The James Madison papers
URL: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/madison_papers/

[Visited Oct’05] Online access via the American Memory Project (CH, Dec’05, 43-2404) to the James Madison Papers from the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress gives researchers access to the finding aids, organization, and content of approximately 12,000 items captured in some 72,000 digital images. According to the custodians of this important resource, this collection is built from digitally scanned images of microfilmed copies of handwritten documents. Many document images link to searchable text transcriptions. With this resource researchers can now access many of these materials with considerable ease, although the quality of some images varies. The collection is organized into six series dating from 1723 to 1836. It includes a selection of Madison’s father’s letters, and documents about Madison’s early life and duties as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and the Continental Congress (1779-82). The site documents Madison’s impact on the Constitutional Convention of 1787, his work in the House of Representatives, and his time as secretary of state during Thomas Jefferson’s administration.

Correspondence and notes also trace Madison’s two terms as the fourth president. According to the Web site, notable correspondents in this collection include Dolley Madison, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Edmund Randolph, and Noah Webster. Access through this American Memory Project site also provides researchers with a time line of Madison’s life (1751-1836), essays, an introduction to his life and papers, a section on Madison and the Federal Constitutional Convention of 1787, and an interesting section on the codes and ciphers Madison employed to keep unauthorized people from reading private and public correspondence. The collection can be browsed by title, name, or series. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates and above; general readers.—L. Lampert, California State University—Northridge