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## MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### A Message from the Archivist of the United States



The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is our nation's record keeper. Every day we work to preserve and provide access to the records of our Government, whether those records are the Declaration of Independence, service records of military veterans, electronic cable files from the State Department, or documentation on homeland security issues that will make our country safer.

Throughout the history of our democracy, these records have been first-hand witnesses to the events that have shaped our country. They have documented the rights and entitlements of our citizens, and they have held our Government officials accountable to the people.

Although we are a small agency, we are vital to continuity of Government, homeland security, public trust, and national morale.

- We give legal authority to emergency actions of the President and executive agencies through publication in the *Federal Register*.
- We protect the plans, drawings, maps, and photographs of Federal facilities worldwide.
- We preserve and provide access to the military service records of 56 million veterans of our armed forces, ensuring that they and their families receive the benefits they have earned by defending our country.
- We are developing new technology that will enable the Government to share electronic information across space *and time*, reducing the risk that critical intelligence will be lost in obsolete hardware and software.
- We are preserving and processing the records of the 9/11 Commission for the Government officials who need to consult them as they consider the Commission's recommendations.
- We protect and display the founding documents of our country – the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights – which more than a million people a year come to see because these Charters of Freedom are the heart of the democracy we cherish.

Never before has NARA played such a critical role in our Government, and never before have the stakes been higher for our success.

That is why I am pleased to present this summary of the National Archives and Records Administration's Performance and Accountability Report for FY 2004. Thanks to support

from our stakeholders and partners and the efforts of our exceptional staff, we made significant progress on each of the goals of our Strategic Plan and our two preexisting material weaknesses. Our Strategic Plan focuses us on five goals – improving records management, meeting electronic records challenges, expanding opportunities for access, meeting storage and preservation needs of growing quantities of records, and strategically managing our resources. Our progress in these areas is detailed throughout this report, but I must highlight one special achievement here.

On August 3, 2004, NARA announced the award of design contracts for our revolutionary system that will preserve and provide access to electronic records across space and time, the Electronic Records Archives. The goal of this system is to make Government electronic records available virtually anytime, anywhere, to anyone with Internet access.

Let me share an example of how critical this system will be. The personnel files for Americans serving in our armed forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world are in digital formats. Our service members depend on these records not only for their careers in the military, but subsequently to obtain veteran's benefits, jobs, and insurance. But today no one can guarantee to Americans serving in our armed forces that these electronic records can be preserved for as long as needed. The Electronic Records Archives will enable the U.S. Government to honor its commitment to veterans; it will enable us to maintain their digital military personnel files intact and authentic.

I encourage you to read the rest of this report to discover other strides we have made in helping Federal agencies address records management problems, making it easier for our customers to find and order copies of records, preserving at-risk records for future generations, streamlining the Government's rulemaking process, and much more.

We also have made strides in ensuring that our resources are well managed with the proper oversight. It is my informed judgment that there is reasonable assurance that NARA's management controls are achieving their intended objectives and that the program and financial data contained in this report is valid and reliable. This assessment is based on management control evaluations and other written evaluations conducted in NARA's offices and staff organizations and senior management's knowledge gained from the daily operations of NARA programs and systems. I also have relied upon the advice of the Office of the Inspector General concerning this statement of assurance.

Pursuant to Section 4 of the Integrity Act, the financial subsystems of NARA generally conform to the objectives detailed in OMB Circular A-127, revised. Although three systems (Order Fulfillment Accounting System; Trust Fund-Gift Fund Financial Review, Analysis, and Reporting System; and Records Center Revolving Fund financial management systems) are not in complete conformance because they fail to meet the financial management system requirements, the non-conformances are not deemed material.

NARA, through its internal control evaluation, identified two material weaknesses in previous fiscal years – computer security in FY 2000 and collections security in FY 2001. We have made substantial progress this year in eliminating both material weaknesses. These actions are outlined in the full version of this report.

There is much more yet to be done, but I believe that our stakeholders and the public can be proud of their National Archives, which every day is protecting, preserving, and making available the essential evidence of our Government.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John W. Carlin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "C".

