National Archives and Records Administration

USER GROUP MEETING
National Archives Building, Washington, DC
Friday, August 27, 2010
10:00 a.m.
(1:00 p.m. meeting held at the National Archives at College Park, MD)

OPENING

Michael Kurtz, Assistant Archivist for Record Services - Washington, DC (NW) welcomed everyone to the User Group meeting. Thirteen researchers attended.

AGENDA

1. <u>**Research Room Security Issues**</u> (Michael Kurtz)

   a) **Research Room Green Bags**

   In the past fiscal year, there have been ten incidences of copies and original records being mixed together. We are taking steps to protect the original records, researchers, and staff by using green bags for copies of records and researchers' notes that are taken out of the research rooms. Green bags will contain only the items that are leaving the research rooms; this will not include items that researchers put in the lockers.

   Currently, researchers' use of the green bags is voluntary. We now want everyone to use them all the time, so we are ordering more green bags. National Archives (NARA) staff will be checking the green bags before they are locked and leave the research rooms. Presenting Security with the locked green bags will diminish the time researchers stand in line at the guard station before exiting the building. Security will need to check only the items that are not in the locked green bags. We are working with the guards to insure that the checkout process runs smoothly and efficiently.

   b) **Public Access PC Paper**

   To further distinguish original records and copies, and to streamline the checkout process, we will begin using colored paper in all of the public access computers and photo copiers. Would using another, such as pink, pose any problem?

   Feedback:
   - The paper color is a big issue for some of our clients, particularly the attorneys.
   - The quality of the resolution and contrast of paper to image is very important, particularly for those using optical character recognition (OCR) scanners.
   - Pink paper would not provide the proper contrast.
   - We suggest you use yellow, off-white, or grey.

Kurtz: We could make exceptions in special cases, as the one you have mentioned. We are doing everything we can to keep from mixing records and copies of records, and to improve records access and checkout speed. Colored paper will help us achieve these goals. In the meantime, we will test various paper colors before making a final decision.

Feedback: Will you continue to place a stamp on our personal items as you do on record copies as a way to further alleviate problems? Can more than one guard work at the checkout area?

Kurtz: Yes. We will continue stamping personal items (paper). We are working with the Security office regarding your request.

2. <u>**National Archives Records Storage/Space Issues**</u> (Michael Kurtz)

We have a team looking into how to implement a *scan-on-demand* system for the Washington National Records Center (WNRC) and other parts of NARA. In this process, rather than shipping a folder back to an agency, we would scan the folder contents and send it online to the agency. We would also use this method of information transfer among the NARA facilities. We intend to scan folder contents, rather than scanning boxes of records.

In three years, the storage areas in the National Archives Main Building and at College Park will be filled to capacity. We are currently planning on building a new Washington National Records Center (WNRC) which will contain three archival storage bays to alleviate the immediate space problem in the Washington, DC area.

One idea we are considering for freeing up space is to digitize the military service and pension records and send the originals to our St. Louis facility. If we decided to do this, we would work on one section of the records at a time and would move them only after we had digitized them. Since this is only one of the options we are considering, the project would not begin for several years.

Feedback:
- Could you digitize the records at a lower resolution to take up less space?
- Do it right and do it once. And do it in color, set at 600 dpi for preservation quality.
- At the Library of Congress, if something is off-site, you must request it in advance so it is ready when you arrive.
- Place the records where most needed or used, for instance, in St. Louis. When making your decisions, consider geographical relationships and who is using the records.

Kurtz: We must follow our vision of access, anywhere and anytime. We must also think globally for access to information. Digitization will happen only after Congress provides funding. Nothing will be happening in the near future. Although we are looking at fiscal year 2013 for the digitization of military service and pension records, we cannot foresee what the budget will be at that time.

Feedback: Would there be a charge for the scan?

Kurtz: We just don't know until we start the process.

