

# National Archives and Records Administration

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**NARA 201**  
January 28, 2005

**SUBJECT:** NARA Correspondence

**TO:** Office Heads, Staff Directors, ISOO, NHPRC, OIG

**Purpose of this transmittal memo.** This transmits revised policy directive NARA 201, NARA Correspondence.

**Explanation of changes.** “Memorandum” replaces the terms “informal letter” and “internal memo” throughout the directive.

**Canceled directive.** NARA 201, dated September 29, 2003, is canceled.

JOHN W. CARLIN  
Archivist of the United States

Attachment

# National Archives and Records Administration

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NARA 201  
January 28, 2005

**SUBJECT:** NARA Correspondence

## **201.1 Purpose of this directive**

This directive provides NARA's policy for preparing and handling NARA correspondence. The procedures in this directive are intended to ensure well-written and effective correspondence that, by its appearance and style, reflects favorably upon NARA. Correspondence that is consistent in style contributes to a consistency in NARA's public image, demonstrating that NARA speaks with one voice regarding its mission and its business. While most of the specific procedures in this directive apply to communications written on paper, the general practices for addressing, writing, and recordkeeping also apply to communication by e-mail.

## **201.2 Authority for this directive**

- a. 41 CFR 102-193.20g
- b. While its guidance is not mandatory, the U. S. Government Correspondence Manual, 1992, was used as a source for writing this directive.

## **201.3 Supplements to this directive**

- a. The NARA Style Guide establishes NARA standards of punctuation, word usage, and grammar to promote clear and effective writing and to comply with the President's June 1, 1998, memorandum concerning plain language.
- b. The Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence contains samples of letters, memos, and e-mails, and detailed guidance for preparing correspondence.

## **201.4 What is NARA correspondence?**

NARA correspondence is official written communications to entities outside NARA and to other NARA offices and units. The types of correspondence and their formats are described in subpars. a-e. For specific formatting, such as margins, line spacing, etc., see the Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence. For templates, go to the "new file" section in Microsoft Word or the forms section on NARA@work.

| Type of Correspondence | Description/Addressees                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Format and Availability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a. Formal letter       | Correspondence addressed to entities outside NARA, including the President and Vice President of the United States; White House staff members; Members of Congress; the courts; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) officials; heads of departments and agencies; state, local, or foreign government officials; non-Federal addressees who are performing contractor or consulting services for NARA; other Federal agencies that provide ongoing services to NARA (e.g., GSA Public Buildings Service); and members of the general public, organizations, private companies, and associations | Use NARA letterhead paper (printed with blue ink and containing the official NARA seal, dated 1985). See subpars. 201.27e and 201.27f for availability.                                                                                                                                |
| b. Memorandum          | Correspondence between NARA offices/units or from a NARA official to a NARA employee, whether transmitted in paper format or electronic format attached to an e-mail                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Use the appropriate facility-specific Word template that contains the Date, To, From, and Subject information, available on NARANET and printed in black ink.                                                                                                                          |
| c. Form letter         | Correspondence for which a pre-written letter can be used (e.g., replies to frequently asked reference questions, NARA bulletins, Press Releases) that transmits identical information to a large number of individuals or entities<br><br><b>NOTE:</b> If more than 100 of the same letter are used annually, the letter must have a form number approved by the Information Resources Policy and Projects Division (NHP).                                                                                                                                                                       | Depending on the addressee, use the appropriate facility-specific Word template that contains the Date, To, From, and Subject information or the template named "letterhead" (e.g., "Archives I Letterhead"), or the NHP-approved form, available on NARANET and printed in black ink. |
| d. E-mail              | Electronic communications to send information quickly and easily when speed and responsiveness are important                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | See the Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence for guidance on formatting and style.                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| e. Fax                 | Fax is a system for transmitting and reproducing written and graphic material by                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | As a cover sheet, use the NARA Facsimile                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|  |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                  |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | means of signals sent over telephone lines. The material that is being transmitted also is called a facsimile or fax. | Transmittal template available on NARANET. See the Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence for guidance on formatting and style. |
|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 201.5 Terms used in this directive

a. **Office head/office** refers to ISOO, NA, NCON, NEEO, NF, NGC, NH, NHPRC, NL, NPOL, NR, NW, and OIG.

b. **Unit head/unit** refers to organizational components within each office (e.g., NAF, NFS, NWCTC within the Washington, DC, area); regional administrators, assistant regional administrators, and directors of programs within the Office of Regional Records Services (NR); and Presidential library directors.

