

Sources of International Data from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

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Globe,” at the annual meeting of IASSIST
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Background: NARA's Custodial Program for Electronic Records

- Computer-readable data: 20th Century “new” form of primary documentation
- NARA has been preserving and providing access to archival digital data records for 40 yrs
- Preservation and access services have evolved over time, along with technology evolution

How do federal records come to the National Archives?

- **Collaboration between Agency Records Officers (ROs) and NARA archival staff**

ROs identify agency's records (including data records) through "records scheduling" and propose the long-term disposition of the series or systems once an agency's need for them ends

- NARA staff appraise the proposed dispositions; very small percentage are appraised for "permanent" retention
- Agencies transfer physical and legal custody of "permanent" or archival records according to transfer instructions of each records schedule.

Digital Records Accessioned into the U.S. National Archives

- About 18 TB of “born” digital records from over 150 depts/agencies/bureaus
- Focus of today’s presentation: “born digital” records from the US Information Agency (USIA) and the Department of State

USIA, 1953-1999

- 1953: USIA as an independent federal agency
- Separated the U.S. international information program from the Department of State
- Role of USIA: promote U.S. foreign policy goals and support policymakers through info gathering, analysis, and dissemination
- Agency had a significant research program
- At end of FY 1999, functions of USIA reverted to the Department of State

USIA Public Opinion Polls

Data files of USIA's public opinion polling activities, worldwide, appraised as permanently valuable federal records, as are printed reports and related textual records produced by the program

Data files include media surveys and attitude surveys

USIA began transferring poll data to NARA in 1980; to date, 1669 USIA data files have been accessioned

Predating NARA's custodial program for electronic records, USIA agreed to deposit its data at the Roper Center

Sample USIA Poll Questions

- 1970, Philippines, 6 weeks after the U.S. incursion into Cambodia: Do you approve of the U.S. having sent troops into. . . Cambodia? Do you approve of U.S. policies regarding Vietnam?
- 1972, UK, France, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and West Germany: What is your opinion of the policies and actions of Russia in the Vietnam situation? What is your opinion of the policies and actions of the U.S. in Vietnam?
- 1975, Japan: All things considered, do you think the U.S. did or did not do all it should to meet its commitments to South Vietnam?

Use of USIA Public Opinion Data

- USIA data: a unique source of opinion data from the various national populations where USIA polls covered a wide variety of topics
- Over the years, many of the researchers for whom NARA has provided copies of USIA data files have been international academics
- There are no restrictions on the use of USIA data files, and copies may be ordered by anyone for a standard cost-recovery fee

Data-PASS Partnership

- Data Preservation Alliance for the Social Sciences: Data-PASS
 - Reported on at previous IASSIST conferences and later this week
 - Data-PASS project: Roper Center and NARA are filling gaps in USIA data each preserves; NARA has rec'd data from 236 USIA studies, 1952-73; Roper has rec'd 959 files from NARA
- ***More on the results – IASSIST '10***

“Born Digital” Records of the U.S. Department of State

- Beginning in 1973, State has used an “electronic telegrams” system for all official correspondence, communications, and documentation relating to conducting the foreign relations of the U.S.
- Electronic telegram records from 1973-76 have been transferred into the National Archives

Online Access to State's Electronic Telegrams

- Unclassified, unrestricted, and permanently valuable records for 1973-75 are accessible through NARA's Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource
- Includes 791,847 telegrams, withdrawal "card" records, and index records to materials available on microfilm
- No registration and no charge for using

Access to Archival Databases (www.archives.gov/aad)

- First released in February 2003: ***includes records appropriate for individual retrieval on specific persons, places, events, transactions, or that are indexes to accessioned records in any format***
- ***State Department's electronic telegrams first added in 2006; and expanded coverage since***
- As of May, 2009, **AAD supports online search and retrieval access to approx. 83,000,000 records from 57 archival series, in over 500 files (includes one series of digital photos)**

Spike in use since December 2008, suggests automated queries, as daily # of queries run now in the 10s of 1000s.

Had been averaging several thousand queries a day before this.

AAD: Access to Archival Databases

[<http://www.archives.gov/aad>](http://www.archives.gov/aad)

- Has been demo'd and discussed previously at IASSIST
- Supports free-text and fielded searching
- “Virtual visitors” and queries scale well beyond traditional demand for digital records – “revolutionizing” access to archival data records

AAD: Access to Archival Databases

<<http://www.archives.gov/aad>>

- Prior to 12/08 spike in queries, most popular series: World War II Army enlistment records and passenger immigration records
- Electronic telegrams from the U.S. Dept of State, 1973-75 had been 4th most popular series queried since they were added
- Throughout 2009, heaviest volume of queries has been for records of military contracts and insider trading of securities; Army enlistment records, passenger immigration records, and State's telegrams rank right below

Access to Archival Databases (AAD)

Access to Archival Databases (AAD)

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Getting Started Guide



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[Republic of Vietnam Incidents Files \(INCDA\)](#)
Each record of the Republic of Vietnam Incidents File (INCDA) documents a ceasefire violation combat incident.

