

5/4 Evening Session:

The evening session ran from 5:30 -6:30.

Q: (Roger Joslyn) Well, I have a little advantage, as I was here this morning and heard the comments and so forth. Just a couple things to pass on. I ran into a couple of people who were here this morning, and unfortunately they were very pessimistic. They said they're just putting a face on it, they're going to do what they want anyhow. So if you want to take that as you have your work cut out for you, I guess that's what it would be. But there was a lot of concentration on the list. Only a few of the people who were here, and maybe even now who have seen this, there was some discussion of this, and I was thinking when I sat with Dorothy for I guess over an hour last week, and we looked at the list, and I and Jordan who was here this morning, expressed great surprise of the wonderful juicy things that maybe not even fall into what we do for our clients, but just fascinating things that we weren't even aware were there, I was thinking, as I was telling Dorothy, well, while I had certain favorite things that I was seeing on the list to be donated or to go to storage or whatever, and explaining why I think in reverse it would be good for the Archives, to be able to explain why they think a particular microfilmed series or textual records series should go. It's hard to know whether you have a group of financial historians that are coming in eagerly on a regular basis so you could justify having XYZ collections. And of course there's a lot of things that you have that cross over with social historians, biographers, people doing research for even movies, for film backgrounds, you know like that. I'm not saying an essay on each one, but I think it would be helpful for us who want ABC so badly if you can say why you think XYZ should go, that could be valu--helpful in the process.

Q (Steve?): A question, perhaps not to be answered now, but a brief response. For many of the agency record groups, there are comparable record groups in the other regional archives. Not every record group, but for many, you have for the local area what the other groups have. To what extent in this planning process of selecting records for retention here or moving for off-site storage, to what extent have you consulted seriously with all of the other branches to get a sense how for the same record group those records are used in their branches where that's relevant data? Perhaps a brief response on that one would be helpful.

A: Nancy Shader: I've spoken—my position, the Regional Archives Directors, we have an annual conference and we often talk about records that are used, and we're often very similar. So a lot of the records that we have selected, that staff selected, are the records that, when I've talked to other directors, have said "Yes, we would take that." Now in some regions it's very unique. For example, I don't have a lot of Bureau of Indian Affairs records. So that is not a heavy use record for me, but in other regions it's an incredibly high-use record. So some are unique to the geography of that region. But the general of what we're selecting are the high use, the naturalization records, the documents to help you get into the court records, you know, select historic site records that document a particularly important location, for example the Brooklyn

Navy Yard. Things like that, the Navy Yard records in other, like Philadelphia's a good example, so there is overlap. So we have talked to them and I planned on bringing them in throughout the process to hear what kind of feedback they have.

Q (Peter Wosh): Well, just a quick question, when you're talking about off-site storage, I assume that you're bringing stuff, based on researcher requests that stuff is going to be back in a reasonable amount of time, right? Like, you said something's off-site, somebody requested, what do you anticipate is your normal turn-around for, or how far in advance would a researcher have to request records in order for them to be brought back from off-site.

Nancy: We're working on that, but we are, since as Tom noted, it's so much closer than Kansas, we are looking into having a courier service back and forth, whether it's once a week or twice a week, it's going to depend on use. We're also looking in to, if you know exactly what you want, doing what our record centers do, which is digitize on demand, and we could get it to you same day. So if you want something very quickly and you can identify it, we could get it to you same day. If it's, you want to look at 5 boxes of this particular situ— court case or correspondence, we would arrange that with you. The challenge here, and this is for Dorothy as well, is to educate our users, to help them understand, contact us first via e-mail, telephone call, just so we can make sure when you come, we can make our time with us as productive as possible. So that's going to be a challenge, and that's something we're working on now is, we've surveyed other institutions, what their turnaround time is, and we're working on that to see what's the best combination.

Q: Yeah, I would just say, from my own perspective, it's—I think if you're a researcher, you're pretty much used to stuff being in off-site storage now. I mean, at NYU, for example, we have a tremendous volume, a tremendous percentage of our archival collections really are off-site, we have a facility, one in New York and one in Westchester County, and to me, that's, virtually every research institution that has large collections of kind of bureaucratic records is kind of moving in that direction, especially if they're in urban areas where the cost of, obviously, space, you know, is sort of at a premium. So I don't think it will be a surprise to people, but I do agree that, you know, good education really is important. And in our case, actually, interestingly enough, the library's moving a substantial percentage of its books off-site. So I mean, they're even going beyond just archival collections and more into books. And, you know, I think it's just the way things are, and I think the research community kind of adapts to it. So I don't find that particularly troublesome, personally. I doubt many of my colleagues at NYU would either, so.

Q: Related question. For records that have been already shipped to Kansas, but have been perhaps requested more frequently than others, are you considering then transferring those to the new Philadelphia facility in order to speed up the process of service?

