

Please stand by for realtime captions.

Hi everyone. This is Jamie from GPO. Welcome to history help, a research support community for everyone including genealogists, historians and citizen archivists. With me here today is Ashley who will do the tech-support. I also have several presenters. Kelly Osbourne is a community manager and web developer in the office of innovation at NIH -- prior to now join the national archives she was a web developer for the publishers of the Atlantic and science as well as the says Moni and American Art Museum. Rebecca is the research history have coordinator. She has 35 years of experience in archival reference having worked at the textual reference of the national archives since 1985. In her time at NARA she has edited several award-winning finding aids and records guides. Although she has knowledge about many of the records in the custody of the national archives, she has the most experience in 20th century military topics, especially those pertaining to World War II and the Korean War. Darren Cole is a community manager and digital engagement specialist in the NARA office of innovation. In addition to history hub, he has supported a number of national archives online projects including today's document, which shares NARA holdings from that date in history across multiple social media channels. In between other projects he enjoys developing animated gifts from the NARA GIF channel. Before we get started, I'm going to walk you through a few housekeeping reminders. If you have any questions you would like to ask any of the presenters, or if you have any technical issues, feel free to use the chat box which is located in the bottom right-hand corner of your screen on the desktop or laptop. I'm going to keep track of the questions that come in and at the end of the presentation I will ask our presenters to respond to each of them. We are recording today's session and will email a link to the recording and slides to everyone who registered for the webinar. We are also going to send a certificate of participation using the email you used to register for the webinar. If anyone needs additional certificates because multiple people are watching the webinar with you, please email [FDLP outreach@GPO.gov](mailto:FDLP_outreach@GPO.gov) and include the title of today's webinar along with the names and email addresses of those meetings for CERT took the kids. Desktop computer and laptop users may zoom in on the slides being presented. Click on the full-screen button on the bottom left side of your screen, to exit that mouse over the blue bar at the top of your screen so it expands and click on the return button to get back to the default view. Finally, at the end of the session we will share you a webinar satisfactions survey. We will let you know when the survey is available and the URL will appear in the chat box. We would very much appreciate your feedback after the session, including comments on the presentation style and the value of webinar. That is all for me. I handed over to our presenters. Please take it from here.

This is Kelly Osbourne. Can you hear me okay?

We can hear you.

Thank you all so much for joining us. We are really excited to tell you more about history hub. It is a project we have been working on for a number of years, and it seems especially relevant

right now. What is history hub , it is a crowdsourcing platform for people interested in researching history and genealogy. We think of history really broadly like military records, personal history, government, things that people are interested in government wise. We have designed it to kind of follow a little bit of a Google model so that your first, the first thing you see is a question box. We are really interested in people being able to ask a question. There is also -- it is hard to see, but there are relevant lists that people have written that help users find what they are looking for from popular content, and this is an idea of the spaces that we have on history hub, which is how we sort of chunk the questions that we could asked get asked. Here's a typical space or catchall researchers help. You can see people asking questions [Indiscernible] whatever does it fit into one of the other categories. So overall is a platform where people can get answers from multiple sources. Really interested in people being able to crowd source their reference questions. It includes a community of citizen experts. Sometimes very dedicated experts who can be experts in genealogy. I don't know if the people who joined us have much experience with genealogists, but some of them have decades of experience and it is really impressive. We also have professors or professional researchers. It is also a knowledge base with skills and improves with quality over time. So someone can ask a question and information can be added continually down the road. It is also the result of ongoing research into how organizations communicate with and serve their audiences, nudges organizations in the public sector, but also the private sector. It is really based on trends and consumer research empowered by the same platform as the Apple support community. So if you ever have a problem and you Google what do I do when my kid drops his phone in the toilet, you will probably come to the support community. A little more about an example of how this works. My laptop started making this really disturbing noise. So I did what anyone would do, I went to Google and typed in why is my laptop frantically making a weird beeping noise. This is comparable to a question on history hub. And I filmed the answer on the Apple support community. It was exactly what I was looking for. Comparable to a researcher asking the question, and you can see it is a common problem. Over 3000 questions at the time I took the screenshot. 3000 people clicked I have this problem too. So within minutes the person had their answer. Somebody who wasn't an Apple expert answered the question. It was the exact thing I needed to know and the exact answer to my problem as well. And they included additional information that was really helpful but did not show up in my initial research. So this is kind of how it works on history hub. You can ask a specific question, very specific research question, get an answer and minutes and people who are knowledgeable who often don't have the workloads that the rest of us have, they can answer the question quickly. And the best part is the answers available to anyone who googles a similar question. This paradigm has really set user expectations for how they research online. People want to be able to ask a specific question, not telling me how to fix my MacBook, but why is it making a beeping noise. They want to be able to get help immediately. They want someone to help solve it immediately. And be able to ask follow-up questions. The way people are getting help immediately often is that they will search and find the answer they are looking for. So the search, that is the part that we are most interested in . It is a really interesting part of how history hub works. If you type in the googles, lost honorable discharge certificate, you can see the first result that comes up is something on history hub. It is also a Google featured snippet. You can see that if you type in how do I get a DD 256, which is a military record, the top results in the Google search engine