3. **Status of Archives I Building Changes (Michael Kurtz)**

For the time being, everything will remain the same as you see it today. The research room will stay in its current location. No changes to the building can be made until we receive the five million dollars needed for the planned changes. Currently, the most recent plan (Plan D) is still in the appropriation process. The request is still being marked up in committee, so the request is not even on the floor of either the House of Representatives or the Senate. We will let you know once we have funding.

Feedback: In the lobby, we have to wait until 9am to get into the research area; this causes congestion and is a security issue. May researchers move to the research area instead of the lobby before 9am?

 Kurtz: After both meetings, we will talk with Security.

4. **Installation of Wireless Internet (Wi-Fi) at Archives I and II (Diane Dimkoff)**

Installation of the Wi-Fi began in July 2010. This fall, any registered researcher will have access. Bill Day, from the NARA Facilities office, is overseeing the project. Archives II will be wired by next Thursday, September 2, 2010. Currently, we are in the testing phase in the Main Building. Please let Diane know if you can participate in the testing. You may sign up after the meeting.

Diane will also hold focus group meetings to discuss security issues, and the use of thumb drives and other portable media.

Feedback: Do you have control over the public access PCs at Archives II? They crash or do not work. This is a problem.

 Dimkoff: There was a blip that day. It is not related to Wi-Fi.

5. **Archives I Microfilm Equipment Test Results (Diane Dimkoff)**

Based on the survey results, we selected the Scan Pro 2000. We now need funding to purchase it.

6. **Serial Set Update (Diane Dimkoff)**

The lawyers accepted the contract and we are getting the digital version of the Serial Set.

7. **Questions and Answers**

Question: How many scanners will be replaced and when?
Answer: We want to replace as many scanners as possible, but cannot do this until the FY2011 budget passes. It is possible that the budget may not pass until January 2011.

Question: Can we have new equipment with thumb drives?
Answer: Yes.

Question: We used to be able to leave our equipment and paper here overnight and now we can't do that. Why?
Answer: We are trying to control the amount of paper in the research room in relation to document security. People are responsible for their belongings. However, we can look into using green bags for overnight use.

Question: I would like a larger plate for the scanner. The bulk copier is larger, but not large enough. The scanner at Archives II is great. Can we have new equipment with a larger plate?
Answer: Our Trust Fund provides equipment so we partner with them and they are open to our suggestions.

Feedback: There is a concern that scanning costs are too expensive. Fifty cents is too much; keep it down to 10 cents.
Answer: We liked the Archives I digital book scanner we tested, but it was very expensive ($60,000).

Feedback: I recommend training for use of the new microfilm scanners.
Answer: Yes, we will do staff and researcher training. Scan Pro offers training sessions for all.

Question: The Archivist talked about citizen archivists. I would like to send out that statement. Where can I find it?
Answer: The Archivist's blog has a statement about the citizen archivists. See www.archives.gov and search on *citizen archivist.*

Question: Can we make bulk copying easier in the Archives I east room – 30 minute sign up? The bulk copier room is not always available.
Answer: Electricity is an issue. We are planning it for the west research room, but there are issues with wiring, so everything is currently on hold. We will try a 30 minute sign up with signs beginning September 6, 2010. We will communicate the sign up process more clearly if others are waiting.

Question: What was your feedback on the Saturday pulls?
Answer: We are not finished analyzing the results yet, but results were not consistent. We need to analyze not only the process but the type of records requested.
Feedback: Try advertising the pilot more at places like Ancestry and historical societies.

Question: Is the pull-on-demand back to the original process?
Answer: Yes, it was announced at the last meeting.

UPCOMING USER GROUP MEETINGS

- September 29, at 1:00 p.m., Archives II with the Archivist

- October 22, at 1:00 p.m., Archives I

- November 19, at 1:00 p.m., Archives II

- December: No Meeting

Please send agenda items to Diane Dimkoff at diane.dimkoff@nara.gov or Nancy Fortna at nancy.fortna@nara.gov, so that staff can attend to address the issues.

ADJOURNMENT – 1:45 p.m.