A (Nancy Shader): Yeah, we're looking at all of the records, and in fact, as I mentioned before, we have had some records that have been requested and we said to ourselves "Why did we send

that off-site?" We already brought it back to New York. And that's going to come with us here. So, it's definitely, we're looking at the big picture, and use. The records that are currently stored off-site are fairly easily retrieved and we have good intellectual control over it, the stuff currently at Varick, we're working very hard to process, to get better intellectual control, which is helping us identify them, so during that process, that might make some of the records we have on-site even more useful, so again, flexibility is the key. As people use it, as we identify different resources, we may shift what's where. And we are prepared to do that. We fully expect to do that. We don't think the decisions that we make now are necessarily gonna be what it's going to look like 5 years from now.

Diane: Any additional questions?

Q: In terms of public programming. Could you give us a sense, for some of us who are involved in other historical and genealogical organizations, where we've been to small-scale programs in the Varick Street facility, what's the scope of the public event facilities that you have or have access to when things are all finally settled?

Dorothy: That's a great question. We certainly want to continue the programs that we do now, because they've been very successful, and we want to expand them. We've had a number of requests for additional student programs, and additional teacher programs, and hence the reason why we have a dedicated educator now on staff. Chris has been with us almost 2 years, and he's be—he's available to accommodate those additional requests, but one of the comments I've heard often, is how can you do more general events? General outreach to the main population who's not experienced with research. And we really see us expanding, maybe Archives Week programs, Archives Month programming, we certainly see the opportunity to do special events related to historic anniversaries, there are a number of partnerships we work on with Federal Hall National Memorial, and Ellis Island, and just having space here will allow us to really plan for bigger programming. And this is where the archival staff will provide feedback and provide input, we are all in this together, so we're all going to support each other, and when we have those larger events, even though we currently have the staff of 2 people, everyone in the Archives will assist. Because we all benefit back and forth from the programs increasing visitation to the research room and vice versa. So we see them, that aspect of the archives, really working well. Does that answer your question?

Q (partially inaudible): You referred several times to the auditorium. What is the capacity, what will be the capacity for accommodating the public? How many people will be...

Dorothy: 300 plus, in the auditorium, there are also 2 breakout rooms that adjoin the auditorium, and we should probably have a private conversation about this Steve, to talk about maybe increasing some kind of genealogical event, here in Manhattan. Because I know, was it 3 or 4 years ago, the Family History Fair, kind of stopped. And I was mentioning to Roger, we would like to bring that back, and work with the various entities to bring that back. So that's just one

example of something we've identified and certainly if the public came back to us and said "We'd like to see this too," if we can do it, we will.

Q (RJ): Since Peter brought up the subject of off-site storage and retrieval as being kind of a given and works well, I just had this thought. I believe it will, does for the National Archives. I must confess, I haven't had experience with having to order too much that's off-site through NARA, but I have had experiences with other facilities that have archives or at least off-site storage, shall we say, that are under different government agencies maybe some even private. Is this something that would be under your capacity, I assume this would be under your hat, Dorothy, that the National Archives could sort of encourage, or have programs or something, that would help educate and train many of these other places that don't really have good archival and retrieval policies. I know it all comes down to the almighty dollar and things like that. But you know, it's a nightmare with some of these—I'm sure, as you're well aware. But I'm sure it's something that the archives could spearhead, or maybe there have been events where this was done, and how do you browbeat some of these agencies to take advantage of what we are learning and implementing.

Dorothy: It's certainly something we can work on, Roger.

Diane: I think that was a compliment in there. Anybody else? Very good.

Q: Just a comment about retrieval from remote storage. When I was the superintendant at Cape Cod National Seashore, we had the archives come in and clean up our records which were—it's embarrassing to say what bad condition they were in. Stored in an attic, and just a disaster. But we were very fond of our records, and the fact that we could go upstairs to the attic and just get them whenever we wanted, you know, was a real advantage. So even though we needed the Archives to clean them up, you know, it was a bitter pill to realize that we were gonna have to let them go and they were gonna have to go into remote storage, where they would be properly protected. It was the entire history of that park from the day it was created. So we saw them go with despair that we would ever see them again. But I have to tell you that the service we had from the National Archives was excellent. A+. We never waited more than about 48 hours for anything that we needed, and if it was something that we needed that was really urgent, things were FedExed, and I was just amazed at the service. And we never had experience with the Archives before, and, but I have to say when I came here and realized we were going to be working with them again I was really happy. So just a testimonial from a satisfied customer.

Diane: Thank you. Anybody else? All right, well I'm going to turn the microphone over to Tom Mills.

Q&A Remaining 9 minutes are Tom Mills' closing comments.