are on history hub. A big part is that search engines prioritize websites that are updated frequently and because people are asking questions on history hub, dozens of times a day, and answering questions dozens of times a day, it is constantly being updated so the information on history hub can be weighted more heavily than it is even on archives.gov. Here are a couple of other examples. If you type in or researching how many women voted in the first elections. I can't remember the date. But if you type that in, quite a bit is that people are asking questions using words that show up in searches of other people. They are using real-world search terms. Sometimes it can be a little specialist and how we present information and people will ask questions in different ways, or for example, how do I find out if my grandfather was a Tuskegee air man. The kind of problems that history hub can solve. We answer a lot of questions on a one-to-one basis from emails, people walking in the door. We had about 38,000 research questions coming through the NARA website, which was part of an almost 200,000 pool of questions that NARA had to answer in the last year. So a lot of those are similar questions that we answer again and again. The questions that are asked on that one-to-one basis are really lost in that kind of conversation, a one-to-one conversation. They are not like searchable. Here's an example. Somebody asked, they are looking for naval records, which is a very popular subject of research at the national archives, but we call it Navy deck logs. So Becky, she is our main reference, the reference coordinator for history hub, she answered in a way that gave him the information he wanted, but also it is linking Navy deck logs, the naval record of NATO operations Silver Tower. Those concepts are going to be linked. Sometimes we can't provide a complete answer because the questions can be held in records elsewhere. For example, I don't know if there are a whole lot of government people on the line, but we are always joking about how we go home for Thanksgiving, when that was a thing, when people would still travel for holidays. You know, your family would ask you how are things going with the library Congress or the national archives. The general public doesn't know the difference between federal institutions, but they also don't, why would they need to? and why would they need to know that, for example, in this question the person is looking for information that they would think would be at the national archives but is actually at National Park Service. Or here they are looking for information that will be in an archives, but it is not in our archives, it is at the New Mexico State archives. State records center and archives. Sometimes people will be reached -- researching something in they will be able to find what they're looking for because we are humans and humans are error-prone. So here is someone looking for information on Mercy gravy and what they really wanted was Marcus Barbee, very seamlessly gives them the information they are looking for at the national archives and also the Library of Congress. A lot of resources to look to. Sometimes the knowledge and experience can be helped by experts in other ex-institutions. Here people don't always know the difference between the national archives in the Library of Congress. So we have people from the Library of Congress answering questions as well like here is someone asking about employee records. Here it is really surprising, not surprising, it is heartening how many people are really interested in helping other people find information. Here we have got someone asking a question about naturalization records. It was answered just as well by a citizen expert as it could've been answered by us. And they can answer a lot faster. Our goals in general, we are looking to facilitate research. We really feel strongly that we have an obligation to the public to help them, and we are looking to connect with new audiences. Not everyone knows how to do

