

National Archives and Records Administration



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!ATTLIST Message-ID seqno CDATA #REQUIRED
!ATTLIST Path seqno CDATA #REQUIRED
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Cover:

World War II pilots on board the U.S.S. *Lexington* (from the NARA exhibit "Picturing the Century").

Supporters of woman suffrage, which observed its 80th anniversary in 2000, aid the war effort in 1917 (165-WW-600A-1).

A furnace operator in a TVA plant, ca. 1941-45 (from "Picturing the Century").

Astronaut James Irwin on the Moon, Aug. 1, 1971 (from "Picturing the Century").

Background: (top) A page of the Constitution undergoes conservation treatment;
(bottom) a sample of XML coding from NARA's Electronic Records Archives project.

What Is the National Archives and Records Administration?

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is our national record keeper. An independent agency created by statute in 1934, NARA safeguards records of all three branches of the Federal Government. NARA's mission is to ensure that Federal officials and the American public have ready access to essential evidence—records that document the rights of citizens, the actions of government officials, and the national experience.

NARA carries out this mission through a national network of archives and records services facilities stretching from Washington to the West Coast, including 10 Presidential libraries documenting administrations of Presidents back to Herbert Hoover. Additionally, NARA publishes the *Federal Register*, administers the Information Security Oversight Office, and makes grants for historical documentation through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

NARA meets thousands of information needs daily, ensuring access to records on which the entitlements of citizens, the credibility of government, and the accuracy of history depend.



(left)
Vienna, VA. Thomas family viewing television, ca. 1958. (306-PS-58-9015)

(below)
LBJ listening to tape sent by his son-in-law Capt. Charles Robb in Vietnam, by Jack Kightlinger, July 31, 1968. (LBJ Library)



“Old-timer—keeping up with the boys. Many structural workers are above middle-age. Empire State [Building],” by Lewis Hine, 1930. (69-RH-4K-1) Photos from “Picturing the Century”

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New Developments Help Safeguard *Your* Records

OUR BIGGEST NEWS in the 2000 fiscal year came from two developments at opposite ends of the time spectrum. We found new ways to preserve and provide access to little known records that are among our newest—and famous records that are among our oldest.

Our most famous records are America's great Charters of Freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—dating back to the nation's founding in the 18th century. If you have visited the Rotunda of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, any time in the past half-century, you have seen them in protective glass cases that were state of the art for document preservation when they were made.

In fiscal year 2000 we started replacing those cases, which were beginning to deteriorate, with new ones even more technologically advanced. When we finish in 2003, the Charters will remain safely on display for millions in the 21st century.

At the same time, we made a technological breakthrough for safeguarding modern records. The Federal Government, like most everyone else, is now creating most of its records with computers. But because methods for preserving and providing access to paper records won't work for electronic records, they will disappear unless we create new technologies to save them.

In FY 2000, we joined with partners to create a prototype that shows that an Electronic Records Archives really is possible. And now we are working to build it.

Both developments—our work to save old parchments and new emails alike—are described inside. But why?—why do we go to so much trouble to safeguard such records?

For the same reason that we safeguard millions of other Government records in all kinds of formats.

First, they are *your* records. That is, they were and are made by officials representing you (and other citizens back through time), appointed or elected, as part of programs that you as a taxpayer helped pay for. They are records that you, the press, your representatives in the Congress, and the Government itself need to understand actions of officials and hold them accountable. They are also records that may document your identity (such as naturalization papers), your entitlements (such as veterans' service records), and even your rights (from the Bill of Rights to the latest freedom-of-information or consumer-protection laws and regulations). And they also document the historical experience of your nation, which, without original records, has little chance of being accurately understood.

In fact, we safeguard such records because *they are essential for the functioning of our democracy.*

A society whose records are closed cannot be open. A people who cannot document their rights cannot exercise them. A nation without access to its history cannot analyze itself. And a government whose records are lost cannot accountably govern.

Please examine this report with that in mind. It is what motivates us. And it is what gives you a clear, personal stake in our success.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John W. Carlin".

John W. Carlin

Archivist of the United States

You Can Help Make Freedom's Charters Meaningful

THREE DOCUMENTS, only six pages. But the great words contained in America's Charters of Freedom—the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights—created our nation and continue to guide its governance. The Foundation for the National Archives has been called upon to play a major role in keeping those historical treasures on display in a meaningful and dramatically improved setting for you and future generations.

For more than 50 years, the Charters of Freedom have been in the Rotunda of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, where millions of visitors have been inspired by them. The Foundation is working to keep that opportunity available to millions more and to make a visit a more exciting experience than ever before.



