

**RESEARCHER FORUM**  
**September 28, 2012**  
**Archives 2 (1 PM)**

**Are you satisfied with our services?**

Bill Mayer met with researchers and began the meeting by asking them if they are satisfied with our services. They responded that, by and large, they are satisfied with the service we give in our research rooms.

**Researcher Comments/Concerns**

1. Recognizing that there are **two levels of researchers** and two levels of expertise
  - a. Those who are beyond doing researcher in the census with level of expertise
  - b. Newbies
2. **Personnel** (mainly satisfied with National Archives (NARA) staff)  
 Bill Mayer spoke on his background in libraries and mentioned that he is new to the Federal environment. But, he has met many people at NARA who are very dedicated. He also mentioned that NARA has several missions: discovery, access, preservation, and accessioning.
3. **Computer Systems** (not satisfied with the technology)  
 (Mayer) Preservation of the records is important regardless of its format. We have 3,000 years of experience with paper and about 50 years with e-records. NARA has a lot of obsolete hardware so that records in particular formats can still be accessed.
4. **Quality of Copies** (varies quite a bit)
5. **Research Registration System** (inconsistencies)  
 (Mayer) We need to have a nation-wide researcher card system.
6. **Citizen Archivist**  
 (Mayer) The Citizen Archivist is up and working now. What do you think of it?  
 Response: It is wonderful!
7. **Cost of Copies** (50 cents a copy is excessive and difficult)  
 (Mayer) – He expressed his interest in skill sets and experience level.
8. **Researcher Expertise – Staff Experience Levels** – helping with “problem” records  
 Researchers expressed their concern about being cut off from certain records. It had been difficult getting a copy of the old Master Location Register (MLR). Some NARA subject matter experts are leaving and retiring. The loss of this staff and the move from subject matter experts to generalists means that researchers may not learn of some records relating to their research. Researchers who have worked with certain records for years

and maintain a level of expertise with the more obscure records can help staff with knowledge of some of these records and with the identifying information of the boxes. Changes in that information have resulted in problems with pulling the correct records.

Researchers are willing to help in these areas, but they need limited access to the stacks. (Mayer) – Access to the stacks is a holdings maintenance issue. We want your expertise.

Suggestion – videotaping this expertise

**9. Finding Aids**

Researchers suggested putting finding aids online and would like the opportunity to add to the finding aids when they discover changes/updates. They are willing to hold webinars/training sessions on finding aids to less experienced researchers.

Other suggestions were to hire interns from the University of Maryland to scan finding aids. Once scanned, interns or staff could go through each finding aid and match it to the records locations.

**10. Ordering Records Online** – The Library of Congress has ordering records online. (Mayer) This is not a security issue, but a system issue.

**11. Microfilming/Refilming bad quality microfilm/Scanning Needs** – More staff needed (Mayer) – Trust Fund fee schedule will be changed. Hopefully, we will be able to obtain better equipment as well as scan finding aids.

**12. Research Room Staff** – More staff needed.

**13. Fix Boxes, Do Refiles, and Pull Records** – More staff needed.

**14. Records Removed from Circulation** – Records removed from circulation present problems, especially to lawyers who need certification of records.

(Mayer) NARA's dual mission is access and preservation of the records. There will no longer be access to records if they are not taken out of circulation when they are damaged and staff needs to use the proper conservation techniques to repair and restore documents.

**15. Turnaround Time for Refiles**

(Mayer) We keep records 3 days before refilming them.

(Diane Dimkoff) – Call me if you need records held.

**16. Consistency in research room rules**