

The Archivist's Advisory Committee on the Presidential Library-Foundation Partnerships

December 2, 2011

Welcome (David Ferriero)

Mr. Ferriero (Archivist of the United States) welcomed the group to another meeting of the Advisory Committee and asked the Presidential Library Directors and representatives of the respective Presidential Library Foundations to introduce themselves. He then read an excerpt of a letter from George Washington to James McHenry in 1796, emphasizing the closing paragraph, where Washington exhorted McHenry to “deliberate carefully but execute swiftly.”

Mr. Ferriero said he had promised to make the Advisory Committee meeting more interactive, and he hoped for discussion as the agenda progressed. He introduced Jim Gardner, the Executive for Legislative Archives, Presidential Libraries, and Museum Services (LPM).

Comments (Jim Gardner)

Mr. Gardner acknowledged he was still very new to his position, and while he had enjoyed the opportunity to meet some of the Advisory Committee members while visiting Presidential Libraries he looked forward to meeting the rest of them on his subsequent visits. He admitted to having a complicated agenda, but said he's very interested in involving all aspects of LPM in his plans.

Budget (Ferriero, Gardner)

Mr. Ferriero began the discussion by acknowledging that the current budget climate has put significant pressure on NARA. The agency has submitted a budget to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) with the mandated 5% and 10% reductions. Federal agencies, including NARA, have received additional guidance requiring reductions in planned spending for FY 2013. This has put pressure on the agency to be creative in planning. NARA is in a second continuing resolution so far this fiscal year, and each CR comes with 1.9% reduction in funding. With a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the Federal budget this is an uncomfortable time for the agency. The holdings of the agency continue to grow as the agency's funding continues to decrease.

He continued by noting that NARA has instituted a hiring freeze and is monitoring other agencies' reductions in force (RIFs) and buyouts. NARA management is reviewing every staff opening to determine if there is a different way to do the work. NARA has launched a workforce planning process. The purpose of the workforce planning is to help anticipate future staffing

needs and analyze every part of agency for how positions are used. He noted this planning could be used for reductions if need be.

Mr. Gardner added that the workforce planning initiative is relatively new to the agency. The planning had been discussed with the library directors in their meeting the day before. He said the agency is working to complete two planning documents, Strategic Direction and a Demand Analysis documents. These documents will allow the agency to identify its priorities, analyze the work underway and the work that will need to be done in the future, and start the process of shaping the workforce to meet the work of the future.

Mr. Ferriero mentioned how personnel costs make up the largest portion of the agency's budget, yet staffing has never been at a level appropriate for our holdings and mission. He then asked for questions from the Committee.

Sandy Quinn of the Nixon Foundation asked where is the biggest impact at the local level when reductions are made - personnel, facilities, etc.? Mr. Ferriero responded that overall funding reductions would be made across the board, but would certainly involve personnel (noting again that NARA is already in a hiring freeze).

John Heubusch of the Reagan Foundation noted that the libraries and foundations have a unique situation due to partnerships. When the libraries, along with the rest of NARA, are in a tough situation, the Foundations are trying to sort out the implications – How does it affect us? How can we help? He stated the Reagan Foundation is transparent with its financial situation (Duke Blackwood, the Library Director, attends board meetings). Is it possible for some system to be set up where Foundations can be made routinely aware of the NARA budget situation at each library (Library-level budgets, both Operating Expenses and Trust Fund)? The Trust Fund in particular is mysterious to foundations, as they don't know how much the local library director has and don't know rules of the road for spending. Transparency can help the foundations help NARA. Mr. Ferriero replied that this was a very good idea and is easy to do. He said he will have Micah Cheatham, NARA's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO), provide the information the foundations need on a regular basis. He noted that having a new CFO is a real asset to agency.

ACTION ITEM 1: NARA will share library-level budget information with the corresponding library foundations.