## 201.6 To whom does this directive apply?

This directive applies to all NARA employees who write, review, edit, sign, type, file, or control NARA correspondence.

## 201.7 Who is responsible for NARA correspondence?

a. **The Policy and Communications Staff (NPOL)** is responsible for establishing official practices, standards, and procedures for written communications.

b. **Office heads or their designees** establish reasonable standards of timeliness for replies to general correspondence under their control to ensure that all NARA standards regarding content, format, and timeliness of reply are applied to correspondence under their control (e.g., customer service standards). For controlled correspondence (see par. 201.9), the controlling office/unit establishes the timeliness in accordance with applicable law(s).

**EXAMPLE:** Freedom of Information Act requests

### c. Writers

(1) Review and assemble background information, including all information and facts concerning the subject;

(2) Write in a clear and concise manner, in accordance with the NARA Style Guide;

(3) If necessary, coordinate with other offices/units that are involved in the matter;

(4) Prepare the final correspondence that is consistent in style and format, and

editorially correct; and

- (5) Proofread the final product.

d. **Typist (or writer, if the same)** determines and applies the appropriate format, form of address, number of copies, and other typing and preparation requirements, as stated in this directive.

**201.8 What special handling applies to National security-classified correspondence?**

Correspondence that contains information or attached documents with Top Secret, Secret, or Confidential information relating to national security must be properly marked, transmitted, and safeguarded in accordance with the Information Security Manual (INFO. SECURITY 202).

**201.9 Controlled correspondence**

Certain incoming correspondence is controlled by means of a record of receipt or control log to ensure that priority correspondence is cleared properly and replied to within established deadlines. The types of controlled correspondence are explained in pars. 201.10 through 201.13.

**201.10 Correspondence controlled by the Office of the Archivist**

a. The following types of correspondence are controlled by the Office of the Archivist:

- (1) White House correspondence, except requests for Office of the Federal Register (NF) publications specified in 1 CFR;
- (2) Congressional correspondence, except that explained in par. 201.12 and subpar. 201.16b;
- (3) GAO audit reports;
- (4) Policy letters;
- (5) Complaint letters that are addressed to the Archivist or that concern NARA policies; and
- (6) Other correspondence that, in the opinion of the Washington, DC, area office/unit head, warrants a reply by the Archivist (see subpar. 201.14b).

b. The Office of the Archivist logs in controlled correspondence and uses OF 41, Routing Slip, to route to an office(s) for a reply. The replying office must e-mail or send a copy of the reply as specified on the OF 41.

**201.11 Handling White House correspondence**

White House mail is controlled by the Office of the Archivist. When delivered directly to another NARA office/unit, except as noted in subpar. 201.10a(1), hand-carry or fax it to the

Archivist for control. The response to White House mail is signed by the Archivist. (Exceptions are noted on the OF 41; also see subpar. 201.14a.) If the response is signed by anyone other than the Archivist, provide a “cc:” of the response to the Archivist. The preparing office/unit must also provide a “cc:” of the response to the White House when responding to a letter referred by the White House for direct reply. (See subpar. 201.22d for preparing courtesy copies [cc:].)

## **201.12 Handling congressional correspondence**

### **a. Control and signature**

#### **(1) Nonreference mail**

| <b>Type of Nonreference Congressional Mail</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Controlled and Signed By</b>                                  | <b>Routing</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) Congressional correspondence received in the Washington, DC, area                                                                           | The Archivist                                                    | Send to the Archivist and to the Congressional and Public Affairs Staff (NCON), a copy of the response to a nonreference congressional inquiry that is signed by any official other than the Archivist (except for correspondence described in subpar. (1)(e)). |
| (b) Congressional inquiries concerning the application of established policies and programs for which NH is responsible (e.g., human resources) | Assistant Archivist for Human Resources and Information Services | Send to NH                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| (c) Congressional correspondence concerning the administration of the records of Congress                                                       | Director, Center for Legislative Archives (NWL)                  | Send to NW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| (d) Routine form letters providing information regarding and confirming constituent tours                                                       | Director, Museum Programs (NWE)                                  | Send to NW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| (e) Letters from Members and committees requesting Federal Register publications as specified in 1 CFR                                          | Director of the Federal Register                                 | Send to NF                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

(2) Reference mail – Referrals of constituent requests for information from or about accessioned records, or similar requests from congressional sources, are delivered to,

controlled by, and signed by the office heads for the Office of Presidential Libraries (NL), NR, or the Office of Records Services – Washington, DC (NW) (or their designees), depending upon which office controls the records. Requests addressed to NCON are logged by NCON and then forwarded to NL, NR, or NW, depending upon which office controls the records. NCON does not retain a copy. (See par. 201.16 for reference inquiries about accessioned records outside the Washington, DC, area.)