research and archives. It can be difficult. So we are really looking to connect with different kinds of audiences, and also enable contributions from other institutions and public members of the public and subject matter experts of all types. We are looking to create a knowledge base that continually improves. We have some discussions that have lasted for years with people adding new information all the time. We are looking to improve customer service for an audience that is really accustomed to immediacy and also, not just immediacy, but I often think of like for my laptop example, if manuals had been a thing, but just follow this train of thought, if manuals still existed, if I had the problem with my beeping laptop and had a manual, that I could look through the manual and probably find the answer, but nobody reads manuals anymore. They really just want to be able to search and find their specific question and get it answered. So we are also always looking to decrease our workload over time by increasing transparency, by taking the information that has been locked in these one-to-one conversations and putting them in a way, putting them online in a way that more people have access to the information. Those become super relevant recently. We are responding to a changing world, but the world was changing before the recent pandemic. Our customer base is really interested in not being , having to find information in a physical location. But one of the bonuses is that it also enables staff, our remote experts to still serve the public, even if their institution is shut down. So some of the lessons we have learned. We, like just internally, sometimes the workflows you have may not work as well in different technologies or in a different way. So you really need to be able to be flexible and collaborative with what -- bureaucracy, you want to be able to answer questions fairly quickly. Partnerships between internal offices and also external partners are vital. We all feel like we play to our strengths. The division of labor is important and partnership and collaboration, and it is all the things that make any project better, partnerships, collaborations play to your strengths. I'm going to hand it over to Darren to discuss some more specifics. You got it Darren?

I think so. I'm going to cover some of the growth and experience in the future of the platforms as we see it, that we will do a quick spin around. You to see her growth over time. We have a steady, almost exponential, gross. -- Gross. The total number of questions asked and growth in regular sugar registered users. We projected our current growth 8000 users total by the end of 2020. The growth rate [Indiscernible - muffled] similar expansion in web traffic as well as we grow and expand and the platform matures. This is what we're most excited about. This compares the growth in searches of content on Google, compared with the subsequent decrease in contact us emails. Emails we receive through our website. Users come to the national archives and contact us and we put in their research questions. That shoots an email to our reference staff and they have to go to work on it. Really what we're trying to do is cut down on that number and hopefully the more people we have using history hub, we have a commensurate increase, the amount of content and people can find their answers on history hub and hopefully we see fewer one-to-one emails being sent to us. You can also see the growth in the number of cube live questions. We are pushing 5000 questions now. This just shows that as the platform grows and matures it has increased her profile on Google. We have a steady growth in the number of search impressions as people are searching in Google, they will see more in their search results. We are hoping this can work for you. It is a secure site. For anyone who works in the federal government, you may have heard of said ramp, a certification,

it is said ramp certified with the standards. All posts are moderated for PII, wites personal identifiable information. We don't want Social Security numbers exposed. That is all moderated and checked. No anonymous posts. Becky moderates most to make sure they follow our posting policy. Also, for anyone concerned about having expose personal accounts, we do offer group office accounts for institutions, so if you want to have an account for the national archives and research staff, you can do that as well. There are several examples of that. It is really up to the individual preference. Getting started. We don't need any memorandums of understanding. That is the MOU or agreements. They are not necessary. This is for anyone for any institutions joining. We have an expert bag that appears next to each users post experts bag badge so users know you're a bona fide expert. Something that we found is very useful is posting existing frequently asked questions or FAQ on the site. This is a great way to get a seed question to build content on the site. That is an easy way to get started through the content hub. Log posts are a great way to highlight something that goes beyond an ordinary question. Were happy to experiment. If someone is interested in getting involved on history hub, there are a variety of short-term pilot options. This is an example of what an expert icon, this is someone from the Utah State archives and records service. This is their icon outlined in the shape of the state of Utah. This is one of the FAQ we posted to the site. We got a lot of requests for the [Indiscernible] . You can get them replicated by other third-party services, but it is a very popular search. As you can see, at the time we took a screenshot it had over 5200 at this point. Here's an example of a block post, which is a great way to describe something in more detail. It is had almost 80,000 in less than five months since it was posted. This is an example of, this is the Library of Congress space. This is a very specific support community for their transcription project. This is an example of one of their blog posts. Now a quick demo of the basics of the site. I am just navigating around and exploring the content. As Kaylee detailed earlier, the home page, we try to keep it fairly basic. The real focus is the asked the question box in the center where we hope users come in and focus their attention and put their questions there. we also have some basic navigation on the top. And if you are an existing user or new to the site and want to create an account, you have to sign in and register. Further down on the bottom of the page we have some of our more private blog posts, some of the more popular questions. The ones that get a lot that we put here for users convenience. And also a list of all our communities. Kelly describe some of these. Researchers help, the catchall, military records and genealogy are the most popular. Women's rights, African-American records. Legislative, presidential and technical help and support as well. Just as an example, this is what the genealogy community looks like. You have all your recent content. Questions where someone has just posted an answer. So though show up here, the most active stuff goes to the top. A little shortcut to ask a question over here, and we also have a list of other featured content on the right-hand side. These are recent blog posts from our staff describing some of the more complicated aspects of genealogy research. Searching a site. This is one of her favorite topics. The site has a built-in predictive search engine. As you start to type your search in the search box, this site will automatically start to suggest questions and answers that may match. They will tape and where can I find naturalization records and it will come back and provide some suggested answers that are already on the slide. So someone types in the search and they see the answer and lick through and that gets taken care of without having to submit the post in the first place. They get their answer and you don't have to respond to another

