Researchers' Forum
Thursday, June 2, 2011
National Archives (NARA – AII)
College Park, MD
1PM – Auditorium

Welcome

Director, Access Programs Susan Cummings welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the audience to think about holding the meetings quarterly or more often.

The following items were discussed:

I. **1940 Census Status by Rebecca Warlow**
    This is an update on the 1940 census. Our Digitization lab is digitizing all microfilm down to enumeration level. On line maps and descriptions are in ARC. And later this summer on the online public access prototype. Type in the key words: ***1940 map***, ***county***, ***state name***, and you can look at maps of ancestors and determine enumeration.

    The 1940 Census opens April 2, 2012 and will be available from your home computers and NARA computers.

    We are checking the quality of scans. The originals were destroyed. We only have microfilm copies. As we create metadata, we check copies against originals and fix. Microfilm that is poor quality is noted. Says best image available. Also notes pages missing or duplicated.

    The status is updated in the blog NARAtions and at meetings.

II. **National Archives Experience II Construction at AI by Rick Judson (Deputy Executive for Business Support services)**

    At our last meeting, we were waiting for funding. Since then, we have been working on the exhibit side plans. There are no changes to the research side. It is the same design (Scheme D) discussed in the past. Gallagher and Assoc. are working on the exhibit and signs.

    On April 15 the budget was approved and we received $5 million for first sequence for NAE II. April 27, NARA sat with Grunley Construction contractors and they are going to do this as a CM at risk. We will get prices sometime next week and then see what we can afford. And then schedules. No work until this Fall, in the Oct. or Nov. timeframe.

    First sequence on ground floor in research area. Doing small components to minimize disruptions. Most work done after hours. First sequence is going to take about 8 months.

We have requested for funding in fiscal year 2012. Won't have word on that until next year.

Date for construction determined by working with research room staff. Maybe end of September (3rd or 4th week).

Plan D is still the same plan and no changes.

First move finding aids to library. Final estimate on increment one was higher than what expected. Might have to defer some work. So we might start working on public restrooms on Constitution side. We can move finding aids without having to do the restroom work given money available.

Second component would be microfilm and lecture area. Will do another presentation to show the phases. Aim for having this meeting in August.

The process for clearing through Security as you come into the building from Pennsylvania Avenue will remain the same. Research lobby will have a research office and another office. There are no planned changes to this process.

New training room will be completed in phase B and will be done before existing classroom (room G-24) goes away.

III. <u>Microfilm Readers/Scanners in Process for Purchase by Rick Judson</u>

Protest by another vendor sent to GAO, so we cannot make the purchase of equipment for A1 at this time.

Timeline to resolve:
- Protest filed Tuesday, May 31.
- NARA has 30 days to respond to GAO report concerning our position on protest.
- 100 days from filing, GAO will render a decision.
- Protester requested a hearing. May be scheduled within the 100 days. Hearing is public.

We cannot talk about the procurement.

Ordering plans in place. All microfilm at A2 is in the microfilm room. Scanners to date cannot use classified material on the current equipment. New equipment would place a declassification sticker on the copy. So even if it says *top secret*, it could have this label so it meets DOD standard.

IV. <u>**Security and Attire in Research Rooms by Rick Judson**</u>
There are complaints about security procedures during screenings. Some new guards are in training, so they err on the conservative side of what can be worn into the research rooms. Researcher or Guard can ask research room staff to help determine about clothing acceptability. It can be confusing. Anyone can bring in research room staff to determine.

We are constantly training. We started the new procedures in January, but did training in December to prepare. They err on being overly cautious.

We are looking into property pass use at both buildings. We are trying to go away from having equipment receipts. In the future we hope that the procedure might be changed so that guards look for an asset tag from NARA. No tag, then we assume that it is personal property. Tags should be tamper proof, so it would leave residue.

Audience: Have personal equipment listed under Researcher's card.

Judson: We will discuss with security.

V. <u>**St. Louis Flooding by Rick Judson**</u>
We hear that there is concern about the rain and the new St. Louis facility. Rain affected parking area paving before employees could move into the facility. The facility is not in a flood plain and not within a 100-year flood plain. It is five feet above level.

During building construction, they had a chilled water pipe break. This damaged some panels and office space, but the company replaced it. Weather did not affect work.

The concrete building can resist winds. It is designed to National and local codes. The stack areas are self-contained like A2.

VI. <u>**Digitization Status by Mary Rephlo**</u>

Footnote, Ancestry, and FamilySearch are operating cameras in the DC area.

