

What another great year it has been for the Federal Records Center Program (FRCP), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and our customers.

We continue to make great progress on the timely disposal of records formerly under the Tobacco Industry Litigation (TIL) freeze, and the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) reduced its backlog to 85,000 pending cases in the fourth quarter, meeting a major milestone in its backlog reduction plan. Great work to our nationwide Transfer and Disposition team, the entire NPRC crew, and all FRCP staff as we continue to support the NARA mission and all of our customers—both Federal agencies and our nation’s veterans.

Workload

Demand for our core services has once again increased over prior years. In Fiscal Year 2016, we accepted 1.1 million cubic feet of new transfers, which brings our total holdings to 29.4 million cubic feet of records. At the same time, we disposed of 1.5 million cubic feet, beating last year’s disposal activity by almost 300,000 cubic feet. The increase in disposal activity is directly related to the lifting of the TIL freeze; records affected by the freeze are now being disposed. FRCP staff reviewed 80,000 transfers for disposal, processed 34,000 new transfers, accessioned 6,000 permanent transfers (79,000 cubic feet) as part of the Annual Move, and reviewed 9,700 transfers for possible accessioning in FY 2017.

We also provided responses to an impressive 7.9 million general reference requests and more than 1.2 million military and civilian reference requests.

Employee Engagement

I am especially proud of our continued progress in employee engagement. Each of the FRCs and their NPRC components continued focusing for a second year on their self-identified top three initiatives that matter most. Since we began our employee-driven “top three” focus, our Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) scores have shown a steady improvement. The first year, our scores increased by an impressive 4.4 percent overall, and last year they increased another 7.5 percent. We’re on the right track and building momentum. I hope you agree.

Many staff members are involved in making the FRCP a great place to work. Staff have joined local and national committees that contribute to creating a better workplace. Spanning safety issues, process enhancements, social activities, and health and wellness, staff have stepped up to improve their workplace by addressing topics that are

specific to their location. The teamwork in each of the centers and across the program are evident in our EVS results.

Equally gratifying is the excellent work done by our Better Workplace Bloggers on the Internal Collaboration Network (ICN). This team was recognized this year with an Archivist's Award for its focus on spreading the "good news" of the FRCP. The team shared information on Better Workplace initiatives in their FRCs, interviewed senior NARA leaders to get their input on the work of the FRCP, and shared best practices among the FRCs.

Operations

The TIL freeze lift project continued to be a high priority this year and the National Transfer & Disposition Team (NTD) played a significant role in planning and executing the lift. The TIL freeze was first applied in 1999 when the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) sued several major tobacco companies for fraudulent and unlawful conduct and reimbursement of tobacco-related medical expenses. The freeze was finally lifted on December 31, 2015.

Although the TIL freeze lift effort will not be finished for most agencies until the summer of 2018, the FRCs have already addressed 75 percent of the 2.2 million cubic feet of records immediately eligible for disposal by issuing disposal notices for more than 70,000 transfers since April 2015, which is a major accomplishment. Thanks to the occupancy of two new bays in the caves at the Kansas City FRC and our disposal actions, the FRCP has more than three million cubic feet of available space (10 percent space availability) after dropping below the critical five percent availability threshold in 2015.

Working in the background, the NTD also coordinated 55 records freezes that were either lifted, revised, or established this year. With support from the staff of the Office of the Chief Records Officer (AC), NTD reviewed 482 draft or final records schedules. This resulted in the execution of 87 mass data changes that updated the Archives and Records Center Information System holdings data and this group provided direct assistance to several FRCs to review transfers for potential disposal. It truly was a team effort this year!

The FRCP continued to move forward with improving ARCIS for NARA and agency customer users. By the end of the fiscal year, more than 70 agency customers have been deployed on ARCIS portal 2.0, which will save the FRCP thousands of staff hours

that would have been spent on entering transactional data into ARCIS and managing user accounts.

In addition, three new ARCIS functionalities that will improve the customer experience and our operations were developed this year. First, the new Disposition module will streamline the disposition process through providing our agency customers with portal access to review and approve disposition notifications. Second, the Customer Communication module will allow customers and FRC staff to receive and send manual and/or automatic communications about transaction status changes. Lastly, ARCIS is now capable of receiving transactions directly from customer records management systems without any manual data entry. In FY 2017, select agencies will pilot these new features before final versions are deployed to all customers.

In FY 2016, the Records Management Consulting Services team carried out two dozen projects to help agencies address the challenges facing their records management programs. We inventoried records, drafted new disposition schedules, and advised agencies how to maintain the records they need to do their work. We helped agencies meet the goals of the Managing Government Directive, updating their business practices so they maintain more reliable electronic records. Our work also enabled NARA to gain control over permanent records that were still in agency custody, improving public access to nearly 300 feet of records about the USS Monitor, a Civil War ironclad ship.

In FY 2016, the FRCP greatly increased its scanning capacity. We deployed new high-speed and specialty scanners across our Document Conversion Units (DCU), giving the FRCP the ability to digitize microfilm, microfiche, bound volumes, and oversize material at multiple locations. We continued long-term projects to digitize historically-significant records for the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Internal Revenue Service, and others. Of significance, NARA has begun to accession the National Register of Historic Places and Landmarks case files that our Fort Worth and Riverside DCUs have digitized. So far the Arkansas, Illinois, Michigan, and Texas records have been made available for researchers through NARA's online catalog, with more to come. Lastly, the Valmeyer DCU achieved a better than expected cycle time and a high quality review rate on its U.S. Coast Guard Service Treatment Records project.

