



SOCIETY OF American Archivists

The Records Manager

The Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists Records Management Roundtable

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Debra Kimok, Editor

Notes From the Chair, Russell D. James, CA



Notes From the Chair	1
Russell D. James, CA	
RMRT Successful at Council Meeting	2
Bruce Ambacher	
RMRT Develops New SAA Workshop	2-3
Michael Miller	
Member News	3
New RMRT Leaders Needed!	3
Working Group & Committee Updates	4-5
New RMRT Initiatives:	
ResuméBuilders Group	6
Glenn S. Cook	
Annual Meeting Travel Awards	6
Debra Kimok	
Focus on Students:	
Student Paper:	
Records Management in a Local Court System and Government Offices	7-12
Jessica Miller	
Midwest Archives Conference	12-13

Our roundtable is growing! We are now at 275 members. When we were just over 200, the steering committee decided to conduct a survey of our membership and we did so in November. The results are back, each committee, subcommittee, and working group has put together an action plan to implement some or most or all of the suggestions our members gave on the survey. In coming months, we will be giving the membership a report of what we have done to implement the survey responses.

“Project after project after project” is something I hear a lot. But that is, I believe, the best way for a large group like ours to operate. Some members are interested in A, some in B, and others in C. Why not do all three? Thus far this year we have completed the time-consuming project of putting together a “Records Management for Archivists” 2-day workshop that will be offered by Michael Miller at the SAA Annual Meeting in Austin in August. Thank you, Alison and Mike for all the hard work you put into this.

We’ve also had three of the proposed sessions we supported get put into the SAA Annual Meeting program: Green Archives, Diversity in the profession, and museum records management. They should provide a

great RM spin to the conference and I hope each RMRT member who is in Austin plans on attending these.

Katie Scanlan needs to be commended for the hard work she has done on our mentoring project. She has worked against almost insurmountable odds to pair more than a half-dozen of our students or less-than-experienced members with our more seasoned experienced members. I have only heard good things from the mentees, so mentors – keep up the good work. This project has a lot of potential and I hope others will volunteer to join this project.

We have a new trio of webmasters who will be revamping the website in coming weeks and I am excited about some of the ideas they all have for it. We might even get pictures and artwork on there! We want to make the site something records managers will go to for information. Just what that means is up in the air right now, but we welcome your comments.

As we move into the twilight of my tenure as chair of this roundtable, we need some leaders in our group to step up. I will not be running for a third year, so someone needs to take my place and that of some of the others. It does not take much effort and the time involved is mostly sending and reading received emails. I hope some of you will step up to at least take a position on our steering committee. It has been a heck of a ride, it has, it has!



Bruce Ambacher,
RMRT Council Liaison

The SAA Council met on February 26-28 in Washington, DC at the site of the 2010 SAA annual meeting, the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel.

The RMRT had placed several items on the agenda for consideration and has an interest in the outcome of others.

The most important issue for this roundtable was the request for permission to raise money from the sale of branded merchandise. Council approved this item so long as the branded items meet all requirements for use of the SAA logo (if it is used), all proceeds are deposited with SAA, and the proceeds are used for the stated purpose of providing travel grants to members to participate in the roundtable meeting and hopefully other annual meeting activities.

The Roundtable also asked Council to have the Intellectual Property Working Group draft appropriate copyright (or creative commons) and reproduction policies for publications, such as this newsletter, of various SAA bodies. A uniform policy would benefit all components of SAA and provide the chairs of sections and roundtables with

clear guidance to follow when external bodies and commercial ventures ask to reproduce materials first published within SAA. The Council approved the request and will direct the IPWG to develop appropriate policy.

The Roundtable also asked Council to direct staff to extend one fees to all days of the annual meeting. After discussion Council agreed to the proposal but exempted imposing such fees on volunteer working groups such as task forces created by Council and meeting during the annual meeting for fact finding, deliberations, or reporting to Council. While the anticipated fiscal impact of extending the one day fees is expected to be small, it will have a positive effect. This is a welcome outcome in these times of shrinking portfolios and tight budgets.

