

Government Record News

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of the Society of American Archivists

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From the Chair

Dear Colleague:

Editor Tim Johnson has, once again, put together an outstanding edition of the Government Records Section Newsletter. Dr. Mary Rawlings-Milton, Ms. Deborah Aretrout, Mr. Bill LeFurgy, Ms. Antonia S. Mattheou, and Ms. Marry-Ellyn Strausser have each made fine contributions, and Tim has pulled together some additional information. It therefore behooves me to get out of the way. Before I do, however, I would like to note a few items of personal interest.

Ms. Anita Doering has contributed a brief article on the Government Records Section Web Site (governmentrecordssection.org). Ms. Doering's work on the web site is of enduring value to the Section. All individuals interested in government records and archives should bookmark this site, for it provides valuable information, and valuable links, in one location. A terrific job, Anita. Thank you.

The Government Records Section Annual Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 30, 8:00 am - 10:00 am, in the Washington Hilton, the Meeting hotel. We need candidates to run for office. The Election rules are spelled out in the by-laws, available under "Mission" at our web site, governmentrecordssection.org.

As specified in the by-laws, "There shall be a Nominating and Elections Committee consisting of the immediate past chair of the Section (serving as chair of the Committee) and the two Steering Committee members whose terms are not expiring at the conclusion of the next annual meeting. Those individuals include Ms. Jelain Chubb, State Representative and Rising Chair, and Ms. Diana Banning, a Local Representative. Our addresses are available at the web site, and

in this newsletter.

Please consider running for office. The strength of any organization is in the activity of its members, and the Government Records Section needs your help. So please contact us, and volunteer.

Besides Elections, the Section will have a slate of terrific speakers. Stay tuned for further details.

I urge you all to follow the example set by our contributors, and share with us the good work that you all are doing, by contributing an article to the next issue of the Government Records Section Newsletter, which we hope to put out in the Summer of 2001. Please contact either Tim Johnson, or myself.

Reminder. The SAA Program Committee generally calls for proposals for program sessions, setting a deadline for proposals sometime in early October. Now would be the time to begin thinking about sessions sharing the results of your good work in, or thoughts about, Government Records.

All the Best for a Terrific Spring 2001!

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Electronic Records & Federal Records Management

By Mary Rawlings-Milton, PhD, Millican & Associates

The Federal Records Act requires agencies to document their actions or decisions. This includes documenting the process used by the agency to reach a decision or take an action regardless of their monetary value or policy impact. Achieving this level of documentation is difficult enough with paper records. Electronic records are even more illusive. There are several reasons for this. One, the creator no longer turns the record over to clerical staff for filing. The result is gaps in the records collection. Second, the technology does not automatically protect the record copy from accidental erasure or deletion. The result is doubts about the authenticity of the records. Third, information technology continues to change rapidly. The result is that an electronic record may no longer be readable within a few years. Yet a basic records management principle is that records must be accessible throughout their life cycle. Federal agencies have the additional burden that electronic records with historic value need to be portable into a format that the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) will accept. Keeping the paper

records accessible throughout the life cycle is simple. This is not true for electronic records.

Therefore, while information technology has made it easier for agencies to create documents, it has made it more difficult for agencies to capture and maintain the records. In spite of these difficulties, federal agencies are being encouraged to do more electronically. The Internet allows federal agencies to reach the public in new ways. E-mail and the Internet provide the potential for the public to request and receive federal services electronically. The Government Paperwork Elimination Act (44 USC §§3504 (West Supp. 1999)) requires that federal agencies begin accepting information from the public electronically by October 2003. One challenge to the federal agencies is ensuring that the information received from the public is authentic and accurate. One solution for this challenge is to use digital signatures. This technology uses an algorithm to create a 'picture' of the document. If this picture is changed, the document is invalidated. The problem with this solution is that it prevents the record copy from being copied or migrated to newer technology, which is needed to maintain accessibility. Any action of this type will change the 'picture' and the record will reflect that it has an invalid signature. Generally, federal agencies are experimenting with digital signatures without attempting to resolve the records issues. NARA has issued guidance on ways to deal with the digital signature issues but compliance with the act is frequently outside of the records officer's control. As a result, the effectiveness of their guidance is unknown.

