

The National Archives  
and Records Administration

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The National Historical Publications  
and Records Commission



National  
Humanities  
Alliance

Congress established the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in 1934 to preserve and make accessible to the public the records of the U.S. Government.

The National Archives' grantmaking arm—the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)—funds projects that preserve and make accessible our national, state, and local records and histories.

### The Case for Increased Funding for NARA and the NHPRC

- Over the last 40 years, the archival holdings of the National Archives have ballooned at an unprecedented rate—from 3 billion to 12 billion pages of paper.
- The federal government's transition to electronic records, including 600 million emails from the last three presidential administrations alone, has dramatically increased the number and complexity of records NARA needs to manage, process, and catalog.
- NARA has not been able to acquire and deploy the advanced digital tools necessary to keep up with the ever-increasing volume of government records received every year, making it challenging to meet the goal of digitizing the agency's analog holdings—NARA is nearing just 500 million pages digitized out of 12 billion.
- Each new presidential library created and placed under NARA's care adds new staff, maintenance, and records management costs.
- NARA's responsibilities in facilitating declassification and FOIA compliance have increased at a time of diminishing resources, creating large backlogs.
- Forced to do more with less funding, NARA has had to reduce hours at its research rooms and limit the number of materials individuals can access at one time. As a result, conducting research takes longer and is more difficult to do.
- The challenges faced by NARA are also faced by state and local governments that depend on NHPRC funding to ensure that their records are maintained and accessible. The NHPRC's limited budget is not sufficient to meet the vast needs of state and local archives, putting our cultural heritage at risk.

## Making Government Records Accessible

NARA ensures that government records are preserved and made accessible to Veterans, ordinary citizens, the press, and government agencies.

- American citizens rely on records held by the National Archives. Veterans and their families rely on military records preserved by NARA to gain access to their benefits. Others use immigration, naturalization, and census records to provide proof of citizenship and conduct genealogical research.
- To meet the increasing demands of citizen access and preserve the growing collection of federal records, NARA now has over 40 facilities nationwide, including 32 regional archives and records centers and 14 presidential libraries.
- NARA provides records to all three branches of the government so that they can perform their essential services—from an incumbent president, to congressional investigators, to criminal prosecutors in accordance with court-ordered subpoenas. NARA coordinates all federal records issues, including declassification of federal records and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Federal Records Act, and the Presidential Records Act.
- NHPRC grants to state partners help preserve and strengthen access to state, county, and municipal records, as well as support broader outreach and preservation within each state. For example, a grant for a collaboration between the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the governor's office created the infrastructure needed to preserve that office's records. Another grant supported a partnership between Simmons College in Boston, the Massachusetts State Archives, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and the Massachusetts Town and City Clerks Association to establish a virtual and in-person training program for municipal and county clerks, who are in charge of preserving records in their care.

## Providing Access to Nationally Significant Documents

NARA and the NHPRC ensure that papers of national importance—from our founding documents to the papers of presidents and prominent Americans—are broadly accessible.

- Each year, more than 1 million people view the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights on display in the National Archives Museum.
- *Founders Online*, created through a partnership between the NHPRC and the University of Virginia Press, provides digital access to more than 180,000 papers of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Madison, as well as Founders such as Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton.
- Since 2013, NHPRC funding has supported the *Freedmen and Southern Society* project. By publishing documents from the National Archives, researchers at the University of Maryland, College Park are creating a documentary history of how Americans navigated life in the years after the Civil War. The collection emphasizes the lives and reactions of formerly enslaved people to a fundamentally changed world.
- Published by the Center for the Study of the American Constitution at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with NHPRC funding, *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution and the Adoption of the Bill of Rights* is a resource for researchers and constitutional law classes. It has been cited by courts such as the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces and the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Preserving & Making Local Histories Accessible

NHPRC funding preserves state, local, and regional histories that make up our rich national story, ensuring that they are accessible today and remain so for future generations.

- NHPRC funding enabled a partnership between the University of South Florida in Tampa and the Archives of the Diocese of St. Augustine to create *Lost Voices from America's Oldest Parish Archive, 1594–1821*. The project showcases the rich lived experiences of Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans in Spanish Florida by making papers from the oldest European city in the U.S. digitally accessible.
- NHPRC funding supports the digitization of records documenting the history of local U.S. industries. As a result of NHPRC funding, the University of Alabama is digitizing more than 40,000 records from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries related to the state's coal and iron labor history, including Brierfield Iron Works, Shelby Iron Company, and Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company. At the San Diego Air and Space Museum in California, the digitization of more than 170,000 images is illuminating the history of Rohr/Goodrich and its contribution to American aviation manufacturing.
- NHPRC funding helped researchers at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, engage the public with the Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, supporting the development of high school lesson plans and workshops in Native communities. Workshops took place on the Pine Ridge Reservation, Rosebud Reservation, and Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota; the Crow Reservation in Montana; the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho; the Menominee Reservation in Wisconsin; the Cattaraugus Reservation and Allegany Reservation in New York; and with Muscogee (Creek), Kiowa and Comanche, Cheyenne and Arapaho, and Osage communities in Oklahoma.
- NHPRC funding helped digitize more than 54,000 documents related to the history of Alaska that are held by collecting institutions in the Eastern U.S., making these documents broadly available. Documents included papers on Alaskan Native cultures, including Tlingit, Haida, Athabaskan, Iñupiaq, and Yupik; papers related to the history of trade and whaling; and papers related to religious missions in the state.

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National Humanities Alliance

**THE NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE (NHA)** is a nationwide coalition of organizations advocating for the humanities on campuses, in communities, and on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1981, NHA is supported by over 250 member organizations, including: colleges, universities, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, state humanities councils, and scholarly, professional, and higher education associations. It is the only organization that brings together the U.S. humanities community as a whole.