Several roundtables petitioned for relief from the recently imposed 50 member minimum level for a roundtable to continue to be a viable roundtable within SAA. Council voted to reduce the minimum from 50 to 25 SAA members as the minimum for continued existence with the full complement of SAA support services and resources.

Summaries of all of the Council's actions and copies of all resolutions approved during the winter Council meeting are available on the SAA website: www.archivists.org. The full minutes of the meeting will be available within 30 days of the end of the meeting.

RMRT Develops New SAA Workshop

Records Management for Archivists to be offered in Austin, August 9 – 10.



Michael Miller,
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For years the RMRT has received requests for a practical, introductory records management course for archivists who have records management duties. In response the RMRT has developed a new two-day SAA workshop that will provide archivists with an overview of records management principles and practices and give participants tools to use in establishing or improving a records management program. A major advantage of this workshop is that it was developed by and specifically for archivists, and will be taught by professionals with archival as well as records management experience.

To provide even a basic understanding of records management in a two-day workshop is a daunting task to say the least. With a broad range of subjects to cover, the workshop will focus in on the most current approaches to addressing the typical records manager's core responsibilities and overcoming the roadblocks that frequently impede

the successful implementation of a records management program. Case studies will assist participants in developing workable approaches to managing email and setting up a records management program that fit their institutional setting.

Through this workshop participants will:

- Understand basic records management terminology and concepts
- Be able to write a records retention and disposition schedule
- Become familiar with the legal requirements for records management
- Gain a basic understanding of electronic records management

Learn how to become an advocate for records management

The target audience for the workshop will be archivists with beginning to intermediate knowledge of records management who have been presented with job duties that include records management and/or those who want to learn records management practices to enhance their job performance.

Michael L. (Mike) Miller will be the instructor for the Austin workshop. Mike has over 30 years of experience in archives and records management, having worked as both an archivist and a records officer in the federal sector. His areas of expertise include digital records management, electronic records archives and preservation, records management policy, records scheduling and appraisal, records management and archival training, and strategic planning and records management program development. Following three decades in the federal sector, Mike is now a records management consultant for the Lockheed Martin Corporation, assisting both federal agencies and private corporations in the transition from paper to electronic recordkeeping.

Mike holds a PhD in History and is a Certified Archivist and Certified Records Manager.

An educator by avocation, Mike teaches graduate courses in records management and electronic records management at the University of Maryland and Drexel University and has served on numerous professional committees including the ICRM Committee on Examination Development and the ARMA's committee that developed professional competencies for records managers.

Member News

Congratulations to Steering Committee member

Michael Courtney

who recently received his Master's degree in Christian Ethics from Loyola University Chicago and on his new position as Processing Archivist/Records Analyst at the Archdiocese of New Orleans!

New Roundtable Leaders Needed!!!

Beginning in August 2009, your RMRT will need a new **Chair**, a new **Vice-Chair**, and **two Newsletter Editors**. Russell and Debra will remain active roundtable members, but are giving up the reins to make room for new ideas and to focus on other projects.

Please send your intent to run for one of these positions to Debra or Russell no later than June 15th. Candidate resumes will be printed in the July issue of *The Records Manager* and posted on the RMRT web site so that roundtable members can prepare to vote at the annual meeting in Austin.

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Functions Thesaurus Working Group

Russell D. James, CA



This group has been working hard to nail down the exact composition of each term in the thesaurus we created on our wiki. Some of the terms do not belong, others do. Much debate and discussion has ensued, for instance, on whether a certain term is a broader term or related term to another. To some or most this may sound boring or tedious, but it is helpful for us to perform this procedure for every term so we can get the best result. This is a multi-year project. We are in year two and we may progress to year four or five before this thing is done. Anyone wanting to join the group, please let me know at russelldjames@grandecom.net

Records Retention Compliance Working Group

Melissa Gottwald



The Section/Roundtable Records Retention Compliance Working Group has been continuing its efforts to ensure that non-current records of sections and roundtables are added to the SAA Archives at University of Wisconsin-

Milwaukee. Members have been contacting current and past chairs to inform them of the working group's efforts and to encourage them to transfer any records they may have to the archives.