Tom McNaught of the Kennedy Foundation noted that foundations have more flexibility than the government in terms of communicating with Congress. He asked if the foundations can be kept better abreast of Congressional news. The foundations are the representatives of their constituencies and have a responsibility to educate and inform their Congressmen on the importance of protecting our documentary heritage. Can the Foundations get a list of the Members of Congress who serve on NARA committees? More information from NARA could inform the outreach approaches taken by the foundations. Mr. Ferriero responded that he liked the idea and asked Chris Runkel (from NARA's General Counsel staff) if having John Hamilton

(the Director of NARA's Congressional Affairs Staff) meet with the foundation representatives would be problematic. Mr. Runkel answered that information Mr. Hamilton could respond to questions asked by individual foundations and share his responses with the other foundations as part of the agency's informational responsibility. If the foundations were interested in hearing from Mr. Hamilton, as a group, then he could attend the next Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Ferriero agreed.

ACTION ITEM 2: NARA will distribute lists of the agency's current Congressional oversight and appropriations committees. (<http://www.archives.gov/congress/committees.html>)

ACTION ITEM 3: Micah Cheatham and John Hamilton will attend the next Advisory Committee meeting.

Duke Blackwood of the Reagan Library said the climate of current planning suggests working sooner rather than later. He urged the information sharing not wait until the next meeting. Mr. Ferriero agreed, adding that everyone needs to figure out a feedback loop on the work of the foundations. Elaine Didier of the Ford Library said sharing the same information with the directors would be helpful, to which Mr. Ferriero agreed.

Mr. McNaught asked when budget cuts come, will library directors have flexibility to make local cuts? Each library has different situation. Or are cuts coming through a centralized process? Mr. Gardner responded that a key part of workforce planning is to see what the impacts of cuts on particular libraries would be, so management is asking directors to begin to identify where impacts will be. He acknowledged that part of the budget situation won't be across the board personnel cuts. By determining what are the specific needs of each library, identifying other revenue streams, etc. NARA hopes to minimize impacts on core functions.

Larry Temple of the Johnson Foundation asked if NARA has an across the board 8% cut will it be 8% reduced from the libraries or from the rest of NARA as well? He commented he would be concerned if an 8% overall cut to NARA's budget led to a 12% cut in the libraries. He asked Mr. Ferriero what he anticipated happening to the libraries. Mr. Ferriero replied that OMB's guidance is clear that agencies cannot rely on across-the-board cuts but instead must cut or reduce specific programs.

Mr. Temple asked about staffing during the hiring freeze. If a person leaves, can the library replace the position if they justify it? Mr. Ferriero said if the Library prepares a justification that meets the criteria, he will support it. He noted that two key positions (the Director of Presidential Libraries and the Director of the Nixon Library) are going forward to be filled.

Mr. McNaught commented that the current budget leads to rumors at both the foundation and library. The fact that foundation staff have more flexibility than government staff as far as awards and raises leads to tension. The recent analysis of centralizing all classified records became another source for rumors. He added that in cases where materials were deeded the

families may want say in where the materials are stored. Mr. Ferriero responded that he is always interested in what people are hearing. He added that the discussion of storing classified material was triggered by the findings of an investigation into the security procedures at another NARA facility. As a result of those findings he asked for an analysis of handling classified records across the country. He stated that no decisions have been made based on this analysis, and he clarified that he has never personally advocated for centralization. Mr. Gardner commented that Nancy Smith (Director of the Presidential Materials Division) and her staff were working with the libraries on a white paper with options for storing the materials. While no decision has been made it is important to have the discussion.

On the issue of morale Mr. Ferriero said it is a serious issue for him. Problems with staff morale are only compounded by the anti-government worker sentiment. He asked how can NARA get in front to compensate for that? The issue is not just money, it is about recognition and appreciation of the staff. Anything foundations can do to recognize staff would be appreciated. Mr. McNaught responded that foundations can't give bonuses or a free meal and there is not much flexibility for the foundation to appreciate Federal staff. The Foundation staff who work under the direction of Tom Putnam (Director of the Kennedy Library) work alongside Federal employees but they get bonuses.

