



**Researchers' Forum
Friday, February 18, 2011
National Archives (NARA – AI)
Washington, DC
1PM – Room G-24**

Handouts

- ✓ Agenda
- ✓ *Putting the Pieces Together* pamphlet handed out by Lee Irwin

Welcome

Director, Access Programs Susan Cummings welcomed everyone to the meeting and then the 32 attendees and speakers introduced themselves. The following items were discussed:

I. A discussion of NARA's Transformation Plan (read more on the [Archivist's blog](#)) with the National Archives Chief Operating Officer Tom Mills

The transformation began a year ago last summer. We looked at ways to transform NARA; be more flexible, open, tech-savvy, a customer-driven organization. We were doing well, but could do better in these areas.

This fall the Task Force identified six Transformational Goals and proposed a new high-level organizational structure to reach those goals. The Archivist of the United States accepted them. A new group in January drilled down on the details. This team gave a report in January and the Archivist accepted it.

Mr. Mills showed the archives.gov site with the Final Report "A Charter for Change: Charting the Course at <http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/charting-the-course.pdf>.

The new plan supports the transformational goal of a customer-focused organization. As Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Mills will ensure that the different programs within NARA collaborate. We will implement the new organization during April to July 2011 timeframe. By July, the new structured Research Services will be in operation.

The more detailed page for Research Services has new aspects showing it supports customer-driven.

One of these features is a new Research Customer Support organization. Its purpose is to make sure Research Services is gathering and responding to input from customer groups.

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Under this support are two parts:

- **Research Customer Council:** This is not made up of NARA staff. This is made up on a national level of customers including researchers, genealogists, etc. There will also be local groups, like the DC Users Group, that will continue.

- **Customer Teams:** These are NARA staff assembled teams put together as needed around a particular topic. They are the most knowledgeable and will make specific action-oriented plans. They communicate to the staff on the ground. These expert customer teams inform all parts of the organization so the work is unified and national in scope. This affects all parts of the country in Research Services.

Another feature of the new Research Services organization is the establishment of four Access Coordinators across the country. As a group, the Access Coordinators drive priorities and work in specific locations. Each Access Coordinator manages a NARA archival program or set of programs. The sets of programs are organized by geographic locations. Because of their size and scope, programs only in the Washington DC archives and the St. Louis archives are managed by their Access Coordinators. This set up meets the needs of customers locally and nationally.

One Access Coordinator also leads Online Content Development. The staff (made up of flexible teams) working with this Coordinator will work on projects such as finding aids and building our online research presence. This too will be driven by input from customers and experts who are liaisons with customer groups.

Preservation Programs is also part of Research Services and influences all. Accessible records are for now and the future.

We continuously engage staff at locations and all levels to develop better customer services, processes, etc. so we are as efficient and responsive as possible. We are facing tough budget issues, so need to be more efficient based on customer needs. Customer needs drive priorities.

Answers to Questions:

National online content development will take place in Washington, DC (not St. Louis) because digitization activities are taking place here.

We have come up with a storage solution, but it is not fully vetted internally with staff or customers. The basis of the solution (already in some locations) is more low cost underground space.

Regarding where our servers are stored, we are building capacity in the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) physically located in West Virginia. This will be done in increments over several years. Our interim solution anticipates the expected content from our digital partners. We are almost there, but not quite fully.

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The Transformation has no relationship to the National Archives Experience. Changes to the National Archives Experience on the Constitution side would affect the research side. Plans for the reconfiguration of the National Archives Experience space remain as they were last summer. However, all work is dependent on funding.

The budget issues will not impact the Transformation. We must move forward in July. We must be more flexible and adaptable; do more with less and be clear and realistic about our funding needs. We are improving efficiency through Lean Six Sigma processes. Lean activities are a better system of engaging staff that can provide input. We need everyone's talents and ideas. We must be positioned to answer Capitol Hill and the White House on how we are as lean as possible before we ask for added resources to address work backlogs and critical initiatives.

The Research Customer Council has not been figured out yet. We are looking for people who bring national and different perspectives. They will be users and researchers of the National Archives. We will have input and discuss major decisions with these groups. It will be a fair and open process for customers.

The Archives I and II staffs will fall under the Access Coordinator for Washington, DC. We expect to have a balance of "specialization" and flexible capacity to meet changing needs of our customers. We hear that you want input on these decisions loud and clear. This is why we want this council and have these experts on it. We will be flexible with staff to bring in experts from different areas. We are currently recruiting for the head of Research Services. Drilling down will be done later this summer.

The team in DC will be the primary access point for sensitive records such as records involving privacy, FOIA, and subject classification and the expectation is that most will be filled from within.

All of the staff that you work with now will remain in the new Washington, DC Research Services organization. Upper levels have yet to be filled.

Mitch Yockelson will continue with security in the IG office.