Lawrence F. O'Brien III

Lawrence F. O'Brien III

President

Foundation for the National Archives

With appropriations from Congress and the Administration, the Charters' old, deteriorating cases are being replaced with state-of-the-art encasements to protect them on display for decades to come. These Federal funds are also making possible renovation of the National Archives Building, which makes it possible to seize an opportunity to develop an educational component that will allow visitors to understand why the Charters are so important and how they continue to impact our lives today.

Private donors are being asked to help the Foundation to finance a 10,000-square-foot exhibit that will tell the story of the Charters and other records of our Government. Using documents, artifacts, pictorial material, and technologies through which visitors from around the world can interact with the exhibit, we will provide fascinating and enjoyable opportunities to learn about the Charters' roles in our national history and personal lives.

Additionally, private donors are helping us restore the inspiring historic murals around the Charters in the Rotunda. Their restoration will enable visitors to continue to visualize the two great moments when patriots declared independence and established our Government.

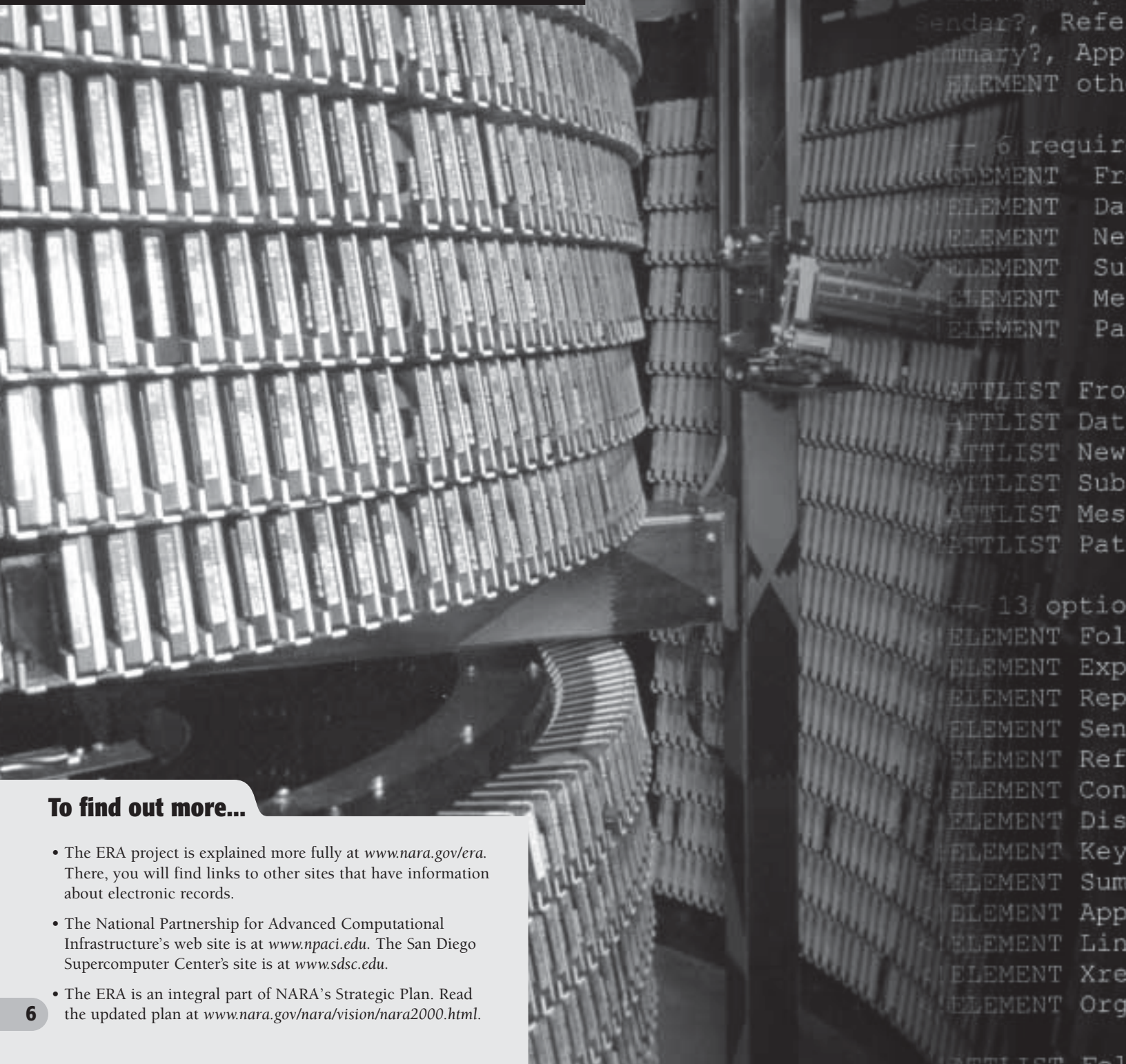
Also, we are working to raise private funds to help finance a new theater within the National Archives Building so visitors can see films, lectures, and discussions about the Charters, other historical treasures housed in the Archives, and discoveries historians make in our records.