Even without the Government Paperwork Elimination Act challenge, electronic records overwhelm most federal records officers. The myriad of formats, application constraints and other information technology (IT) technicalities can be overwhelming. One reason is that the records officers are not part of the information systems development process and may not be aware that some information systems contain records. Another reason is that the records officers have little or no IT education or experience. The other major factor is that the electronic records management applications (RMAs) are too complex. A records officer with some IT knowledge will be able to use these applications. Without the creation of a simple front end, the average records creator who must declare and file the electronic record will find the application more easily by-passed than used.

These RMAs are generally based on the Department of Defense's (DoD) RMA standard 5015.2. DoD, working with the University of British Columbia, developed a standard for managing records electronically. NARA has endorsed this standard as one way of meeting the federal recordkeeping requirements. The result is a series of off-the-shelf software applications that have been certified as meeting these requirements. These applications are designed to capture the information the records officer needs for the federal records program. They were not designed with the end user in mind.

The University of Pittsburgh also has developed a methodology for managing electronic records. Their approach was to develop functional requirements for electronic recordkeeping systems based on legal, professional and other established requirements. The resulting requirements are no simpler than the DoD standard. Both approaches require too much effort on behalf of the record creator for the implementations to be successful without heavy modification for the end user. Neither university should be faulted for the complexity of their solutions. The goal was to determine what information should be captured for archival needs and not to find a

practical solution for managing electronic records.

Unfortunately most of the research is still directed at the archival requirements and determining the best format for long-term storage of electronic records. A methodology or process needs to be developed that enables the records creators to save the record easily. Unless the creator saves the record initially, the problem of long term preservation will be moot.

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DM vs. RM, and the Industry

By Deborah Armentrout, National Archives

The following article contains comments that are my own. They do not necessarily represent opinions of my employer or any associations of which I am a member. They are written in the perspective of a humble records manager and archivist. The goal of this article is to explain the technology without the technical jargon.

In conversations with professionals in the field of archives, records management, and information technology, I have realized that there is a general confusion with some basic concepts. I have also seen many paper-oriented colleagues steer clear of electronic issues because of the lack of understanding of terms. Once these concepts and terms are explained in a non-technical manner, the issues we face in this field are not as much as a burden. The language and concepts in which we are familiar can be applied to these new technologies.

Document Management

Document management is a discipline that involves physical storage, document production, and access control. A document management operation, in simple terms, might be a cabinet holding paper documents with file guides, and a copy technician. In technical terms a document management system could be the folders and documents in Windows Explorer. On a higher technical and more expensive level, a Document Management Application (DMA) is a specific system that an organization purchases to share, reproduce, and manage their documents. This type of system is useful when staff needs to use and revise the same document. The user at this point is responsible for control and management.

Records Management

Records management is a discipline that involves physical storage, access control, and disposition. In records management the main functions are to categorize, locate, and identify records that are due for disposition. In simple terms, a records management operation might be the document control room with staff that locates, disposes or accessions records, according to a records schedule. On a technical and more expensive level, a Records Management Application (RMA) is a specific system that is chosen by an organization to store, protect, and schedule records. This type of system is useful when staff needs to have access to the same record. Once the document is declared a record, the organization is responsible for managing it. Records Managements shifts document accountability from the end user to the organization.

Difference Between Document Management(DM) versus Records Management(RM)

The table below shows the distinction between the two types of management.

	DM	RM
Focus	Information	Policy
Purpose	Manage information in documents	Manage assets and ensure compliance
Sees a document as...	Information container	Evidence
Value	Re-usability and reference	Statutory, regulatory, operational and historic
Use	Instantaneous (create, revise, and search)	Used during entire life cycle (create, distribute, use, storage, and disposition)
Use document as...	Product that can be manipulated or revised	Official record, no modification
Record retention	Unscheduled	Scheduled
Attitude	All information is equal (keep everything).	Destroy information when it is no longer needed.