Search Central Foreign Policy Files

[Advanced Search](#)

Wars/ International Relations: Central Foreign Policy Files

series, listed chronologically

Series and Files	No. of Records
Central Foreign Policy Files, created, 7/1/1973 - 12/31/1975, documenting the period 7/1/1973 ? - 12/31/1975 - Record Group 59 search	791,847
Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1973 - 12/31/1973 search	119,356
Electronic Withdrawal Cards, 1973 ? - 12/1973 search	5,615
Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1974 - 12/31/1974 search	200,580
Electronic Withdrawal Cards, 1/1974 - 12/1974 search	9,885
P-Reel Index, 1/1974 - 12/1974 search	91,427
P-Reel Index Withdrawal Cards, 1/1974 - 12/1974 search	2,520
Electronic Telegrams, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975 search	231,047
Electronic Telegrams Withdrawal Cards, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975 search	13,131
P-Reel Index, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975 search	115,771
P-Reel Index Withdrawal Cards, 1/1/1975 - 12/31/1975 search	2,515

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How do the Electronic Telegrams Relate to International Public Opinion Data?

- Not sure, but . . .
- NARA has data from two USIA polls taken in Taiwan in the spring, 1974
 - Both are Continuing Audience Analysis Surveys focussed on the effectiveness of Voice of America broadcasting and distribution of the USIA monthly magazine, *World Today*
- A search in the 1974 telegrams file finds 54 messages to the Department of State from Taipei, almost all of which dealt with reports of media reactions in Taiwan
- Perhaps there's a story there. . .

Another Interesting “Data” Find in the Electronic Telegrams

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 PEKING 01188 260816Z

10

ACTION PA-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EA-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 NSCE-00 NSC-05 SS-15 /045 W

----- 058255

R 260711Z JUN 75

FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3956

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PEKING 1188

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: US PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN POLICY

REF: STATE 145775

1. ON REFTTEL HARRIS SURVEY WAS THERE ANY QUESTION RELATING TO TAIPEI OR ANY QUESTION RELATING TO THE PRC. IF SO, PLEASE TELEGRAPH TEXT.

BUSH

And the rest of this story. . .

- The author of that message, “Bush,” was George H. W. Bush, then Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office, China
- Ambassador Bush apparently was a user of public opinion data – in this case, U.S. public opinion data
- The reply from State appears to have been sent later the same day

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 STATE 151077

62

ORIGIN PA-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 PRS-01 /025 R

DRAFTED BY PA/M: PDENNIS:SAC

APPROVED BY PA: CWBRAY

DESIRED DISTRIBUTION

PA, EA, S/S

----- 090675

R 262111Z JUN 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USLO PEKING

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 151077

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: US PUBLIC OPINION ON FOREIGN POLICY

REF: PEKING 1188, STATE 145775

1. FULL TEXT OF SURVEY WAS SENT REF STATE TEL 145775. KISSINGER

And an AAD search for REF STATE TEL 145775 . . .

- Dated 2 days earlier, it was a telegram with the subject line: US Public Opinion on Foreign Policy and went to U.S. posts throughout Western Europe, the Middle East, the USSR, Peking, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Kuwait, Iraq, and the US Military Command in the Central Pacific
- It included the full text of the report (incl some frequency distributions) released by Louis Harris and Assoc on American opinions, less than 2 months after US withdrawal from Vietnam, about the defense of South Korea and other issues involving the use of troops abroad.

What do we know about the use of the electronic telegrams ?

Not much, other than what the numbers tell us. (681,783 queries from 1/1/09 – 5/3/09). Even if the numbers are inflated by automated queries, there is a level of activity with these records, because they are online, that has no parallel in the analog environment.

We think that most direct requests about these records go to our colleagues in the textual records division. However, they have told us that they too have received relatively few direct inquiries about these records.

In the time since 2006 when the electronic telegrams were added to AAD, the Electronic Records Reference staff has recorded only 46 direct inquiries about these records, not including requests from NARA or Department of State colleagues. Compared to the numbers of queries, this level of interpersonal demand is insignificant.

Nonetheless, as in providing reference services for USIA data, at least 1/3 of the requests came from international researchers, academics and media, primarily. Our colleagues who work with textual records from the Department of State tell us that a substantial portion of the use of those records traditionally has been by international researchers seeking documentation about their own countries but unavailable to them there.

Mobile Data and the Life Cycle

- In keeping with the theme of our conference, above, the limited examples we have just discussed are evidence of the mobility (and research utility) of digital data throughout its life cycle.
- The examples also offer a glimpse of the potential of historical international data from U.S. government agencies as primary source documentation on populations and governments throughout the world. We hope we have offered new insight into the ways in which records accessioned into the U.S. National Archives include data that are valuable for research well beyond topics concerning programs and policies of the U.S. federal government.
- In what is an obvious understatement, we note that the tradition of ready access, for all, to open U.S. federal archival records, has been dramatically enhanced by access to digital records.

Thank You

For more information, please contact:

Reference Services Staff

Electronic & Special Media Records

Services Division, NARA

Email: cer@nara.gov

Telephone: 301-837-0470

www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records

www.archives.gov/aad