The Transformation started before the budget "dilemma." This transformation will help us. We started on this transformation before budget issues. Many of you participated in surveys on the researcher's electronic communications, pull process, initial consultation process, letters, and finding aids. These were all independent of the transformation but will help us.

There will be no loss of jobs due to the Transformation -- the budget, we don't know.

Send additional comments to Tom Mills at tom.mills@nara.gov or Susan Cummings at susan.cummings@nara.gov. Or tell the Archivist at the [AOTUS blog](#). Please visit "Doing more with Less" on his blog.

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All of the charts shown are online. <http://blogs.archives.gov/aotus/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/charting-the-course.pdf>.

II. An update on NARA's plans for the 1940 Census with Rebecca Warlow

The 1940 Census is coming on April 2, 2012. We are doing it differently this time.

It will not be on microfilm, rather it will be made available digitally through NARA's online public access search. You will now be able to do research from your home computer to scroll through digital images.

Our digitization lab has been working the last two years to digitize it. Currently the lab is rescanning any surrogates that our quality control checks have identified as needing reimaging. We have a number of staff, including some of Diane Dimkoff's staff, also working on the indexing. We are indexing to the Enumeration District level.

Just like the 1930 Census, there is no name index. You will need addresses to determine the enumeration district in which people lived.

The maps and enumerations will be online this summer so you can start identifying the enumeration districts in which people lived before the Census schedules are released. Gather your addresses now. Diane Dimkoff's staff worked on the 1940 census website. It has information about the 1940 Census including videos of enumerators. Connie Potter is working on a 1940 Census workshop to be held during the National Archives Annual Genealogy Fair on April 21 (second day of the event).

We have been speaking with Data.gov about placing the 1940 Census on their site, in addition to NARA's web site. Data.gov can be used by social scientists to download all or some of the images from that site instead of NARA's.

The 1940 Census will be released on April 2, 2012. Researchers should be prepared for high-demand on the web site. This is new, so we do not know how many people may want to use the site on April 2.

The paper copy of the Census does not exist. It was destroyed by the Census Bureau decades ago. NARA accessioned the microfilmed version of the 1940 Census. We will keep the microfilm as the original record even after it is digitized. They are never destroyed.

Shawn Smith reported that there were no problems with the scanning. If something is blurry, it came that way. We have been identifying problems in advance.

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We have a way for you to report problems. Email digitization@nara.gov and it goes to Rebecca Warlow and Mary Rephlo. Also use it to correct issues with Footnote and Ancestry. We can coordinate any problems.

III. An update on the renovations at Archives I with Susan Cummings

The reconfiguration money (\$5 million) is still in the FY11 budget. The plans are the same as shown previously. We are waiting for Congress to approve the budget. We are in a continuing resolution until March 4th and maybe longer. We cannot move forward without Federal and private funding.

The FY12 budget also has money for the next phase of National Archives Experience 2. It is also sitting in Congress.

The National Archives Experience includes both sides of the building. This includes the new microfilm room, etc. The plans are laid out in phases. We had to prioritize each part so there are logical increments of what gets done. Nothing will be partially done. The Foundation for the National Archives fundraises for this too. This will happen with money from both parts.

Susan will look up what money is going to the different sides of the building. *(Response: Assistant Archivist, Office of Administration (Acting) Richard Judson reports that the federal funding is to reconfigure the research side and to install the infrastructure for the relocated gift shop and the new exhibit space. The federal funding also pays for the build out of the public space.*

The private funding pays for the interior of the gift shop and the "My Archives" space. The private funding will also fund the exhibit work.)

The design is finished and is still a NARA priority. Assistant Archivist, Office of Administration (Acting) Richard Judson confirmed that it is still design "D" with no changes.

IV. An update on the purchase of microfilm reader-scanner(s) for Archives I with Susan Cummings

If we get a budget, we will buy them. We can't spend until we have money. We would purchase the model you voted for.

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V. A discussion of plans for the potential move of pension files (see pages 6 and 7 of the minutes from our November meeting for more information) with Susan Cummings

This is the same as last time. There have been no further conversations about moving military pension files to the St. Louis archives. We have a plan to manage space through fiscal year 2012 and are working on longer term solutions. Moving the pension files is still a remote possibility. Our plan is that pension files would be digitized before being moved, if we ever get to that point. There will be many more discussions about all the possible solutions to our space needs. We will keep you informed.

Underground storage such as the caves in Kansas and Missouri are part of our overall space plan. We can't move in new records into Archives I and II until older, lesser-used records are out.

Answers to Questions:

We keep stats on records so we know what is heavily used. Ann Cummings put together a list online of those records that have moved. Rebecca Warlow will look into seeing if this list of records can be placed into a table so they can be sorted.

Comment: There is 100% opposition to military records being moved.

The plan is to digitize records before they are moved. It is a good faith plan.