John W. Carlin  
Archivist of the United States

November 1, 2004

## Introduction

This Performance and Accountability Report represents the culmination of the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) program and financial management processes, which began with strategic and program planning, continued through the formulation and justification of NARA's budget to the President and Congress, through budget execution, and ended with this report on our program performance and use of the resources entrusted to us. This report was prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Chief Financial Officers Act, as amended by the Reports Consolidation Act of 2000, and covers activities from October 1, 2003, to September 30, 2004.

## How to Use This Report

This summary report describes NARA's performance measures, results, and accountability processes for FY 2004. In assessing our progress, we are comparing actual results against targets and goals set in our annual performance plan, which we developed to help us carry out our Strategic Plan. Our complete set of strategic planning and performance reports, including the full version of this report, is available on our web site at [www.archives.gov/about\\_us/reports/reports.html](http://www.archives.gov/about_us/reports/reports.html).

This report has four major parts:

- **Management's Discussion and Analysis**

Look here for our agency-wide performance and use of resources in FY 2004. You also will find information on the strategies we use to achieve our goals and the management challenges and external factors that affect our performance.

- **Performance Section** (*in full report*)

Look here for details on our performance by strategic goal and long-range performance target in FY 2004. This section covers the targets we were aiming for, how and why we met or did not meet them, and explanations of how we assess our performance and ensure its reliability.

- **Financial Section** (*in full report*)

Look here for details on our finances in FY 2004, our financial statements and notes, required supplementary information, and the reports from our external auditor and our Inspector General. Also included is information on our internal controls and an explanation of what kind of information each of our financial statements conveys.

- **Appendixes** (*in full report*)

Look here for our Inspector General's assessment of our agency's management challenges and other materials to aid in understanding this report.

## About NARA

The National Archives and Records Administration is our national record keeper. An independent agency created by statute in 1934, NARA safeguards the records of all three

branches of the Federal Government. Our job is to ensure ready access to essential evidence, and in doing so we serve a broad spectrum of American society. Genealogists and family historians; veterans and their authorized representatives; academics, scholars, historians, business and occupational researchers; publication and broadcast journalists; Congress, the Courts, the White House, and other public officials; Federal Government agencies and the individuals they serve; state and local government personnel; professional organizations and their members; students and teachers; and the general public – all seek answers from the records we preserve.

### ***Our Vision***

The National Archives is a public trust on which our democracy depends. It enables people to inspect for themselves the record of what Government has done. It enables officials and agencies to review their actions and help citizens hold them accountable. It ensures continuing access to essential evidence that documents

- the rights of American citizens,
- the actions of Federal officials, and
- the national experience.

To be effective, we at NARA must determine what evidence is essential for such documentation, ensure that Government creates such evidence, and make it easy for users to access that evidence regardless of where it is, or where they are, for as long as needed. We also must find technologies, techniques, and partners worldwide that can help improve service and hold down costs, and we must help staff members continuously expand their capability to make the changes necessary to realize the vision.

A New Hampshire man born in Italy to an American mother and an Italian father claimed he was a U.S. citizen and thus entitled to Social Security benefits but had no written documentation. He contacted our regional archives in Pittsfield, MA, in search of passenger arrival manifests for ships arriving in the United States in 1947, the year he came to America. An initial search turned up nothing, but then his brother recalled arriving on the *Saturnia* in the summer of 1947. A NARA archivist found him listed with his mother and brother as arriving on September 8, 1947. He wrote to NARA later thanking our staffer for “her determination and excellent researching abilities on my behalf in locating my immigration to the U.S.”

### ***Our Mission***

NARA ensures, for the Citizen and the Public Servant, for the President and the Congress and the Courts, ready access to essential evidence.

### ***Our Strategic Goals***

NARA’s strategic goals are set forth in our Strategic Plan, which we revised and updated in 2003. This update acknowledged recent achievements, especially in the e-Government arena; assessed new conditions facing us; and committed us to measure our value to the taxpayer by setting aggressive outcome-oriented performance targets.