FamilySearch goes to Footnote for indexing and mounting. Once a month, we put a report online on what is available. There are 481 titles available on Ancestry. We put these up with the entire series. It is counted differently in Footnote – incrementally. There are 59 million on Footnote.

Information series is on the website by NARA at www.archives.gov/digitization. This shows the strategic plan and partnership agreements along with lists. It shows all the lists and series with our partner websites with links.

We update monthly.

Audience: When Footnote puts up on their website, access to the records at NARA are limited for an entire block. They are missing and restricted, so this is a problem because the researcher has to prove that it is missing.

Rephlo: Missing numbers will be placed by Footnote. We realized some are missing and Footnote is working to fix.

Process to report is for the researcher to go to main desk research room and prove that it is missing. We will look into how to make this smoother.

Audience: Digitization needs to be of better quality of textual records.

Rephlo: FamilySearch does not use color-capable machines. It is not a requirement of FamilySearch.

Footnote's past projects were not done in color because that was not the requirement. Now purchased by Ancestry, so they will do it in color. Originally, we asked for black and white for online viewing. We are now convinced and as of June 1, we are not going to do color with those just starting -- not in process. There will be color in Ancestry and Footnote.

The War of 1812 will be in color.

Projects in process will stay the same dpi (such as widow pensions). Footnote photographs at 400 dpi and Ancestry at 300 dpi. These are minimal standards for our images. Our partners have the same requirements as Federal agencies; 300 and 400 dpi if photos.

Footnote scanned at 400, which was doing scans at a higher level than what we required.

The Ancestry agreement is coming up in Jan. 2012 and we will look at the digitization requirements. Our Information Services Office will discuss options with them.

Audience: Current NARA guidelines are 7 years old and need to be updated. The quality needs to be updated. Also, documents in the public domain are being removed from public circulation.

Rephlo: We still have access to our records if it is in our digitization partner's site. This is noted in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Ferriero: Our goal is to keep material in its original format. We understand and the point is understood. Contracts will be updated.

Audience: Why is the Archives in the business of making money for Ancestry rather than preservation?

Ferriero: We are only partnering because doing it is the only way we can get this information out. We want to provide 24-hour access to this content on the internet in the shorter term. It would take us over 100 years.

Audience: One example of the problem with records not being available is the State Department call slips were not allowed to be pulled because they were marked *Ancestry.com exclusive.* The Reference Archivist did not know how to pull the material from Ancestry.com.

Rephlo: www.archives.gov/digitization.gov will take you to the hyperlinks to get to material and then you can sort. When it has www.ancestryinstitution.com from our computers, then it is free.

We can train our staff more. It is a cultural change. Finding aids may disappear and put online. We will do a better job of finding these materials online.

Audience: When material is being scanned, the material is blocked for the entire block. Another example is the reports of deaths overseas from U.S. consulates.

Rephlo: Those records were an aberration on how they locked down the entire block when scanning just part. We understand .

T289 will be redone and posted on Ancestry later this week. The index to the pension files for the Civil War and some from the Spanish American wars, are missing files. They wre done pre-partnership and put up before we partnered. They are going back to correct. They are required to do that under the partnership agreement, but not required pre-partner.

Audience: Ancestry citations need updating and to note the roll.

Rephlo: We can ask them to put that metadata in, but it is pre-partner. I am working with a new person at Ancestry and Footnote. When we ask for a simple change in metadata, they have to pull the entire block including all of the images.

Ferriero: I suggest we have a meeting with researchers to meet one-on-one with our digitization partners. NARA can have a formal meeting for them to listen to researchers.

Audience: Another example of a problem is the Online Shot Cards. The Navy Air Force cards used to be on line, but now they are reduced to a two-line summary in ARC. The

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researcher must go back to the card catalog because it is not online. Navy personnel are in the card catalog, but not online.

Cummings: We are getting the textual inventories and lists attached to ARC. We will look into the item level description and see why it does not have all the information going into the ARC.

Audience: Can we get high-resolution images attached in ARC?

Cummings: Yes, the ability is there. The policy is to get more up, but there might be a bandwidth issue.

VII.Pension Files by David Ferriero
Files will not be moved unless scanned.

Scanned files may be moved once you have access to the digital files and no problems.

Audience: After problems are resolved and there are quality images, how do we get files back from St. Louis if there is an issue?

Ferriero: Scan-on-Demand, The record centers will do a high-quality scan and then send it to the researcher.

Audience: What happens when I send it back to NARA with a problem because the entire file is not scanned and parts are missing? How are we going to know when something is missing? How will NARA know?

