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## STATEMENT by John W. Carlin Archivist of the United States,

**to the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology of the Committee on Government Reform House of Representatives Congress of the United States**

October 20, 1999

### Chairman Horn, members of the Subcommittee, and members of the Staff:

I am John Carlin, and as Archivist of the United States, I administer the National Archives and Records Administration. I'm grateful for your interest in NARA, and I welcome this opportunity to describe the challenges we face and the efforts we're making to meet them.

At the outset, I would like to touch on some things that might be of particular interest to you, and then provide a more detailed description of the full range of NARA's customers, services, concerns, initiatives, and progress. But because our Strategic Plan puts our customers first in our thinking, I want first to make clear who they are and what we provide them.

Our mission, as defined in our Strategic Plan, is to ensure ready access to essential evidence documenting the rights and entitlements of citizens, the actions for which Federal officials are responsible, and the national experience. In 34 facilities across the country, including regional archives, records services centers, and ten Presidential libraries, we preserve and provide access to literally millions of records—billions if you count individual pages, photographs, and recordings—ranging from our 18th-century Charters of Freedom to 100,000 late 20th-century electronic files.

Literally thousands of people, including genealogists, lawyers, historians, veterans, newspaper and television journalists, and government employees, annually do research in our archival facilities, and thousands of others write or call with inquiries for records or information from our records. Approximately one million people, many of whom are school children, annually view the Charters of Freedom in our Washington rotunda, and each year approximately 1.4 million people view exhibits in our Presidential libraries. Approximately 1.5 million veterans annually request documentation from us of their entitlement to benefits. People throughout the country this past year made more than 7 million user visits to our web pages. And the number of documents that researchers have pulled up to review from electronic editions of the *Federal Register*, the *Code of Federal Regulations*, and related publications that NARA produces now exceeds 100 million annually. In addition, as you know, Mr. Chairman, many historians, archivists, and records managers across the country are carrying out projects to preserve and publish records with the help of grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, which is part of NARA.

I am pleased to say that increased support from the Congress and the Administration for special initiatives over the past three years is enabling us to serve these customers better. As

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a political scientist, Mr. Chairman, you will be glad to know that scholars, among other researchers, are grateful to the Congress for making it possible, in the budget just passed for FY 2000, for us to hire more archivists to assist them in our research rooms, and to provide better research-room equipment for their use. Researchers are grateful to Congress for enabling us to continue our progress in building an Archival Research Catalog that eventually will provide on-line descriptions of everything in our holdings so that their research can start at home. And researchers, especially genealogists, are also grateful for funds appropriated in our FY 2000 budget to enable us to prepare for opening the 1930 Census records.

Providing public access to records, however, is only half our job. We're the National Archives and Records Administration. We provide guidance to our largest customer, the three branches of the Government, including the Federal courts and more than 300 Federal agencies with thousands of locations nationwide and around the world, on documenting their activities and managing their records. We also have the responsibility to approve how long Federal records are kept in order to protect individual rights, hold Government accountable, and document the national experience. For the Congress and its legislative agencies, we preserve official records in our Center for Legislative Archives and provide access to them.

Mr. Chairman, I do not have to tell an oversight committee how important it is for Government agencies to be able to locate and provide access to records quickly and adequately. When they have difficulty doing so, as in some recent cases, Congressional committees feel frustrated by what, to us, is a records management problem. There have been a lot of charges and counter-charges about records availability, but I think it is true to say that the Congress, the Executive Branch, and NARA itself have not in the past put enough emphasis on the need for effective records management in the Government. But fortunately that is changing, and we're grateful for the support that the Congress and the Administration have been giving us in recent budgets for records management improvement.

With that introduction to what we do and for whom, Mr. Chairman, I would like now to turn to some specific concerns that may be of particular interest to you and your committee.

As you know, we are all concerned about electronic records. They pose an unprecedented challenge because such records are vulnerable to erasure, media instability, and technological obsolescence, and because they are mushrooming in quantity and in multiple formats. But we are making progress toward meeting these challenges and averting loss.

The magnitude of the problem has made us realize that NARA does not have, nor will we have, the expertise or the resources to meet these challenges on our own. Consistent with our Strategic Plan, we have made partnering with others a key strategy, so that our limited resources can be leveraged for maximum return.

For example, we have partnered with the Department of Defense to develop a set of baseline requirements for the management of electronic records, and we subsequently endorsed this baseline as a starting point for agencies that want to begin implementing electronic recordkeeping. Also, we have formed a partnership with Government records managers and information officers, and with private-sector consultants, to launch an inter-agency Fast Track Guidance Development Project. This project will identify "best practices" currently available to Federal record keepers in managing electronic records.