Our five strategic goals are:

- Essential evidence is created, identified, appropriately scheduled, and managed for as long as needed.
- Electronic records are controlled, preserved, and made accessible for as long as needed.
- Essential evidence is easy to access regardless of where it is or where users are for as long as needed.
- All records are preserved in an appropriate environment for use as long as needed.
- NARA strategically manages and aligns staff, technology, and processes to achieve our mission.

### ***Our Organizational Structure***

We carry out our mission through a national network of archives and records services facilities stretching from Washington, DC, to the West Coast, and from Atlanta to Anchorage, including Presidential libraries documenting administrations back to Herbert Hoover. Additionally, we publish the *Federal Register*, administer the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), and make grants for historical documentation through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). We preserve and make available, in response to hundreds of thousands of requests, the records on which the entitlements of citizens, the credibility of Government, and the accuracy of history depend. More and more people are using our services and gaining access to our records through the Internet, whether by requesting copies of records through *inquire@nara.gov*, commenting on regulations at the Government-wide site *regulations.gov*, downloading milestone documents at *ourdocuments.gov*, searching online databases of records and information, or engaging in a host of other activities through *archives.gov*. We continue to encourage this trend, by adding online services and contributing to several of the President's e-Government initiatives, so that citizens everywhere have access to our vast holdings. An organizational chart, which provides an overview of NARA's structure, follows.