Records recently received by the SAA Archives as a result of contacts made by the working group include: Archives Management Roundtable, Archives of Religious Collections Section, Labor Archives Roundtable, Lesbian and Gay Archives Roundtable, and the Lone Arrangers Roundtable.

The working group will also be compiling a records management guide that will provide guidance to section and roundtable leaders for the maintenance, custody, and transfer of records and guidelines for what records should go to the archives.

Melissa Gottwald
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Diversity Working Group

Debra Kimok



The Joint RMRT/AMRT Working Group on Diversity in Archives and Records Management is nearing completion of its first charge:

“To contact and network with persons with physical impairments in the archives and records management profession (archivists, records managers, and researchers/patrons), identify and study the challenges for them in same, and develop tools to assist them in overcoming these challenges.”

Results of our 2008 survey have been compiled and we are now working on developing a best practices guide, due for completion by June 2009.

We also received wonderful news from SAA! Our speaker panel proposal, “Strategies for Accommodating People with Physical Impairments and Disabilities in Archives,” has been accepted as Session 307 at the SAA annual meeting in Austin.

“This session addresses the impact colleagues and patrons with physical disabilities experience in their working in and use of archives. Panelists will discuss the 2008 survey of the AMRT/RMRT Joint Working Group on Diversity in Archives and Records Management, their use of a wiki for compiling research, and recommend tools and strategies for addressing challenges faced by persons with physical impairments and disabilities in archives. Audience participation is welcome and vital.”

Panelists are Debra Kimok, Frank Serene (author of “Making Archives Accessible for People with Disabilities”), Avery Olmstead, and Casey R. Greene, CA.

Many thanks got to AMRT Co-Chair Daria Da’Arienzo, for chairing our session.

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LART/RMRT Joint Working Group

Alison Stankrauff



The Society of American Archivists' Lone Arrangers Roundtable and the Records Management Roundtable have joined together to craft a records management manual that will serve as a guide for lone arrangers – or others – who find themselves records managers at their institutions. Lone arrangers more often

than not find themselves wear many hats. They often find themselves not only archivists – but also records managers – and often more job titles than just these!

How to manage?! Where to start?! This guide can speak to and inform an entire range of different professionals at different sorts of institutions – of all sizes. From academic to government to corporate to nonprofit to community organizations – this guide should serve as a guide to all professionals in all these organizations.

The guide, at this point, is set to cover these key components in its content:

- Defining Records Management
- Communicating with your institution the benefits – and need for – a Records Management program, aka “Selling to the Executive Level”.
- Conducting a Records Inventory
- Inventory Taking
- Assessing Record Types
- Creating Records Schedules
- Legal Considerations
- Outreach and Training

A large piece of this will be prioritizing records management procedures and steps for lone arrangers and those who find themselves playing the role of several professionals in one position.

- Alison Stankrauff
Archivist and Assistant Librarian
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SAA Lone Arrangers Roundtable Co-Chair

RMRT Mentoring Project

Katie Scanlan, J.D.



The RMRT Mentoring Project was developed to serve RMRT members and to assist the SAA Membership Committee with the continuing success of its Mentoring Program.

Since its inception in the fall of 2008, the RMRT Mentoring Project has helped to establish eight official Mentor/Mentee partnerships!

The ultimate goal of the RMRT Mentoring Project is to *connect people* within our profession – often people that would not otherwise meet. Participants are eager to share with and learn from one another. This is of benefit not only to the Mentor and Mentee but also, I believe, to the archival profession.

