

Diane Dimkoff

Customer Services Director Diane Dimkoff introduced NARA's new Research Executive Bill Mayer.

Interview questions for Mr. Mayer will be addressed in the next issue of [Researcher News](#).

Bill Mayer

Thank you for your patience last Thursday so I could talk to all of the Research Services staff.

Mr. Mayer's Priorities include:

- Creating a place to find records.
- Understanding the landscape of NARA.
- Connecting between researcher and the records.
- Understanding the "story" of our records; lifecycle.
- Understanding who is coming to NARA physically and virtually. Also, why are they here and how do we adapt to their needs.
- Making sure the network holds up to demand.
- Replacing the Researcher Registration System
- Creating the automated pull slip
- Aligning our mission so all have the same public access to permanent records.
- Partnering

Researchers

Researchers' topics and Mr. Mayer's response:

I. Request online pull slips.

- Looking at how to make this happen. Give me a few more months. I am reaching out to other institutions.
- I have a background in these types of systems; built the [Washington Resource Library Consortium](#).
- I acknowledge that it would be ideal for it to have the MLR information.

II. What is the status of HMS?

- It is a work in progress for nationwide use. Mostly used at Archives I and II. Primary focus of adoption in other NARA locations.
- 96% entered into HMS at Archives I
- Let's do a 6-month check in (around March). This will allow me time to provide an update with credible information.

- III. More staff, especially archive specialists, is needed.**
- Share this concern. It seems to be cyclical on specialists and generalists.
 - Hiring freeze currently, but working on getting more staff. Just got 8 more staff positions approved.
 - I'm interested in not limiting who can apply. Not requiring history degrees of archivists. Librarians and Archivists have similar goals: discovery, access, preservation, and possibly ingest.
- IV. Request an online explanation on records; where they go, how to access, value, and why accessioned at NARA for Federal Executives.**
- We need a cohesive research services
 - We must Harness finding aids
- V. Suggest that you centralize social media.**
- Working towards having a research page created by Research Services.
- VI. Clients of professional researchers, the common researchers, do not know how to interface with NARA.**
- Would love to see individuals have unmediated access to the records without an expert.
 - Concern about how do we go forward and helping people re-think how we're going to do it.
- VII. Professional researchers are treated differently from the "regular" researchers.**
- There should not be a difference, but recognize that there are some. How do we deal with multiple needs in a changing environment?
 - Online access makes access deceivably easy to get. In-person records are harder to get. There is the joy of discovery.
 - Need your help with what you're learning to make better choices. Need partnership.
 - Align our mission so all have the same public access to permanent records; really understand our mission and execute.
- VIII. Can we have pulls requests after 5pm?**
- Depends on how we re-construct.
 - Looking at how to change and the consequences. Looking at biggest demand. Change services based on what people need is a discussion we need to have.
- IX. Are we now customers instead of patrons?**
- We have a mandate to serve the regular citizen. It is not clear that we serve professional researchers. We need to understand who our customers are – it is not just the professional researcher.
- X. NARA treats us differently from Ancestry.com.**
- Appreciate that and you will see a change in the relationship.

XI. What became of the GAO report from years ago on how NARA should have better customer service.

- An idea implemented baldy does not mean it's a bad idea.

XII. Suggest training where a staff person is a researcher for a day.

- Good idea. This was the idea behind the Citizen Archivist. Looking at “how do we make it better?”

XIII. Archives staff should be up on archival standards.

- Cultural changes happening – example is hiring me.

Bill Mayer

My goal is that we partner, acknowledge constraints and that simple ones get in the way. I guarantee that we will continue this conversation. As I told my staff, I'm as smart as you make me.