Cummings: The researcher has the choice to purchase all or part of the document.

Audience: Currently if something missing, then the researcher goes to the desk and then they pull the originals for scanning by the researcher. I can't do this if it is in St. Louis.

Cummings: At this time we are not talking about moving the bulk of the pension records.

Trevor Plante: Navy widows pensions that are on microfiche are moving to St. Louis. This is the only exception. They are all scanned from microfiche. *Post-meeting note:we are reviewing the quality of the microfiche.*

Cummings: If in the future NARA decided to move pension files to St. Louis it would go to a center for military records which would have a research room. But the files would need to be scanned first as the Archivist has said and there are no plans or resources for doing that.

If a researcher is concerned that a digitized image of a record in incomplete we can still pull the original file, even if the records are stored off site. For instance, NARA is currently running a pilot with NY records where archivists in Lenexa Kansas pull and service records for researchers in NY.

Audience: I don't know if a records center has really found or not found a record. Records that are accessioned are available from other areas.

Tom Mills: We are in the process of looking at how records will be held off-site and the researchers' needs. We will provide you with feedback. The new archivists really want to make this happen at our Kansas City and St. Louis locations. Accessioned records in Kansas City area caves would be available with archives staff to pull records for you and available for scanning or viewing in our Kansas City archives building. We need your assistance to understand what it should look like in our business model. Suggestions can be submitted to our WIKI (http://www.ourarchives.wikispaces.net/).

Audience: WWI and indexes for Civil War pensions on microfilm are being moved. Are the textual records retired or removed also?

Sabrina Petersen, Ancestry: Tell Mary Rephlo about quality or errors.

Audience : Descriptions are not getting into Special Media records online.

Cummings: We will look into.

Ferriero: We are worried about the business process. Be patient with us. We are trying to listen to your concerns. We know you are frustrated. I am a user-service person and want to make this a better experience.

Audience: The Finding Aids staff are doing a great job and correct an error within 15 minutes.

VIII.   Back To Microfilm Scan by Susan Cummings
We know the AII book scanner is a problem and when we are able to purchase a new one, we will take the issues with the current one into consideration.

IX. Chairs by Susan Cummings
Someone had sent in a request for a smaller chairs in the AI research room. We have two small chairs in stock and they will soon be in the microfilm reading room.

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X. Pull Slip Pilot at AI by Susan Cummings

Concerning a request to submit pull slips for later pulls at A1. Trevor Plante will start a pilot on June 6. If you put in a pull slip for later pull and then later want to change, it might already be pulled. You can't change your mind once it is in the box.

You can put in a slip at the end of the day for the next morning. We do this now. Make sure to put in the date and time.

We will look at how it goes and let you know.

If the material is pulled early, it will be in the researcher room.

XI. Copies of the MLR by Susan Cummings

Copies of the Master Location Register are in are the finding aids room, but many of the locations may be incorrect. If you want an electronic version of the MLR, it must be FOIA'd. As we progress, holdings information will be available online through OPA in the future. Down the road it will be tied into our registration system. The system is not there yet, but in the future it will have a pull slip feature. It is definitely on the road map, but not happening for a year or two.

XII. Other

- **Audience**: Staff is more friendly, but still problems with pulls. We want consistent rules for ordering carts for our two teams. We need written rules to help us.

  Cummings: Providing examples to us is helpful. We have students over the summer, so there are chances for mistakes. We are working on customer service and have meetings with our staff. You have to tell the supervisor/manager on site. You have to say when and where it happened. Give specific information.

- The blue paper was picked because it is a different color and high contrast when copied.

Items to be discussed in upcoming meetings:

- Are we meeting quarterly or more often? Think about what you prefer.
- All-digital research room and new equipment will be on the next agenda for the September meeting.
- Construction at A1 meeting with Rick Judson in August will be set up. Date to be determined.
- Digitization Partners and Researchers meeting coordinated by NARA. Date to be determined.

2011 USERS GROUP MEETING DATES

Please join us on the following dates:

- July & August – summer break
- September 16 –Archives I, Room G-24 at 1:30

Agenda items should be sent by September 9th to: Susan Cummings at
susan.cummings@nara.gov or call 301-837-8636.

Visit *www.archives.gov/dc-metro/researcher-users-group/*

[The NARAtions blog is available at*: http://blogs.archives.gov/online-public-access.* If you
have suggestions for questions we should ask our researchers and the public, please send them to
us at *socialmedia@nara.gov.*]