

## **Ask the Archivist Hangout**

*Questions received during Google Hangout on September 24, 2013*

From Michael on Twitter:

**What does AOTUS stand for?**

AOTUS stands for Archivist of the United States.

From Charlotte on Twitter:

**Is this the first Archives Hangout ever?**

This was the first Hangout at the National Archives! Although we hope that this was the first of many more to Hangouts to come. We have many ideas and hope to see you online in the near future.

From Rupert the blog:

**Do you plan anything special for 100 years of World War I, or are you open to cooperation with other countries' national archives on the topic?**

The National Archives is exploring the possibility of a World War I exhibit for 2017. Many European countries, such as Britain, France, and Germany, have already started planning programs starting in 2014. You can learn more about these projects here:

<http://worldwar-1centennial.org/index.php/partners/international-government-commemoration-organizations.html>

Additionally, the U.S. Congress created a WWI Centennial Commission, which is an opportunity for federal agencies and private groups to collaborate: <http://worldwar-1centennial.org/>

From John on the blog:

**What new ebooks are in the works? The current three are excellent! From a teacher and a volunteer.**

We are so glad you enjoy the ebooks! We are currently working on ideas for new ebooks, do you have suggestions for ebooks you'd like to see from the National Archives?

From Jackie on Facebook:

**David, I am sure many of us who cannot travel would like to see a more user friendly site for research. Are there any plans to put documents and photos, etc online?**

The National Archives currently has more than 1.9 million digital objects available in our online catalog: <http://www.archives.gov/research/search/>

NARA's current strategic plan recognizes the need to develop a long-term plan for digitizing and making available its holdings. The strategic plan says that NARA will work to digitize selected records, including those most requested by researchers, and will put searchable descriptions of all our holdings online. It also says that NARA will make digital copies of selected non-electronic records available online, and will set priorities for putting these holdings online.

From an intern at the National Archives:

**If someone does not have archival training, what are other possible careers at the Archives?**

Employees at the National Archives hold all types of positions that call for a wide range of experience and abilities, including archival, administrative, and technical skills. Many NARA staff members have degrees in history, library science, IT, or policy and government. Some even have PhDs. However, the

educational requirements are different for every position. You can find out more about Careers at NARA on our website: <http://www.archives.gov/careers/index.html>

From Landthieves on Twitter:

**Is Miley Cyrus's twerking gonna be archived, please say no.**

While Miley Cyrus' VMA performance will most likely not end up at the National Archives, you never know when celebrities will appear make an appearance in the records. Here are just a few:

Michael Jackson and Ronald and Nancy Reagan: <http://research.archives.gov/description/198548>

Hollywood Roundtable after the March on Washington:

<http://blogs.archives.gov/mediamatters/2012/09/21/hollywood-roundtable/>

Elvis and Nixon: <http://research.archives.gov/description/1667921>

From AAC Roundtable on Twitter:

**What steps are being taken to hire archivists from racial & ethnic backgrounds, and support their career development at NARA?**

The National Archives is strongly committed to attracting and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. To accomplish this, we conduct targeted recruitment and outreach efforts at colleges and universities and with professional organizations, we implement and administer Student Diversity Internship programs, assist organizations in developing diversity and inclusion strategies that are focused on building and maintaining an inclusive workplace, and direct, guide and manage the Employee Affinity Group program. We believe that the diversity our employees bring inspires innovation, encourages respect, and promotes unlimited success.

From Landthieves on Twitter:

**Since digital media has overtaken print/television media, what steps are being taken to ensure preservation of cultural events?**

The National Archives is responsible for preserving and providing access to the documents and materials created in the course of business conducted by the United States Federal government, so we don't typically preserve cultural events. We do however, host many public programs and educational events at the National Archives that are recorded and captured. These are preserved according to our records schedules.