Another difference between DM and RM is the storage function. In DM there is no mechanism to define whether or not a document is a record. Therefore the DMA has no ability to apply retention and disposition operations. With a RMA, it does not matter where a record resides. The retention and scheduling is still applied to that document whether it is in a file cabinet, hard drive, server, DMA or RMA.

Industry

The ability to share, revise, control and designate documents as records has moved out of the paper oriented document room. There is more attention and money being spent on the development of records management. Three major forces are driving the records management industry: changes in technology, customer demands, and regulations.

Changes in technology require records management to co-exist and keep pace with information technology components. Records must be declared and kept in a variety of infrastructures (databases and “nets”) and formats (e-mails and word processing). The ability to archive or migrate these records creates technical, legal and cost challenges.

If organizations find a solution to these challenges, there are advantages for the records and archive professions. Users can declare, classify, search, request, and retrieve records on the same, or what appears to the user to be the same, system while allowing the records manager or

archivist to handle retention and disposition.

Changes in the customer involvement in records management has prompted vendors to tailor the look, feel, and ease of use for the users that are not records managers and who should not be expected to learn the discipline.

Vendors are also changing their products to meet the new regulations and technical demands. Vendors are pairing with other vendors to provide integration of DM and RM products. Vendors are building RM functionality into their architectures.

The same regulations and standards that are affecting vendors are also impacting the practice of records management. New regulations are forcing agencies to implement records management practices and to make new investments in the technologies that meet the mandate of the new regulations. The DoD 5015.2 Standards has undisputedly had a great impact on electronic recordkeeping software. The document serves as a guide for government, private sector, developers and information professionals.

DoD 5015. 2 Standard

The Standard states that if DoD components intend to purchase software systems that claim to accomplish electronic records management, those systems must meet the functionality contained in the Standard. It also includes the minimum records management requirements that must be met based on NARA regulations and 44 U.S.C. 2902.

The Standard addresses mandatory requirements and baseline requirements. It identifies requirements that are implemented by the organization, but not necessarily by the RMAs. Meaning that electronic calendars and e-mail systems may be implemented by a different external system but the management of those records is conducted by the RMA.

Also addressed are unique requirements that may be needed for the agency function, such as classified records. Other useful RM time and labor saving functions are included, such as, bulk loading capability, document imaging, fax integration, bar codes, workflow and/or document management features, and web capability.

Summary

The issue professionals in the field of archives, records management, and information technology now face is what type of automated management system to purchase. It has been stressed before in many articles, and here again, that organizations must analyze their procedures and mission to determine the best application for their needs. An evaluation should be made of commercial products and how they will meet business requirements.

It is a significant undertaking. The first step is to understand the basic concepts. Apply the specialized knowledge of records management and archives to the technical terms. Once these basic concepts are understood, one should be equipped with the confidence to support these critical endeavors. It is a fine opportunity to learn more about technology and how to work with members of a diverse staff to develop an appropriate system that will be workable now, and in the future.

Records and Archival Management of World Wide Web Sites

By William G. LeFurgy

**Mr. LeFurgy has held a variety of positions over the last 20 years with U.S. local and national government archival institutions. The opinions expressed are solely those of the author.*

Since first gaining broad public attention in the mid-1990s, the World Wide Web has rapidly expanded across the cultural landscape. Virtually all organizations—including most government agencies—have set up web sites to provide information and conduct business. As web sites grow so does dependency on them for accountability, evidence, and other purposes that require recorded documentation. Governments find they must take steps to manage web sites as information resources and, in some cases, to preserve sites as archival records. This is a terrifying prospect. Web sites are maddeningly different than paper records and are even different from databases, e-mail, and other electronic records.

How can the well-intentioned archivist or records manager cope?

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers. The web is still new and the technology upon which it is based is constantly changing. A period of trial, error, and learning lies ahead before there are broadly applicable philosophies and techniques for effectively managing web records. Despite the frustrating lack of a silver bullet, there are some concepts and approaches that archivists and records managers can consider right now in their efforts to tame the web.

