

On the road—with the Archivist

This past year, I have been on the road frequently, visiting every NARA facility except our regional archives in Anchorage, which I plan to visit this summer. I have given dozens of speeches to stakeholder groups and others, and I thought NARA colleagues might like to see some of what I've been saying to these audiences. Here are some excerpts. The full texts of many of these speeches are available on our web site, at www.archives.gov/about/speeches.

Plenary session, joint meeting of SAA, NAGARA, CoSA, Washington, DC, August 3, 2006:

We need to be aggressive in letting the public know how much records matter to them, not only as citizens in a democracy but as individuals in their daily lives—the records of their government and the records pertaining to them personally. . . . Simply put, we must be advocates, not only of the importance of records, but of their preservation and accessibility to everyone in a vibrant democracy.

To that end, we in the archives profession must also be concerned about the level of civic awareness among the citizenry. That is why we at the National Archives have embedded “civic education” into our Strategic Plan for the coming decade.

Address to the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, New York City, August 13, 2006:

We are . . . eager to have genealogical information available to everyone via the Internet. We expect that the new technologies that will come with ERA will help solve the challenge of long-term preservation of Federal records relating to family history and genealogy already being stored electronically in the private sector. And we have in the works partnerships with private parties that will lead to more digitizing of information now available only on paper or microfilm.

Address on disaster preparedness and recovery, joint meeting of SAA, NAGARA, CoSA, Washington, August 5, 2006:

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita swept over the Gulf states of Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi last year, millions of Americans living in those areas were left without many



of the things they had taken for granted. . . .

Vital records—property deeds, birth certificates, and personal papers—as well as records that document their rights as Americans and entitle-

ment to government benefits—had all been in the path of the hurricane. . . . The National Archives and Records Administration, working with some state and local archives, stepped in to help assess, recover, and preserve these irreplaceable, vital records. . . . [Now] we have embedded the mission of “first preserver” into the Strategic Plan that will guide this agency for the next 10 years, until 2017.

Address to the Federation of Genealogical Societies, Boston, August 31, 2006:

In his budget request to Congress, the President has, unfortunately, called for zero funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, our grant-making arm. The commission's grants are vitally important in supporting projects that preserve historic records that add to the story of the American national experience and to family histories. . . .

These grants have had tremendous ripple effects, as many of you know. Today, NHPRC's impact goes far beyond the modest investment in Federal funds made for its grant program. It's an example of how a little spending by NARA can go a long way.

Address to the American Association of Law Libraries, St. Louis, July 11, 2006:

The Electronic Records Archives (ERA) that will emerge from [our] efforts—and the technology it will spawn—is not just for the National Archives. It will be for you, too. Just as World War II and the nation's space program brought great technological leaps forward that affected our everyday lives, so will ERA.

We will ensure that ERA technology can be transferred, scaled, and adapted to meet records preservation needs outside the

Federal realm. It will benefit state and local governments, colleges and universities, small businesses and large corporations, financial institutions, hospitals and insurance companies, courts and public schools. And, of course, it will benefit archives and libraries.

Address to the National Genealogical Society, Chicago, June 7, 2006:

I intend to pursue vigorously and communicate openly the National Archives' major goals regarding all documents entrusted to our stewardship. These goals are the physical protection of the records themselves and the maximum feasible public access to the overwhelming majority of records—with appropriate protection for legitimately classified national security information.

In the future, if any records are removed [from open shelves] for defensible reasons of national security, the American people will always, at the very least, know when that occurs and how many records are affected. At NARA, we are in the business of assuring access. There can never be a classified aspect to our mission.

Welcoming remarks to the African American Genealogy Symposium, College Park, September 8, 2006:

The story of America is more than the story of historic figures making landmark decisions. As you all know, our history absorbs the stories of individuals and families, seeking and exercising their constitutional rights, striving for a better life, and nurturing an open and vibrant democracy. These stories are also in the National Archives, and we renew our invitation for you to come and discover them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein".

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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