

# Heritage Library News

Volume II, Issue 2

April - June 1998

## From the Director's Desk

So much has happened this quarter it is difficult to list it all. The board has added two new members, Sandee Hanahan and John Krause. We have voted to expand the library space to approximately 2000 square feet to accomodate meetings and outreach projects. We have become members of the local Chamber and will use their assistance to try to sponsor a SCGS workshop in Hilton Head. We have been selected as a site for the LDS FamilySearch CD-ROM library and we expect to have the 61 CD set up and running by month end. Representatives of the Library attended NGS in Denver and will attend FGS in Cincinnati. We have new computers, a new copier, and new printers. Details on the new space should be in the next newsletter.

**Notice of annual meeting!**  
**The Annual Membership meeting of the Heritage Library Foundation, Inc. shall be September 10, 1998**

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### Board of Directors

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689-9558

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689-2604

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689-9738

**Director—** Dr. Robert Peeples  
785-3967

**Director —** Mark Swetland  
705-5661



**HHIGS September 17  
Meeting Topic  
Irish Touring and  
Research**

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES CLOSURES

*The following article is from "Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter", copyright 1998, by Richard W. Eastman and Ancestry, Inc. It is republished here with the permission of the author.*

Several weeks ago I received a U.S. Government report entitled "Ready Access to Essential Evidence: The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration 1997-2007." This 48-page booklet apparently was prepared by the staff of Mr. John W. Carlin, Archivist of the United States. The plan is written in the best government legalese; it uses mighty long sentences to describe some very simple ideas.

I have read through the report several times and am very concerned about it. I also hear "scuttlebutt" that the officers of a number of genealogy organization have similar concerns. Finally, Lou Szucs, Executive Editor of Ancestry Magazine, wrote an excellent Editor's Note column in the March/April, 1998 issue of that magazine about the National Archives report. If you haven't seen her article, I strongly recommend you obtain a copy.

My concern revolves around pages 16 and 17 of the National Archives report. I am not so concerned about what it says explicitly; I am more concerned about what it infers. For instance: *To provide future access [to documents] will require rectifying several problems confronting NARA right now. Throughout our facilities, collections of photos, films, and other paper documents are already in jeopardy because of high use and/or physical fragility. The old, original National Archives Building in downtown Washington is aging badly to the detriment of records still stored there. Even the cornerstone documents of our democracy on display in the National Archives rotunda - the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights - need reencasing, because their aging containers no longer protect them adequately. Climate-controlled, protected archival space is needed for millions of U.S. military service records, dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the world wars to the present, now stored in an environmentally inadequate records center. Thousands of cubic feet*

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## LOOKING FOR PASSPORTS?

All passport applications for 1791 to 1905 are in the National Archives. During this period passports were not required except during part of the Civil War. However, many people obtained them. Without one, a U.S. traveler visiting the old country could be drafted into the military services.

The earliest applications were simply letters of request, but sometimes other papers—such as expired passports, birth certificates, naturalization papers, etc. were filed with them. The application could contain name, place of residence, age, names of family members traveling with the applicant, the court of naturalization, date of arrival in the U.S., port of entry, vessel name, etc.

If the passport is before 1906, write to the Diplomatic Records Branch, National Archives, Room SE, Washington DC 20524.

If the passport is after 1906, write to Passport Services, Research and Liaison Branch, Room 316, 1425 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20524.

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Library Hours —  
Thursday: 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Friday & Saturday 9:00 am - 1:00

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of other records are inadequately protected and inefficiently administrated in small regional records facilities so full that, without new and better space, NARA might have to consider a moratorium on accepting additional Government records in the regions, including records of Federal programs affecting transportation, economic development, and the environment.

To fix our current facilities, to ensure appropriate protection of their records, and to expand storage capacities adequately to meet demands for more space already upon us will require additional dollars. But, we also plan to get more for our space money. Making records accessible no longer requires a far-flung system of facilities. In an age of "FedEx", "fax" and Internet communications options, location is less a factor in providing access. The better strategy will be to consolidate holdings into larger, more efficient facilities that provide better environments for records preservation and for staff activity.

Reading through those two paragraphs I was really impressed. This is a "motherhood and apple pie" description; there is almost nothing controversial here. The archivist of the United States wants to improve storage capacities and environmental controls and also give better access to the records. Who can argue with that?

I then went looking for the specifics of how the Archivist of the United States plans to accomplish this. His report continues:  
*Specific Strategies*

- A. *We will take cost-effective steps during the next decade to protect NARA's records holdings in appropriate space, while also providing an appropriate working environment for staff.*
  1. *We will consolidate archival holdings in a few repositories.*
  2. *Recognizing our responsibilities for preserving and providing access to records, papers, and objects that document the Presidency, we will work with future Presidents on options for housing Presidential materials.*
  3. *We will develop and refine standards for allowing NARA to leave physical custody of archival material, particularly electronic record material, outside of our own facilities when feasible and when both the generating agency and NARA, in consultation with users, agree that it is in the public interest.*
  4. *We will consolidate the holdings of the Federal records centers.*
  5. *To the extent that it is cost-effective, we will selectively reappraise the record material already in custody, seek ways to reduce archival holdings that duplicate those of other institutions, and review existing retention periods for temporary records."*

The original document goes on to cover many more items, but I will stop here and discuss the above details. Again, it sounds good at first glance, but I see a few problems.

First of all, the Archivist of the United States says, "We will consolidate archival holdings in a few repositories." Where? Which ones are being closed? Will the facilities in major metropolitan areas be closed for economic reasons with all records transferred to abandoned military bases in Montana? Or some other location with low real estate costs? If so, how do genealogists and historians gain access?