Developing a Management Structure for Web Sites

The first step needed to bring web-related files and documents under control is to assert their place within the organization. Despite the novelty associated with web sites, at their root they are the same as any other organizational activity that creates and maintains records. Two important conclusions flow from this: 1) web-related files and documentation are often official records; and 2) administration of these records must be incorporated into overall organizational records management activities.

The level of effort needed to manage web site records will vary. Since the costs of possible approaches vary significantly, it is wise to select an option tailored to the needs of the individual site. One concept that has enjoyed recent popularity is based on risk management: an organization assigns a high, medium, or low risk level to its site (or to sections of the site). Risk is defined in terms of potential legal, operational, or financial requirements that might be associated with the site and its information. For example, if the site is used to file benefit claims, it likely would have a high risk designation since there is a good chance that someone might contest the process or its results. The assigned level of risk will have a direct bearing on choices for site recordkeeping. This concept is best explained in a publication of the Canadian government, *An Approach to Managing Internet and Intranet Information for Long Term Access*

and Accountability (see www.imforumgi.gc.ca/iapproach2_e.html).

Organizations will use risk perception and other factors (including potential research value) to establish appropriate recordkeeping methods. Possible approaches range from simple techniques (such as filing hard copies in a desk drawer) to complex technological solutions (such as electronic filing with version control by means of a records management application).

Appraising Web Records

A central issue is how long web site records should be kept and made available. To some extent, this issue overlaps with decisions regarding risk and other factors. But once web site information is finished meeting immediate business needs, should it be kept as archival documentation? What elements should be placed into the archives?

The issue is complicated by two opposing factors. The first is that a web site is often a singular collection that can provide important evidential and informational value. With its metadata tags and links, a web version of a document differs significantly from hard copy and other versions. Due to ease of updating, it is possible that a web version of a document may be the most current. An electronic format also can make a document significantly easier to use, most especially for searching and copying. This argument in favor of archival retention is forcefully counterbalanced by the second factor: the large majority of web sites cannot ensure reliable recordkeeping. Most sites do not provide for secure filing and cannot guarantee that all information presented is complete or accurate. And while things may change in the future, the critical documentary evidence of an organization's activities most often reside somewhere other than the web, such as in other electronic systems or in paper documents.

Even with their shortcomings, however, chances are that at least some web sites and related documentation do merit a place in archival collections. The trick is to determine what to save. The decision can be helped by grouping web site records into three categories:

- Development and administration, such as minutes of web team meetings, project management files, and descriptions of project responsibility, processes, and procedures.
- Technical operation, such as system software documentation, customized software configuration files, logs, "cookies", and search indexes.
- Web content, such as graphic, textual, and other information retrievable via the site, which may include publications, press releases, forms, and calendars as well as digital images, sound files, and video files.

Appraisal decisions for each category can vary. If the primary interest is in preserving the information posted on a site, appraisal can zero in on the third category, and within that, perhaps only on parts of a site. Interest in preserving the actual "look and feel" of the site will require capturing everything in category 3, as well as some documentation in category 2. If an organization is placing great emphasis on using the web to fulfil a core mission (such as through e-commerce or e-government) it might be appropriate to preserve some elements of category 1 to document the transition. Whatever immediate appraisal decisions are made, however, it is important to recognize that changes in web site use or technology compel periodic

reassessments.

Many web sites now enable access to databases and other large information collections. Such collections are typically separate from the web site itself: software retrieves information from a database and presents it on the web. Since they are structurally separate, it typically makes sense to appraise, and if necessary, preserve, a database separately from the web site. Appraisal efforts should also take account of different types of web sites, most particularly Intranets (information made available only within an organization) and Extranets (information made available only to specified individuals outside the organization). Where they are used, the content and purpose of such sites can vary greatly, which will influence appraisal decisions. The National Archives of Australia has provided some basic information about management of such records at www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/web_records/contents.html

Capturing, Preserving, and Accessing Archival Web Sites

If a web site (or part of a web site) is determined to have archival value, capturing it can be a relatively straightforward matter. Less complex sites, such as those with a few dozen files and that do not make extensive use of proprietary programming, may be captured in a matter of minutes. Sites with more complexity, however, require careful planning and timely guidance before capture is attempted.

