



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Index to the Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary, 1/1/1984 – 12/31/1995 Record Group 207

Updated May 15, 2020

1. What information is in these records?
2. Why were these records created?
3. What paper correspondence is covered by this index?
4. How do I find the paper correspondence for correspondence listed in these records?
5. Why do some of the summary fields contain all X's or why do some values contain X's?
6. Why are only the "Master Files" available on AAD?
7. How do I search the Subject Summary fields?
8. Why do the Master Files contain dates outside of the time period they cover?
9. How can I access a copy of the full file?

1. What information is in these records?

This series consists of an electronic index to the correspondence of the Office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary, 1/1/1984 – 12/31/1995. The index contains information about each letter received by the Office of the Secretary. It includes the control number assigned to each letter; basic information about the letter, such as the name of sender, date and summary; and information about actions taken on the letter. Most of the letters are from the general public, either sent directly to the agency or referred to the agency by other federal agencies, members of Congress or the White House. The index covers the terms of Secretaries Samuel Pierce, Jack Kemp and Henry Cisneros.

2. Why were these records created?

The agency created this database as an index to the correspondence of the Office of the Secretary. The index helped ensure that incoming letters went to the appropriate official and received a proper and timely response.

3. What paper correspondence is covered by this index?

The Textual Reference Archives II Branch (RDT2) holds the textual (paper) correspondence and other files for Secretary Samuel Pierce, Secretary Jack Kemp, and Secretary Henry Cisneros. This electronic index may be helpful in locating paper correspondence in the below series:

NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and*
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

8601 ADELPHI ROAD
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20740-6001

www.archives.gov

NAID	Title	Dates
16668440	Official Correspondence Files of Secretary Samuel R. Pierce	1982-1988
16734981	Official Correspondence Files of Secretary Jack Kemp	1989-1993
77861805	Official White House Correspondence Files of Secretary Jack Kemp	1989-1993
77861789	Correspondence Files of Deputy Secretary Alfred A. DelliBovi	1989-1993
76048799	Correspondence Files for Secretary Henry Cisneros	1993-1996

Please note that some of these series have access restrictions. Descriptions of these records are available through the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov>. You can locate the description by searching using the NAID (National Archives Identifier) number listed in the table above. See FAQ #4 for how to access these records.

4. How do I find the paper correspondence for correspondence listed in these records?

The textual (paper) correspondence indexed by these electronic Master Files is in custody of the Archives II Textual Reference Branch (RDT2). To access the paper correspondence, researchers should contact RDT2 with the **control number**(*), **control type**, and **letter date** from the electronic record for each correspondence requested.

Researchers may contact RDT2 by email at archives2reference@nara.gov or write to them at: Textual Reference Archives II Branch (RDT2), 8601 Adelphi Rd, College Park, MD 207406001.

The electronic index is not a direct correlation to the paper records. You may need to search within multiple correspondence series. Please keep in mind that it is possible that there is no paper correspondence for a specific control number, even if it is listed in the electronic index.

Please also know that the paper correspondence is restricted partially under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (b)(6) for personal privacy and must be screened individually before release.

*Please note that the control numbers in the electronic index contain 7 digits while control numbers in the paper correspondence contain 6 digits. It is not entirely clear why the numbers differ, however NARA staff has found that the last 6 digits of the 7-digit index control number represent the control number in the paper correspondence. However, control numbers in the paper correspondence are not unique. This is why researchers need to provide the **control number**, **control type**, and **letter date** from the index for each correspondence requested.

5. Why do some of the summary fields contain all X's or why do some values contain X's?

NARA staff found that some records in the Master Files contain personal privacy information in the three summary fields (SUBJECT_SUMMARY1; SUBJECT_SUMMARY2;

SUBJECT_SUMMARY3). It was determined that this information should be masked under FOIA b(6) to protect the privacy of the named individuals. Staff created public use versions of the Master Files that mask the sensitive data in these fields with "X."