This year, the Foundation sponsored a preview breakfast for the Emancipation Proclamation, which was on special exhibition for the Millennium Celebration, and a dinner for the Senate and a reception for the House of Representatives to open the "Treasures of Congress" exhibit. The Foundation continues to support educational resource books, such as *The Presidency of Thomas Jefferson*, containing facsimile documents, learning guides, and lesson plans, for use in high schools around the country.

In this report, we gratefully acknowledge supporters of these programs by name. Through the National Archives' site on the World Wide Web, www.nara.gov, you, too, can learn how to participate in the Charters of Freedom Project. Or call NARA's Development Office (1-888-809-3126). NARA and the Foundation heartily welcome your involvement.



Two of the three StorageTek 9310 tape silos at SDSC. Each silo holds up to 6,000 tapes, and each tape can hold up to 20 GB of data. (Courtesy, SDSC)



To find out more...

- The ERA project is explained more fully at www.nara.gov/era. There, you will find links to other sites that have information about electronic records.
- The National Partnership for Advanced Computational Infrastructure's web site is at www.npaci.edu. The San Diego Supercomputer Center's site is at www.sdsc.edu.
- The ERA is an integral part of NARA's Strategic Plan. Read the updated plan at www.nara.gov/nara/vision/nara2000.html.

Preserving Our Digital Future

The robotic arm and shelves of tapes inside one of the silos. The robotic arms move tapes back and forth between the shelves and the more than 20 tape drives attached to the silos. SDSC's High-Performance Storage System installation is the world's largest HPSS used in production mode. (Courtesy, SDSC)

XML coding will assist NARA in its effort to save information independently of software that will become obsolete one day.

THROUGHOUT THE Federal Government, at an ever-increasing pace, thousands of records and documents—eventually headed for preservation at the National Archives and Records Administration—are being created daily with technologies that will probably be outdated before the records ever reach us.

Our challenge at NARA: How to preserve, quickly, so many different kinds of records in so many forms and make them accessible far into the future with computers and software not yet imagined.

Our response is to build an Electronic Records Archives (ERA), an archives of the future, where the records of digital government would be assembled, managed, preserved—and made accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime.

We are not facing this challenge alone. This year, we became a co-sponsor, with the National Science Foundation, of the National Partnership for Advanced Computational Infrastructure, which the NSF created to take advantage of emerging opportunities in high-speed computing and communications. The partnership will pursue research in leading-edge information technologies needed to build the ERA. We also entered into a long-range agreement with the U.S. Army Research Laboratory.

This puts our efforts to build an ERA at the highest level in the nation's research community, using some of the most powerful computers in the world. And already, this research—conducted mainly at the San Diego Supercomputer Center at the University of California at San Diego—is paying off.

We take seriously our stewardship of the documents entrusted to us and our responsibility for their authenticity. That means retaining not only the information in a document but also its structure, context, and appearance. This challenge is being faced by a major international research initiative involving researchers from 13 countries, the InterPARES project, in which NARA is a partner.

Meanwhile, experts have learned how to separate the information to be archived from the hardware and software that created it. To do so, they are using a new computer

language called eXtensible Markup Language, or XML. It is a way of marking up electronic documents with easily understood tags instead of coding dependent on what will some day be obsolete software. XML will not only retain the information but will provide a detailed description of the document. This will enable us to find and accurately display records, preserve the original ordering of records in files, and understand how activities were carried out over time.

We also plan to make our research results adaptable for use by smaller archives, such as state and local governments, universities, libraries, and other private institutions. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the grant-making arm of NARA, has made a \$300,000 3-year "scalability" grant to the Supercomputer Center to explore adapting the technology for smaller archives.

Still, there are many challenges before the ERA is realized: How can ever-changing web sites be preserved? How can geospatial data, such as satellite imagery, be preserved? What is the best way to set up an archives at multiple locations and be accessible everywhere? How can we preserve authentic electronic records in a way that allows researchers to use continually improving technologies for finding, retrieving, and using them?

Research with our partners, at San Diego, Georgia Tech, the University of Maryland, and other sites, is seeking answers to these and other important questions. But already, it has put us well along the road toward an ERA that can close gaps created by technology, physical distance, and—most important—time.