Mr. Runkel concurred with the lack of flexibility. NARA's General Counsel staff is always happy to talk about ideas, though. New proposals may be similar to previous proposals, but sometimes the facts are different – as a result there may be more or less flexibility. Things we accepted before we can't now. He continued that his office encourages directors and the Office of Presidential Libraries to talk with General Counsel about proposals. The worst outcome is that General Counsel says no. With that said, they are willing to look at creative proposals.

Fred Ryan of the Reagan Foundation stated that rumors tend to start in Washington and move west. He asked if there any discussions the foundations should prepare for to minimize rumors? Mr. Ferriero replied that it is a good idea for NARA and the foundations to share rumors as well as information. He assured the Committee the he will keep them in the loop on the budget process.

The Role of the Presidential Libraries and Foundations in the 2012 Election Cycle (Runkel)

Mr. Runkel began the presentation by commenting that as the election cycle begins in earnest a growing number of private groups will be looking to use library facilities for political activities, so his intent is to provide some insight into the way General Counsel uses applicable laws and NARA policies when assessing potential events.

He reminded everyone that library directors and library employees (like other NARA staff), as Federal employees, are governed by the Hatch Act and cannot engage in political activity while

on duty in any Federal room or building. He noted that rooms the government uses but does not own can be considered Federal rooms under the Hatch Act. There are limits on directors authorizing political activities – any activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, a candidate, or a partisan interest. There are also limits on the use of NARA buildings based on NARA regulations. For example, a local political club can be allowed to rent a meeting room or event space to have a reception and tour of library. The club is not meeting for business and is using the library for its intended use. If, however, the political club wanted to hold a monthly business meeting to discuss the next election, for example, that would be considered “partisan political activity” under our regulations, which is prohibited. NARA uses the Hatch Act’s definition of “political activity” in applying the “partisan political activity” standard in the regulations.

Mr. Runkel continued that while candidates are not normally allowed to make regular campaign appearances there are two exceptions. The first is that candidate debates are allowed under certain conditions, and the second is that candidates are allowed to give policy speeches under certain strict conditions. Among conditions for debates is that once a director agrees to use of NARA space that NARA staff must step out of the planning process. Another group (the library foundation, a media partner, a nonprofit organization, etc.) must be the debate’s organizing body. The debate should include as many candidates as possible. Other rules apply to policy speeches. Any library and foundation wanting to host candidates must be willing to extend invitations to every major candidate.

Mr. Blackwood asked if a library can invite a political candidate to do a policy speech. If so, must the library invite them all? Mr. Runkel replied yes, though obviously some candidates may not accept the invitation. When asked if candidates deemed not viable can be excluded Mr. Runkel responded that General Counsel encourages the foundations to consider who are the viable candidates in as an inclusive manner as possible, but that the decision should be left to the foundation.

Mr. Runkel added that with other races (Congressional, etc.) – General Counsel looks at how election rules define candidates. If a person has an exploratory committee or is fundraising for the purpose of deciding to run or not, the Hatch Act considers them candidates. Runkel continued to discuss policy issues surrounding public programs at Libraries, with references to his handout.

Mr. Gardner commented that the trickier part concerns policy issues. We want libraries and foundations to take on civic engagement, but when it becomes partisan problems arise. Politics is appropriate in the libraries, but how do we handle it so we don’t look poorly? Mr. Runkel answered that his office generally favors public programs organized by library/foundation or by one or the other. In general his office does not like private groups wanting to do their own events. The intent should be to promote the library and the agency, not just have a lecture hall.

For the most part General Counsel would advise directors to oppose private groups wanting to do a public program.

Mr. Ryan said in some cases external groups want to use Reagan facilities, then only later do they find out some public figure is coming to participate in the event. Their agreement language gives them the right to stop groups wanting to hijack the space for their own purposes. Mr. Runkel reiterated his preference for programs organized by foundations and the libraries.

Mr. Gardner stated that some of this is about basic communication. If a candidate makes a connection to President in a very partisan way, how we communicate our nonpartisan orientation? Donna Garland (NARA's Chief Strategy and Communications Officer) responded that the context of the discussion is important. You can't un-say something, however. Her inclination is that if someone says something unfortunate she would not try to retract what was said. The key is to have the agency be clear in its own processes so it can clarify its role to all who ask. Mr. Ferriero added that NARA management does not want to discourage libraries and foundations from pursuing these types of events. Ms. Garland concurred, noting that creating interesting events raises the exposure of the libraries in their communities. In the long run enhanced exposure increases the chances of sustainability.