The RMRT is proud to be part of this SAA membership service and we are thrilled to match RMRT members who are interested in or experienced with records management. If you are a member of SAA and are not yet part of the SAA Mentoring Program, please consider getting involved. This service exists for YOU. Contact me for more detail!

Katie Scanlan, J.D.
RMRT Mentoring Project Coordinator
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What do our members think about our roundtable and its projects?

Read the 2008 RMRT Survey Report to the Membership at

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/recmgmt>

Resumé Builders Group

Glenn S. Cook



Four Records Management Round Table members are developing a guide to writing resumes.

The individuals working on the project are:

Nancy Freeman, Records Manager/Archivist, National Wildlife Research Center USDA, Fort Collins, Colorado

Erin O'Meara, Electronic Records Archivist, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

Larissa Woo, Archivist/Records Manager, Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP New York, New York

Glenn Cook, Alaska State Archivist, Juneau, Alaska

The focus for this project is to analyze the similarities and differences between academic, corporate, private foundation and government organization hiring manager preferences for the resumes they review for their vacancies. The team would like to show how to make experience translate from one organization to another. In addition, we would like to help those pursuing an RM/Archives career to market their skill sets appropriately and strategically for the various sectors of employment. We do not plan to start from scratch, but rather use standard resources and tailor them to meet the needs of our profession. More to come as the project advances.

Testimonials About the Resume Building Project



"A resume is your first impression on a potential employer so I was eager to have an experienced professional look at my resume. To have Glenn Cook, the Alaska state archivist take the time to look at my resume was wonderful. Glenn gave me great advice on how to tailor the information and what additional aspects of my experience would fit well on my resume. It was great to make a connection with Glenn and he also connected me with a Record Manager in Denver, great networking opportunities."

—R. J. Mauro



"Having two professionals look over my resume was great because I have limited experience in archives and was unsure how to make my non-archive positions work to my advantage, but Brad and Debra gave me some helpful tips to do just that. I now feel that my resume is interview and job ready!"

—Rachel Webb



"The comments that Lorette and Kristy gave were invaluable. They helped me completely restructure my resume and I've gotten some good comments from other reviewers and possible employers. I've even recommended other students in my program to contact SAA to have their resumes looked at too."

—Broede Young

RMRT Annual Meeting Travel Awards

Debra Kimok

Our Council liaison, Bruce Ambacher, reports that SAA Council has approved our request to raise money to fund members' attendance at the roundtable meeting at SAA Annual. This is an important undertaking, one for which we need volunteers. We already have two, but would like to have more people working on this.

If you have fundraising ideas and would like to help get this program underway, please contact Russell or Debra.

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Records Management in a Local Court System and Government Offices

Jessica Miller



Jessica Miller is an archival administration student at Wayne State University. This is a case study paper that she wrote for her records management class in Fall 2008.

The County X Trial Court Services office is located in medium-sized Midwestern city, and processes records associated with civil, domestic, and criminal court cases that are heard within the county. The Chief Deputy Clerk of the Court and her staff are responsible for carrying out records retention and disposal activities for the trial court. Three clerks work in the court's file room, one of whom has been delegated responsibility for initiating the purging process when records have reached the end of their retention periods.

The court's main file room houses tens of thousands of files dating from 1998 to the present, with earlier files placed in the court basement. File numbers are assigned in numerical order when new cases come in, and the numbering system starts over at the beginning of every year. All files are kept together in order, regardless of whether they are closed or subject to privacy restrictions. (Court records are open to the public, with a few exceptions for expunged convictions and minor defendants. These files are clearly marked as "suppressed.") When space is needed in the main file room, the staff moves a group of the oldest files to the basement storage area. All files in the trial court services department are kept in paper form, but the county is moving toward electronic imaging for offices that keep copies of files (domestic case files at Friend of the Court, for example). The office that accepts a document when it is submitted becomes the office of record. County officials hope this will reduce the volume of duplicate records on paper.