(3) Misdirected mail – If congressional mail described in subpars. (1) and (2) is received by other units, hand-carry it to the appropriate office. All other congressional correspondence must be hand-carried to NCON for control.

**b. Addressing replies**

(1) Replies to congressional staff members – NARA attempts to keep each Member of Congress informed of all correspondence with his or her staff.

(a) If the congressional staff member who signs the correspondence is in the Member's Washington, DC, office, address the reply to the Member of Congress at his or her Washington, DC, office.

(b) If the congressional staff member who signs the correspondence is in the Member's state or district office, address and mail the reply to the Member at that location, include the name of the staff member in an attention line and send a courtesy copy to the Washington, DC, office. (See subpar. 201.22d.)

(2) Replies to constituents – When the incoming letter from a Member of his or her staff requests a reply to a constituent, write the reply directly to the constituent with a courtesy copy to the appropriate congressional office. (See subpar. 201.22d.)

**201.13 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act requests**

Handle FOIA requests in accordance with NARA 1602, Access to Records Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Refer to ADMIN. 201, ch. 1, part 6 for handling Privacy Act requests.

**201.14 Correspondence requiring the Archivist's signature**

Officials having signature authority or given responsibility for preparing correspondence for the Archivist's signature are responsible for the content of, and ensuring the timeliness of, outgoing correspondence.

a. **Formal letters requiring the Archivist's signature**

| <b>Correspondence Addressed To</b>                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Exceptions</b>                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| President, Vice President, White House staff members, Justices of the Supreme Court, heads of Federal departments/agencies or major bureaus within department/agencies, heads of state and foreign countries | Routine letters to the Counsel to the President (These letters can be signed by the General Counsel (NGC) and the Director, Presidential Materials Staff [NLMS].)                             |
| Members of Congress                                                                                                                                                                                          | Replies to routine reference and information requests that are covered in par. 201.12, and certain correspondence originated in units outside the Washington, DC, area covered in par. 201.16 |

b. The Archivist normally answers correspondence that questions policy, expresses a complaint, or asks for a commitment to a new initiative and comes from the public, agencies, professional groups, or organizations. If an office head or other official receives correspondence that appears to meet these criteria, refer the letter and a draft response to the Archivist to determine who signs the response. NARA officials must exercise judgment whether to refer the letter to the Archivist or answer it directly.

c. In most cases a formal letter prepared for the Archivist's signature must be addressed directly to the Cabinet member, agency head, Member of Congress, or state or local official regardless of the position of the official who signed the incoming letter. However, there are exceptions depending upon the subject matter, personal relationships, or policy considerations. If there is a question, contact the Archivist's office.

**201.15 Correspondence signed by NARA officials other than the Archivist**a. **Memos within an office/unit**

- (1) Appropriate office heads sign office-numbered memos.
- (2) Office/unit heads routinely address correspondence, including instructions, and announcements to persons in their charge.
- (3) Office/unit heads may address correspondence to officials in their chain of command.
- (4) Unit heads may sign correspondence directed to only one unit within their office.
- (5) NARA officials with recognizable titles, such as Records Officer, Data Standards Coordinator, Chief Information Officer, or Public Affairs Officer may sign memos.

b. **Memos between offices/units**

(1) The Archivist or Deputy Archivist signs multiple-addressed correspondence directed to employees of more than one office or to multiple office heads with the exception of:

- (a) Legislative tracking information (NCON may sign);
- (b) NARA notices (see NARA 113, NARA Notices); and
- (c) Requests for comments or clearance of NARA directives or external policy (signed by the Director, NPOL).

(2) Office heads may address correspondence to another office head.

(3) Office heads may address correspondence to unit heads or to employees of those units within their chain of command.

(4) NARA officials with recognizable titles, such as Records Officer, Data Standards Coordinator, Chief Information Officer, or Public Affairs Officer may sign memos.

**c. Correspondence outside NARA (excluding e-mail)**

(1) Policy-related issues - Only the Archivist or Deputy Archivist signs correspondence on NARA-wide policy or policy-related issues to OMB, General Accounting Office (GAO), or other agencies.