There are a number of software packages that will automatically copy a specified Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and store the files on a PC hard drive. Examples include Teleport Pro (tenmax.com/), HTTrack (www.httrack.com/), and WebCopier (www.maximumsoft.com/); there are many others to choose from. Such software basically duplicates or "mirrors" a site as it appears on its host computer, although there are options to exclude image files, parse embedded software files (such as Java), and limit the extent to which linked or lower level pages are captured. The extent to which these options are used depends on appraisal, preservation and access considerations.

Preserving a web site for ongoing access is challenging. All aspects of computer technology have a tendency toward rapid obsolescence. Today's electronic files may be difficult to access in 20 years because the computer software and hardware needed to interpret and present the information may not be available. This is especially true of proprietary technology: a company with current popular products could easily be out of business or using different technology in just a few short years. This leaves archival collections of electronic records vulnerable to obsolescence as well. While there is hope that archivists can one day have tools to cope with this threat (see www.nara.gov/era, for example), there is no current assurance that electronic information tied to a proprietary format can be kept accessible into the future. Non-proprietary formats, on the other hand, can be kept accessible. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration has a non-proprietary transfer standard that involves use of ASCII software files stored on magnetic tape (see www.nara.gov/nara/electronic/transfer.html).

Basic web text documents in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) can be saved according to non-proprietary standards. But it is readily apparent that web sites are full of proprietary file formats, including Java, ActiveX or other applets; .jpg, .gif, and .tiff images; and Word, WordPerfect, and Adobe .pdf documents. Since such files are often a critical element of a web

site, saving just the HTML text is an incomplete solution. The best strategy at this point for preserving a web site or a section of it is to copy all pertinent directories and files as they exist on the host computer. This provides a full portrait of the site and is also the easiest way to use the copying tools. (Some of the applets and image files may prove unreadable in the future, but full capture will provide at least the potential for viewing the site as it existed; full capture also is the best way to preserve a site's content, context, and structure). At least two exact copies should be made, including at least one on removable storage media such as magnetic tape or CD-ROM. The copies should be periodically checked and recopied to ensure that the media remains readable; if possible, it is wise to store the media in controlled environmental conditions (for an example of a policy in this area see www.nara.gov/cfr/cfr1234.html#partc).

The frequency for capturing a site depends again on appraisal considerations. If the site documents a temporary organization or function, it might be best to capture only the final version. An ongoing entity could be handled with periodic copying of the whole site or alternatively with copies of changes made to site content. This capture is separate and distinct from systems backups made as part of regular computer operations. Typically made with specialty software, systems backups do not serve long term preservation purposes.

In conjunction with an effort to mirror a web site, it is important to document technical issues and other aspects of the site. This is necessary to understand the original purpose of the site, as well as its technical parameters. It might be appropriate to prepare a narrative and collect useful policy statements, project plans, and other descriptions of the site that may exist. Printing certain portions of the site such as top level site pages could also be worthwhile for ease of reference. Technical documentation should include an overview of the types of file formats and software used within the site (such as .pdf, Word, .jpg, .gif, Java, and so forth); this description should also include the version of the formats and software, if known. A site map (hierarchical list of directories and files included within the site) annotated with useful descriptions will greatly enable future use of the information. Details regarding the number and type of storage media used are also important.

The simplest method to provide access to a copy of a smallish web site is to store the copy in a separate directory on a hard disk. The dates and content of each directory can be listed to facilitate reference. This would permit quick access to the information, either in-house or through the web. If the amount of data precludes keeping an online reference copy, some variety of removable media can be used. Where multiple media are involved, descriptive labels must be used. Regardless of the method used to provide access, a copy of the information must be maintained separately, preferably as far physically as possible from the first copy.

Conclusion

The ideas and approaches outlined here offer no guarantee that web sites can be appraised and preserved with complete success. We do not yet know what parts of web sites will be most important in terms of historical documentation, and this makes it hard to settle on a firm appraisal policy. We do not know how quickly and how radically web technology will change, and this makes it difficult to prescribe capture and preservation standards. We do know, however, that the web is a historic phenomenon and that it is necessary to dig in and do our best to ensure that it is addressed as such. From that practical experience will come improved tools

and techniques that archivists and records managers need to deal with web records.