In terms of electronic records preservation and access, we also have new hope, thanks to another partnership. Over the past quarter century, NARA has taken into our archives approximately 100,000 files of electronic records from the U.S. Federal Government as a whole. But we estimate that the Treasury Department alone, for example, is now generating annually, in e-mail alone, nearly a million files of electronic records that we are likely to need to take into our archives. So we entered into a partnership to support work at the San Diego Supercomputer Center on an automated system to enable us to take in large quantities of

Government e-mail messages in a short time, and the Center has produced a prototype that is able to preserve two million e-mail messages in two days. This could be a huge breakthrough.

In the meantime, we continue to have large volumes of paper records with which to deal through our records center operations for Federal agencies. We maintain a regional network of records centers in which we provide storage, retrieval, and other services on records that remain in the agencies' legal custody. With your support, Mr. Chairman, for which we are grateful, we instituted on October 1 a reimbursable program, in which we offer agencies customer-oriented, fee-supported records center services. For the first time, all agencies, not just some, will reimburse us for all records center services we provide. And as part of implementing this program, records storage standards were established, which will apply to both NARA and private-sector or agency facilities.

We also continue to address needs of archival facilities that house the permanently valuable records in our own legal custody. Funds appropriated by the Congress are enabling us to search for the kind and quantity of space we need to replace outmoded and full-up facilities in Anchorage, Alaska, and Atlanta, Georgia. And we plan to renovate our grand old original archives building here in Washington—the building that houses, among other treasures, the records of Congress. We will upgrade its HVAC system to meet today's archival preservation standards, remedy shortcomings in electrical distribution and fire safety, meet requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and improve public spaces generally. Here again, though, we are developing partnerships by soliciting private-sector contributions to supplement public funds for educational aspects of the project.

The centerpiece of the renovation will be the replacement of currently deteriorating cases for the nation's Charters of Freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. They will receive state-of-the-art re-encasement so that they may continue to be safely viewed in our rotunda by millions of visitors well into the new millennium.

With that introduction, I would now like to provide you with a more detailed description of the initiatives I have described and others that are critical for reaching goals in our Strategic Plan.

Our Strategic Plan identifies four major goals toward which we strive. If we are successful, the following four things will be achieved:

- *Essential evidence will be created, identified, appropriately scheduled, and managed for as long as needed.*
- *Essential evidence will be easy to access regardless of where it is or where users are for as long as needed.*
- *All records will be preserved in appropriate space for use as long as needed.*
- *NARA's capabilities for making the changes necessary to realize our vision will continuously expand.*

Success in the latter goal, will be reflected in our progress toward the first three, and success in those three requires that we improve front-end records management in the Federal Government, meet the special challenges posed by electronic records, expand public access to records in general, and meet storage and preservation needs of growing quantities of records. What progress on each of these fronts have we made?

### **Progress In Improving Records Management**

Every day, White House officials, agency administrators, Congressional committees, and Federal courts create thousands of records. NARA helps them meet statutory requirements

that they document activities, maintain records systematically, and determine which ones have sufficient historical or other value to warrant continued maintenance, and for how long. Without effective records management, records needed to document citizens' rights, actions for which Federal officials are responsible, and the historical experience of our nation will be at risk of loss, deterioration, and destruction. With more than 300 agencies creating records in thousands of locations, NARA has had difficulty responding even reactively to demands for records management assistance and service, and reactive responses do not guarantee that all important Government records are safe. To ensure that records are not in jeopardy—that "essential evidence will be created, identified, appropriately scheduled, and managed for as long as needed"—NARA's strategic plan calls for aggressive promotion of effective front-end records management throughout the Government.

We accelerated our records management activities in FY 1998 through efforts to secure high-level support in Federal agencies for records management; to develop more records management assistance to field offices as well as Washington offices of Federal agencies; and to begin planning a review and reinvention of how Federal records are identified, appraised, scheduled, and tracked while in agency custody. We are proceeding with our records scheduling study and have launched a major records management initiative—our "Targeted Assistance Program" for providing assistance to Federal agencies nationwide with urgent records-management needs.

*NARA's Targeted Assistance Program:* With funds appropriated in FY 1999, we have added to our records management staff 13 positions, which we have filled with persons experienced in all records media, including electronic records. In addition to working with agencies' headquarters in Washington, these professionals have been deployed in FY 1999 to help agencies' field offices in Boston, Seattle, and Fort Worth. We are receiving grateful feedback from agencies that for years have not had this kind of assistance. And agencies with particularly severe or urgent records management needs are getting priority help from us.

We are going forward with our nationwide Targeted Assistance Program to assist agencies with their critical records management needs. FY 2000 appropriations provide 17 additional staff positions for expanding assistance into more of our regions as well as to more agency offices in Washington. In the future we will need to expand records management assistance further so that every NARA region will have a Targeted Assistance Program. Our additional employees will help Federal agencies manage Government records in all formats in accordance with NARA recordkeeping requirements.

