

New web site reflects best practices, hard work

For many NARA customers, their first impression of the National Archives is not priceless parchments in the Rotunda, nor surprises in the stacks in Washington, DC, and College Park, nor discoveries in the Presidential libraries or regional archives. It is what they see on the agency's web site, *www.archives.gov*. More than 1.4 million visitors each month "walk" through this virtual door and visit the Archives on the World Wide Web.

This summer, the staff brought a new and even livelier look to *Archives.gov*, and I urge you to explore it if you haven't done so already. The new design makes it easier and faster to access our vast resources and represents hard work on the part of the Web Program staff.

The new, attractive design is more colorful, affords more space on each page to display information, and provides a search box on every page.

The home page provides immediate access to some of the most popular NARA web pages, including "America's Historical Documents" and a page featuring high-interest records, such as the Charters of Freedom, with links to detailed information and image downloads. The new web site also provides links to the "most requested" information and services, such as jobs, grants, and publications information;



National Archives news and facility locations; the monthly Calendar of Events; guidance and tools for research; and information on how to order copies of historical documents.

A major change to *Archives.gov* is the appearance of special portals on the home page for various categories of users. These portals are geared to genealogists and family historians, veterans and their families, educators and students, researchers, records managers, preservation and archives professionals, information security specialists, Federal employees, members of Congress, journalists and other members of the media, and the general public.

The portals pull together information and links tailored to the special interests of each category of customers. For example, the genealogy main page provides all the necessary links to genealogical resources available at NARA, such as census, military service, naturalization, immigration, pension, and other records. It also provides links to all the other genealogical information on the

web site, regardless of its location—ranging from genealogy articles in *Prologue* to particular microfilm records.

The new web site also addresses visitor expectations by providing information not only about what *is* available on the site, but also what is *not* available. It then explains what steps visitors can take to find what they're looking for. The response to date from the public indicates that the redesign has been well received. Webmasters in other Federal agencies have also been generous in their praise.

All of this, of course, did not just happen. It is the result of some hard work on the part of NARA's Web Program staff: **Sarah Araghi, Crystal Brooks, Darren Cole, Michelle Dozier, Stephanie Garnett, Jocelyn Hill, Michael Lingenfelter, Patrick McCann, Karen McCray, Jennifer Nelson, and Sarah Swanson.** Their considerable effort, cooperation with colleagues in the agency, creativity, and attention to best practices in web design have produced a terrific new vehicle that will serve well the needs of our customers and staff.

This product—how it looks and is organized—is based on NARA's web customer satisfaction survey, usability review sessions with the public, e-mails sent by the public, analysis of aggregated data collected from the agency's web servers as well as commercial and internal search engines, and, of course, comments from the NARA staff.

In short, best practices were used in redesigning the web site to meet the needs of NARA users and constituencies.

I congratulate the Web Program staff and others who assisted them in this important work. As time goes by, *www.archives.gov* will be able to provide access to more of NARA's holdings to Internet customers. In the years ahead, we look forward to welcoming many more "virtual" visitors from throughout the world.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States



The redesigned web site organizes information in ways that make it easier for visitors to find what they are looking for. The "Archives.gov For" section, for example, provides links to information of interest to particular categories of users, such as genealogists and veterans.

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