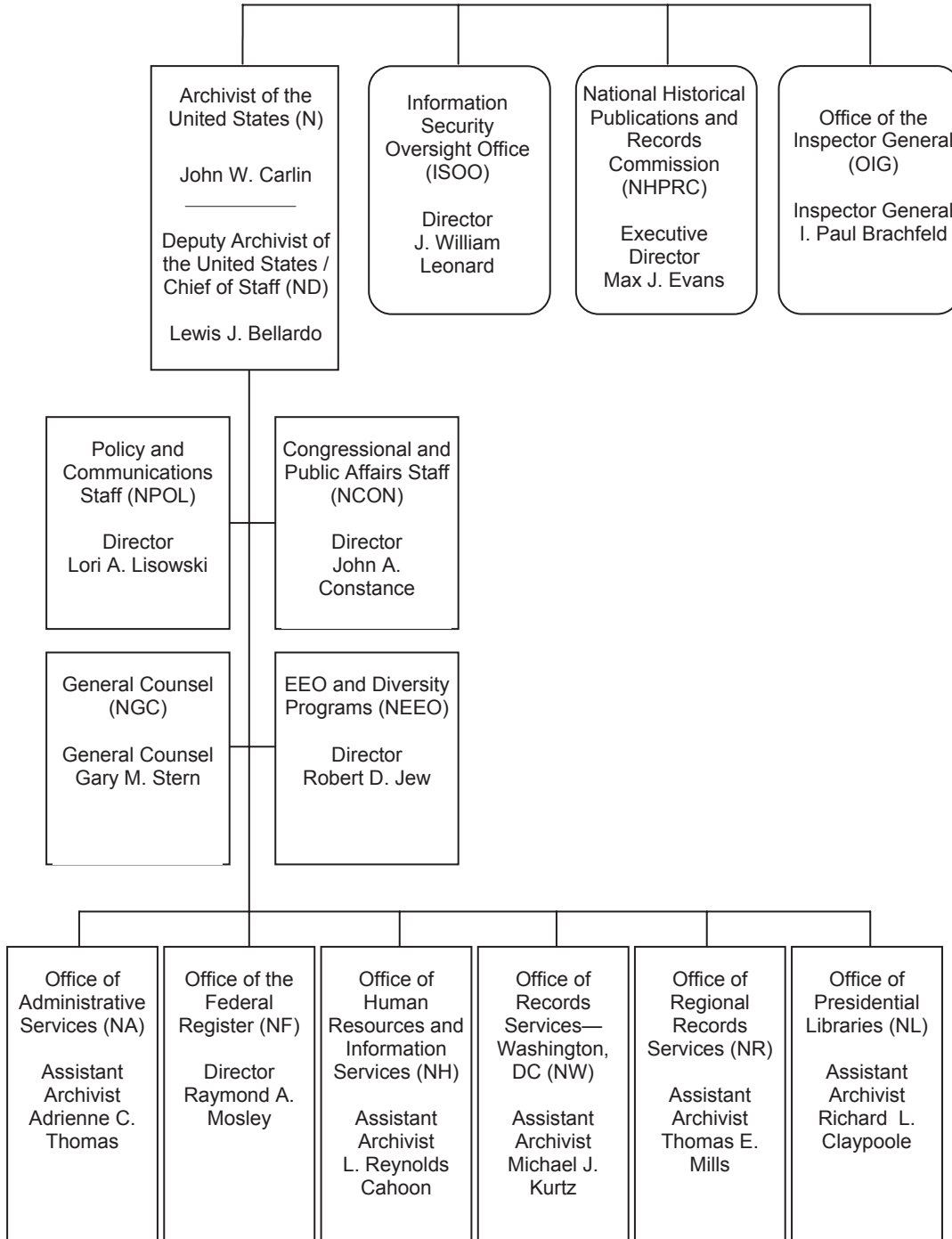


Figure 1. NARA's Organizational Structure

## NARA's Challenges and Management's Actions to Address These Challenges

September 11, 2001, has forever changed our Government. Security, continuity of operations, critical infrastructure, and emergency preparedness are now more important to every Federal agency. How NARA deals with these issues affects the entire Government and beyond. Our mission is to ensure that Government officials and the American public have ready access to essential evidence, and this mission puts us at the very heart of homeland security and all of its intergovernmental electronic communication challenges. In addition, NARA provided the 9/11 Commission with thousands of documents that were crucial to the Commission's work, and we now maintain the Commission's web site and are processing all of the Commission's records for use by Government officials and eventually the public. Whether publishing the *Federal Register*, protecting the vital records assets of Federal agencies nationwide, fulfilling the records requests of America's veterans, solving the challenge of preserving electronic records, or displaying our nation's Charters of Freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—to inspire the American public, NARA plays a critical role in keeping America safe, secure, and focused on our democratic ideals.

Never before has NARA played such an indispensable role in our Government, and never before have the stakes been higher for our success. Following are just a few examples of the ways in which the Government and the public are relying on NARA to meet vital needs.

- The *Federal Register* must be published each business day, regardless of weather, terrorist attacks, or other emergencies that may close other Federal operations. Publication, even during emergencies, is critical because many of the actions that Executive departments and the President need to take require the legal authority that comes from publication in the *Federal Register*.
- NARA responds to more than a million requests a year for information from or copies of Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs). Many of these requests come from veterans, their families, or organizations working on behalf of veterans to verify their military service, apply for benefits, or research medical conditions. A veteran's ability to obtain a job, housing, or medical care is often dependent on our ability to meet their information needs quickly.
- NARA protects the essential records of hundreds of Federal agencies and courts as well as the records of the Congress, the Supreme Court, and 13 Presidential administrations in 34 facilities nationwide. These records include everything from highly classified National Security Council policy memorandums to

A Bible found on a troop ship sailing from England to France in early 1945 ended up at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis in 1993. NPRC staff discovered that the military records of the Bible's owner, an Army private, had been destroyed in a 1973 fire. An archivist attempted to track down the soldier or his family but was unable to find anyone. So the Bible was included in the soldier's reconstructed military record. Eleven years later, NPRC received an Internet request from a woman asking for information on military awards for her brother, the long-lost owner of the Bible. The soldier, who was killed in Europe in March 1945, was entitled to several medals, and the Bible was sent to his sister.

congressional committee records to architectural drawings of Federal facilities to satellite photographs of major cities to the tax returns of individual Americans. All of this information and more is saved for as long as needed because it is essential for the effective operations of our Government, protecting the rights and entitlements of our citizens, understanding past decisions and informing future policy choices, holding appropriate officials accountable for their actions, and ensuring the safety and security of our country.

