

**Archivist's remarks at press conference for
NOAA/NARA digitization project
Wednesday, October 24, at 10 a.m.
Room 105, Archives I**

Good morning, everyone. I am David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, and welcome to the National Archives. I'm very excited about the project we're talking about today.

This collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is an outstanding example of how cooperation between Federal agencies and the public can unlock information for the benefit of many.

Just over a year and a half ago, NOAA approached us about digitizing historic Navy Deck Logs and logs of U.S. Revenue Cutter vessels so that they could... collect information on historic weather patterns and climatic data in the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans.

Since then, thousands of pages have been digitized, and the work of transcribing is about to begin.

Researchers—and even those of us who work in large research institutions—can feel awed, even overwhelmed - by the immense volume of material in our custody.

The National Archives exists to preserve and make accessible the records of the Federal Government, but how accessible is information if it is confined to one physical location and scattered across thousands of volumes?

In the last few years, the National Archives has entered into several digitization projects and begun to enlist the help of “citizen archivists.” Jobs that were once thought to be too big to tackle are now making progress.

Volunteers on-site and online have worked on... thousands of Civil War widows pensions for digitization, transcribed 1940 census schedules to make a searchable index, and transcribed and tagged documents on our own website, Archives.gov.

In the same way, NOAA’s “citizen scientists” are now at work transcribing the data in the ships’ logs.

The power of crowd-sourcing... allows us attempt these massive projects and complete them more quickly than we could have thought possible 20 years ago.

When we make records available as widely as possible, their potential use expands.

Information that had been collected for one purpose can now aid modern inquiries.

Today NOAA is mining the data from these historical voyages to help them answer questions about present and future weather patterns.

We encourage others in the scientific community to tap the invaluable resources of the National Archives.

Too often we think of using archival records only to verify what happened in the past.

But this exciting project reminds us that we preserve records for what they can tell us in the future.

And it reminds us all that in the National Archives you can find records concerning a wide array of subjects. We preserve not only census records, treaties, and our founding documents, but we hold a wealth of scientific data as well.

As a result of this partnership, we all come out ahead: NOAA gets the data it needs; NARA gets copies of the digital files; and the public gets access to thousands of pages of these popular records that provide a wealth of historical information on operations of the vessels, diplomacy, individuals, important historic events, and details of day-today life on the sea.