



**Researchers' Forum
Friday, November 19, 2010
National Archives (NARA – AII)
College Park, MD
1PM – Lecture Room C**

Handouts

- ✓ Agenda
- ✓ The Text Message -- The Blog of the Textual Archives Services Division at Archives II

I. Welcome

Director, Access Programs Susan Cummings welcomed everyone to the meeting and discussed the following agenda items:

II. A discussion of the Archives II Saturday pull pilot by Chief, Research Support Branch Vernon Smith and Susan Cummings

During the month of November, there is a pull pilot in the Textual Research Room on Saturdays at Archives II similar to the one done at Archives I. We are gathering information to see what does and does not work. The Saturday pulls are on a regular pull schedule as during a regular week.

Unlike Archives I, the Archives II pilot includes archival assistance in the Finding Aids Room. From noon - 1pm, consultants are on a lunch break. Managers Rick Peuser, Lisha Penn, and Vernon Smith have come in to make sure things run smoothly.

Note that this does not change the three-day pull request. It is already part of the three-day. To extend your pull request, call 301-837-2500 for the Textual Research Room. Ask for the circulation desk, get a staff member, and they can hold it for five days. Confirm they found your pink slip to add these extra days.

This is a pilot to determine the extent of researcher interest in having record pulls on Saturday. We are counting the number of pulls but we have not set a magic number that is the tipping point to make this a permanent change in Saturday service. We know from the pilot at Archives I that the cost per record pulled ratio was very high. We need to balance the researcher interest with the overall cost, especially as we look to difficult financial times ahead.

Regarding publicity and our ability to get word out about the pilots, we learned from the Archives I experience. We did publicity in new ways this time to notify as many researchers

Researchers' Forum
November 19, 2010

2

as possible in communicating this pilot, such as more information online, a press release, and signs.

You may provide feedback from our questionnaires. For more information, see <http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/saturday-pulls.pdf>

III. Wi-Fi Update by Susan Cummings

We just learned that the wireless internet will be available in public areas for registered researchers on November 29!

Register to be a researcher in room 1000 at Archives II.

IV. An update on the Archives I renovation/budget by Susan Cummings

No budget, so no renovations are going on.

V. An update on NARA's proposal to use colored paper and on the green bags by Susan Cummings

Colored Paper

For records security, we need to differentiate between originals and copies. This speeds up the check out process. Based on what others are using, we've picked blue paper and it is on order.

We are looking at the white paper procedures. We are aware that researchers will continue to have a need for white paper reproductions for legal uses, etc. We are assessing our work processes and there will be a means to accommodate this request. Blue paper will be in use in January.

We are planning for the all digital research room initiative. New copiers will allow us to make digital copies in May 2011. We are working on the details of the process. You can walk out with a CD, DVD, thumb drive, email, etc. In the short term, color copies will say reproduced. The security rules are not final yet.

Certified copies will always be available and admissible in court. We can print it for you on white paper with a mark that it was reproduced at the Archives. The paper size will be 8 1/2" x 14" including certifications. We are looking at the certification process and understand this need. It is a continuous process improvement.

Researchers' Forum
November 19, 2010

3

Green Bags

Green bags are part of our security to make it faster and easier to check out. Your notes/copies will go into the bag, our staff reviews, and then locks it. Only guards can unlock it. It is currently used in the Textual Research Room and expanding to all of the rooms. We are securing the records. Green bags will be mandatory.

VI. A discussion of security measures for staff by Susan Cummings

NARA will be implementing security screening of staff. This is being discussed by NARA senior management with input from our union representatives. We know two methods are under consideration- a 100% check of staff and random searches.

VII. Website remake of ARC/OPA by Digitization and Description Team member Rebecca Warlow

Rebecca Warlow provided a preview demonstration of the new website and Online Public Access search. The new website will be available for the public in December and the new search in early winter around January depending on technical issues.

Website

The website was last updated several years ago. This time, we are revising it to focus on tasks that people are trying to accomplish when they come to our website.

We collected information from researchers on what you wanted in a variety of ways over several months including asking staff, researchers, veterans, patrons in line at exhibits, etc. This is part of Open Government from December 2009. The Flagship initiative is to redesign by matching the needs of all users (researchers, educators, students, and those just browsing to see the founding documents).

We have the new website categorized into sections. There are five main sections: veterans, researchers, educators and students, locations, and our online store.

Other pages will focus on genealogy, Congress, records preservation, Federal records managers, publications, offices in NARA, and information about us in general. It also includes an agency index, FAQs, and social media (e.g., blogs like NARAtions and AOTUS).

The research section has basic information on how to do research at each of the facilities and links to specific topics like the Civil War.

Researchers' Forum November 19, 2010

4

The new website rolls out next month in December. This is the first phase of the redesign. The focus is on the home page, researchers, veterans, education, and will then move onto other areas.

The 1940s census will be available online in 2012 spring.

“Hire a Researcher” will still be available. All content will migrate over. You do not need to resubmit information. All current information will come over. If you need to resubmit information, we will let you know. We do an annual contact check to revise the list.