You have Susan's 100% oath that we will discuss movement of records as early as we can with you. Susan can look at the next level of records to be moved. (*Response: From Archives 2 - RG 241 - Patent Case Files; RG 503: Court of Customs and Patent Appeals case files are also scheduled for off-site storage at the Lenexa facility.*)

From Archives 1 - RG 287 - Publications of the U.S. Government; RG 21 - Case Files of the District Court of the United States from the District of Columbia, Civil Action Case Files, 1938-1969. These files are retrievable by a case number.; RG 15, Records of the Veterans Affairs, NSO, NSC, NWO, and NWC Pension Files, A1 Entries 5-8, Available on National Archives Microfilm Publications M1408, M1469, M1274, and M1279. There is a database listing of these materials. RG 15 is going to be shipped to the NARA facility in St. Louis that holds the archival military personnel records. RG 503: Court of Customs and Patent Appeals case files are also scheduled for off-site storage at the Lenexa facility.)

The State Department records are the most heavily used. Susan is looking into if/how to make usage statistics available to the public and do it based on each building. (*Response: we use a two prong approach to determine which records are least used: we check with the reference archivists and then we verify their answers with physically counting the pull slips which are stored by record group. NARA has been looking into an automated system for pulls that will make requests much easier for researchers at home and in person as well as provide us with a more accurate way of collecting usage data. This too is dependent on future funding.*)

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We are doing everything we can to keep up with technology. We use NIST and International Standards Organization standards as part of understanding digitizing records to keep up with new formats. ERA will hold these digital materials. We are doing it scalable and designed so we can adapt to new technology.

Concern expressed: Once scanned, originals will not be available again. Technology keeps changing.

We have space available until 2012.

Trevor Plante clarified what was going where and what was being digitized before being sent. He mentioned that the records going to Lenexa were not being digitized first. The records going there would be low use records that we would still provide reference service on. So if a researcher requested a file, we would then retrieve the file from Lenexa for them to view. Diane Dimkoff then mentioned that Dr. Kurtz stated at a User Group meeting last summer the possibility of sending Compiled Military Service Records and Pension files to St. Louis. Those records would go to the Archival part of NPRC. Kurtz stated that only service records and pensions that had been digitized would go to St. Louis.

Concern expressed: Widows Pension Files being digitized by FamilySearch is in black/white and this is not acceptable.

The best way to give us input is to send it to Susan and/or put it in the blogs to the Archivist. It will be the Researcher Council in the future. The Researcher Council will be accessible. We will also have smaller groups like this one.

VI. A discussion of the Library in Archives I with Susan Cummings

We appreciate the large and immediate amount of feedback. Thank you.

OMB told us to cut five programs. Senior staff level and the next level down, the Washington, DC records services program managers, had meetings to make this decision. The programs we picked are this library and the microfilm duplication program.

Staff is still here in both research rooms. The same resources are available. We still have public access PCs, online resources, and the books are still here. We are training research staff on these resources. A Librarian will be contacted if needed for help. This fits in the direction we are going.

We will continue to use resources in the library to improve initial consultation for new researchers or those with new research topics. We looked at how to best get them to these records. The library helps to get that initial part done. Jeff Hartley is taking a leadership role in the new services. The library already provides a lot of consultation.

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OTHER

- We are aware of the researcher numbers and the crowding that happens come March. We are meeting with the architect and the Foundation for the National Archives to look at quick wins to improve research rooms. We are always moving furniture to accommodate you better.

We want to continue to be a world-class research room. We have to work with money as it becomes available.

- Diane Dimkoff announced the Annual Genealogy Fair on April 20 & 21 with the theme *Become Your Family's Detective*. We would love for you to attend or volunteer. Question or volunteer by contacting Diane.Dimkoff@nara.gov.
- Lee Irwin handed out a pamphlet *Putting the Pieces Together*.
- Susan Cummings is looking into why some staff may think that the master location list cannot be copied and made available. She is unaware of any security problem that would prevent it being copied. *(No response at this time. It is an internal policy issues that needs to be discussed. We will let you know what the outcome is.)*

NARA is testing the new Online Public Access system (OPA) which is a portal to the Archival Research Catalog (ARC) and eventually the Holdings Management System and other sources so you can begin to plan your pulls before you come in to do research. HMS numbers are in ARC. A lot has not been described yet, so we have “stub” articles with very basic information. You can search by entry number in the description identifier field in advance search. Put it in quotes. The HMS number parallels identifier numbers. The RG numbers are back in search. Questions can go to Rebecca.Warlow@nara.gov.

2011 USERS GROUP MEETING DATES

Please join us on the following Fridays at 1 p.m.:

- May 20 –Archives II, Lecture Rooms B/C
- August 19 –Archives I, Room G-24
- November 18 –Archives II, Lecture Rooms B/C

Agenda items should be sent to: Susan Cummings at susan.cummings@nara.gov or call 301-837-8636.

Visit www.archives.gov/dc-metro/researcher-users-group/

[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.]