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TOWN OF HUNTINGTON, NEW YORK

The Huntington Town Clerk's Archives and "Documenting Cultural Diversity in the Town of Huntington" project

By Antonia S. Mattheou, Huntington Town Archivist

The Huntington Town Clerk's Archives was created in 1993, under the direction of Town Clerk and Records Management Officer, Jo-Ann Raia. It houses 1250 linear feet of historical documents and municipal history documenting the Town's origins and growth.

The Archives is committed to preserving records of historic value generated by all Town departments. It is the policy of the repository to make its collections available to the residents of Huntington, the broader academic community, and the general public for teaching, research, publication and exhibition. In doing so, the Archives reflects the vision of the Town's Officials to better serve the community's legal, fiscal and administrative needs, as well as the ever growing need of enhancing education techniques by using primary sources.

Realizing the critical challenge that exists in preserving the diminishing pool of original research materials from earlier generations, the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives initiated a project titled, "Documenting Cultural Diversity in the Town of Huntington" in order to assess existing material in the hands of various organizations and individuals in the Town. This project became a reality in the fall of 1999, after a \$3,000.00 grant was awarded to the repository by the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program.

Since this was the first time the State of New York had funded a local government to survey its cultural diversity, it became obvious from the start, that in order for this project to succeed, several concerns had to be overcome. These concerns included selecting the right people to serve as the project's Advisory Board; community awareness of the project; easy access; dissemination and evaluation of the results.

Selecting the right people to serve as the project's Advisory Board

The Town of Huntington is constantly undergoing transformation, responding to ever-changing waves of newcomers. To adequately document the diversity and complexity of daily life in 21st century Huntington, is a daunting challenge. To ensure community participation, individuals serving on the Advisory Board had to be well connected and well known within the communities they represented.

Community awareness of the project

A study of this caliber had never before been introduced to the Town of Huntington. Contact with the different institutions within each ethnic group was handled directly by the group representative and press releases were distributed. Besides the Advisory Board members, the Project Director and Archivist spent much time making phone calls with the purpose of

identifying various institutions or completing survey forms. In addition, articles pertaining to the project appeared in local newspapers.

Easy access

An effort was made to make it as easy as possible for those interested to reach the project's Advisory Board members. They all made their phone numbers available to the institutions they surveyed. All other times, people were encouraged to call the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives for information. Telephone and facsimile numbers appeared on every piece of mail sent out.

Dissemination and evaluation of results

The project's Advisory Board unanimously agreed to make the printed results of this project available to those interested, free of charge.

Organized efforts to survey historical materials relating to ethnic communities by a local government have never been initiated in the State of New York before this project. Thus, the work accomplished by the Advisory Board of "Documenting Diversity in the Town of Huntington", is an enormous advance in the cause of preserving the history of the Town's ethnic communities and culture as known today. While the survey by itself does not guarantee the long-term preservation and availability of all the records described, it was a necessary first step.

Through this project, we were able to identify 41 ethnic groups, which were unknown by many. The records surveyed cover the years 1903-1998, with the exception of the Bethel A.M.E. African-American church records, dating back to 1843. The surveys describe 12 African-American, 1 German, 1 Haitian, 5 Hellenic, 1 Irish, 4 Italian, 12 Jewish, 1 Latino, 1 Native-American, 1 Norwegian, 1 Scottish, and 1 Swedish establishments. Since most of these records are in private hands, written permission might be needed before one is allowed to use them.

The final report of the project has been developed to be of general interest to individuals in the archival profession and researchers interested in ethnic history. In addition to the surveys, this report includes a brief history of the Town, a map, census records as well as bibliographic and archival resources available related to the ethnic groups identified.

Based on a survey form that was developed, an Access input model was created to accommodate all information gathered, on the different types of records found in the collections of the various institutions.

