schwartz, continues work on processing the collection, including the new additions. Senator Hollings’ long record of public service and his significant role in modern South Carolina history ensure that his collection, once opened to research, will be one of the most valuable and important resources at the University of South Carolina.

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