(2) Payroll matters to the General Services Administration (GSA) – If policy related, the Assistant Archivist for Administrative Services (NA) must sign. For routine matters to GSA Payroll, the Director of the Budget and Finance Division (NAB) signs.

(3) Routine finance matters to the GSA Office of Finance - The Director, NAB signs.

(4) Officials designated by the Archivist (e.g., Records Officer, Data Standards Coordinator, Chief Information Officer, or Public Affairs Officer) may sign correspondence relating to their programs.

**d. Congressional correspondence** – See par. 201.12 and subpar. 201.16b.

**e. Reference correspondence** – Office heads determine appropriate levels for signature of non-congressional reference correspondence.

**f. Records disposition, agency service, and records center service matters** - The Director, Modern Records Program (NWM) and the Assistant Archivist for NR (or their designees) may write directly to OMB, GAO, GSA, and other Federal agencies on routine matters, including notices to records officers.

g. **E-mail** – Individuals as approved by their supervisors, may send e-mails to organizations outside NARA, relating to official NARA business. Follow the same writing practices as specified in the NARA Style Guide

#### **201.16 Correspondence prepared by Presidential libraries and regional records services facilities**

a. **General** – Prepare in accordance with this directive. For correspondence controlled by the Office of the Archivist (see par. 201.10), send the original incoming correspondence and signature package by express delivery service to the Archivist.

b. **Congressional**

(1) Reference correspondence – Directors of Presidential libraries and regional administrators control and sign routine reference correspondence. Office heads may require that copies of replies be provided. If a reference inquiry would be more appropriately answered by another NARA office/unit, forward it by express delivery service, fax, or e-mail and mail the original as a followup.

**NOTE:** NR and NL determine the appropriate levels for signature of non-congressional reference correspondence.

(2) Complaints and policy questions – If a complaint or question is received about NARA policy issues, telephone or e-mail the appropriate office head for instructions. Less serious complaints and commonly asked questions about NARA policies may be answered locally with the verbal or e-mail concurrence of the office head. If the office head determines that a Washington, DC, area office is better able to respond, send the letter by express delivery service to the Archivist.

(3) Personnel/human resources matters – Send inquiries by express delivery service to NH, along with readily available background information. Regional administrators and Presidential library directors (or their designees) must send a copy of the inquiry by express delivery service to NH through NR or NL. The Human Resources Services Division (NHH) handles the reply, coordinating with other units if necessary.

(4) Routine relations with district offices – Directors of Presidential libraries and directors of archival and records center programs may reply to local congressional inquiries and initiate correspondence about such activities as:

(a) Technical assistance and record storage services provided to local congressional offices by NARA;

(b) Tours of NARA facilities provided to local congressional staff members;

(c) Courtesy notices to local congressional staff members of exhibits,

film showings, or other public activities or services of the unit; and

(d) With the concurrence of NCON and the appropriate office head, invite Members of Congress or local staff members to participate in public activities, such as exhibit openings or symposia.

**NOTE:** Address such correspondence to the member's local office only. Send courtesy copies to the office head or a designee for distribution with NARA Washington, DC, area offices and to the Washington, DC, congressional office. (See subpar. 201.22d.)

(5) Other correspondence – Other congressional correspondence is handled in accordance with par. 201.12. Use express delivery service to send incoming letters to the Archivist. Draft replies may be sent to the Archivist or the office head either by express delivery service, fax, or e-mail.

**c. Signature authority for other correspondence (outside the Washington, DC, area)**

(1) The Archivist signs correspondence to officials listed in subpar. 201.14a.

(2) Reference correspondence is signed as prescribed by the office head.

(3) Directors of Presidential libraries or regional administrators, or their administrative officers or other designees may sign letters to local GSA officials concerning operation and maintenance of the facility and to GSA Finance and Payroll on routine matters concerning employee pay or individual financial transactions or reports.

(4) Office heads may issue further guidance concerning the signature authority of local officials.

**201.17 Using acronyms, abbreviations, and organization codes**

Follow the NARA Style Guide for using acronyms and abbreviations. Normally, acronyms and organization codes are spelled out the first time used. (For organization codes, see Appendix B of NARA 101, NARA Organization and Delegation of Authority.) Most importantly, always consider the reader.