*NARA's Records Scheduling Reinvention Effort:* We also have launched a preliminary study of the ways records disposition decisions are made throughout the Federal Government in the electronic information era. The responsibility for approving the disposition of records is the most critical statutory responsibility I have as Archivist of the United States because it determines how long records must be kept to protect individual rights, provide accountability in Government, and document the national experience. Therefore, the scheduling and appraisal process used to carry out this responsibility is central to NARA's mission.

The scheduling policies and processes developed during the 20th century and currently used by the Federal Government apply primarily to paper-based recordkeeping systems. But the reality at the end of the 20th century is that most records are created electronically and may be maintained in a variety of media. We must explore what should be the Federal Government's policies in the 21st century on determining the disposition of records, the processes that will best implement those policies, and the tools needed to support the revised policies and processes. Working with various stakeholder groups, we will answer a number of basic questions about Federal documentation, the goals and purposes of scheduling, the appraisal criteria to be used in determining appropriate retentions, and the respective roles of NARA, Federal agencies, and the public in determining dispositions.

These are major steps in our effort to achieve the first goal in our Strategic Plan: *Essential evidence will be created, identified, appropriately scheduled, and managed for as long as needed.*

### **Progress in Meeting Electronic Records Challenges**

As I indicated earlier, special efforts are needed to manage, preserve, and provide access to electronic records. The massive explosion both in quantities and types of electronic records generated in the Federal Government only continues to accelerate. New technological ways to create records have not been matched by technological advancements to manage them. The Government must address realistically a future in which most Government recordkeeping will be electronic, and unless we successfully address the key issues, essential evidence will be lost. To ensure the survival of such evidence, we need to meet four critical challenges:

- *NARA needs to develop and update guidance for Federal agencies to help them manage an increasing variety of electronic records.* Expanding technology has outstripped NARA's capacity to develop even basic guidance for many major types of electronic records, such as document management systems and electronic commerce. Without such guidance it is not realistic to expect Federal agencies to develop electronic recordkeeping systems that will protect records that preserve individual rights or hold Government accountable, much less allow NARA the opportunity to provide long-term preservation and access.
- *NARA needs to work with partners to identify technological solutions that agencies and NARA can apply to distinguish between permanent and temporary electronic records without human intervention.* One of the early lessons from agencies trying to implement electronic recordkeeping for e-mail is that staff find it burdensome to distinguish between temporary and permanent records when the volume agencies deal with is now in the millions.
- *NARA needs to develop capabilities to preserve permanently the increasing volume and variety of electronic records created by agencies.* NARA must develop the capacity to preserve electronic records even when the hardware and software that were used to produce them are obsolete and no longer function. NARA's current capability for accessioning and preserving electronic records continues to be limited to databases and simple forms of electronic textual records. We must be able to accession and preserve the many other common classes of electronic records, such as word-processing files, document images, spreadsheets, digital photography, video and sound recordings, and geographic information systems.
- *NARA must develop capabilities to provide permanent access to electronic records so that researchers can discover and retrieve what they need.* Preserving electronic records alone is not enough. Users must be able to access them once they have been preserved. By statute, NARA is the Federal agency required to provide permanent access to records, including electronic records. Providing access to electronic records is currently limited largely to producing one-to-one copies of entire data sets on digital media and, to a very limited extent, formatted printouts of data. On-line access is limited to a few databases of war-time casualty data or to records NARA has digitized from paper or other formats. Providing access that meets user needs—namely, electronic access—to records created electronically in Federal agencies is a challenge we must meet.

In FY 1998 we created an inter-agency Electronic Records Work Group to consider alternatives to electronic records guidance in General Records Schedule 20, which a Federal district court ruled null and void. Though that ruling has been reversed on appeal, we have acted nonetheless on the Work Group's recommendations, and thanks again to support from the Administration and the Congress in the FY 1999 budget, we have taken other steps to deal with electronic records needs:

- We issued guidance to Federal agencies on how to schedule electronic copies of program records that remain on an e-mail or word-processing system after a record-keeping copy has been produced.
- We developed changes to general records schedules that authorize the disposal of certain administrative records, regardless of physical format.
- We developed a new general records schedule for administrative records documenting the management of information technology, which has had two rounds of review by Federal agencies and, after revision, will be published in the *Federal Register* for public comment.
- We launched an inter-agency "Fast Track Guidance Development Project" to identify "best practices" currently available and to provide guidance quickly on electronic records issues that urgently confront Federal record keepers now—guidance they can use while work goes forward on developing more complete and longer-term solutions.
- We have partnered with the Department of Defense, as I said in my overview, to develop a set of baseline requirements for the management of electronic records, and we subsequently endorsed this baseline as a starting point for agencies that want to begin implementing electronic recordkeeping. This standard does not answer all pertinent questions nor preclude other approaches, but does provide at least a starting point for agencies that want to begin implementing electronic recordkeeping now.
- We are reviewing DoD's certification process for software meeting baseline electronic records management requirements, and we are working with DoD and other Federal agencies on other technical projects of potential value to Government agencies in dealing with electronic records. Funds appropriated for FY 2000 will enable us to continue this work, which we expect to lead to records management applications of use throughout the Government.

