

Service guidelines for the National Reference Service

The role of our National Reference Service is to assist you to access records in the collection, or direct you to the best source to meet your information needs.

The National Archives website provides information about our collection and services. You can view records online, order and pay for digital copies of records, or submit an inquiry about records in the collection.

The amount of time needed to provide a complete response to an inquiry varies. We will spend up to one hour identifying relevant records on your behalf. Depending on the nature and complexity of your inquiry, the information we provide in our response may include further avenues of research for you to pursue.

In the case of complex research, the role of the National Reference Service is to support your research by providing:

- knowledge of the National Archives' collection, finding aids and research strategies
- information, search tools and services to assist you research independently
- online services to enable you to explore the collection, ask us a question and request digital copies of records
- referral to more appropriate services if the National Archives is unable to assist with your inquiry
- reference services free of charge for up to one hour
- support in ordering digital copies of records for a fee
- support in submitting applications for access to records.

If you are unable to conduct or continue your own research, you may wish to engage the services of a research agent.

What we will do

When you visit our research centres, dedicated reference staff can advise you on appropriate research strategies. We will explain our services, research centre rules, how to use our finding aids including our online collection database RecordSearch, and how to access the collection. We can assist you to order original or digital copies of records.

If you identify records that you wish to view in our research centres in advance of your visit, we will make up to 40 records available for you on your arrival. If you intend on accessing more than 40 records, please contact us to negotiate an arrangement that will suit your requirements.

While we aim to deliver records to our research centres within our published standards of service, audiovisual material, records requiring preservation treatment before use and material housed in cold storage may take longer to deliver.

We provide a digitisation service (low and high resolution) as well as photocopying in research centres, and will provide you with the most legible copies possible. At times of peak demand there may be delays in providing copies. Research centre users are encouraged to use personal cameras to make copies of records.

Our National Reference Service aims to respond to inquiries within our standards of service with:

- information about records that may be relevant to your inquiry, or
- advice on how to continue your research.

What we will not do

We will not:

- undertake extensive research on your behalf
- provide an interpretation of the contents of a record.

If you have special needs

If you have special needs, please let us know in advance of your visit so that we can provide any assistance that may be required.

Your comments

We welcome your comments on the quality and range of services we provide. Please complete a survey card available in our research centres or our online Reference service feedback form.