From Lee James on the blog:

**Modern sources of information are no longer primarily paper documents. It is created on film, digital texts, email, audio tape, radio and video broadcasts, and many more media; Plea describe what measures the Archives takes to collect and preserve such data.**

A wide range of formats are used in the course of business by the Federal government. The National Archives has a responsibility to preserve all records in perpetuity, regardless of format. NARA certainly recognizes the challenges Federal agencies face in managing electronic records that, through the use of modern tools, can be in a wide range of formats. Most recently, NARA is in the process of updating our transfer guidance for records that have been appraised as permanent. The draft of this guidance is available from our records management blog, Records Express, <http://blogs.archives.gov/records-express/2013/11/01/opportunity-for-comment-transfer-guidance-bulletin/>

From an intern at the National Archives:

**How are the Archives dealing with digital archiving, especially with the constant changes in technology? Do you re-transfer/re-save everything or keep the older technology with it (for ex. data on floppy disks)?**

The Special Media Preservation Laboratory at the National Archives is responsible for reformatting and duplicating records created in textual and non-textual formats, including duplicating motion picture film, still photos, microfilm, and sound and video recordings; microfilming paper records; reformatting audio and video recordings in obsolete formats that cannot be used on currently-available playback equipment; and, generating digital images of records. These program activities result in the removal of fragile records from use, while still providing access to their informational content by capturing the information in a new format. The preservation staff members at the National Archives work together with the archivists to preserve the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government. Successful preservation efforts are part of the fulfillment of the agency's mission to provide ready access to these records.

From Janet on the blog:

**Recently in Amsterdam a Van Gogh painting was found, identified, and donated to the Van Gogh Museum. What US records are you hoping still exist in someone's attic waiting to be found and identified?**

The National Archives has custody of 41 photo albums documenting artwork and furniture stolen by German troops during World War II. The albums were created under Hermann Goering's direction by Alfred Rosenberg, who led the Nazi agency, Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) and served as pick lists for Adolph Hitler. The albums are meticulous records indicating where they were stolen—invaluable provenance documentation for restitution claims. Through the work of Robert Edsel and the Monuments Men Foundation, these albums shed light on an important aspect of World War II and will play a role in helping victims recover their treasures. We expect that nearly 100 albums were created and can be used along with our records to identify the original owners.

From Kate on the Blog:

**What one thing should graduate students in archives learn before we give them their degrees?**

A true combination of skills are necessary to be successful in the archival profession. The work is challenging, complicated, and never complete. My job requires interaction with people from a variety of professions, positions, agencies and organizations, so I believe in the importance of developing interpersonal skills in order to communicate effectively and develop strong working relationships with others.

From Patti and Alvajoy on Facebook:

**Perhaps an online source that does not require subscription but more of a pay as you go for copies. andI have been tracing my family tree for a number of years and would LOVE to have access to Native American Records BUT I am a Senior on a fixed income and cannot afford the price of some subscription sites. Access and pay a reasonable price for copies would be wonderful.**

The National Archives has partnerships with various organizations in order to increase access to our holdings. These partnerships often require subscription fees for access to their websites. We do have free access to our partners' digital copies through research room computers in our facilities across the country. We will certainly pass on your comments to our digitization partners. In the meantime, we continue to add digital copies to our online catalog, where we have 1.9 million digital objects available for free: <http://www.archives.gov/research/search/>.

From an intern at the National Archives:

**What is the most interesting/rewarding part of your job?**

The most rewarding part of my job is understanding the important role we play in the lives of individuals – whether it is a veteran looking for service records, a student conducting research, or a child who wants

to learn more about his or her family – knowing that we are helping individuals and contributing to scholarship on a daily basis gives me a deep appreciation for the work we all do at the National Archives.

From an intern at the National Archives:

**Does the Archivist have any in-put towards the temporary exhibits (for ex. suggestions, ideas, etc.)?**

Yes I do, and I'd love to hear your suggestions as well! What exhibits would you like to see next?

Stay tuned for more Hangouts from the National Archives in the near future, including author Brad Meltzer!