Moreover, as I indicated in my overview, we *may*—and "may" must be emphasized because we are still in the research and development stage—have in sight a workable way to maintain electronic records in a comprehensive system providing both preservation and access for all data types without dependence on particular software or hardware. Let me elaborate on the overview of this development that I gave before.

For some time now, NARA has been able to accession electronic databases. But the Government is increasingly generating large numbers of electronic records, such as e-mail messages, word-processing documents, and spread sheets, which are treated electronically as individual files. NARA has had no method of preserving and making these millions of files available. In our search for an answer, we joined the National Partnership for Advanced Computational Infrastructure to seek a solution. At this stage, a prototype system has been developed by our partners at the San Diego Supercomputer Center, a national laboratory for computational science and engineering at the University of California, San Diego. The prototype has been able to preserve a million e-mail messages in just two days.

Additionally, research being done for us at the Supercomputer Center and at the Army Research Laboratory gives us hope that an Electronic Records Archives can be built to preserve any kind of electronic record, in a format that frees it from the computer system in which it was created, and will enable us to meet requests for it using a variety of tools available today and advanced technologies that will be developed for tomorrow. Moreover, access will be expedited by combining this system with the Archival Research Catalog we are developing to describe all bodies of records in our nationwide holdings. All this could be a major breakthrough in our search for an affordable system to accession, preserve, and provide electronic access to electronic records of the Federal Government.

In FY 2000, NARA will be working to take these next steps:

- We will build in the following ways on the initial work done on three key projects described above: the DoD standard needs more evaluation and testing; the Fast Track Guidance Development Project needs to answer some key questions; and the Electronic Records Archives partnership project needs to take steps beyond the initial prototype for accessioning, preserving, and providing access to electronic records.
- We will build our capability to preserve document image files. Currently the imaging industry does not have agreed-upon standards that will allow interchange of documents among systems or transfer to and preservation by NARA. Because many of the records that agencies are currently imaging have been archival in paper forms, NARA must work with agencies to develop standards for imaging permanently valuable records so they can be permanently preserved, or risk losing a generation of historically valuable documentation. In FY 2000 we will undertake the development and testing of imaging standards and techniques to ensure long-term preservation and access to the Government's permanent records.
- We will build our current capacity to process the increasing volume of records: Additional positions we are adding in FY 2000 for electronic records work will enable us to take into NARA the increased flow of electronic records that can't wait for the future system being developed. This staff will handle the work generated by the increased scheduling, appraisal, and oversight efforts growing from our targeted assistance to agencies.

Beyond FY 2000, we will need to expand and build upon current efforts in the following ways:

- Add high-level professionals to oversee the development and implementation of the Electronic Records Archives. We must be much stronger internally if we are to succeed in building on progress we are making with our partners in learning how to preserve and provide access to electronic records of many kinds in large quantities. Not only must we find the solutions but we must be able to implement them.
- Expand our efforts to develop guidance and technical solutions for agencies for managing electronic records by using NARA itself to test guidance we will give to agencies. We can provide records management guidance and advice most effectively and authoritatively if we use our own agency as a test bed, making NARA itself a model for others of affordable, workable records management practices. Advice we offer other agencies will have no credibility unless we use it with our own records. The first step in doing that will be our launching of a business process improvement project (BPI) to renovate NARA's own records management system and methods for the era of electronic records. A major part of this work will be to document the study itself, and such products and improvements as come out of it, for the benefit of other agencies. Moreover, implementing the recommendations will go hand in hand with evaluating recordkeeping system software that we expect to test in FY 2000 in hope of coming up with a records management application (RMA) that we can use agency-wide, and that may also prove useful to others. It only makes good common sense that NARA test within itself solutions we can share as we work with agencies on preserving and providing access to essential evidence.

Clearly, there still remain many obstacles to coping successfully with electronic records. We must continue to leverage our resources through productive partnerships, build working relationships with Federal agencies, and maximizing the opportunity given us by Administration and Congressional support to build NARA's internal capacity to get the job done. Because records in the future will be increasingly electronic, taking the steps I have described for managing, preserving, and providing access to them will be critical for meeting all of the major goals in NARA's Strategic Plan.

