

Appendix D : Comments (Arranged by Respondent's Satisfaction Level)

Very Satisfied:

Very Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Have better written guidance to help agencies schedule all kinds of records.

Very Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Receiving SF-115's electronically.

Very Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- N/A. I am satisfied with the services.

Very Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Nothing. Your Scheduling and Appraisal Group is outstanding. We really appreciate the proactive, supportive relationship we have with Yvonne Wilson and her staff.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Only negative comment is processing time for schedules. I'm not sure if there is any way to improve the turn around time. As far as our relationship with our appraisers and archivist it very good we are in contact with each other 2-3 times per week on many records management issues. Thank you.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- I think you're doing just fine.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- The time it takes to receive an SF115 is very long and it would be wonderful if that could be shortened. David Langbart our appraisal archivist has been working with our Agency for more than 15 years and he has always done an outstanding job. We can call him at anytime and usually within an hour he calls back with a response. He keeps us informed at all times about the where in the process new items are. He contacts our Agency with any new or up coming changes so we have an opportunity to begin working on them early and can better prepare. Mr. Langbart makes himself available either at his location or ours for meetings and always has the answers, but if he doesn't we have an immediate follow up from another member of the Archives staff.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- We're very satisfied with the scheduling services, but would like to see the processing time shortened a bit.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Continue to make the process simple and easy to understand.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- I really enjoy working with my appraisal archivist. I know he has other customers but you would think that our agency is his only customer. I have also had the pleasure of working with several other appraisal archivists at NARA and they too were very professional and attentive to all of our issues and concerns.
- Receiving a monthly "Status Report of Registered Schedules" is a plus and for me is one of the most important things that NARA can do to continue improving our scheduling and appraisal process.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- I have found that agency scheduling activities are more successful when there are an adequate number of pre-appraisal meetings. I believe that having more NARA staff time dedicated to individual agency pre-appraisal work would be beneficial. Having more appraisal archivists on staff would help alleviate the work load of the current NARA scheduling staff.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Make the process more consistent, and ensure that what is discussed in BRIDG meetings is also know to the appraisal archivist. Also, if you can share other agency's scheduling success in flexible schedule it will be most hopeful.

Very Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- NARA has always provided the EEOC with the attentiveness needed to facilitate all of our scheduling needs. Keep up the good work!

Very Satisfied. 0 SF 115s.

Dear NARA Staff,

Please know that I was tasked with Records Management Officer responsibilities last September 2005; however, I have had experience with NARA's wonderful, expert services for over 5 years - working as a Records Custodian. For example, the previous FRTIB Records Management Officer submitted several requests (which I prepared for the most part) for our department - where I was the Records Custodian (e.g., for permanent records approval, approval of Records Schedules, and other items) - all of which were handled proficiently by NARA and on a most timely basis.

Please also know that, as FRTIB has been assigned a new Appraisal Archivist, Mr. Harrod, I have been providing information through my initial contacts with Mr. Harrod - which have been most positive. FRTIB is most fortunate to have the guidance of NARA's Appraisal Archivist services and looks forward to working with Mr. Harrod. In fact, I have started to make arrangements for Mr. Harrod to visit the FRTIB this Summer to give a briefing and meeting with FRTIB's appropriate records management staff.

Although FRTIB has been reorganized and restructured, we are working to bring all the records schedules current as well as all other functions of the Records Management Program, approved by NARA, as an FRTIB Directive. Because of the wonderful guidance, outstanding training, and high professionalism of NARA instructors and appraisal archivists, I believe FRTIB has an established successful program. FRTIB needs of course to update schedules and initiate new ones (where needed), as well as bring other functions current. As the person tasked with RMO responsibilities - in addition to my position-description duties (within the Office of Finance), I am doing all that is possible to train new and current staff as needed and complete RMO-required tasks.

I also wish to thank NARA for the outstanding CDs, "Records Management for Everyone," and "Records Management for Program Managers - What's In It For Me," as these two CDs have been a Godsend to me in my communications with the entire Agency and bringing all departments (new and restructured) to full understanding of every federal employee's role in handling, maintaining and preserving federal records. I am especially grateful for the CDs because they were given to me at a time when I continue two position responsibilities and, together with E-mails I sent to all Program Managers, Records Liaison persons, and Records Custodians, they are the best, most valuable form of teaching FRTIB could hope to have. I firmly believe there is no better way except to have the NARA training programs. Thank for the website link too!

Thank you also for permitting federal records management officers to complete this survey. Although not yet officially appointed as Records Management Officer (RMO), I have been performing these RMO duties since last October 2005, and - per verbal information received from the CFO of my department (my supervisor), expect to be officially appointed in the near future. Because of this pledged appointment, received verbally on 5/19/2006, I believe it is permissible for me to complete this questionnaire sent to Federal Records Management Officers.