question in our staff will focus on that. If you click through this is what a question and answer post looks like. If not, take the back or do a more in-depth search for the whole community. Asking a question is pretty easy. These are the same, let's suppose you don't get any predictive responses here. So you type a question in with the asked button that shows up at the bottom you have to create an account first. No anonymous posts, you have to register first so writing a question, we tried to give users basic tips using the same title. This is in particular for genealogy questions. What you know about the person you are researching, always helpful for our staff and other genealogists to give them a head start. Also you can post images or links you might have, and again, these don't post any PII but that will be filtered out. For example, a lot of times people find census records, especially when the old ones are illegible so trying to decipher what was written now maybe 100 years ago sometimes to help with that. At the bottom of that page you get to choose which community has posted a question to you. And then we tell them, the caveat that everything is moderated and there is a slight delay while the post is reviewed. To moderate questions in the order they come in. So we take a couple of days based on volume. It is usually pretty immediate. For federal employees there is no moderation on federal holidays. Questions may be edited through PII. We have the help and technical support space. And we have some real basic fundamental place questions. How do I unsubscribe. Their ways when you create an account to adjust. Account preferences to get email alerts and things like that. How do you post a question, how to update your profile, widen my question get rejected? it does happen occasionally if a question violates the terms of service or if it is a duplicate. If someone has already emailed us directly with a research question we won't posted twice. Those are the most common reasons usually. If it doesn't fit the topics of the site, if it is not history related, we still respond to the user once we got a question for NASA asking why the sky is blue so we put some research links on that. So hopefully that helped. It wasn't really topical for our site. That is the site in a nutshell. It is open to anyone. We are always looking for interested partner institutions to help us out. I think as the site scales and matures and grows, it really benefits the public in the more institutions we have participating it is and everyone win scenario. You submit your FAQs to get started. It helps build and grow the content. He can write a blog post. You can help answer any questions as they come in, or you can contribute to existing questions. We have certain questions that always have new information coming in. The records and details available the come to light. So we would love to you to join us. Check out the site, history.gov. If you want to participate as an individual institution, please contact us, history hub at NARA.gov. I will headed back over to Ashley and handle your questions.

Thank you. We are taking questions now. If you have a question on anything that was presented or if you have questions for a particular presenter, please chat them in the chat box at the bottom of the screen. We have got one, how do you vet individuals and how do you prevent wrong answers?

I'm not sure what you mean by vetting. We usually take anybody's question. But there are some questions, some people will put up advertisements. Those get rejected. About wrong answers, I tried to read through, although I don't always read through everything that a citizen archivist may put up, but I do read over the ones from research services. So we tried to put out the best answers we can.

This is Kelly. For vetting participants, we do ask that you join through an official work email address. We will have a couple of conversations about history hub for our cadre of experts. For people posting the wrong answer, we at the national archives, as Becky was saying, she make sure that the questions or the answers that we provide our as complete and full as we can make them, but having wrong answers from the public is an excellent opportunity to correct misinformation. So if another user helpfully provides information that may be incorrect, we take that as an opportunity to just provide more information, more factual information. Does that answer your question? okay. Good.

For Susan, I think if you go to the archives.gov website we have links to history hub all over, including on the contact us page. We try to make it very easy to find history hub. If you are referring, history hub is a great place to start. We have a question from Andy Schafer saying she is from the state library. What is required to be a partner institution? it is really, we are really looking for people who are from other institutions who are willing and able to answer questions or post information that will be helpful to the public. We really just asked that you contact us from your official work email address, and then we will start a conversation with you from their. I think we have more.