### **Progress in Expanding Opportunities For Access**

With Congressional support going back to FY 1994, we are increasing access to records in many areas. Here are some highlights:

- Genealogists, historians, and other researchers can locate microfilmed records they need from an on-line microfilm publications database we completed in FY 1999, describing more than 3,000 microfilm publications and identifying where they can be found in NARA facilities.
- Participants in the current international effort to trace gold, artwork, and other assets looted by the Nazis from Holocaust victims now can use a major NARA publication, produced in FY 1999, describing the large body of relevant records in our holdings. NARA chairs the Interagency Working Group on Nazi War Criminals Records, created by Executive Order to help implement the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act.
- Persons who want facts with which to evaluate theories about the assassination of President Kennedy may now search some 2,000 cubic feet of relevant records in NARA's JFK Assassination Records Collection, to which we continued adding material in FY 1999, at the beginning of which NARA took over sole responsibility for the collection from the statutorily terminated JFK Assassination Records Review Board.
- Users of our *Federal Register* publications are finding additional material on line. Along with the daily FR itself and the entire *Code of Federal Regulations*, we put on-line in FY 1999 the listing of Executive Orders and their codification; we created a process to help users of the *CFR* determine which sections have been updated; and we are preparing the public papers of the Presidents for on-line access, with photographs as well as texts.

In addition, we are making progress on the following access projects:

- building our electronic Archival Research Catalog
- meeting records-declassification requirements
- developing our web site
- improving our data administration, and
- upgrading NARANET, our electronic communications network.

I will explain each of these one by one below.

*Building an electronic Archival Research Catalog.* As part of the Electronic Access Project I mentioned earlier, we are building an Internet-accessible catalog of NARA's nationwide holdings. People who want to do research in our collections can begin at home or school and search more than 400,000 descriptions of our records through the NARA Archival Information Locator, which is a prototype for our Archival Research Catalog. We plan to complete the catalog structure in the summer of 2000, and we will begin conversion of data to reach our goal to describe 100 percent of our archival holdings in a nationwide catalog by 2007. Additionally, teachers, students, and the general public can now download, via the Internet, 124,000 images of significant and high-interest documents, photos, and other NARA records that we completed digitizing in FY 1999 from our nationwide holdings as part of our Electronic Access Project. FY 2000 appropriations will enable us to roll out our Archival Research Catalog system to our facilities nationwide and begin the conversion of records data from outdated, incomplete systems and paper finding aids to our Internet accessible catalog.

*Meeting declassification requirements.* Many kinds of researchers will benefit from access to more than 10 million pages of records that we declassified so far in FY 1999, bringing to nearly 330 million the number of pages of records that NARA has now declassified under the Administration's Executive Order—the largest number of records declassified by any one agency and more than half of the total declassified throughout the Federal Government.

Nonetheless, more work will be needed to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12958

by reviewing and declassifying (or exempting from declassification) all permanently valuable records more than 25 years old. Despite having made major progress toward reducing the backlog of records requiring review, we need resources to complete the new, Congressionally mandated reviews of records in our holdings. The Kyl Amendment, the Lott Amendment, and other special declassification projects require re-reviews of already declassified records and page-by-page review and interagency referrals (in the Nazi War Crimes and Chile/Pinochet projects, for example), which greatly slow the pace of declassification.

I would like to add here that NARA's responsibilities include administration of the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), which has functions under Executive Orders on classified national security information and the National Industrial Security Program. ISOO directs oversight of declassification programs within agencies through on-site program reviews to improve the quality and output of these programs. ISOO also conducts reviews of classification programs and special access programs within agencies, while strengthening data collections and analysis, working with NARA on a database of information that has been declassified, and maintaining support for the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP) and the Information Security Policy Advisory Council (ISPAC).

*Developing our web site.* In 1996, we recognized that web technology would be a key strategy to employ to fulfill our mission. We must make full use of the web and ensure that the information and services our web site provides meet the needs of Federal agencies and citizens. Since NARA's web site was launched in 1996, it has grown tremendously. But the web site has been primarily staffed by employees who have other full-time jobs. We need now to professionalize our web staff and upgrade our web tools.

*Improving data administration.* Because NARA provides to agencies and the public information about our holdings and records themselves that document individual rights, the actions of Federal officials, and the national experience, it is critical that the information we provide is reliable, accurate, complete, consistent, and timely. Users must have confidence in our determinations about whether we have the records they need. Although we have had a data standards program in place, it has never been adequately staffed to serve as a comprehensive program for managing the data used in our daily operations and in fulfilling reporting requirements. Without a strong agency-wide program, we are in danger of building systems that will not be able to exchange data or even use the same data for different purposes. Our Strategic Plan calls for us to implement policies and standards that facilitate development of an integrated, agency-wide information infrastructure. Building on the data standards efforts we began in our Electronic Access Project, we are adding three new staff positions with funding now available. In future we will also need contractor support for our data administration program in order to:

- improve data quality and reliability,
- increase data sharing, and
- control data redundancy.

*Finish upgrading NARANET, our electronic communications network.* NARANET now enables citizens who cannot visit our sites to do research and request needed information; it allows Federal agencies quick access to records management information and help; it allows citizens, such as veterans, access to information to document their rights; it allows researchers visiting one of our locations to find related information at our other locations; and it allows staff nationwide to communicate efficiently to meet customer needs. Within the next several years, NARANET will need to support our initiatives to accept electronic records from the agencies that create them and preserve and provide access to them. NARANET also will need to support a system we are planning to facilitate records scheduling with agencies, including allowing schedules to be submitted electronically by agencies. We plan to build a reliable, expandable, high-capacity, cost-efficient information technology and communications

infrastructure to support our work processes and public access to our holdings.

