

National Archives and Records Administration Information Quality



NARA seeks public comment on the draft Information Quality Guidelines below. See the Federal Register [notice](#) for information on submitting comments.

The Draft Guidelines contain our standards of quality, utility, objectivity, and integrity for information that is disseminated to the public, and the administrative procedures for preparing, reviewing, and correcting information products. The Guidelines also describe the mechanisms for the public to request correction of information, and to request reconsideration of a NARA decision to deny a request for correction. We will consider public comments in developing the final Information Quality Guidelines.

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What Our Customers Should Know about NARA's Information Quality

As part of our on-going effort to provide high-quality customer service, NARA is committed to ensuring that our information products are useful, accurate, clear, complete, and objective. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Government-wide guidelines under section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-554) to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility and integrity of information disseminated by Federal agencies. Each Federal agency is responsible for issuing its own section 515 guidelines. Subsequently, NARA has developed our own information quality guidelines.

What information is NOT subject to NARA's Information Quality Guidelines?

Information that is NOT subject to our Information Quality Guidelines includes:

- **Archival Records.** Among NARA's responsibilities is to take into NARA facilities and Presidential libraries, for public use, records that have sufficient historical or other value to warrant their continued preservation by the U.S. Government. The archival records entrusted to NARA's care have many different creators including Federal Government agencies, the Congress, the Courts, and Presidential administrations. Archival records are excluded from these guidelines because NARA must ensure the authenticity of the records as they were created, regardless of the accuracy of the content of the information.

Archival records include books, papers, maps, photographs, electronic records, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or

characteristics.

- **Records Center Holdings.** NARA also temporarily stores records on behalf of Federal agencies and Members of Congress. NARA is not responsible for the quality of or correction to the information content of these records.
- **Legal Publications.** Another of NARA's responsibilities is to publish the official text of Federal laws, Presidential documents, administrative regulations and notices, and descriptions of Federal organizations, programs and activities. This information is contained in legally-mandated publications of the Office of the Federal Register: the *Federal Register*; *Code of Federal Regulations*; *The U.S. Government Manual*; *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*; *Public Papers of the Presidents*; slip laws; *U.S. Statutes at Large*; and the *Privacy Act Issuances*. The texts of these publications are created and submitted by a variety of Federal entities who are individually responsible for the information quality of their submissions.

What information IS subject to NARA's Information Quality Guidelines?

Information that IS subject to our Information Quality Guidelines includes:

- **Information about Archival Records.** NARA disseminates information about the archival records we hold in several forms including finding aids, inventories, general information leaflets, research information papers, and guides. These products describe the archival records, give context to them, and identify their location in one of NARA's multiple facilities.
- **Programs and Services Information.** NARA provides information about our programs and services. For example, NARA mounts exhibits about our holdings, provides educational materials for K-12, and provides records management information. We disseminate price lists, catalogs, and other purchasing information for our products and announcements of events and programs at our facilities through notices and the *Calendar of Events*. We also make available information about grants, programs, and funded projects through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
- **Organizational and Management Information.** NARA disseminates information about our structure and organization including employee and office locators, organizational charts, statements by the Archivist of the United States, and NARA's Strategic Plan. NARA also distributes the *Annual Report* which contains information about NARA's achievements, activities, goals, and products and the Information Security Oversight Office's (ISOO) *Annual Report to the President* which contains information on Federal security classification programs and compiles statistics on classification and declassification activities Government-wide.
- **Office of the Federal Register Information.** The Office of the Federal Register makes available information about its official publications and functions.

How does NARA disseminate this information?

These information products are disseminated in several ways: on paper, microform, and/or in electronic form. The primary form used by NARA for electronic dissemination of information is the NARA web sites www.nara.gov and www.archives.gov.

How can I correct information that is subject to the Information Quality Guidelines?

To correct information maintained and disseminated by NARA, follow the procedure described below.

What do I need to provide to request corrections?

- **Requestor Contact Information.** Include your name, mailing address, and fax number or telephone number; or your name and email address. This information is needed to respond to your request.
- **Description of Information to Correct.** Clearly indicate the information you believe is in error and should be corrected. Include the name of the product (e.g., finding aid title, pamphlet number, web page including URL, title, etc.) where the information is located, the date of issuance if available, and a description of the information to be corrected.
- **Reasons that Information Should be Corrected.** Include specific reasons why the information should be corrected and if possible recommendations for how it should be corrected. Recommendations for corrections that are specific and provide evidence to support the need for correction will enable NARA to provide a satisfactory response.

How can I make a request?

- **In-person Requests.** If you are in any NARA facility, you may submit a request for correction with NARA Form 14045, "*How Were Our Services?*," available in NARA research rooms. If you would like a written response, include your name and contact information.
- **Letter/Email.** You may submit a written request in email or paper form. NARA will send a response in the same form as the request, unless you indicate otherwise. For email requests, please use the "Contact us" link found at the bottom of most pages on the NARA web site.

You can address paper requests to:

Information Quality
NWCC, Room 2400
National Archives at College Park
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

NARA review of request

Based on a review of the information provided, NARA will determine whether a correction is warranted, and, if so, what action to take. Any corrective action will be determined by the nature and timeliness of the information involved, the significance of the correction, the use of the information, and the scope of the correction.

NARA's response

NARA will respond to your request by letter, email, or fax. NARA will respond to requests for correction of information within seven working days of receipt. The response will explain the findings of the review and the actions NARA will take in response.

Right to request reconsideration of request for correction

If NARA denies a request for correction, the requestor can appeal the decision within 30 calendar days of receiving notification of the denial. NARA will acknowledge receipt of the request for reconsideration within seven working days of receipt. NARA will respond to the person requesting reconsideration within 45 calendar days of the request for reconsideration. The response will include the decision, how the decision will be implemented, and within what period of time.