- Our greatest challenge is to ensure that valuable electronic records – from electronic OMPFs to geographic information systems to State Department cable files to transportation security databases – are managed and preserved over time so that key information is not lost in obsolescent hardware and software. To meet this challenge, NARA is developing a revolutionary system that will capture electronic information, regardless of its format, save it permanently, and make it accessible on whatever hardware or software is currently in use.

Let us turn for a moment to the specific challenges NARA faces:

**Security.** We store more than 27 million cubic feet of Federal records in 34 facilities nationwide, and we have the vital responsibility to protect these records, the staff who care for them, and the public who visits our facilities to use them. To do this, we must plan for a variety of natural and man-made emergencies that might leave our facilities vulnerable or require us to provide shelter for staff and the public.

**NARA Holdings Summary**  
FY 2004

	Artifacts (in items)	Traditional Holdings (in cu. ft.)	Electronic Holdings (in LDR*)
Washington, DC, Area Archives	1,491	2,221,395	5,593,834,700
Regional Archives	20	633,650	0
Records Centers	0	24,111,471	0
Presidential Libraries	538,614	238,111	35,308,040
Affiliated Archives	0	7,198	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>540,125</b>	<b>27,211,825</b>	<b>5,629,142,740</b>

\*LDR=Logical Data Records

Currently, NARA has a material weakness in collections security. We face three primary challenges in this area:

- We must provide quality service to our customers while instituting reasonable internal controls to prevent theft and to maintain documentation to support the recovery of alienated holdings and subsequent prosecution of those who would steal records that belong to all Americans.
- We must take every reasonable appropriate measure possible to limit access to records of importance for national security and act expeditiously in coordinating efforts with law enforcement entities as appropriate.
- We must protect and safeguard our facilities themselves and the staff who work in our facilities and the people who visit our facilities to mitigate the potential for damage and destruction through both natural and deliberately precipitated acts.

Having an effective security posture requires that we take a big picture, holistic view of all our facilities and holdings. We have a comprehensive plan to address our security weaknesses that includes improvements to (1) the way our staff work, through training

and changes to security policies; (2) the way records are handled, such as isolating high-risk records and improving records location controls; and (3) the way security is implemented, from the monitoring of records use by researchers to the creation of more visible deterrents to crime at our facilities. If we can implement this plan, we believe we will resolve our material weakness and greatly enhance security for our records, our staff, and our customers.

**Records Center and Records Management Activities**  
**FY 2004**

	<i>Federal Agency Reference Requests</i>	<i>Federal Agency Requests for Appointments to Review Records</i>	<i>Records Management Training</i>
Washington, DC, Area	719,566	2,181	479
<b>Office of Regional Records Services</b>			
Northeast Region (Boston)	363,547	892	541
Northeast Region (Pittsfield)	30,154	0	470
Northeast Region (New York)	0	368	51
Mid Atlantic Region (Philadelphia)	2,208,545	1,966	161
Southeast Region (Atlanta)	696,981	3,264	194
Great Lakes Region (Chicago)	109,242	4,525	93
Great Lakes Region (Dayton)	2,247,042	565	111
Central Plains Region (Kansas City)	675,079	841	62
Central Plains Region (Lee's Summit)	533,894	729	0
Southwest Region (Fort Worth)	619,953	3,070	135
Rocky Mountain Region (Denver)	289,937	698	189
Pacific Region (Laguna Niguel)	115,691	4,931	235
Pacific Region (San Bruno)	1,281,592	2,079	28
Pacific Alaska Region (Seattle)	122,993	3,609	248
National Personnel Records Center	820,948	156	0
<b>Regional Records Services Total</b>	<b>10,115,598</b>	<b>27,693</b>	<b>2,518</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,835,164</b>	<b>29,874</b>	<b>2,997</b>

**Facilities.** Our 34 facilities also are our first line of defense for records preservation. Providing appropriate physical and environmental storage conditions is the most cost-effective means to ensure records preservation. We face an ongoing challenge, however, to ensure that all of our facilities meet necessary standards for the storage of Federal, and particularly archival, records. We also must ensure that other entities that store Federal records comply with existing facility standards. Our Strategic Plan includes several strategies for meeting our goal to preserve all records in an appropriate environment for use as long as needed. Our ability to meet our storage and preservation challenges will be a key factor in the future course of our agency.