NARA's ability to perform its mission depends on the sustainability of this internal network backbone. We must reach our performance target of maintaining a 95 percent effective computer and communications infrastructure by 2007. In 1998, NARANET was 76 percent effective overall. In FY 1999, we installed monitoring tools and developed processes for measuring network performance, renovated 17 mission critical systems for Y2K compliance, kept network running a high percentage of the desired time, and began the cyclical replacement of workstations, network operating systems, software upgrades, and network servers, routers, and supporting software. In FY 2000 we will increase the speed at which our network delivers services, renovate 100 percent of mission critical systems for Y2K compliance, and complete the first cyclical replacement of hardware and software begun in FY 1999. Next steps must include these:

- replace 20 to 30 percent of NARANET components annually and support a 15-percent annual growth rate,
- carry out necessary staff IT training,
- create a national help desk for staff,
- expand contractor maintenance support in our Presidential libraries and regional archival facilities,
- develop the user-support services necessary to meet long-range performance targets in our Strategic Plan, and
- increase overall network performance.

*Improve services to veterans.* NARA employees in team-based pilot projects have been conducting tests of new processes designed to improve services to veterans who request records to document entitlements to benefits. As I noted earlier, our National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis receives approximately 1.5 million requests each year from veterans and their representatives for documentation of their military service. Veterans and their families need accurate, complete, and prompt information from military personnel records in order to obtain their rights and benefits, which may include health care, home loan guarantees, education, employment, and burial allowances. However, in past years, backlogs of unanswered requests have ranged from 30,000 to 140,000. The result has been lengthy delays in getting veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs the documents they need.

To remedy this service deficiency, we launched a business-process re-engineering study in FY 1997. From this study we developed a plan for a radical reinvention of the Center's reference processes. During FY 1999, we tested the redesigned processes through team-based pilot projects. And our FY 2000 budget provides for human-resource initiatives and information technologies needed to implement the plan. Beyond this, we will continue implementation by testing customer-service innovations, training staff further to work in a new team system, and acquiring additional information technology and telecommunications infrastructure to support service improvement. This will result in greatly reducing the backlog of requests and ensuring routinely prompt service to America's veterans.

All of these access improvements will help us achieve the second major goal in our Strategic Plan: *Essential evidence will be easy to access regardless of where it is or where users are for as long as needed.*

### **Progress In Meeting Storage and Preservation Needs Of Growing Quantities of Records**

We also have made progress toward meeting our third major goal: all records will be preserved in appropriate space for use for as long as needed. To ensure that Federal agencies' records are protected wherever they may be stored, in our facilities or those of others, we drafted records center facilities standards, which we have revised based on

extensive comment and have published in the *Federal Register*. Additionally, we have made further progress on preserving records in jeopardy.

With money appropriated by the Congress for the preservation of at-risk archival holdings, in FY 1999 we preserved 185 cubic feet of new records we received that required preservation action, and we preserved 1,320 cubic feet of previously identified at-risk records. In addition, we instituted risk assessment procedures for all new accessions of Federal records in the Washington, D.C., area; trained Presidential library archivists in preservation and risk-assessment procedures; and surveyed records proposed for laboratory conservation treatment in six regional archives facilities. Also, we conducted meetings at our facilities across the country to get advice from our customers for a plan to deal with our overall space needs.

Additionally, with your support, Mr. Chairman, we developed the program I mentioned earlier under which Federal agencies now reimburse NARA fully, through a revolving fund, for the costs of storage and services they receive from our records centers. On October 1, after working to help Federal agencies prepare for the change, we launched our reimbursable program, which will improve Government efficiency by enabling us to provide as much space and service as agencies really need while giving them a financial incentive to evaluate those needs carefully. In preparation, we analyzed our finances so that our prices cover all records center costs. We developed policies and procedures for records center accounting and billing. We worked on the technological infrastructure for our interim billing system while we develop the requirements for a new accounting and billing system. And to meet our customer service standards, we added staff to be paid from records center revenue. With the approval of this subcommittee, the Congress has enabled us to capitalize our records center revolving fund to start the program. And we will make continuing improvements as our staff gains experience and we upgrade technology for the program.

We will provide quarterly reports on the program as requested by you, Mr. Chairman, and work with the Committee staff to see that the reports are in a form that is helpful for the Committee's review. NARA will benefit from this program because expanding space costs were eating up increasing proportions of our overall budget. Now agencies will pay for additional space they need and will be able to get all they request because the amount of space will no longer be limited by our budget. Also, we'll be able to devote resources previously tied up in space costs to helping agencies manage records more efficiently and schedule them more carefully, all of which could save money for the agencies individually and for the Government as a whole.