For the record, I have also completed all six of the NARA's Knowledge-Area Training Programs (at Adelphi, Maryland) from January through April 2006, attended CENDI Program and also RACO held in Washington, D.C. on May 9, 2006. All NARA's training courses and educational programs are at the highest level - they are truly outstanding in every respect. The course materials have been another Godsend to me and a constant source of reference. I am also sharing all of these materials with the Department Head in the Agency, and also plan to disseminate many of the materials received at RACO, particularly the electronic-records data. I am also taking the 5 tests to become certified by the Archivist of the United States, Mr. Allen Weinstein.

With respect to answering your question about "the most important thing . . . to improve . . . scheduling . . . services . . ." - I do not really feel qualified at this point in time to answer the question as, I am in the midst of doing office evaluations and determining what Records Schedules can be updated. After using all the wonderful materials you have provided in your Course Books, I will revisit this question.

As far as your "appraisal" services, I look forward to working with NARA's newly-assigned Appraisal Archivist to FRTIB as I have also been requested to update and make suggestions for the Agency's Directive that governs the Records Management Program" - and I am reviewing all the laws and regulations. Perhaps putting all the laws and regulations together that every Agency needs would be a consideration - but I know you have so many laws (from the U.S. Code) already listed in the course manuals and other materials. I have also printed out the Basic Laws and Regulations from the Internet and will review that also as I want to ensure that every law and regulation pertinent to records management is included in FRTIB's Directive when updated. For example, with the added contractor sites, I have been searching for records management laws and regulations that would govern an guide contractor sites and have found ones under, e.g., the FAR regulations - such as those under 52.212-5. Then, there is the consideration of centralization and decentralization - and I believe centralization is best because that ensures the Federal Agency will monitor contractor sites and ensure federal laws and regulations are being followed.

Thank you again. Good luck with your wonderful programs. It was most encouraging hearing the incredibly-knowledgeable speakers at the CENDI and RACO conferences. Please continue to do what you are doing - I believe that is the best way you can improve on it. One very important point I've learned in the Business world - which I agree with wholeheartedly is - "If it's not broke, don't fix it!"

Please continue to give your wonderful training, counsel, and outstanding materials. And please continue to enforce your regulations, never dilute or discount your standards, and remain the directing, guiding light agencies need in times of business as usual and times of crises. In listening to keynote speakers at RACO tell their experiences in dealing with disasters - such as Hurricane Katrina - I believe every Agency needs to be checked for emergency preparedness. One of the items I have at the top of my RMO-project list is to update our procedures, meet with Agency principals, and schedule a practice plan - which was reinforced at NARA's RACO.

Thank God for NARA!

Satisfied:

Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Provide timely feedback.
- Assign more than one appraisal staff to each agency.
- Put more informal guidance in writing.
- Provide expertise on GRS.

Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Speed up the process.

Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- We really miss the ARDOR system. It was really helpful to have easy access to schedules of other agencies.

Satisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Hiring more archivists would probably speed up the entire process. At this moment the appraisal archivists are too often tasked with extra duties that keep them away from the scheduling and appraisal process.

Satisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- If it did not take so much time for the review and approval process that would be a big help because I send a lot of schedules to NARA for their review and approval before posting into our handbook.

Satisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- Improve the timeliness of receiving record schedules back from NARA.

Satisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- Reducing the time involved - Perhaps if Nara could look at there process, they may determine that there are some steps in the process that can be eliminated.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- The appraisal archivist that works with our bureau is responsive, professional and very knowledgeable. Unfortunately, she is also limited with the extent of her authority to resolve complicated issues.
- Decision-making in the Director of Litigation's office is basically shutting down the retention scheduling process of our bureau. Most of these decisions are probably justified, but we are at an impasse. Clear and concise guidelines need to be developed at higher levels between NARA and DOI for dissemination to the records officers and internal stakeholders. Issues surrounding the management, retention and preservation of IFTR are in a state of confusion and the frustration levels are rising. Department and NARA officials at decision and policy-making levels need to work together to clearly define regulations and requirements to resolve these issues. We need shepherds in these herds of lost sheep.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Your scheduling and appraisal services do not appear to be problematic. Our schedule took 3 years because it was 28 years old. Your staff was VERY professional and I enjoyed working with them.
- What is problematic currently for our agency is the records freeze situations. I am told that your General Counsel and upper management will not consider any sort of variance related to record disposal (only records transfer). Obviously this is a problem. Our agency (DOI) will always be in litigation with some entity. So the concept of litigation and records disposition should not be deal breakers. Unless I have been misinformed there should be some clear-cut plan to exempt either bureaus or particular parts of their records holding from an agency-wide freeze. I'm sure other agencies must have similar situations.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Decreasing the time it takes to finalize a schedule would be ideal. It seems to take extremely too long - perhaps, if explored, you may determine that there are some steps in your process that could be eliminated that would reduce the time involved in the scheduling & appraisal service. Otherwise, as a whole, this service that you provide is an excellent one!