The Archivist also mentions Internet access and FedEx and all that. I decided to look at the plan for when, where, and how the conversion would be done. I searched the rest of the document but could not find any mention of such a plan. There is no mention of funds allocated for a study. There is no reference to how or when this is to be accomplished. I know that in this day and age of government pressures to reduce spending, any plan not in place and funded at the beginning may never be funded or implemented. Will the records be removed from public access and then a brief announcement made, such as, "Oh, we cannot afford to complete the plan"?

We all know there is no substitute for having access to the original documents. Even electronic copies or photocopies are not quite as good although most of us will accept them as substitutes. But where is the plan to make substitutes available? Mr. Carlin also wrote in his report, "To the extent that it is cost-effective, we will selectively reappraise the record material already in NARA's custody, seek ways to reduce archival holdings that duplicate those of other institutions, and review existing

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**"We will  
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*Strategic Plan of the  
National Archives and  
Records Administration  
1997-2007*

# GENEALOGY ON THE NET

The Internet has opened many fantastic doors to research for the genealogist and other researchers. The variety of databases and online reference works make the Internet and World Wide Web a researcher's dream. Electronic libraries in cyberspace may never totally replace our familiar libraries filled with books, newspapers, and magazines. But the online versions of reference works and finding aids for various archives offer conveniences and ease of use that are unrivalled.



Many Web sites have databases and reference libraries, which can be searched for information. Search engines provide speed to the researcher. A good example is Ancestry's *Geographic Reference Library*. A preface to this "InfoBase" describes this online reference work and its value:

"This Geographic Reference Library infobase enables users to locate nearly any town, city, county, or other populated place in the United States as well as many schools, churches, courthouses, cemeteries, or major geographic features across the United States. This infobase includes two of the most significant U.S. gazetteers currently available in electronic form, the 1854 *New and Complete Gazetteer of the United States* and the new *American Genealogical Gazetteer*. This combination now makes it possible to find both old and new place names practically instantaneously. With more than one million entries in this infobase, many forgotten or hard to find places will be found again."

The Internet is indeed changing the way we research and empowering us in ways we never imagined. To try Ancestry's *Geographic Reference Library* yourself, you can find it at <http://www.ancestry.com>.

## INTERESTING INTERNET SITES TO VISIT

### Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet:

<http://www.oz.net/~cyndihow/sites.htm>

### Allen County Public Library:

<http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy>  
(includes on-line library catalog)

### National Genealogical Society:

<http://www.ngsgenealogy.org/main>  
(includes on-line library catalog)

### Federation of Genealogical Societies:

<http://www.fgs.org/~fgs>  
**USGenWeb/Rootsweb:**

<http://rootsweb.com>  
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery>  
(a registry of US cemetery data)  
<http://rootsweb.com/~irish>  
(for information presented by the Irish Genealogical Society, International)

### Family Treemaker:

<http://www.familytreemaker.com>

### Heritage Quest:

<http://www.heritagequest.com>

### CIA World Factbook:

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/nsolo/wfb-all.htm>  
(Contains detailed information about every country and territory in the world.)

## NEW ACQUISITIONS

The Library is pleased with its recent acquisition of the FamilySearch® genealogical database — a user-friendly collection containing 61 CD ROMs of files and programs designed to help individuals search for information about their ancestors. This collection is a production of the Family History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and includes:

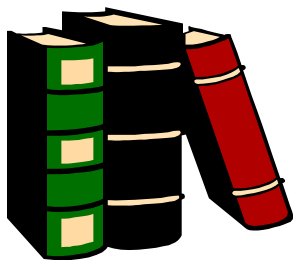
*Ancestral File™*  
*International Genealogical Index™*  
*Family History Library Catalog™*  
*Other Files*

### Recently acquired books and microfilms include:

*Sacramental Records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans 1718 - 1850, 12 volume set*  
*Connecticut Genealogy, 4 volume set*  
*Memorial History of Hartford Co. Connecticut, 2 volume set*  
*History of Connecticut, 5 volume set*  
*South Carolina's African American Confederate Pensioners 1923-1925*

*Several volumes of interest to the Irish Ancestral Researcher have been added, as well as microfilms of SC Will Transcripts, 1782-1868, and 1830-1880 Alabama Census for selected counties.*

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### In This Issue...

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retention periods for temporary records.”

Does this mean the National Archives and Records Administration will not collect future records? If not, where is the plan to insure these records are preserved and available to future generations? Ironically, the administration is being sued over its advice to federal bureaucracies to destroy electronic records. That court action was described in the April 11 edition of this newsletter.

I would suggest that this report with a title of “The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration 1997 - 2007” is not a strategic plan at all. It is an announcement, not a plan. A plan has details, but none are included in this 48- page booklet. I believe there is a significant risk that this “Plan” will be implemented to the point that facilities are closed and records are removed from public access. My fear is that the so-called “plan” will end there. Without any details in this plan about how and where future access will be implemented, I believe there is no plan for future access. I think all genealogists should

### CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Aug 27 — 29** *British Isles Family History Society — Los Angeles*
- Sept 10** *Heritage Library Foundation Annual Meeting — 10AM at the Library*
- Sept 17** *Hilton Head Island Genealogical Society — The Seabrook*
- Sept 25 — 26** *Ozarks Genealogical Society — Springfield, MO*
- Oct 10** *SCGS Annual Meeting — Edgefield*
- Oct 22 — 25** *New England Regional Conference — Portland, ME*
- Nov 6 — 7** *Florida State Genealogical Society — Melbourne, FL*