When masking discrete restricted information, staff only masked the numbers or specific data (e.g. masked a social security number). When masking a privacy concern, such as information relating to personal or medical details, staff masked all three summary fields in full.

6. Why are only the "Master Files" available on AAD?

This electronic index consists of six data files extracted from the Automated Correspondence On-Line Response Network (ACORN) system, which was the program software the agency originally used to maintain the correspondence. The data files consist of two kinds: Master Files, which are the main correspondence files and contain essential basic information about the correspondence; and Detail Files, which contain internal administrative information about a specific correspondence record as tracked within the ACORN system.

There are three Master Files in this series: Index Master File, January 1984 - December 1988; Index Master File, January 1989 - December 1992; and, Index Master File, January 1993 - December 1995. There are three Detail Files that each pair with one of the Master Files. The Detail Files connect to the Master Files by the correspondence control number.

Staff determined that the Master Files contain the essential information needed for searching and discovery of the indexed correspondence. Researchers may potentially use the information in the Master Files to locate possible paper correspondence in custody NARA's Archives II Textual Reference Branch (RDT2). See FAQ #4 for details about how to access the paper correspondence.

The three Detail Files are not available for search through the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource, however they are available for download from the National Archives Catalog at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/570020>. To use the Detail Files, we recommend that researchers first search the Master Files to obtain the correspondence control number, which may then be used to search the Detail Files for records related to particular correspondence.

7. How do I search the Subject Summary fields?

In the Master Files, there are three summary text fields (SUBJECT_SUMMARY1; SUBJECT_SUMMARY2; SUBJECT_SUMMARY3) that contain brief descriptions of the correspondence. These fields are meant to be read together as a single narrative. However, given that these summary narratives span across three fields, we suggest that researchers who wish to search within the Subject Summary fields do so using a free-text search rather than a fielded search. To do so, enter search terms in the single text box under "Search this file" on the Fielded Search page for a file.

8. Why do the Master Files contain dates outside of the time period they cover?

Upon review, NARA staff found that some records contain dates in the Letter Date field that fall outside of the time period a particular Master File is stated to cover. For example, the Index Master File, January 1984 - December 1988, contains over a 1,000 entries dated after 1988 and the Index Master File, January 1989 - December 1992, has about 400 entries dated before 1989. Because of these overlapping time coverages, we suggest that researchers search all three files if they are searching for correspondence within a specific time period.

It is not entirely clear to staff why these date discrepancies exist. The technical documentation does not specify the criteria the agency used to extract the correspondence data out of the ACORN system in order to create the respective files. It is possible that some of these discrepancies are the result of how the correspondence was either entered or closed out in the ACORN system. For example, a correspondence record in the Index Master File, January 1993 - December 1995, may have an Entry Date in 1995 while it has a Letter Date in 1996. In some cases, a correspondence that first appears in one file may not yet be closed out and so may appear in a later file; in this case, the correspondence would display the earlier Letter Date. Other discrepancies are possibly due to data entry errors. The related Detail File may provide additional information about how a particular correspondence was tracked within the ACORN system and may help explain some of the overlapping dates.

9. How can I access a copy of the full files?

The raw data file, along with the associated technical documentation, may be downloaded from the National Archives Catalog at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. There you can search by the series name, Index to the Correspondence, or using the National Archives Identifier 570020, which is the description identifier for this series.

In the results, select to view the full series description. Click on the link "file(s) described in the catalog" next to "Includes:" for a list of the file units within this series. Then select the file unit containing the records of interest to you. The file unit description will include the list of electronic records and documentation files available for viewing and/or downloading.

Additional information about downloading electronic records from the Catalog is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/access-in-catalog-faqs>.

Please keep in mind that the data file consists of the raw structured data as loaded into AAD (i.e. the coded values without meanings), but without the AAD software that displays the meanings for coded values and field titles. For more details about using files containing raw structured data, you may wish to review our "Introduction to Raw Data" at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/electronic-records/raw-data-intro.pdf>.