There is one on their, if you are referring patrons from other institutions, do you refer us to send researchers to history hub or contact us? either way. The whole idea of history hub is that we kind of trade a lot of questions a cumin, if we can answer them we don't have to go to more reference units. So they can go to history hub if they want to. Some people don't want to be in a social media and prefer to have the question private, so they would do the contact us.

We have a question from someone, a clarification with AJ saying, so answers are checked for accuracy. The official response is checked for accuracy. He checks that for accuracy. But we don't check other users who will be helpfully providing information. We don't check whether there information is correct. If they link to other sites, we will click on the link to make sure it is not a spam site or something, but we don't verify there information, which is why if people who are considered experts have that expert bag badge and incomplete answers are not incomplete, it is like a part of the answer and more information, information can grow over time. Thank you for pointing that out.

We have a question that came in privately. How frequently do you get questions which need to be referred to a more local institution like a state, county or city archives department?

It depends on the question is. We get a lot of questions about vital records in the archives has very few vital records. So those will have to go to state institutions or if, depending on the age, historical societies or state archives. We try to answer them all and point people to the right direction.

Another question. I live in the UK, would we have full access to this great tool?

yes. Absolutely.

We have a number of researchers from Europe and other countries. Is open to everyone.

Another question. NARA also maintains a list on its website of researchers for higher. This history hub noted this in its response to requesters?

If they asked for that information, I will point them or we will point them to that webpage.

70 has a question, what are the downsides?

Some people won't take no for an answer.

I feel like the question what are the downsides really depends on -- that is so broad. If you're doing proprietary research, some people don't want their research exposed. It is public for everyone. So in those instances, it is not the best platform.

And also, right now researchers are frustrated because we can't physically go and look at records because we are all teleworking. And sometimes you have to say it in bulk, we are not physically able to go look at the records. So that they understand. We're not trying to put them off, we just can't do it right now. So that can be disappointing for them.

We have another question specifically on the pandemic. What effect has the current pandemic had on history hub? have you seen a change in the number or type of requests received and have there been questions that were unable to be answered because staff are working from home or otherwise not able to access materials?

At the beginning, we weren't receiving as many questions as we used to, and then as the closures became more evident to researchers, history hub started to build back up to the volume we have. And they can be frustrated, especially if you can't get something from the national personal records Center that they are used to getting, or even if they are looking for exception records that we have to physically go look in boxes, that is frustrating for us and for them. But we do what we can looking at all of our online sources and if we can't, we just tell them -- we do have paragraphs saying that the reference units may not get back as quickly as possible. The personnel records Center is only doing emergency looking out for veterans and that kind of thing. The one caveat we have right now is that NARA worked out an agreement with ancestry, and so usually to see NARA records on ancestry would have to be [Indiscernible] unless they were certain ones, and right now we have an agreement with ancestry to have those records open. I think that is a big boost and people can do research on ancestry as long as they are from NARA records.

Another question. Who do we contact if we are interested in volunteering? also, is there a time commitment desired?

Just email us, history hub@tran14.gov. The slide with our email addresses they are. We don't have a time commitment. We can work with partner institutions in a variety of different ways. They can expand and contract based on your capabilities and interests.

We should clarify, and institution definitely contact us. Of you just want to get involved as an individual in your own free time, then go to history.gov and create an account.

Another question, a slightly cynical question, if you reduce the need for reference staff, are you giving the institution or government a reason to reduce staffing levels?

actually, this is a super interesting question. Let me just get super nerdy. Somebody please Remy and if I get to esoteric. But there is a lot of discussion about in general what does artificial intelligence, what does AI mean for knowledge management workers? are those people going to be irrelevant? actually, that is not the case. What it looks like is that systems like this allow reference staff to be freed up from the more kind of basic level of reference and allows for, it creates a greater importance on humans answering questions and humans who are knowledgeable and have experience, the knowledge workers. The knowledge workers are actually more relevant. But there is also still questions that, you know, like people don't want to, don't want to kind of extrapolate information into, for their particular circumstance. So they will ask a question that has been asked 1 million times before. So that can be answered in a way that is an easy way. There are two tiers to this kind of knowledge base. There are the very easy low hanging fruit questions that can be answered by either the general public or by a reference, someone just starting out in reference, and then there are the questions that are more esoteric that require a human was like a human brain and human experience to answer the question. If you like it kind of went off on a tangent. Please let me know if that answers the question. I think humans are more important. I don't see this as, the research shows that systems like this don't make the humans who participate irrelevant. It makes them more relevant.