Trial Court Records Retention and Disposal

The trial court follows retention schedules provided by the state exactly as they are written, and it uses the

state's general schedule for any records to which agency-specific schedules do not apply. Retention and disposal schedules are housed in binders in the main file room and are accessible to all staff members. Trial court clerks have also devised procedure documents that outline step-by-step the processes they use to implement the state's schedules. Purged files are tracked in a log that indicates file numbers and the date of the case's final order. The final order is microfilmed, and the remaining items in the file are destroyed. Occasionally, a file will need to be kept because the final order was filed after the year currently being purged. The court services department does not go back to reexamine files that are kept, and it does not attempt to recall convenience copies located in other departments.

The trial court implemented a bulk purging project in 2002. Prior to this, it had not taken any action toward retention and disposal. When the bulk disposal project was complete, disposal was done as space was needed in the file room, and files were purged in batches consisting of one year's worth of files. At first the court hired temporary employees to complete the purging projects, but eventually budget cuts made that impossible. After that, in-house staff would handle the task. Eventually, that also became difficult due to staff turnover and staffing cuts throughout the county. The court has not been able to purge any files in several years.

Once the final orders have been removed for microfilming, a clerk completes a Certificate of Records Disposal form used throughout the county that indicates the record title or series, dates, applicable retention schedule, volume of records, date of disposal, and disposal method. The form closely resembles a previously state-mandated form even though it is no longer mandated by the state because county officials wanted to maintain the same level of documentation when disposing of records. When the paperwork is complete, the documents to be destroyed are sent to an outside contractor for shredding.

County officials hired a contractor in a neighboring state to perform shredding related to its records retention and disposal programs. The company was selected after a formal bidding process in which the county sent out requests for proposals. The contractor sends drivers to the courthouse with locked totes to transport the documents back to its facility on locked trucks. All of its trucks have GPS systems installed to ensure that documents are transferred directly to the facility in a timely manner, and

the totes are weighed at both the courthouse and the shredding facility. Court officials can watch the shredding process on video and have visited the facility several times. The shredding company is also NAID certified. It seems to be an excellent choice for an outside contractor.

The trial court had initially devised a fairly solid records retention and disposal program based on the resources it had. Using state-provided schedules kept its staff from wasting valuable time reinventing the wheel, and its procedure documents allow employees who have not been formally trained in records management to handle the basic tasks involved. The program also ensures that an adequate paper trail is kept when records are destroyed, which is particularly important when dealing with legal records. Unfortunately, staffing and budget cuts have prevented the program from being implemented consistently in recent years. The trial court is dealing with an all-too-common situation in which the organization has no dedicated records management function, and an already overburdened staff is having difficulty keeping the program going.

Trial Court Vital Records Protection

According to Saffady (2004), vital records “contain information that is essential to an organization’s mission... If vital records are lost, damaged, destroyed, or otherwise rendered unavailable or unusable, mission-critical operations will be curtailed or discontinued” (p. 123). Susan Seaborn, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Court indicated that the trial court’s vital records are the registers of action for each case. This document is an inventory of all documents filed over the course of a case. Seaborn said that if a file is lost or destroyed, it could likely be recreated with copies of documents from attorneys or other departments as long as the register of actions could be accessed in some form. Without the register of actions, destroyed files could not be reassembled from other sources and would be lost forever. This certainly satisfies Saffady’s criteria for a vital record.

Starting in 1979, trial court registers of action are born-digital records. Paper copies are kept with each file and microfilm backup copies are kept off site. The backup copies are on microfilm because the state mandates that records to be considered official must be human-readable. Registers of action created prior to 1979 are typed on paper note cards and stored in cardboard boxes in the courthouse basement. No backup copies of these

documents exist; therefore, it would be nearly impossible to recreate files from this time period in the event of a disaster. A clerk in the file room estimated that the note-card registers of action are accessed approximately five times each week for correspondence related to such issues as verification of cleared convictions.