“One NARA” and the Presidential Libraries

Mr. Ferriero gave an update on NARA's Transformation, noting that the process has been underway for a year. He described Gartner's Hype Cycle – a process that begins with hype/raised expectations then moves into a trough of disillusionment. He noted the six pillars of the Transformation – One NARA, Out in Front, An Agency of Leaders, A Great Place to Work, A Customer-Focused Organization, and An Open NARA.

Tom Mills (NARA's Chief Operating Officer) said the agency's reorganization began with Mr. Ferriero's approval of the January 2011 Transformation report. The first phase took place last March, and the reorganization was completed at the end of July 2011, when Research Services (a combination of Washington DC and regional services for researchers of Federal records), LPM, and Strategy and Communications were established. Other organizations established as part of the Transformation include Agency Services (all operations serving Federal record-creating agencies), Information Services and Business Support Services (both focused on internal support to units doing external services). The Executive Leadership Team and Management Team, both chaired by the Archivist, now meet weekly. NARA has two vacancies – the Executive for Research Services and the Director of Presidential Libraries. Mr. Mills emphasized that reorganization is only a piece of the Transformation. Ultimately the success of the effort will be based in NARA's ability to achieve the transformational pillars.

Debra Wall (Deputy Archivist of the United States) stated that in her twenty years at NARA she has never seen as much staff participation as occurred in this effort. The Transformation began with a small coalition, but the process was opened to staff from the beginning, through social media and other tools. Staff participation drove the development of the six transformational pillars and the values. With each step in the process the circle of participation has expanded. Now the need is to expand it further to managers and to field facilities to make it the way we do business. Ms. Wall added that one way to broaden participation is to dramatically increase urgency. NARA has a need to identify its strategic initiatives. Shared goals result in shared urgency that involves more people.

Mr. Gardner acknowledged that a key question for the Advisory Committee is how does the Transformation impact the Libraries? He said he came to his job because of the exciting opportunities made possible by the Transformation. For LPM, can there be one office with all working as a group? He shared a few early examples. One was the recent meeting of regional educators in Washington for the Education and Public Programs Division. He asked the Director of that Division to include education staff from the Office of Presidential Libraries and the Center for Legislative Archives, so a number of library and legislative education staff joined the discussion with the other educators. Mr. Gardner stressed he did not want to suggest no collaboration existed before, in fact he has been looking for existing models of collaboration. He noted that during his recent trip to Kansas and Missouri he was able to visit the Eisenhower Library, the Truman Library, and the Kansas City Region. He used the opportunity of the trip to encourage the development of connections among these units. He learned the Truman Library invited the Kansas City exhibit specialist for cross training, a specialist who also wants to go to the Eisenhower Library to take advantage of their very large printer. Another example comes from the upcoming opening of the New York facility in the Customs House in 2013. As NARA develops its facility they are working with other occupants, including the National Museum of the American Indian. Mr. Gardner expressed excitement at the possibility of collaboration between NARA and the Smithsonian. NARA's resident expert in Native Americans works in the Seattle region, so work is underway to determine how best to bring her expertise to programs being developed for New York. He noted this is an exciting time, with many people looking for how to work differently.

On the subject of workforce planning, Mr. Gardner said his direct reports have developed a sense of where the LPM office is going and how we'll work together, not as separate units. The group came up with goals for LPM that are not separate for Legislative, Libraries, etc., but rather are goals bridging the whole organization. He wants to encourage this thinking and hopes workforce planning triggers more discussion of how we'll shape our future.

Mr. Ferriero commented that he dropped in on the education meeting. They had flip charts identifying competencies and had signed up to show who can do what after just meeting each other that day. He added that he is putting pressure on himself to move the Transformation

forward. This is a 3-5 year process. He stated that he will keep reporting to the committee on the status of the Transformation, then he asked for questions.