**Information Technology.** To serve our Government and public customers well, we must have a reliable, expandable, high-capacity, cost-efficient information technology and communications infrastructure. For us to be able to use automation to streamline operations and achieve cost-efficiencies, to develop Internet-based applications for agency and public access to information, and to provide direct online access to electronic records and digital images, we need a sound technical infrastructure. In fact, if our applications perform poorly, we may impede the work of other Federal agencies or the efforts of the public to document their rights and entitlements.

The rapid pace of technological change and innovation in today's environment does offer wide-ranging opportunities for improved information management. Information technology – particularly the World Wide Web – has become integral to providing government services and moving the Federal Government's immense stores of information out of the "back office," onto the Internet, and into the home and office. As NARA moves to fully embrace e-Government and seize new technological opportunities, we must be able to quickly adapt to new technologies and leverage technical expertise to meet the citizen's ever-growing expectations for quality service.

Although NARA does have a material weakness in computer security, we have made significant progress in resolving the weakness. Policies and procedures for NARA's computer security program have been issued, and a computer security awareness program for employees is in place. Our firewall and intrusion detection system have been enhanced, and we updated the contingency plans for all of our IT systems. We still need to complete testing of all of the contingency plans and develop and test an overall disaster recovery plan for the entire IT infrastructure. Completion of these activities should resolve the material weakness.

**Human Resources.** The proliferation of technology has forever changed the nature of Federal record-keeping. Most Federal records are now created electronically, and users increasingly expect immediate electronic access to them. Traditional paper documents are being overtaken by databases, digital images, digital sound, e-mail with attachments, geographic information systems, web sites, and other electronic record formats. The challenges associated with acquiring, preserving, and making available these myriad electronic records are immense and can only be met through creativity, leadership, entrepreneurship, and a willingness to think beyond the conventional. The Federal Government is looking to NARA, as the nation's record keeper, to deliver these creative, entrepreneurial solutions.



*Archives technician Amy Koehler assists a researcher at a microfilm reader at NARA's Great Lakes Region in Chicago. (Photo by Mary Ann Zulevic)*

We must respond to this call for leadership if we want to actively deliver value and innovation rather than simply react to the changes taking place around us. To do this, we must ensure that our staff has the skills and competencies needed to lead the provision of records services in the 21st century, and we must ensure that the systems and processes we use to acquire and manage our staff are efficient, streamlined, flexible, and appropriate for today's modern workforce.

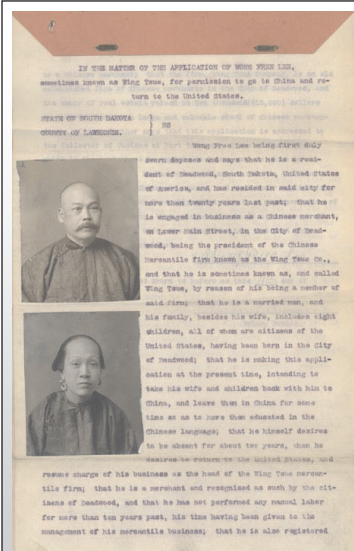
Our Strategic Plan commits us to hiring, developing, sustaining, and retaining staff according to the competencies needed to achieve our strategic goals. In addition, the President's Management Agenda and Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework instruct agencies to engage in serious consideration of the skills and competencies needed to perform the work of the Government in the 21st century, to align human resources to support mission-critical activities, and to streamline and enhance delivery of essential human resources services by leveraging technology and other process flexibilities.

Our future success as the Government's leader for records services will depend in large part on the staff that we hire today. We must ensure that we have the right people in the right positions at the right time to move the agency forward at this extraordinary time in our history.