The trial court currently has no formal disaster plan related to its records management program. The court does create microfilm backups of some current records as they are submitted. Registers of action are microfilmed as they are created and court orders are microfilmed as they are filed. The microfilm is stored on site, and films are not checked for quality control purposes. Obviously, a full disaster plan would be desirable for an organization with such sensitive records in its care. Given budgetary and staff constraints, however, the trial court would probably have to complete a survey and triage process. The first order of business would likely be to back up the irreplaceable pre-1979 registers of action. If possible, electronic imaging might be an appropriate solution since the state does not mandate retention of human-readable copies from that time period. It would also allow file clerks to access them right from their desks, and they indicated that this could be a valuable time saver for them.

County-Wide Records Retention and Disposal

In addition to her duties as Chief Deputy Clerk of the Court, Seaborn is also responsible for overseeing records retention and disposal for all county government departments. The county at one time had a full-time records manager, but the position was cut and the job fell to Seaborn and the trial court services department 7-10 years ago. (Seaborn could not recall exactly when this occurred.) Seaborn was given no formal training when she inherited the retention and disposal duties, but she has made use of resources from ARMA and the state’s records management services department to teach herself the job. She has also sent one of the trial court’s file clerks to a training session provided by the state.

One of Seaborn’s records management responsibilities is acting as a liaison to other county departments. She conducts voluntary training sessions for department heads twice per year, but she cannot mandate attendance or compliance with retention and disposal schedules. If a department wants to make use of the county’s shredding contract, however, it must do so through trial court services and file the proper documentary paperwork.

Seaborn indicated that she's fairly certain that some departments are disposing of documents on their own, but she is unable to do anything about it. She has tried to formally require departments to have retention and disposal schedules on file, but was unable to get support from higher county officials. She has also tried to raise awareness of retention and disposal resources available to departments and how proper retention and disposal programs can save money in the long run. Carpenter (2007) outlines marketing basic steps for records management professionals that include making use of company publications, participating in training events, and talking about records management in department meetings (p. 54). Seaborn has implemented these steps by placing articles in the county's internal employee newsletter, meeting department heads, and conducting classes through the county's professional development department.

Challenges: Budgets, Staffing, and Compliance

Records managers around the world are faced with dwindling budgets, fewer employees, and enlisting cooperation from managers and colleagues for whom records management is an afterthought (if it appears on their radar screen at all). The County X Trial Court and other county departments certainly are not immune to these challenges.

The county's records retention and disposal budget was cut from \$70,000 to \$50,000 when it lost its full-time records manager, and funding has not increased since that time. Money from this budget allocation is used for microfilming and records destruction. Seaborn stated that when she first took over retention and disposal responsibilities, she was not spending the entire budget. Now that she has been able to increase awareness and help some of the county departments become compliant, she sometimes overspends the budget so she can be sure that records are being disposed of properly. If the county's records management budget cannot keep up with basic microfilming and document destruction needs, it is easy to see how vital records preservation programs can go unfunded.

Staffing is another challenge facing Seaborn and her department. In addition to county-wide staffing cuts in the recent past, the court services department has experienced significant staff turnover in the last several years. Because of this, the department's records purging projects were put on hold. Staff members have been too

busy learning their job duties or training new employees that they have not had time to implement retention and disposal schedules.

Based on the fact that Seaborn is now using up a retention and disposal budget she was underspending in prior years, it seems that her efforts to raise awareness of the practice's importance are beginning to pay off. She has been able to enlist cooperation from at least some of her fellow department heads who are now utilizing the county's shredding contract. She has not, however, been able to convince top management that requiring departments to file retention and disposal schedules and enforcing that mandate would be a worthwhile endeavor. If she had top management's support, perhaps departments that are not currently following appropriate schedules would become compliant.

What's Next for Court Services?