Mr. Gardner added that NARA management is not saying the libraries have to be exactly alike, noting that the libraries have thirteen different situations and cultures. The intent is not to impose a model for all to follow. Instead, he added, the goal is to share more and connect more.

Stephanie Streett of the Clinton Foundation asked if there are resources the foundations can share among themselves to make themselves stronger? She raised the idea of sharing exhibits, wondering if it would be possible to develop an affordable exhibit that could be tailored for each site. She admitted the Jewels to Jelly Beans exhibit at the Clinton Library (featuring treasures from each library) would have been a prime candidate for traveling to other libraries. She expressed hope that the foundations and libraries could work on something similar that could travel affordably. Mr. Gardner replied that this was exactly the sort of thing he is looking to do, noting that one of the unified LPM goals under Museum Services is greater outreach through traveling exhibits. He said we all need to think about how libraries can be venues, adding that we should look at other partners as well. He mentioned a recent meeting with the Smithsonian traveling exhibit staff to discuss how to travel the What's Cooking Uncle Sam exhibit featured in Archives I. He recounted previously conversations held between NARA and the National Portrait Gallery on a potential traveling exhibit. He said his office can support this effort, not give the libraries exhibits they're ordered to show.

Ms. Streett said all foundations send email blasts, so we should make sure each foundation and director gets everyone's email blasts to see what everyone else is doing.

Mr. Ferriero commented that he especially likes the idea of focusing on records outside the libraries, because NARA has such extraordinary material in the regions.

ACTION ITEM 4: NARA and the Foundations will share email blasts on upcoming events as well as information on traveling exhibits. LP will coordinate this effort among the Libraries and with the Exhibits program in Washington.

Public Comments

Mr. Ferriero asked for any comments from the public.

Andrew Wulf (Curator at the Reagan Library) said he was thrilled at the traveling exhibit discussion. He added that in his year and a half at the Reagan Library he has collaborated with NARA and with the Reagan Foundation. He continued that as different as we perceive the two sides to be, he believes the shared mandate trumps organizational differences.

Ms. Wall mentioned the recent all-hands meeting held in NARA to discuss the budget situation and hiring freeze. She added that there are plans to do more, including regular all-hands meetings for managers and supervisors. She said the Internal Collaboration Network (ICN), scheduled to start rolling out in January, will give NARA an impressive collaboration platform. The technology will allow the agency for the first time to create virtual groups – educators, exhibit staff, etc. as well as unexpected interest communities. She said management is willing to let it grow organically to see what capabilities it has.

Ms. Garland said internal communication is critical, and that greater staff understanding is key to raising morale. She asked the Committee how can we best connect with you to leverage your information? She noted many of the Committee members have experienced transformations in their careers, so their experiences could prove very helpful to the libraries and the rest of the agency. Ms. Streett agreed, noting the need for good communication between directors and foundation directors and that good communication doesn't necessarily need more resources to do it.

Mr. Ferriero asked if the ICN can be extended to foundations? Ms. Wall replied she would find out.

ACTION ITEM 5: NARA will determine if the ICN can be extended to foundation employees.

Staff Morale in NARA

Mr. Ferriero stated in terms of reported staff morale NARA is now the worst agency in government. The good news is that NARA continues to set records for the percentage of staff who participate in the survey. Issues for staff are opportunities for training and advancement, and concerns about the quality of supervision. Staff recognition is also a key issue. He said NARA leadership is treating this very seriously. The managers' all-hands will be focused on this. He noted the last survey was conducted in the midst of the reorganization. The agency has nowhere to go but up, but will take a lot of work. He noted that in the responses from the libraries there was a 100% response across all the libraries that staff are willing to provide extra effort. He said this is an amazing finding that doesn't appear in the results for any other parts of the agency.

Mr. Ferriero asked the group who wants to host the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for April 2012. The proposed site for the April meeting will be the Clinton Library in Little Rock, AR.

ACTION ITEM 6: NARA will set and publicize the date of the next meeting of the Advisory Committee.

Action Items

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