We have to questions about projects with students. With this be a good tool for national history Day? that is junior and senior high school projects. Are there any college-level classroom assignments that you would suggest or you will have seen done.

We definitely encourage students to take a look at it. This informal thing, we don't do anyone's homework, we try to point anyone, student researcher or otherwise, in the right direction. As far as assignments, I don't know we can speak on anything particularly, but if anybody's getting started on research, is a great place to start.

Also, I have had a number of college interns who have worked for us on history hub. I think that is a great thing for them. They get to learn about all sorts of different questions and different records at the time. And also how irritating it can be to not have everything digitized. That is what we usually do for college students. I know one of our ladies who is over in processing, she teaches a course over at Howard University in Washington D.C.. Her students are expected to tune into history hub and to monitor and look at the answers to the questions we have and go back to her class and give her an update on what they found.

Another question, how long does it typically take for a question to get answered on history hub? are they answered in the order received?

It depends on the question. If we already have a known answer, someone may get a response within hours or days. We try to respond to all questions between 3 to 5 days. Sometimes you have to do a lot of searching through different websites and information before we can provide any answers. It varies, and they are not done in the order that we receive them. A lot of the team that we have will pick and choose which one they want to work on, and I usually end up with the questions that nobody else wants to answer. It varies.

Is registering as a citizen expert open to all? including professional historical researchers who may be willing to share experience and record know-how?

We don't actually have a class for citizen experts because there is no way for us to really that your experience and tell whether or not, to say a citizen expert is kind of a loose term that we give for people to answer questions helpfully, but there is no category for citizen experts.

I am just reading through some of the comments here.

I see Rachel asked, Rachel has some really interesting points about, she says does this [Indiscernible] from paid work to unpaid work. This hasn't been our experience on a platform like this because the kinds of answers that the archivists, the kind of information they can provide, if it is something that is based on their experience, they really have specialized skills. We are not finding that those kinds of responses can come from the public, but the public can answer questions. The more low hanging fruit or for genealogists, a lot of the genealogists will have questions that can get pretty in-depth that are just out of the purview of something that the national archives would normally answer. But I am really interested in, what you wrote about the connected labor. So thank you for providing that link. We will read it. I am interested.

We have researchers that are constantly on the website. Because of the research they have done themselves they can point researchers to records. Sometimes they are good and if they are not, then I will send them an email and say not that. Those replies will be modified because they are not quite right. But other than that, it is amazing how much they will learn off the site and will tell other researchers.

Ashley has put out the satisfaction survey. Last call for questions. We do have another one. And we filter questions by geographical location so I can skim through them, the questions relevant to my state? also, signing up was very easy, thank you.

You can. There is a search button you can ask, and if you want anything that will be in the question that has to do with, let's say New Mexico or Utah or someone mentions Oregon, you will get the questions, you will get all the questions that that state or locality mentioned. But we do not filter normally for geographic areas.

Just a reminder, we have a link to this recording as well as the slide deck to participants who have signed up for the webinar. And we have two questions for clarification. One is, could you say that non-experts answers were not checked.

They are checked. I look over them briefly just to make sure they are not putting in any kind of PII or anything like that. But other than that, and if I see something that is really bad and really wrong, I don't allow those. But for the most part everyone is trying to be helpful and trying to put information in that can help, and a lot of the back-and-forth we did our firm genealogists, and we are giving URLs to ancestry or to family search or other websites and what have you. For the most part, I can't check all of those, but I will scan the URL real quick to see if it looks like it is legit.

I am a little confused since he did say that citizen experts can write blogs and share expertise. How do you become a citizen expert?

citizen experts can't write blogs, but our partner participants can write blogs. So people who have, people from partner institutions can write blog posts, but citizen experts can post questions responses, but not blog posts.

That looks like all the questions we have. I want to thank her presenters. Thank you so much for presenting for us today. I want to thank all of our participants for attending today's webinar. We will see you at the next FDLP Academy webinar. Thank you.

Thank you for having us. [Event Concluded]