The surveys have been organized alphabetically by ethnic group. The level of description provided varies from association to association. When available, surveys consist of contact people information, a brief historical note, a description of the archival records, location, restrictions that apply and access. Where available, information on arrangement of the records, on finding aids or indexes and on microfilm availability is provided. Historical information has been recorded as written in pamphlets or given by the representatives of each institution. From conversations held with Advisory Board members, it became clear that many of the establishments keep records in different locations. Both locations were noted when information was available.

The funding awarded to the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives for this project, by the New York State Archives Documentary Heritage Program, was of great importance. Although it has roughly touched the surface of what needs to be done, it has certainly laid the groundwork for further progress.

Benefits of the project

- The community has realized that to preserve the Town's rich heritage, historical documents need to be kept in a safe place.
- The Koumbaro Club, a Greek organization in the Town of Huntington, has initiated an oral history project, to ensure preservation of the Greek community's culture.
- Three more organizations have called requesting information on how to start preserving their documents using archival methods: Save Huntington Lighthouse, Inc.; Presbyterian Church of Sweet Hollow; Bethel A.M.E. Church. Basic SAA guidelines and the most recent SARA workshop catalog were forwarded to all three institutions. In addition, Virginia Antonucci, Long Island Regional Archivist, was notified in regards to inquiries of these institutions.
- Many Town residents have shown interest in this project and want to know what is planned for the future.
- For the first time, in the history of the Town, we have an idea about the kind of historic records that exist in private hands and their present location.

Future plans

- A forum/celebration will be held in the Huntington Town Board Room, to discuss the project's results, answer questions and make recommendations for future action. During this event, participants will enjoy ethnic food and entertainment. Many local organizations and establishments have been approached for the purpose of sponsoring this event.
- Every association that participated in this project will receive a complimentary hard copy of the project's results.
- The Advisory Board of "Documenting the Cultural Diversity in the Town of Huntington" has decided to post the results of the project on the internet, using the Town's server, for the purpose of making them available to researchers in an electronic form, while also allowing easy access to analyzing the data collected.

We are proud of the progress the Huntington Town Clerk's Archives has made, in awakening the residents' desire to preserve the community's historical records and consequently the Town's heritage. Huntingtonians have realized that historical documents are essential for the preservation of their heritage, therefore attempts must be made now, to retrieve old records and place them in a repository or at least in the club houses used as headquarters of different associations. The project's Advisory Board promises to keep on working towards finding solutions that will assure permanent preservation of the community's historical records.

For further information contact:

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A View from the Web

By Anita Taylor Doering, Archivist
La Crosse Public Library

In December 2000 the Government Records Section launched a web site! The address is: www.governmentrecordssection.org. If you have trouble accessing the site through that address, try direct access through www.angelfire.com/md2/governmentrecords/. Of course, free web hosting often comes with advertising, so don't be shocked if you encounter banner ads.

To use archival metaphors, the main navigation page offers choices to four main subseries: mission (which includes the section bylaws), officers, newsletters and Web links. The links on the Weblinks page have been contributed by section members and include addresses to Web sites and listservs applicable to archivists working with government records. Don't be shy in suggesting sites, but please include the full URL (site address).

Eventually all SAA section web pages will be incorporated into the SAA web site so that the internal search engine will be able to return hit results from section pages as well as the main site. Brian Doyle, SAA Web Master, has been working on a long range plan to do just that. At this point, there is a link from the SAA site to ours and vice versa.

Comments, suggestions, and the like may be directed to Anita Taylor Doering at ad@lacrosse.lib.wi.us.

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Missouri's Electronic Records Guidelines

By Marry-Ellyn Strauser, CRM, Director of Records Management
Division of Records Management and Archives Services, Missouri Secretary of State's Office

Those of us who work with government records recognize that one of the greatest challenges we face today is the management and preservation of electronic records. Our division, Records Management and Archives Services, established an Electronic Records Unit to develop an overall electronic records management strategy for our state. At first, this challenged can be overwhelming. We found that the key is to formulate a plan of attack. As Anne Kenney once said, "If we become too ambitious, we may end up further behind than if we had attempted nothing at all."¹

We started by creating *Guidelines to Managing E-mail Records*. We're convinced that e-mail is the clearest example of records that no one sees. We concluded that if we could persuade people

that some e-mail messages are records, it would be easier for them to make the connection that other forms of electronic business transactions are records as well.