**201.18 Salutations and complimentary closes**

The Guide for Preparing NARA Correspondence contains examples and detailed guidance for adding salutations and complimentary closes. Insert salutations before the person's name or title. In general, if a salutation is used, include a complimentary close, leaving one blank line after the last line of the final paragraph (before the signature block).

| Type of Correspondence | Salutations and Complimentary Closes                                                                           |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a. Formal letter       | Use "Dear" as the salutation and add "Sincerely," as the close                                                 |
| b. Memorandum          | Not necessary                                                                                                  |
| c. Form letter         | Optional                                                                                                       |
| d. E-mail              | Optional                                                                                                       |
| e. Fax                 | Not necessary for the cover sheet but this directive applies to attachments that are considered correspondence |

### 201.19 Signature blocks

- a. Leave four blank lines after "Sincerely" (formal letters) or after the last line of text (all other correspondence) before the signature name. For e-mail, one line is sufficient.
- b. Insert the signing official's name in capital letters followed by his or her title in initial caps.

#### EXAMPLE:

Sincerely,  
*[4 blank lines]*  
 JOHN W. CARLIN  
 Archivist of the United States

### 201.20 Enclosures and attachments

If additional material is accompanying the written correspondence, indicate it as follows: For formal letters use the word "Enclosure." Use "Attachment" on memos and e-mails.

### 201.21 Concurrence and approval lines

When approval or concurrence by another official is necessary, type the appropriate format below the signature block on the file copies, but not on the original.

#### EXAMPLES:

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Assistant Archivist for Administrative Services

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**OR**

Concurrence:

\_\_\_\_\_ NAB \_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ NAT \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**201.22 File copies**

To avoid unnecessary expense in preparing, reading, filing, and disposing of copies of correspondence, keep the number of copies to a minimum. The office or unit preparing the correspondence for signature (originating unit) must prepare file copies as specified in subpars. a – d, in accordance with FILES 203, NARA Files Maintenance and Records Disposition Manual (NARA records schedule). This paragraph applies to signed, paper correspondence. However, if an e-mail serves as the record copy, maintain it in accordance with the NARA records schedule and keep to a minimum courtesy and blind courtesy copies described in subpars. d and e.

| <b>Type of File Copy</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Who Maintains</b>                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a. Official file         | The official file copy is part of the complete official record. The author and all reviewers must initial this copy. When identical correspondence is sent to multiple addresses, maintain only one official copy, annotated with the additional addresses. Identify the official copy on the document itself by highlighting the "Official File" line with a yellow marker and also in the upper right-hand corner of the first page of the document (by drawing a line with the yellow marker, handwriting the word "Official," or stamping the page with an "Official" stamp). | The originating unit determines the keeper of the official file (usually the originating unit), in accordance with the NARA records schedule. |
| b. Reading file          | The reading file copy is a chronological record of the correspondence and can be used as a cross-reference to locate the official file copy. Prepare a reading file copy for all documents signed by the Archivist and Deputy Archivist. Office heads and unit heads determine whether to maintain reading files.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | The Office of the Archivist, office head, or unit head maintains the reading file copy chronologically as File No. 202, Reading Files.        |
| c. Information copies    | Information copies are intended for NARA addressees (units or persons) who need to know about the correspondence or who have requested a copy and would not receive the information by other means, such as e-mail. Prepare an information copy for the signing official if the signing official is not the head of the originating unit.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | The recipient maintains the information copy in the appropriate program file or as reference, in accordance with the NARA records schedule.   |
| d. Courtesy copies (cc:) | Courtesy copies must be facsimile copies of originals, including letterhead imprints on                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Not applicable                                                                                                                                |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | formal letters. Prepare courtesy copies only for formal letters and memos, and some form letters. Insert "cc:" on the original and all copies after the signature block. Avoid sending courtesy copies unless specifically requested. However, for congressional correspondence, if a reply is sent to a location other than the Washington, DC, office (such as the Member's state or district office or a constituent's address), send a courtesy copy to the Member's Washington, DC, office. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| e. Blind courtesy copies (bcc:) | Blind courtesy copies are intended for addressees who need to be informed without the knowledge of other addressees. Insert the bcc: line in the official record copy information and on the copy of the "bcc" recipient. In the case of multiple recipients, include on that line only the name of the individual recipient, not the entire list of "bcc" recipients.                                                                                                                           | If the blind courtesy copy is considered a record and the recipient of the blind courtesy copy is the Archivist; Deputy Archivist; an office head or unit head; or a NARA employee, file it in the appropriate program file or as reference in accordance with the NARA records schedule. |

**201.23 Official record copy information**

Include the official record copy information (distribution and identification) two lines below the signature block on the copies:

- a. Organization code of the originating office;
- b. Organization codes of recipients for reading, information, and blind courtesy copies;
- c. Writer's name (initial of the first name and full last name) and organization code and if the typist is a different person than the writer, include the typist's initials;
- d. Date that the writer or typist prepared the correspondence;
- e. Date if another person revised the correspondence, including the initial of that person's first name and full last name; and
- f. Directory and file name of the final electronic copy of the document.
- g. File code from the NARA records schedule.