*Establish a new regional archives in Alaska.* Our regional records-services facility in Anchorage, Alaska, is located in an annex to the Anchorage Federal Building. We do not have enough space there for all archival records we should be accessioning from the many Federal agencies operating in that state. For FY 1999, Congress appropriated funds for NARA to conduct a requirements study and begin the design of a facility solution in Anchorage. Funds appropriated for FY 2000 will allow us to complete site selection, conduct an environmental impact study, and complete the design for a new facility. Then we will need to contract for the construction of the new facility and for construction-quality management. Efficiency and economy in Government records storage in Alaska depend upon larger, more appropriate facilities there.

*Find new space for archival operations in our Southeast Region.* A study of space needs in our regional facilities nationwide indicates that our Southeast regional operation in the Atlanta area also has particularly pressing needs, both for adequate and for appropriate space. Our regional archives and our regional records center have been located in a World War II "temporary" warehouse in East Point, Georgia. GSA has agreed with us that renovating the existing building to meet our needs is not financially feasible. Accordingly, we are moving the

records center part of our operation to a GSA-controlled space in a more modern Federal Supply Warehouse in nearby Palmetto, Georgia. Thus GSA will have a Federal tenant for otherwise vacant space, and we will have much improved space with expansion room at low overall cost to the Government.

*Ensure the survival of veterans' records in jeopardy.* Earlier, we described our need for funds for a reinvention of our processes for meeting requests of veterans for information from their military service personnel files. Reference service also will require preservation of military service records, many of which are now at risk. Because of the great value of these records, to history as well as to individual veterans, they will be accessioned permanently into NARA's holdings. And because of their huge volume, these records will require a new facility with archival climate controls and security. But the poor condition of many of these records requires that we institute an immediate, comprehensive program for their preservation.

For example, we will reformat 14,400 reels of Air Force Flight Records from 1911–1974, and 1,393 reels of Veterans Administration Master Index Card Files for World Wars I and II. The Air Force microfilm, which is the only source for many individual flight records, has developed spots, which, if unchecked, will destroy the readability of this valuable documentation. The film containing VA card files, which is heavily used, is losing image legibility. Thousands of cubic feet of paper records are in danger of crumbling away from the effects of deteriorating paper stock, the wear and tear of repeated handling, and damage from a 1973 fire.

FY 2000 appropriations are enabling us to set up a preservation program and plan for housing, reformatting, and providing special treatment for these documents. We will need to take these additional steps to carry forward records treatment in our veterans' records preservation program:

- perform holdings maintenance
- prepare materials for reformatting
- let contracts for reformatting, and
- purchase specialized supplies and equipment.

America's veterans must remain confident that records of their service will be available to them, their families, and historians in years to come.

*Renovate the original National Archives Building in Washington.* The original National Archives Building, an architectural landmark in downtown Washington, D.C., is now nearly two-thirds of a century old. Approximately one million people from across America and abroad visit it annually to do research and see the great American Charters of Freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—in the magnificent rotunda that was designed for their protection and display. But to continue to accommodate large numbers of visitors and safely preserve the Charters and thousands of other historical treasures in the aging building, its renovation has become essential. The rotunda itself must be renovated to accommodate the new encasements and vaults we are preparing for the future safety of the Charters of Freedom. The current HVAC system requires upgrading to meet archival standards for the continued preservation of our other holdings in the building. We must remedy significant shortcomings in electrical distribution and fire safety in the building, which otherwise will pose dangers for occupants as well as records. And current public-use space is inadequate for today's levels of visitors and researchers.

The Administration and the Congress gave us funds for work on a concept design for the renovation, for which we will prepare through FY 2000. The next step will be to contract for the renovation construction, which we anticipate completing in FY 2003. When finished, the renovation will:

- correct the mechanical, electrical, and fire safety deficiencies that post a danger to the

building and the occupants

- retrofit the Rotunda area so that the Charters can be displayed in their new encasements
- bring the building, the documents, and the displays into full compliance with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, permitting all Americans to view the Charters of Freedom and use the research rooms
- upgrade stack storage conditions to meet modern archival standards for textual records by adding chemical filtration of the air and tighter temperature and humidity controls, and
- provide sufficient exhibit and public-use space to accommodate increasing numbers of visitors.

As I mentioned earlier, we are asking private-sector donors to partner with us in developing public-education elements of the renovation, including creation of an exhibit such as we've never had before, that will help visitors understand the historical meaning of the Charters of Freedom they come to see.

That concludes my description of NARA's current program needs and initiatives. Everything I have described will enable us to reach the targets and advance toward the goals projected in our Strategic Plan. And they will pay off for the Government and the public in specifically significant ways:

- Federal agencies will be able to keep better track of their records, meeting requests for them from the public, courts, and the Congress more efficiently and economically
- historians, other scholars, and the public will have greater assurance that burgeoning quantities of valuable records—electronic as well as traditional kinds—will not be lost, and
- Americans everywhere will have far easier access to records they need for documenting rights and entitlements, understanding Government actions, and learning about our history.