We strongly encourage state agencies and local governments to implement e-mail policies that cover usage, content, public access, privacy, and records retention. The sole focus of the e-mail guidelines is to assist with the records retention portion of such policies. Major topics included in the guidelines are how to:

- Identify messages that are records
- Distinguish between the official record and convenience copies
- Decide whether to keep messages electronically or print them out
- Ensure e-mail records remain viable

Several areas must be addressed to ensure e-mail records are accurate, complete, and viable *regardless of physical form or characteristics*. The following topics are included in this section:

- Transmission data
- Authenticity
- Attachments
- Accessibility
- Retention periods
- Disposition
- Temporary hold orders

E-mail records must be maintained within a recordkeeping system. Additionally, if a particular record is a public record, it must be maintained in a format that makes it available to the public. Whether paper-based or electronic, the recordkeeping system must capture the appropriate information. It must ensure the records are easily accessible throughout their retention period. In addition, it must ensure for the timely disposition of the records once their retention period is met.

Next, we tackled digital imaging systems. The decision whether to implement an imaging system is complex. Many issues must be considered. Primarily, what is the desired outcome? How will imaging solve user problems? Will it meet real needs? How will it integrate into the existing computer environment? Are there sufficient financial resources to support the system over time?

Our goal in creating the *Digital Imaging Guidelines* was to lay a foundation for successful digitization projects. The key to this success lies in project evaluation, planning, and sound records management practices. The imaging guidelines are a high-level overview of those processes and practices. The document is meant to be used as a starting point. It is not intended to be a substitute for individualized and comprehensive project analysis. It's important to note that these guidelines are designed with business processes in mind. Long-term archival-quality preservation is a critical concern. Documentation addressing this topic is in development.

This set of guidelines is much more detailed than the e-mail guidelines. The following is an

overview of the topics covered:

- Project planning – this section emphasizes the importance of the following before anyone decides to implement a digital imaging system:
 - Reviewing legal issues
 - Conducting a feasibility study
 - Securing on-going and adequate funding
 - Ensuring a records management plan is in place
- Digital imaging technologies – this section is designed to give agencies and local governments the information tools they need to design systems that ensure long-term functionality
- System implementation – this section stresses careful planning of resources and of the imaging system itself. We emphasize three areas:
 - Planning and budgeting for system operation and updates
 - Planning for records storage and migration
 - Identifying legal issues regarding access to and the integrity of the records

In our research for both guidelines, we looked for best practices. The best practices we found that directly relate to state government include those developed by:

- Alabama Department of Archives and History
- Delaware Public Archives Records Management Program
- Kansas State Historical Society
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Nebraska Secretary of State
- New York State Archives and Records Administration
- South Carolina Department of Archives and History
- Texas State Library and Archives Commission

We also consulted publications produced by:

- AIIM
- ARMA
- Cornell University Library
- Government of New South Wales, Australia
- NARA
- National Academy of Science
- National Archives: United Kingdom
- National Library of Canada
- Public Records Office: State of Victoria, Australia
- SAA

- University of Pittsburgh School of Informational Sciences

Missouri's State Records Commission recently voted to approved and recommend both sets of guidelines. The documents are being prepared for publication. The final versions of the documents will be available on our web page (mosl.sos.state.mo.us/rec-man/resource.html) in the near future.

The two documents described here are just the beginning. A few of the myriad topics that are still on the drawing board are desktop files management, electronic recordkeeping systems, document management systems.

Finally, our advice to anyone working to create electronic records guidelines is to keep your eye on the ultimate goal while chipping away at the challenge. Go for small wins and build on your successes.

1. Kenney, Anne R. "Keynote Address: Guidelines vs. Guidance for Digital Imaging: The Opportunity Before Us." Joint RLG and NPO Conference. September 1998.
www.thames.rlg.org/preserv/joint/kenney.html (accessed: March 7, 2000.)

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