**Records Access.** The Federal Government protects hundreds of millions of classified documents at great expense. As noted in the Information Security Oversight Office's (ISOO) most recent report to the President, "many senior officials will candidly acknowledge that the government classifies too much information." ISOO also noted that "one of the principal procedures for maintaining the effectiveness of the classification system is to remove from the safeguarding system information that no longer requires protection in the interest of national security." This means undertaking automatic and systematic declassification, as well as mandatory declassification reviews, in accordance with Executive Order 12958, as amended. Nevertheless, declassification activity across the Government has been declining for the past several years.

Federal agencies have a deadline of December 31, 2009, to review and resolve their equities in security-classified documents more than 25 years old that have been referred to them by other agencies. We estimate that there are approximately 80 million pages in NARA's holdings that must be acted on by the agencies prior to the 2009 deadline. Many of these documents must be reviewed by two or more agencies. We need to make these documents available to the agencies in a systematic fashion to enable them to accomplish their missions, protect permanently valuable Federal records, and prevent unauthorized releases of still sensitive information.

Failure to establish a systematic process for handling referrals poses a significant risk for inadvertent release of still sensitive information. If agencies resolve referrals in an ad hoc manner, the Government loses control of the process. We could not be sure that all referred documents had been acted on because we would have no way of tracking agency actions. With no standard way of recording agency determinations, it is likely

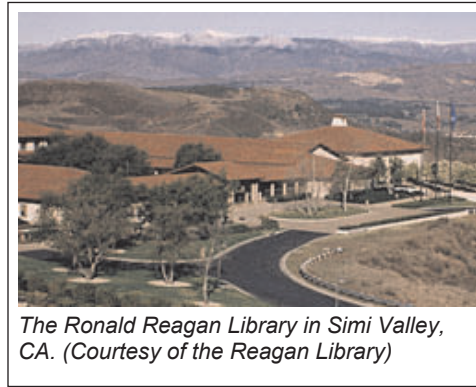


Members of the leading Chinese family in the pioneer town of Deadwood, SD, were able to participate in last July's Pioneer Celebration after NARA found records and photographs of their ancestors' immigration to America. NARA's Pacific Alaska Regional Archives (Seattle) located the records for the family in case files relating to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was designed to keep out Chinese laborers from 1882 to 1943. Such files generally contain photographs of individuals or businesses, transcripts of interviews, maps of locations in China or the United States, and various government documents, such as birth and marriage certificates.

that we will make mistakes in interpreting agency decisions when records are processed for release. Without an organized referral process, it will be impossible to meet the deadline. Therefore, in cooperation with other agencies, NARA is establishing an inter-agency referral center to provide a systematic approach to the referral process.

*Wong Free Yee's application to go to China in 1902 with his wife and eight children and later return to the United States. The family used the document 100 years later to prove their long connection to Deadwood, SD. (Chinese Exclusion Act Case file RS406, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85)*

Classified records in our Presidential libraries also pose a huge challenge for us because they are often extremely sensitive, filled with multiple equities, and highly sought after by Government officials and the public. The Ronald Reagan Library holds the next Presidential collection to which the Executive order must be applied and has classified holdings of approximately 8 million pages. This represents more classified pages than all of the previous libraries combined. Previously, we implemented the Remote Archives Capture (RAC) Project, a collaborative program among NARA, CIA, and other classifying agencies through which classified Presidential materials at field locations are electronically scanned and brought to Washington for review by equity-holding agencies. So far this project has scanned nearly 2 million pages from the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford, and Carter libraries, but the dramatic increase in volume of classified records from the Reagan administration and on may make it impossible for us to comply with the Executive order.



*The Ronald Reagan Library in Simi Valley, CA. (Courtesy of the Reagan Library)*

***Electronic Records Management.*** In this world of exponentially increasing volumes and formats of electronic records, having the ability to find, manage, use, share, and dispose of records – which is the essence of records management – is vital for the efficient and effective functioning of the Federal Government. Records management is an essential component of knowledge management, and yet records and information are rarely managed as agency business assets and records management remains marginalized in many agencies. This undermines the authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability of Federal records and information essential for Government business, particularly electronic Government, and public use.