New Online Public Access Search

The new online public access (OPA) search will be available in late December. The new online public access search is searching all of ARC's approximately 5 million descriptions including approximately 160,000 digital images; seven different series from AAD; all information on the archives.gov website; and NARA's authority files.

Beginning a search will be simple like Google with a basic search box. The search results are grouped together into four categories. Items that are already online are grouped at the top and first. The second category of search results are descriptions of our records that do not include digital objects. The third category is what is available on archives.gov. These are the pages in our website. The fourth category includes items from our authority files. Authority terms link to our descriptions. Authority files are controlled vocabularies that can be used to enhance access to databases.

OPA will also do “stemming” so it will pick up alternate searches. It can also narrow the search. You may narrow by data source, authority lists, types of records (e.g., photo, map, etc.). For instance, you may refine by date so you can have a date range, records only online, and then by a particular office (e.g., Archives II only). It will tell you the number of hits. A hierarchy is available.

Digital images are available immediately so you don't have to do multiple clicks. The image will be the very first thing that you see. A film strip of documents shows the multiple pages available. We will be adding zoom capabilities to a later version of the prototype.

Descriptions will display the hierarchy of the records in a box to the left of the description. It will include the series and record group so the staff knows where to look. Record group search is back.

Traditional information for the record you are looking at is also available such as which office, their contact information, dates of records, and HMS entry number.

Researchers' Forum
November 19, 2010

5

When the new search is available in January, please provide feedback. We invite you to look and let us know what you think, suggest enhancements, and did it work the way you thought it would.

Once our digitization partners have posted records on their website NARA must wait five years before posting it on our website. After that time period, we can put it on our website as our resources are available and it would become part of our online search.

Any NARA computer can access those partners for free. The metadata that is ours will remain ours. If a partner creates metadata, then that is theirs. The legal agreements are on our website for you to view

[<http://www.archives.gov/digitization/partnerships.html>].

Social Media

Social media is available from the home page where you will find all of our social media such as blogs, YouTube, and an RSS feed.

We encourage you to check out the social media. There are many new things coming and available. For instance, you will find the Archivist's blog – AOTUS and NARAtions with its many stories, Family Tree Fridays, the User's Group meeting notes, etc.

Researchers' Forum
November 19, 2010

6

Blog of the Textual Archives Services Division

Robin Waldman introduced "The Text Message" blog and provided a handout with the following:

Check out the newest blog at the National Archives!
The Text Message
This is the Blog of the Textual Archives Services Division at Archives II

As employees of the National Archives, we are stewards for billions of pages of records that contain historical and evidentiary information about the Federal Government. A dedicated staff of archivists, specialists, and technicians in the Textual Archives Services Division work hard every day to ensure that these records are preserved and made accessible to the public. And every day, we are making discoveries while we work, from the mundane to the extraordinary. The Text Message is an opportunity for staff members to share their discoveries with the public. We hope you enjoy reading about our finds as much as we enjoy sharing them with you.

Visit our blog, read about what we're working on, and give us feedback!

<http://blogs.archives.gov/TextMessage>

The blog is just getting started and aiming for a posting or two a week. We want to accomplish drumming up interest in our records. We highlight a record group that does not get much attention or talk about a very popular record group and provide supplemental information. We also explain our processes to you -- for example, the screening process for FOIA. We are open to your questions and offer another layer of transparency. We are beginning with Archives II records. At some point, will open it to Archives I records.

VIII. A discussion of the pension file move to the National Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis by Ann Cummings

Moving the pension files to St. Louis is one possibility NARA is considering to address space issues in the DC area. Nothing is decided. We do know that there is a space shortage and more records are coming. One option is to digitize the military pension files. This is a massive job! Once digitized in blocks, then we could move. We have not made these decisions yet. This is just one of the possibilities. We have a plan to meet our space needs here for three years. After that, we are considering all options.

Researchers' Forum
November 19, 2010

7

We are looking at our scan on demand policy. Once an electronic copy is created for a researcher, we are looking into making it available online.

We are moving lesser used records. "Lesser used" means not been used in multiple years. Our website tells you if something is off site, under restrictions, in the catalog descriptions. For instance, patent records are moving to Kansas.

We do not plan to destroy records that are in a digital format. We will not destroy pension files.

IX. Questions and Answers

Question: FGS 1812 digitization project – how much has been digitized, where are they, and can we have a monthly update? Can the file also be put up partially rather than waiting for an entire record?

Answer: We will follow-up. Please email or blog your question.

11/22/10 Update: No records have been digitized. We have ongoing discussions with FGS contacts who understand that there is currently not enough money to begin the project.

We ask that help us with homework. How can we expand the users of our records nationwide? Please send comments via email or blog. We want better use of our records and more feedback.

[The NARAtions blog is available at: <http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access>. If you have suggestions for questions we should ask our researchers and the public, please send them to us at socialmedia@nara.gov.]

2011 meetings will take place quarterly with the next one probably taking place in March. We will post the dates online.