NPRC

At the end of February 2016, the volume of military correspondence cases pending action by NPRC stood at more than 150,000 requests. Over the next seven months,

NPRC made significant progress in reducing its backlog by more than 65,000 requests, ending the year with 85,000 pending. The entire workforce, including Valmeyer staff and St. Louis Research Services staff, provided significant support to the effort. As a result of the backlog reduction that was achieved, NPRC customers realized much improved response times. Throughout the entire fiscal year, requests for separation documents (i.e., DD-214s) were consistently serviced in ten days or less. Response times on other requests, however, improved from an average of 55 work days in March to under 30 days by the end of the fiscal year. The Center is well positioned for further improvement in FY 2017.

In addition to its backlog reduction efforts, NPRC staff also planned and executed its first ever Congressional Open House, attracting more than 60 congressional staffers from across the United States to visit the Center in person and learn more about its programs and how they can benefit constituents.

NPRC also upgraded several administrative systems, including its office automation software to Microsoft Office 2013, its CMRS-configured web browser to Internet Explorer 11, and its production-supporting data warehouse, eAnalytics, to Business Intelligence version 11G. All were significant efforts that required many staff to do an extraordinary amount of planning, preparation, and testing to minimize the disruption to its workflow.

NPRC also implemented changes to its Career Advancement Program to facilitate non-competitive promotion of staff and developed and began execution of an aggressive career pathing effort. As a result of these efforts, more than 365 staff members were promoted during the fiscal year.

Customer Relations Management

The FRCP continued directly engaging its customers through the Customer Account Manager Team. Not only does the team ensure we have the appropriate funding and agreements in place for storage, service, and projects, but the hands on approach with “customer care” is an important tool in meeting one of NARA’s Strategic Goals--A Customer Focused Organization. Likewise, the customer service provided by records center staff is also key to our success.

The FRCP has received many letters of accolades from some of our customers about their positive interaction with our staff this year. I want to thank you for recognizing the

vital role of customer service and your dedication in continuing to assist us to "connect with customers." The following are a few typical examples of those customer comments:

- Sarah Bussell of the IRS complimented the great service Alicia Jones at the Kingsridge FRC provided when she was seeking a missing document: "AJ definitely goes out of her way and takes the extra mile to help us out".
- To NPRC Core 2 Expert Technician Rita Cann, from a Forensic Odontologist with the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System after Rita furnished military dental records that supported the identification of a veteran who went missing in 2010. . "I just wanted to again let you know how valuable your services and the services of the National Archives have been to our work. I think this makes the eighth case we have identified in the past two years."
- George Leong, the District 21 Records Manager for the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services thanked the entire staff at the San Bruno FRC for "ultra-quick assistance last week pulling the files for us. There was an urgent need to get the information from the files and your contributions were essential."
- Yeo Chang from the Army Family Advocacy Program in Korea wrote to recognize Carol Brooks and her colleagues at the NPRC-CPR for their outstanding support to her office. "When I reached out to Ms. Brooks several months ago about transferring our records to the NPRC, she was awesome! She replied to all my email inquiries right away and willingly took time to explain to me the procedures step by step. Thank you, Ms. Brooks, and thank you NARA for having such an awesome employee".

It is always gratifying to receive unsolicited letters of thanks for excellent service. I wanted to share just a sample with you to acknowledge, and to thank you for, the great work that you do every day.

During the past year new and updated marketing materials have been developed with details of the new and ongoing services that the FRCP provides to our customers. Those materials will be rolled out during FY 2017. A new FRC toolkit is in the final stages of development and will also be rolled out during FY 2017 as well.

While we continue to try to keep our content updated, we are planning a refresh of our website and social media tools in the new fiscal year to make the site more appealing to customers and help them find the information they need easily.

Looking Ahead

In FY 2017, the FRCP has some significant plans: the rollout of the new ARCIS disposal and communication modules, issue the Annual Disposition Profile so agencies are kept informed of cost savings they can realize through the timely destruction or accessioning of records, and continue disposing of records previously under the TIL and HCF freezes. We also plan to deploy a new DCU at the Lenexa FRC, establish process re-engineering teams to develop SOPs for reference and refile/interfile activities, and assist agencies via FastPack and records management consulting services.

For NPRC, plans include deployment of fiche production scanning technology to better support the reference process, an upgrade of CMRS to a browser independent platform, and the deployment of optical character recognition technology to support the incoming mail process. Also for NPRC, we are planning further career pathing activities aimed at providing upward mobility opportunities for its workforce while reducing its span of control so supervisors can better support their direct reports.

I am pleased to report that the FRCP continues to be financially strong, with cash reserves at an all-time high. This will allow us to be nimble in response to space planning, execute upgrades for CMRS and ARCIS, and improve the working conditions for our staff, both in and out of the stacks. We ended the fiscal year with a four percent profit, the maximum allowed by our enabling legislation. This is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all the staff in our records centers.

As we look to the future, the Archivist has approved our proposed FY 2017 rate schedule, which did not increase our prices above our FY 2016 levels. Our customers depend on our accurate, timely, and reliable services, as well as the financial stability that our partnerships allow. While our FY 2017 budget includes a near break-even bottom line, our perseverance in delivering customer orders will continue to win over customers throughout the FRCP.

Again, my sincere thanks to each and every FRCP staff member. Your collective efforts continue to make the FRCP and NARA a valued and unique resource to our customers.