This Government-wide challenge requires collaborative, creative solutions with benefits that are obvious to Federal agencies. That is why we are undertaking a multipronged approach to improving electronic records management that relies on a suite of strategies, policies, standards, and tools that facilitate the effective and efficient management of Federal records. Ultimately, records management should become so seamlessly integrated into agencies' business processes that they don't even realize it; what they would notice instead is that they can easily find the information they need, when they need it, in a form they can use to conduct their business. Getting to this outcome requires that we both transform our own records management program and in turn that we transform records management across the Government. Given the urgent need to improve delivery of Government services, enable the sharing of information across agencies, and manage records and transactions more effectively, we could not wait to undertake these transformations sequentially. Therefore, we have launched several projects and are collaborating on several others that address both of these transformations simultaneously:

- Records Management Initiatives – a series of coordinated NARA initiatives to transform NARA's approach to Federal records management for all records.

- Electronic Records Management Presidential E-Government Initiative – one of the Administration’s initiatives to ensure the success of e-Government by providing guidance and tools for the effective management of electronic records.
- Electronic Records Policy Working Group – a subgroup of the Interagency Committee on Government Information, which NARA chairs, that is developing recommendations for Government-wide policies that will strengthen records management.
- Electronic Records Archives – the key tool that will allow NARA and Federal agencies to manage, preserve, and have access to electronic records over space and time.

We are also committed to working with our Inspector General (IG) to identify and address significant challenges. The Inspector General’s Top Ten Management Challenges, which are highlighted in the IG’s semiannual reports to Congress and include the audits, investigations, and reviews they have undertaken to identify and address them, are included in the full version of this report at [www.archives.gov/about\\_us/reports/annual\\_report.html](http://www.archives.gov/about_us/reports/annual_report.html).



## Performance Highlights

### *Spotlight on e-Government Services*

As spelled out in our Strategic Plan, NARA preserves and makes accessible Government records that document the rights of our citizens, the actions of our Federal officials, and our national experience.

For many years, this has involved preserving those pieces of parchment and paper that have been created over more than two centuries of our nation's government. Now, however, we face the challenge of preserving the records of the present and future, which are overwhelmingly electronic.

Our response to this challenge is the Electronic Records Archives (ERA). It will capture Government electronic records, save them indefinitely, and make them accessible in the future with whatever computer hardware and software is in use.

ERA will give us the means to preserve and provide sustained access to Federal Government electronic records of continuing value and to provide economical storage and retrieval services for electronic records that remain under the legal control of the originating agencies. The goal of the ERA program is to enable NARA to preserve and provide access to any type of electronic record created anywhere in the Federal Government. ERA will provide a comprehensive, systematic, and dynamic means of preserving and providing continuing access to authentic electronic records over time.

In 2004, we reached a significant milestone in our efforts to build ERA to manage and preserve the growing mass of electronic records. On August 3, we selected two national contractors to participate in a one-year competition to develop the best design for ERA. In 2005, we will choose one of them to build it.

The development of ERA will have countless ramifications for other parts of government, private businesses and institutions, and individuals. For example, digital military personnel files for Americans serving in our armed forces today must be preserved for decades to chronicle their military careers and ensure their veterans' rights and benefits. ERA is our solution to preserve those records. In addition, NARA is developing new standards to speed the transfer of electronic records to ERA, and ERA will stimulate advances in technology that will be available to the whole Government. Finally, we have worked closely with many partners to ensure that this technology is scaleable for use by state and local governments, the private sector, and other institutions with a need to preserve electronic records over time.

The ERA announcement was one of our most important steps toward managing and preserving electronic records, but it represents only a part of our efforts to redesign the way the Government manages and preserves its electronic records.



*Archivist John W. Carlin speaks at an August 3, 2004, press conference to announce the award of two contracts to design the Electronic Records Archives. (Photo by Darryl Herring)*



























