An analysis of the current records management situation in the County X Trial Court Services department and the challenges it faces leads to several questions:

- How can the department resume carrying out its existing retention and disposal program despite its severe staffing and budget limitations?
- What alternative funding sources could be sought by the county to pay for records management initiatives?
- How can the department protect its vital records (registers of action) with limited financial and human resources?
- What strategies might Seaborn use to enlist top management support for proper retention and disposal procedures throughout County X?

Resumption of Retention and Disposal in Court Services

Hiring temporary staff to handle records purging tasks is no longer an option due to budget cuts, and current staff members are already overburdened with their daily job duties. One potential solution to this problem would be to recruit student volunteers or interns. The courthouse is located in close proximity to two state universities, both of which have information science programs with records management components. The court could even look outside the records management field to students in law school or pre-law undergraduate programs. An internship program could create a long-lasting mutually beneficial partnership: students would benefit from gain-

ing real-world work experience, and the department would have one solution to its staffing problem. The university programs may even benefit if the county is able to establish itself as a location for students to complete their practicum components. Dearstyne (2008) argues that cooperative programs between departments in an organization are important to records managers because “working together makes efficient use of available resources, particularly staff whose expertise areas are a good fit to get the work done,” and “there are good prospects for the effort being a learning experience, laying the basis for additional cooperation” (p. 44). The same could be said for the participants in a potential internship program.

A precedent exists for organizations utilizing the skills of unpaid student interns to meet their records management needs, and several organizations promote such programs on their web sites. The Brooklyn Historical Society, for example, has a program in which its interns “review and revise existing guidelines for retention schedules” and “conduct a general survey of institutional records materials” (Brooklyn Historical Society, 2008). The United States government’s Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Wisconsin Historical Society Press both offer similar internship opportunities to students in their areas.

Alternative Funding Sources

The records management budget for the trial court and County X as whole is quite small. This, combined with the current global economic downturn, makes creativity an important part of seeking program and project funding. The International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) (2000) make several recommendations, including using funds that are allocated to a less urgent project, using funds from a canceled project, combining funds from multiple departments, and using one project as an umbrella to fund others (p. 3). Brumm (2008) reports having success in using some of these creative funding methods: “I began to work under the radar screen, tapping into relationships that I had established. Eventually, I learned about a project that had been funded but had fallen through, making that money available without having to go through a formal budgetary approval process” (p. 43). Now that the 2008 election cycle is complete, perhaps the trial court could petition to have funds that will not be needed for

elections in 2009 allocated for records management purposes. The court could also consider increasing certain fees to help pay for records management endeavors. Filing fees for court documents are mandated by the state, but increasing photocopy fees might be a viable option. If the money would be used for a county-wide retention and disposal project, perhaps another department could implement a fee increase to cover some of the costs.

The trial court and county might also consider applying for grants to fund one-time projects, such as digitization or microfilming of vital records. Many state records management and archival agencies offer grants. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case in County X’s home state. The state’s records management services office provides consulting services to local governments about records management issues, but it does not provide funding. It maintains that local governments are ultimately responsible for ensuring they have adequate staff and funding to carry out their records management functions.

Dearstyne (2007) offers several suggestions for successfully pursuing grant funding for records management programs, including using grants to fund one-time, finite projects and looking beyond simple financial resources to find offers of in-kind services (p. 41). The National Historical Publications and Records Commission is one obvious source from which to seek grant funding. The commission is dedicated to preserving America’s documentary history, and provides grants to organizations that deal with preserving “records of state, county, municipal, tribal, or other non-Federal units of government” (NHPRC, 2008). In addition, Ancestry.com offers digitization grants to local governments if they apply through their state archival repository. The grants are awarded in the form of digitization services rather than cash. (Ancestry.com, 2008). A clear link exists between court records and genealogy, and the trial court may find it worthwhile to further investigate this award. Pursuing grant funding undoubtedly requires a good deal of time, which Seaborn and her staff may not be able to spare. This could be another way to utilize the talents of graduate student interns, especially if they are interested in administrative aspects of records management programs.

