Teaching with Documents, and Documents, and More Documents: The National Archives Digital Partnerships

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What if...

...you were teaching a lesson on the French Revolution, and rather than assigning your students to read a section in their textbook on the subject, they could read Thomas Jefferson's letter to John Jay describing what he witnessed in Paris during early July 1789, including the storming of the Bastille?

...you were teaching a unit on ratification, and rather than asking your students to simply read Article V of the U.S. Constitution, you could invite them to study the documents that detail the ratification of Amendments 11-27, and see for themselves how the process actually works?

...you were teaching a lesson about the assassination of President Lincoln, and rather than telling your students about conspiracy theories, they could read the actual correspondence received and sent by the military commission investigating the assassination; summaries of evidence of possible use in the trial; proceedings of and exhibits used in the court martial; and a record of the trial published in the newspaper the *Daily National Intelligencer*?

Well, they can!

New Online Resources

For decades, the Papers of the Continental Congress, documents that detail the ratification of Amendments 11-27, and the Lincoln Assassination Papers have been in the holdings of the National Archives and available to researchers on microfilm. But now, due to a new partnership with Footnote.com, all of these documents and thousands more are available online free of charge. Millions more are available through a paid subscription. A partial list of the available collections is included in the sidebar to this article, and a complete list is online at www.footnote.com/documents.

And the partnership with footnote. com is just the beginning.

In recent years, the National Archives has entered into similar partnerships with Google, Amazon, and the Generations Network (ancestry.com) to make a significant portion of the billions of permanently valuable federal records held by the agency available online.

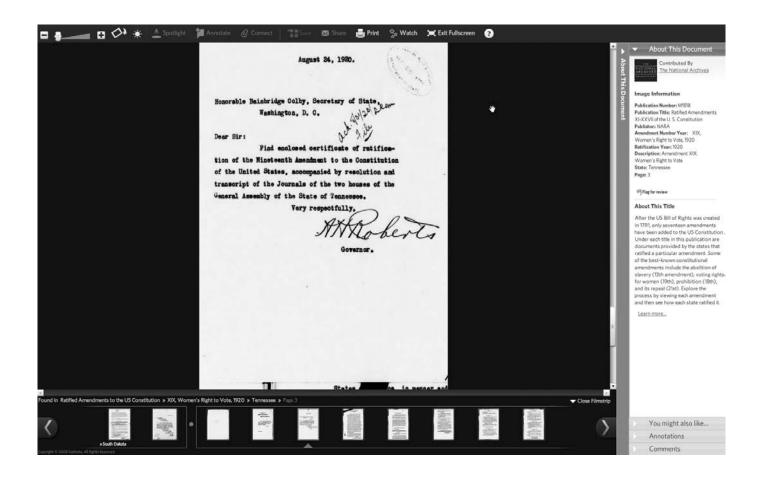
The Google partnership has focused on audiovisual materials. An index page available at video.google.com/nara. html, serves as a gateway to streaming video of hundreds of films in the holdings of the National Archives created by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Department

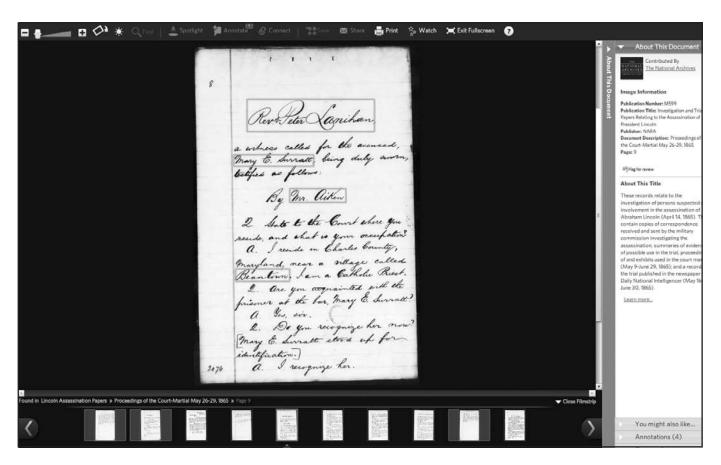
of the Interior, and the Office of War Information. Films with titles such as American Army Women Serving on All Fronts, 1944; Japanese Sign Final Surrender, 1945; The John Glenn Story, 1963; and The Eagle Has Landed, 1969, can be viewed online or downloaded to a portable device. In addition to being available through google.com, they are also available through the Archival Research Catalog on the National Archives website at www.archives.gov/research/arc. Simply conduct a digital copies search on the keyword "Google" for a complete list of available titles and links to the footage.

