The Buzz

The National Archives' Newsletter about Online Access

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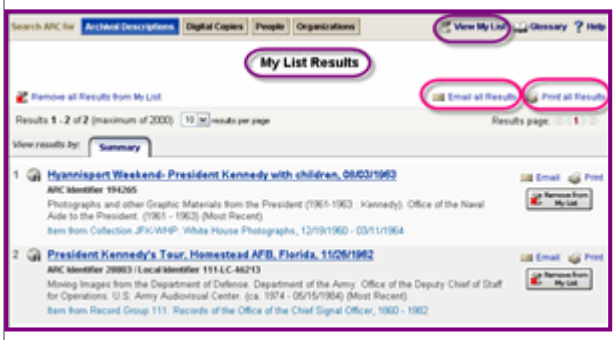
Online Access: Online Finds

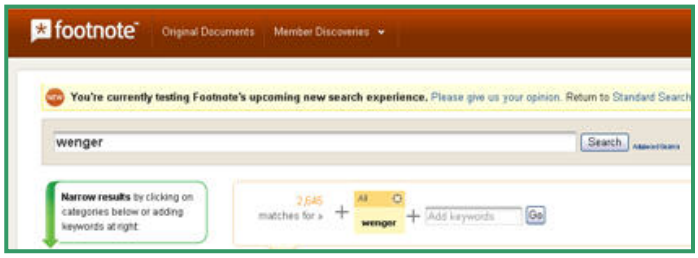


In the Catalog (ARC): The debut of the much-anticipated new ARC Web is just around the corner! Starting this summer, visitors to the newly streamlined site will have access to such features as the familiar "Google-like" basic search box, user-friendly advanced search filters, a well-organized tabular display, and a graphical hierarchy display. The "My List" and email functions, highlighted search terms within record hits, and the ability to search within particular record groups, collections, series, and file units will also improve usability. Stop by the website to learn all about these exciting new features.
http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/new-arc.html

In the Digital Vaults: Just launched in February, this new web version of the interactive Public Vaults exhibit at Archives I features images and descriptive labels for more than 1,200 National Archives records. Users can browse similar records linked together by a virtual "spider web," create their own posters and movies with images, design "Pathway Challenge" puzzles, or search through the entire collection. Nominated for a Webby Award, this new National Archives experience is certainly worth a visit!
http://www.digitalvaults.org/#/browse/?record=269

Online Access: New Resources and Technology

Footnote Search Tips: January marked the first anniversary of the National Archives-Footnote.com joint record digitization project, with more than 35 million historical record images added thus far. If you aren't familiar with the project, check out NARA's digitization partnerships page to learn about this ambitious venture.
http://www.archives.gov/digitization/partnerships.html



Footnote's new search interface allows users to perform both basic keyword and advanced filtered searches. In the basic search format, hits that include all search terms in the same field are returned first, followed by results containing the keywords anywhere in the record. Matched terms are drawn from both officially indexed metadata and user supplied annotations. The advanced search options (name, place, and year) provide users with greater control over their queries. Users also have the option to search within specific titles or sections of titles.

While Footnote's new search clearly has the potential to be a valuable tool, it's important to keep in mind that this is still a Beta version and may need to be refined. Feel free to explore the site and leave comments -- feedback is encouraged. http://www.footnote.com

Online Description at NARA

In the Catalog (ARC): The 4th annual ARC Points of Contact Conference was held April 8th and 9th at Archives 1 in downtown Washington, DC. More than 32 POCs from program offices across the agency attended the conference, which featured presentations on the new ARC Web, file units, canned search links, authority control updates, digital harvest, and partnerships, to name just a few. The change in location, and lodging at the historic Hotel Lombardy were received enthusiastically, as were the greetings and acknowledgements by the special guest speaker -- the Archivist of the United States. At the conclusion of the conference, three framed "ARC Favorites" images were given away as door prizes: ARC IDs 520018 (Trees with Snow on Branches, by Ansel Adams); 594732 (Map of the Battle of Bull Run); and 521700 (Children in Camp, by Dorothea Lange.) Congratulations to Jefferson Moak, Meg Hacker, and Billy Wade on their new ARC décor.

Online Description in the U.S. Archival Community

From the Society of American Archivists (SAA) *Descriptive Notes*: The Winter 2008 edition of the SAA Description Section's online newsletter included: reports from the DACS, EAC, and Future of Bibliographic Control Working groups; discussions of several new standards in development, including the new ICA-ISDF standard described later in this newsletter; and a review the ALA Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access (CC:DA) report. James Roth of the John F. Kennedy Library was announced as the newly elected section chair. The full newsletter is available online at http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/descr/.

Library of Congress Posts Images on Flickr: In the Library of Congress Flickr pilot, the nation's library has embraced Web 2.0 through the use of community tagging, or user-assigned metadata. This project has been undertaken using two sets of photographs for which very little official descriptive data exists. Users are encouraged to contribute their own insights and keyword suggestions through subject tagging, commenting, and annotating specific elements of the image. Judging by the lists of subject tags, identifications of photographed people and places, and user-provided links to outside resources, this first stage of the project has been a success! http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/

Online Description in the International Archival Community

International Council of Archives Activities: The Committee of Best Practices and Standards of the International Council of Archives (ICA/CBPS) released the first edition of the International Standard for Describing Functions (ICA-ISDF) in April and will formally present it at the International Congress of Archives in Malaysia in July 2008. From the press release: "Separated but linked descriptions of functions can improve the understanding of that context and can be used in conjunction with ICA-ISAD(G) compliant descriptions and ICA-ISAAR(CPF) authority files as a tool for efficient retrieval of archives and creators descriptions in archival descriptive systems. This approach constitutes the basis of the new international standard which provides guidance for preparing descriptions of functions of corporate bodies associated with the creation and maintenance of archives." http://www.ica.org/en/node/38665/

Spotted on the Australian National Archives' Web Site: Have fun while keeping up-to-date with our colleagues down under! The Archives of Australia's "Find of the Month" page highlights notable new discoveries, complete with engaging narrative descriptions, related records, and an archive of previous finds. These monthly displays, and their on-site physical counterparts, keep the public face of the Archives fresh, with such exhibits as "the lost songs of Slim Dusty," "John Lennon's incoming passenger card," and "the original patent application for Mr. Squiggle," the marionette host of a children's television program spanning four decades. http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/online/find-of-the-month/index.aspx

"The Buzz" is a quarterly digest and outlet for news relating to online access to the National Archives records and collections. You may contact Kristen Albrittain at kristen.albrittain@nara.gov or Jill Reilly James at jill.james@nara.gov with ideas for articles, suggestions, or comments.