Protecting Vital Trial Court Records

The trial court’s pre-1979 registers of action clearly are at risk on several fronts, and the implications of these risks are particularly frightening because only one copy of the

records exists. Some of the most obvious risks to these records are environmental. They are stored in cardboard boxes in a basement, so flooding is a very real concern. Fire and severe weather are other obvious risks. The building does, of course, have a fire suppression system, but chances are good that at least some of these records would be lost through water or smoke damage. Less obvious risks would include simple problems like records being misfiled or employees leaving records at their desks when they do not have time to return them to their proper location. These things could easily happen in an environment in which file clerks are overworked and face increasing staff turnover rates.

Saffady (2004) draws a distinction between preventive and protective measures in vital records programs (p. 139-140). It is impractical for the trial court to start by focusing on preventive measures because it simply has to do the best it can with its current facility, even though it is less than ideal. The courthouse basement does have several fireproof doors and vaults, so one obvious step would be to move the pre-1979 registers of action to one of those storage areas until a more permanent solution is found. It may also be possible for the trial court to find more secure storage for the registers of action elsewhere in the county. The courthouse is located across the street from another county building that houses several departments, including vital records, elections, the prosecuting attorney's office, and the register of deeds. If one of these offices has fireproof storage with extra room, perhaps the trial court could move the registers of action there. If the department is able to implement some of the nontraditional funding options presented here, it may be able to afford a digitization or microfilming project so the paper copies are no longer the only ones that exist.

Enlisting Support from Top Management

One could argue that Seaborn could gain compliance from more department heads if she could convince top management that enforcing retention and disposal scheduling is a task worth pursuing. According to Swartz (2006), citizens are increasingly requesting access to state and local government records through the Freedom of Information Act (p. 10). These requests could be costly if the records in question are not properly organized or if they have been retained when they legally could have been destroyed. County X actually had this problem in 2001, when township governments requested county sheriff's department records related to a dispute over

funding for patrol officers. Seaborn recalled that many of the records requested could have been destroyed based on their retention and disposal schedule, but since they had not yet been destroyed, fulfilling the FOIA requests was expensive. Seaborn also noted that the sheriff's department has since started engaging in regular implementation of its retention and disposal schedule. Dearstyne (2008) argues that records managers need to "explain RIM's return-on-investment value" (p. 44). The sheriff's department situation is a perfect opportunity for Seaborn to show just how costly noncompliance can be. She could even enlist the help of a graduate student intern to compile the data necessary to prove her point.

Seaborn might also consider using recent disaster events in the news to further illustrate the need for a disaster plan or, at the very least, for a viable system to back up the court's vital records. Although Hurricane Katrina may no longer be fresh in many peoples' minds, certainly Hurricane Ike and the recent California wildfires could also be used to underscore the importance of disaster planning and vital records protection.

Managing Records with Limited Resources: Not a Lost Cause

Susan Seaborn and her staff at the County X Trial Court definitely face numerous challenges when confronting both their own records and the huge amount of records produced by other county departments. With a bit of creativity, however, they have numerous options open to them to gain control over their vital records and to continue to develop county-wide records retention and disposal compliance.

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Midwest Archives Conference

Miranda Rectenwald
Marketing Chair, MAC Local Arrangements Committee,

The Midwest Archives Conference 2009 program will be held in St. Louis, Missouri at the beautiful Hyatt Regency - St. Louis Riverfront, April 29 – May 2. Open to all, this year's sessions range from ethics to video preservation, donor policies, and more. Several pre-conference workshops are offered, including **Electronic Records Management and Preservation**, taught by Mark Myers, Electronic Records Analyst, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. This program will help archivists and records managers develop guidelines and procedures for managing their electronic records throughout the records lifecycle, provide an overview of the issues governing electronic records, address the problems surrounding specific formats of electronic records, and provide strategies for preserving electronic records over time. At only \$40, enrollment is limited for this extremely affordable training, so be sure to register early!

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