Let me conclude with notes on three other activities that are also of concern to the subcommittee: our grant making through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), our Y2K preparations, and our ability to comply with GPRA reporting requirements.

*NHPRC grants:* NARA administers the NHPRC, whose statutory mission is to ensure understanding of our nation's past by promoting, nationwide, the identification, preservation, and dissemination of essential historical documentation. NARA safeguards *Federal* records; NHPRC helps *non-Federal* institutions identify, preserve, and make broadly accessible other records of historical value through grants to non-profit bodies such as archival institutions, records programs, and documentary publication projects.

For example, with NHPRC assistance, historians are locating, editing, and publishing the papers of Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers, papers that document other leading figures in our history (e.g., Thomas Edison, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr.), and papers that document the ratification of the Constitution, the early Supreme Court, and the First Federal Congress. Also, NHPRC is providing leadership by funding research and development projects to help meet electronic records challenges. Grants of this kind include funds to enable a non-Federal expert team from the U.S. to participate in the InterPARES project, which is an international research initiative. And NHPRC has contributed significantly over many years to the advancement of knowledge and training in the fields of archives, records management, and documentary editing. Additionally, NHPRC grants are helping State Historical Records Advisory Boards in every state and U.S. territory to survey their documentary resources and needs, set priorities, and make plans for the most effective use

of each state's documentary resources. In several states, legislatures have appropriated funds in partnership with NHPRC to provide regrants for state and local projects that implement state plans.

These state collaborative programs help NHPRC make its own funds go further, reach grass-roots records programs, and do it economically. The state programs also help NARA in our effort to document Federal programs, the understanding of which depends on recordkeeping by states and localities where so many Federal programs actually are implemented. Thus NARA and NHPRC work together to carry out our complimentary missions nationwide.

*Y2K preparations:* We continue to progress toward our goal of ensuring that no material impact on important business operations results from Year 2000 date-related failures. We are providing monthly progress status reports to OMB, and 21 of NARA's 22 mission-critical systems are now compliant. We plan to complete all upgrades by October 22, 1999.

Specifically, at all NARA facilities, we have brought all infrastructure into compliance, completing upgrades to building-environmental and security control systems, telephone systems, and the entire NARANET wide-area computer network. NARA systems supporting Federal agency records management programs have been renovated for Y2K compliance and we are currently completing tests of them. The holdings-management systems at the Bush and Ford Presidential Libraries have been renovated for Y2K compliance, as well as the JFK Assassination Records Collection system that facilitates collection and use of assassination-related records. The Government Printing Office has provided written certification that the systems and data associated with our *Federal Register* publications and operations are Y2K compliant. All mission-critical systems will complete the NARA Y2K certification approval process, which validates that essential system renovations have been performed, independent Y2K testing has been conducted, and appropriate contingency plans have been developed. We have a Business Continuity and Contingency Plan for our mission-critical systems, and as part of that plan, we are now completing work on a "Day One" strategy to ensure that all business functions continue effectively beyond January 1, 2000.

*GPRRA compliance:* We also have developed and deployed a Performance Measurement and Reporting System. The Government Performance and Results Act requires that we tell the Administration, the Congress, and the American people how well we are doing against our strategic goals with data that is consistent, reliable, and auditable. Our new system is a data warehouse that collects performance data from other databases, verifies that the data is "clean," and stores it in a central place for reporting purposes. The interface to the system is a web-based on-line analytical processing tool that allows us to view the performance data against our annual plan targets in a variety of dimensions including across time (yearly, quarterly, monthly, etc.) and across organizational components. For the first time we have reliable performance data that we can analyze and use to show results and improve our services. During the next year we plan to integrate and expand the system so that our performance is measured using a balanced scorecard approach for tracking cycle times, quality, productivity, cost, and customer satisfaction for our products and services.

To sum up, on all fronts—records management, electronic records, access, storage, preservation, Y2K compliance, and NHPRC grant making—we are fulfilling the promises on the basis of which the Administration and the Congress have provided significant funding increases over the past three years. We have laid a solid groundwork for badly needed advances called for in our Strategic Plan. We are still far from where we need to be in coping with the many challenges I have described. But with continued support from the Congress, we will get out of the catch-up mode and provide the quality service that the American public requires.

Again, I'm grateful for support we have had from you, Mr. Chairman, this committee, and the Congress. We have far to go to reach the goals in our Strategic Plan, but I am more

encouraged today than any time since I became Archivist. I'm beginning to see real progress toward meeting the electronic era's great challenges and providing the services that the people of a democracy need to document their entitlements, hold their Government accountable, and understand their national historical experience.

Thank you very much.