The partnership with Amazon makes available DVDs on demand. A search on the phrase "National Archives and Records Administration" under "movies & TV" on the www.amazon.com website will generate a list of more than 1,700 titles that are available for purchase. Included among them are West Berlin, 1961; UFO-Friend Or Fantasy?, 1966; Body of Iron, Soul of Fire: The Stature of Liberty, 1986; Reagan's Mission, 1987; and more. You can preview brief segments of all of these films by conducting a digital copies search on the keyword "Amazon" through the Archival Research Catalog on the National Archives website at www.archives.gov/research/arc.

The partnership with the Generations Network features records of particular interest to genealogists. All of the federal census schedules from 1790 to 1930, World War I draft registration cards, ships' passenger lists, naturaliza-

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Digital images of the following records from the holdings of the National Archives, and thousands more, are now available for free at www.footnote.com.

- Records Relating to the Various Cases Involving the Spanish Schooner Amistad
- Records from the Constitutional Convention of 1787
- The Papers of the Continental Congress
- The Records of the General Court Martial of Gen. George A. Custer, 1867
- Domestic Letters of the Department of State, 1784–1906
- Foreign Letters of the Continental Congress and Department of State, 1785–1790
- Copybooks of George Washington's Correspondence with Secretaries of State, 1789–1796
- Investigation and Trial Papers
 Relating to the Assassination of

 President Lincoln
- Records of Project Blue Book-UFO Investigations, 1947–1969
- Records of Ratified Amendments XI-XXVII of the U.S. Constitution

tion records, and more are now available. Access to most of these materials is restricted to individuals or institutions with paid subscriptions to www.ancestry.com—but the opportunities to connect students to the past, by allowing them to find documentation on their ancestors or members of their community, are unprecedented—and you might find that your local library has a subscription!

Digitization Partnerships

The decision to enter into these digitization partnerships was motivated by the National Archives' desire to increase access to the records of the federal government and the agency's commitment to ensuring the continued preservation of the original records. To date, these partnerships have resulted in the digitization of nearly 100 million pages of material from the holdings, and more materials are being added every day.

All of these partnership agreements are non-exclusive and all must provide some sort of free access. Currently, access to all of the records on ancestry.com and footnote.com is free in the reading rooms of all National Archives facilities across the country. Also, partners are required to donate to the National Archives a complete set of the digital images with required metadata, and five years after the records are made available on the partner's website, the National Archives may use them in any way. These requirements reflect the agency's commitment to long-term digital access.

Future Approaches to "Teaching with Documents"

Since the late 1970s, education special-

ists at the National Archives have been working in partnership with NCSS to feature "Teaching with Documents" articles in Social Education. Typically, the articles feature a single document, carefully selected to provide students with a tangible link to the past, a background essay, and suggested teaching activities intended to encourage document analysis and critical thinking. Often, the teaching activities encourage additional research—but until now, the articles have not been able to suggest that students conduct further research into related original records. They simply were not readily available. But many of them are now. So, be on the lookout in future "Teaching with Documents" articles for more suggestions for student research assignments utilizing these newly digitized collections. And check out the "Member Discoveries" section of www.footnote.com. Periodically, National Archives education team members will highlight documents that we think would be of great interest to teachers and students. The three documents featured in this article are the first "spotlights" we have created under our team's member name "National Archives Education."

For more information about NARA's Digitization Strategy and Digitization Partnerships, visit www.archives.gov/digitization.

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Note about the Featured Documents

Image #1: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/259024]
First page of a 12-page letter from Thomas Jefferson in which he described what he witnessed in Paris during the first days of the French Revolution, July 19, 1789. From National Archives Microfilm Publication M247, Papers of the Continental Congress 1774–1789, Letters Received from Thomas Jefferson, page 532.

Image #2: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/6577775/] Letter from the Governor of Tennessee to the Secretary of State transmitting Tennessee's ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, August 24, 1920. From National Archives Microfilm Publication M1518, *Ratified Amendments XI–XXVII for the U.S. Constitution*, Amendment XIX, Women's Right to Vote, Tennessee, Page 3.

Image #3: [Screen shot of www.footnote.com/image/6390472/ #6390478]

First page of the testimony presented by Rev. Peter Lanihan, who was called as a witness for the accused Mary Surratt during the proceedings of the Court-Martial May 26–29, 1865. From National Archives Microfilm Publication M599, Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln, page 9.