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Quicker turn around time needed for approving new schedules. Current scheduling averages 330 days. We believe this is too lengthy, especially in light of the fact these records cannot be destroyed pending approval of the schedule. We envision a bottleneck with the impending mandate that all electronic systems/records be scheduled and managed by 9/30/2009 unless this process is streamlined.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Develop a better methodology for scheduling relational databases and large integrated electronic systems, and then provide consistent guidance on how to develop schedules for these systems. The current electronic systems scheduling methodology originated during the mainframe era, and is not adequate for describing or scheduling the information in relational databases and large electronic systems, which may incorporate many databases in various locations, have web-based data entry screens, etc.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Get the approved SF-135 form back to us quicker. The approved forms were taking longer than usual so we called NARA to find out if the SF-135 was approved. The SF-135 were approved and Mailed out prior to April 19, 2006, so we got the copies SF-135 faxed to NHTSA so that we could make arrangements and free up space to pack other boxes. NARA pick up the boxes on April 19, 2006. We received the approved copies in the mail in the first week of May, 2006. I really not complaining but trying to find a solution. Is it the Mail system since 9/11???

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Communication.....communication....communication. We are in the process of changing our records disposition and in the beginning I was receiving regular monthly updates on how that was progressing...not any more...I don't mind making the calls but, the monthly emails were great.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Speed up the process overall.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- It would be helpful if NARA had a tool to provide assistance to agencies when meeting with program representatives in collecting information needed to determine the appropriate value of the records. I located a set of questions to ask when determining legal values, but it would really be helpful if routine types of questions (via a tool) could be provided for administrative, fiscal and historical values. We are a small agency with one records management representative. In trying to train others to meet with program officials to discuss new records series', they often are not aware of the types of questions to pose to obtain a lot of the important information needed to make those determinations.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Faster approval of schedules that contain under 10 items.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Reduce the time between submission and approval. Our agency had a number of schedules approved quickly - perhaps due to the anticipated new building headquarters move. We have experienced 8-10 months wait.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Streamline the scheduling process within NARA in order to expedite the approval of records schedule. This process should not have to take a year or more.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Give more consistent information in writing. Each appraisal archivists can give you different guidance, especially when working on the "21" questions for scheduling electronic records. There is no clear guidance and procedures for scheduling electronic records.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- It is always good to enhance services provided, however, I would like to see more agency involvement -- both NARA and respective agency, that joint ideas may be incorporated!

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Perhaps NARA can work to implement a shorter turnaround time for the schedule approval process. (e.g. Accept more schedules on-line/electronically)

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- I would like to receive tracking information on my schedule as it goes through the various stages at NARA. This could either be via email or posted on your website.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- The NARA staff is very capable and helpful in reviewing and approving schedules, but the process is cumbersome and slow. Also, the staff seems to be overworked and some lower priority scheduling requests appear to be overlooked e.g., small volume paper records, vis-a-vis more critical electronic systems. However, my recent experience in this matter is limited to only a few requests and may not be representative.

Satisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Faster turnaround.

Satisfied. 0 SF 115s.

- Provide personal assistance to those offices in the process of scheduling their records. Most staff do not know how to complete a schedule. With the Department having only one Departmental Records Officer, it is impossible to get the hands on assistance needed.

Satisfied. I do not know the number of SF 115s.

- We have just begun working with NARA. So far I am pleased at the amount of knowledge the analyst has.

Dissatisfied:

Dissatisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Improve on the communication of products as received in your offices (we never know whether, or not, a SF 115 has been received until weeks, and sometimes months, later).
- Improve the time it takes to log a Job.
- Improve the return of postcards or other advisement of NARA Job Number Assignment.
- Improve on consistency of Monthly Status Reporting (it is currently inconsistent. 1 month, then 2, then 1 month, etc.).
- Vet questions back to Agency quicker (now it takes several months, and up to six to have a question asked that should have been asked in the first month, or two - these do not include the types of questions that would have been generated through the stakeholder vetting process).
- Once a Job has been signed by the Archivist of the United States, get it back to the customer Agency quicker (2 months is entirely too long to have to wait for an approved Job). Copying and distribution of signed SFs 115 to Federal Records Officers should take some priority.
- Don't take two weeks to answer e-mail inquiries.
- NARA's appraisal assistance has been very satisfactory. We are pleased with that level of support when we have asked for it.