**EXAMPLE:**

Official: NPOL

Reading: N, NPOL

Information Copy: NA, NL, NW

NPOL:JDoe ams 06-14-2003 Revised: AJones 6-16-2003

p:/comments.doc File Code: 223-2

**201.24 Preparing the signature package**

The following is a requirement for letters signed by the Archivist or Deputy Archivist but also a good rule to follow for all correspondence:

**a. Preparing the folder**

(1) Right side - Place the original letter, followed by an addressed envelope (if the signing office will be mailing the correspondence) and the reading file and information copies.

(2) Left side - Place the official file copy and background materials (including incoming correspondence).

**b. Preparing the routing slip** – Prepare an Optional Form (OF) 41, Routing and Transmittal Slip (or equivalent), indicating the names of persons or offices that must approve the document before the signing official signs it, and the name and phone number of a contact person (in case there are questions).

**NOTE:** The routing slip does not serve as part of the official file. Approvals and concurrences must be indicated on the official file copy (see subpar. 201.22a).

**c. Preparing the envelope(s) for mailing** – Prepare an envelope for mailing the original correspondence. If the letter is mailed via the United States Postal Service, insert an organization code in the return address of the envelope (Washington, DC, area only). (This allows the mailroom to return the mail to the originator without opening it.) Outside the Washington, DC, area, a similar procedure may be helpful. If the original is mailed via interoffice mail, prepare an envelope with the recipient's name, room number, and building.

**201.25 Dating correspondence**

Do not insert the date on correspondence unless you know for sure that it will be signed on that date. Normally, a staff member of the signing official inserts the date after the letter is signed.

**201.26 Maintaining records created by this directive**

Records created for preparing correspondence must be maintained in accordance with the NARA records schedule. If e-mail or fax is used and will not be followed up with written, signed correspondence, print a copy of the e-mail or fax and file it according to the NARA records schedule.

**201.27 Frequently asked questions**

a. **Why do we need a correspondence directive?** It is important to compose letters, memos, and e-mails that are cordial, responsive, correctly written, and presentable. Well-written correspondence improves our efficiency and renders effective service to our customers. For example, a correspondent who is dissatisfied with NARA's response may pursue his or her case by writing to the White House or a Senator or Representative. If Congressional and White House Staff refer the letter(s) to NARA, this creates additional work for NARA staff, adds unnecessary correspondence costs, and creates an unfavorable image for NARA.

b. **Can contractors and consultants working on behalf of NARA sign correspondence using NARA letterhead?** No.

c. **Where can I find guidance on writing?** Use the NARA Style Guide; U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2000; U.S. Government Correspondence Manual, 1992; and the manual that you received if you took the Plain Language training class sponsored by NARA.

d. **Is a fax considered correspondence?** Yes, if the facsimile or the attached material includes information that constitutes a record.

e. **How do I order formal letterhead outside the Washington, DC, area?** Send a request for printing to the Product Development Staff (NWCD).

f. **How do I order formal letterhead in the Washington, DC, area?** For Archives I or Archives II letterhead, send an e-mail to the NAF employee who handles the distribution, indicating the quantity needed, and the name and organization code of the recipient. For ISO, NF, NHPRC, and NWMW letterheads, send a request to NWCD for printing.

g. **Where is the format for memos?** The format is available on NARANET as a Word template.

h. **May I design my own formal letterhead and envelopes?** No. All NARA correspondence must be written using one of the formats specified in par. 201.4.

i. **Who can have personalized stationery?** Personalized stationery is formal letterhead and envelopes with the name of an official included in the masthead. Within NARA, only the Archivist and Deputy Archivist are authorized to use personalized stationery.

j. **Can I order personalized notepaper to be printed?** Office heads may approve the printing and use of notepaper, printed with a NARA official's name. (Phone numbers, room numbers, etc. are discouraged because they are subject to change.) The requesting office must send a request for printing to NWCD and must pay for the printing costs.

**NOTE:** Computer-generated notepaper is acceptable, as long as it is used for official purposes.

k. **Who pays for the printing of formal letterhead and envelopes (for all locations)?** The printing costs are charged to common distributable funds.