Information Quality Guidelines

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) provides information to the public about archival records, NARA programs and services, NARA organization and management, and the activities of the Federal Government through the Office of the Federal Register. Our mission is to ensure ready access to the essential evidence that documents the rights of American citizens, the actions of Federal officials, and the national experience. Our information products are used by governments, historians, journalists, professional researchers, educators, and the general public. NARA information products are used to:

- discover the documentation of the rights of American citizens, the actions of Federal officials and agencies, and the national experience;
- learn about programs and services provided by NARA;
- determine NARA's organization, achievements, activities, goals and products; and
- find information on Federal agency rules, regulations, proposed rules, and notices.

We develop the information that we disseminate from reliable sources and use generally accepted methods for data collection, archival description, and editorial preparation. We thoroughly review information before we disseminate it. The guidelines below describe procedures that we use to assure the quality of our information products, including their utility, objectivity, and integrity.

Utility

Utility involves the usefulness of the information to its intended users. Utility is achieved by staying informed of information needs and developing new information products, and revising and updating existing information products when appropriate.

Through internal analyses of information requirements, the work of internal committees, and outreach activities, NARA keeps abreast of information needs. Based on internal product reviews, consultation with users, and in response to changing needs and emphases, we enhance the content of existing information products, introduce new products, and discontinue others. When new information products are proposed, the proposals are reviewed and evaluated by qualified staff. We regularly review existing information products to ensure that they remain relevant and address current information needs. Where appropriate, we provide contact information on each publication to allow you to submit feedback and questions. In addition, we provide an online contact form that is accessible via the "Contact us" link at the bottom of most pages on the NARA web site. We also provide a paper form, Form 14045 "*How Were Our Services?*", in our facilities nationwide. All of these methods allow you to submit input that helps us to improve information product development.

Our information products are disseminated in the format or formats that make the information most useful and accessible for you. We write them in compliance with the President's June 1, 1998 Memorandum on Plain Language in Government Writing and the *NARA Style Guide* to ensure that they will be useful to you.

Objectivity

Objectivity focuses on ensuring that information is accurate, reliable, and unbiased, and that information products are presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner. Objectivity is achieved by using reliable sources, sound analytical and editorial techniques, and by having qualified people prepare information products that are carefully reviewed.

· ***Use of reliable sources***

Much of the information that we disseminate relates to the archival records of the Federal Government. This information describes archival records, gives context to them, and identifies their location in NARA's facilities. Qualified NARA staff conduct ongoing reviews of these information products and the archival records that they refer to in order to ensure their accuracy and completeness.

We base other information about our programs, services, organization, and management on data produced by the responsible NARA unit. Information that we disseminate on a program, service, or product is derived from data maintained by the NARA unit with administrative responsibility for that program, service, or product.

NARA management and administrative data are maintained in the Performance

Measurement Reporting System (PMRS). The PMRS measures our programs' performance in delivering goods and services to our customers, and is the official source for statistical information about NARA. Data is reported by different NARA units, and only the units who originally entered the data change any data values. Management regularly checks the data for quality and the Office of the Inspector General on a routine basis audits the data and processes. Staff producing information products based on this data are knowledgeable about the content and limitations of this data and maintain a working relationship with the staff who create, update, and submit this data.

· *Preparation of information products*

We base the information contained in NARA information products on data derived from reliable sources. NARA staff are knowledgeable about the data sources that we use, and we apply sound archival, analytical, or statistical techniques, when needed, depending on the data being addressed.

We prepare information about archival records using standard techniques for description of the different forms of archival materials. Archival description is used to describe the organization, content, context, and location of archival materials. We make an effort not to introduce bias or subjectivity into our descriptions of archival records, and leave analysis of the records to the researcher.

Qualified staff review our information products to ensure that the information and any analysis are valid, complete, unbiased, objective, and relevant. Subject matter experts outside of the originating unit may also review those information products that are considered to be more complex, to provide additional perspective and expertise.

We identify the data sources that were used to prepare information products, where appropriate.

· *Editorial review for accuracy and clarity of information in publications*

We edit and proofread our information products before release to ensure clarity and coherence of the final product. We edit text to ensure that the product is easy to read and grammatically correct, thoughts flow logically, and information is worded concisely and clearly. We edit tables and charts to ensure that they clearly and accurately illustrate and support points made in the text, and include short but descriptive titles. Appropriate NARA staff review and approve changes made to a product during the editing process.

· *Policy for correcting errors*

If we detect an error before information is disseminated, we correct the error or include a correction notice, if necessary. If information has already been disseminated, we correct and/or include a notice of the correction with subsequent publication of the information. The NARA unit that originally issued an information product on the web site tracks and records any correction to it. When appropriate, we post correction notices on our web site as well as posting the corrected

information.

Integrity

Integrity refers to the security of information from unauthorized access or revision to ensure that information is not compromised through corruption or falsification. To ensure the integrity of our information, we are implementing controls that have been identified as representing sound security practices as required by the Government Information Security Act (P.L. 106-398, Title X, Subtitle G), with the goal of providing coverage to all major components of information security.

NARA is subject to statutory requirements to protect the information that we gather and maintain. These requirements are contained in the following documents:

- Privacy Act of 1974;
- Computer Security Act of 1987;
- Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-123, A-127, and A-130;
- Government Information Security Reform Act; and
- Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act (FMFIA) of 1982.

[National Archives and Records Administration home page](http://www.nara.gov/nara/infoqual.html)

URL: <http://www.nara.gov/nara/infoqual.html>

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