Dissatisfied. 11 or more SF 115s.

- Improve timeliness. I am currently working with the Air Force archivist to resolve scheduling changes that were submitted in 2000. The SF 115s that are returned to me are all over several years old BEFORE they are approved--this is absolutely unacceptable and impossible to work with.

Dissatisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- Speed the review/approval process. It just takes too long to get a schedule change through NARA.
- Recommend agencies be allowed to approve/change retention for temporary records to meet the needs of the agency, at least for records to be retained less than 10 years.
- NARA should expedite use of electronic transmissions for schedule changes and other NARA processes. Currently, we must print to paper, fax and then mail the "originals" this is not only redundant, it is a waste of time and money. GPEA, President's Mgt Agenda, and E-Gov mandated use of electronic data by August 2005, and yet we remain in a totally "paper" environment for inter-agency issues/processes. This just does not make sense!

Dissatisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- More timely approval process.

Dissatisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- I'm hoping the processing and approval of schedules will be shorter now that my agency is working with the regional office of NARA. Keep the communication going. Don't let schedules sit on someone's desk at NARA in DC without work getting done on them.

Dissatisfied. 6-10 SF 115s.

- Speed up the appraisal process by shortening the internal NARA review periods.
- Look for alternative methods of scheduling especially electronic "bucket" systems.
- Enhance the general records schedules to include more commonly created federal records such as agency-wide reporting on specific matters.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Provide Templates of good schedules
- Make the process quicker and more precise
- Allow the electronic submission of SF-115s
- More training for regional offices
- Less time on the mundane
- Offer to draft schedules on a reimbursable basis
- Offer web based training on records schedule development

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- I'm convinced that there needs to be a more concerted effort made in expanding the GRS to cover agency temporary records. This would not only help to relieve extremely limited agency Records Management resources while simultaneously enabling NARA to focus its resources on Permanent records.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- The turnaround time for even the simplest schedules is deplorable.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Reduce the time it takes to approve a recommended schedule. We have some that have been in NARA hands for almost 2 years. NARA seems to revisit a schedule many times with new questions during the approval process. Each revisit is months apart. One time should be sufficient. We have several items from back in 2001 that we have heard nothing on and do not show on the monthly status reports.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Increase response time for inquiries and requests for assistance. I frequently have great difficulty getting in contact with my appraisal archivist and often have to make several inquiries before I get my questions answered. I sometimes find it necessary to ask another appraisal archivist for assistance, even though I know that another person is not familiar with our agency, because I cannot wait for a response. This problem may be due to an inadequate number of archivists to perform the work, but regardless of its cause, I find that slow or non-existent assistance is my biggest concern.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Stop assigning MSHA's Archivist to other assignments. Since I became the records officer in June 2002, I have worked with 3 different ones. I am currently on No. 4.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Some schedules have taken more than a year to be approved. A faster appraisal process would be very helpful.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Timeliness of approving proposed record schedules where, it is an update to an existing schedule, where the number of items in the schedule is small, and only minor changes have occurred to the records series. These seem to take as long to approve as major schedules with significant changes, additional, deletions, and that have a large number of records series.
- In the past, efforts and attempts have been made to work with NARA on defining a timeline for the approval of a small record schedule that was already with NARA for three years. NARA first wanted to pull the schedule and start fresh. When this was agreed to by the agency, NARA reversed itself and decided to continue on with the existing schedule's job number. Negotiations with NARA was to finalize the schedule and approve it within a five month period - it still took nearly a year to do so. Agreements should not be made unless the intention is to fully honor them. This was a simple demonstration that a NARA agreement is worthless.
- A record schedules had been approved and signed by NARA with notification of the approval made to the agency many months later. Discussions and questions were asked in the interim months with no mention or notification by NARA that the schedule had been approved.
- The NARA webpage for records managers is a mess. I use a web based search engine to find needed NARA webpages and information. There is no information on scheduling agency web pages.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Routine contact from the appraisal archivist; our archivist changed in December and the new archivist has not contacted the Records Manager as of this time.

Dissatisfied. 1-5 SF 115s.

- Speed up the approval process.
- Keep the Agency/Office more informed with "milestones" during the approval process.
- Ensure that NARA staff at headquarters and regional agree on issues and are dispensing the same advice to the Agency/Office they are assigned to so as not to cause confusion or inconsistency.