

Government Record News

The Newsletter of the Government Records Section
of the Society of American Archivists

2001-2002, Issue 4

August 2002

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From the Chair

Dear Colleagues:

It has been my privilege to chair the Government Records Section for the past year. I want to thank the federal, state and local representatives who served as members of the Steering Committee and gave their time and attention to the needs of the Section: Archie DiFante and Diana Banning, who will be rotating off the Committee, incoming Chair Paul Bergeron, and R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram and Arian Ravanbakhsh, who will continue to be members of the Steering Committee. They have each contributed to another successful year.

On behalf of the Section, I extend our deep appreciation to our outgoing Newsletter Editor Tim Johnson for his two years of outstanding service. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Anita Taylor-Doering for her work as webmaster and to extend our gratitude to her for agreeing to stay on in that capacity for another year.

I hope that those of you who plan to be in Birmingham will make a special effort to join us for the GRS meeting. Our featured speaker will be Bruce Craig, Director of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion History (NCCPH). Afterwards, the Section will have a brief business meeting, including the election of new Steering Committee Members.

If you have ever thought about getting more involved in GRS or SAA, now is the time. Your enthusiasm and service to the profession will be invaluable.

Jelain Chubb
Outgoing Chair

Government Records Section to Meet in Birmingham

Members of the Government Records Section will gather on Thursday, August 22, from 8-10 a.m., during the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in Birmingham, Alabama. The program will include an update on section activities, election of officers and steering committee members, and development of session proposals for SAA's 2003 meeting in Los Angeles. The featured speaker will be Bruce Craig, Director of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History (NCCPH), who will discuss efforts by the federal government to restrict access to information, especially in the wake of 9/11. Section members in attendance are encouraged to share information regarding similar efforts by state and local bodies to restrict access to public records

GRS Endorsed Sessions on SAA Meeting Program

The GRS steering committee considered numerous requests for session proposal endorsement last fall. Eight proposals received GRS approval, and of those, the following six were selected by the SAA Program Committee for inclusion on the 2002 meeting program.

Session 25-Paradigms of Archivists: Sara Jackson, James Walker, and Harold Pinkett

Session 35-Finding Our Roots, Respecting Our Ancestors' Privacy: Privacy and Confidentiality Issues in Genealogical Research

Session 44-The Challenges of Managing, Appraising, and Preserving Court Records

Session 55-Saving Our Cities' Records: A Panel Discussion

Session 53-Taking Responsibility for Accountability: Case Studies in The Public and Private Sector

Session 60W-Digital Preservation: Image Quality and Project Development

GRS Service Opportunities

Steering Committee

Once again, its time to elect new members of the GRS Steering Committee. Section by-laws require one new representative from each area of government -- Local, State (Province), and Federal -- be elected at each meeting of the GRS members. These representatives will serve a two-year term and act as advisors to the Chair, who may also assign them specific responsibilities. One of the newly elected members will serve as Vice-Chair of the Section for

2002-2003 and will succeed as Chair for 2003-2004.

Newsletter Editor

The GRS is looking for a dedicated individual to fill the position of Newsletter Editor. The Editor is appointed by the Chair and serves as an officer on the Steering Committee. It is the Editor's responsibility to issue three newsletters annually to the membership.

If you are interested in serving, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee by August 15. Committee members are Jelain Chubb, Paul Bergeron and Arian Ravanbakhsh. Contact information appears at the back of this newsletter.

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Independence National Historical Park Archives Moves to New Home in Landmark Building

By Karen Stevens
INHP Archivist

Independence National Historical Park (INHP), established in 1950, is home to much of our nation's colonial, revolutionary, and federal history. After seven years of planning and many delays, INHP will relocate its Library and Archives from the First Bank of the United States to the newly renovated Merchants Exchange Building in July 2002. MEB is a National Historic Landmark, constructed between 1832 and 1834. Throughout the renovation, the Park's archivist worked closely with architects, engineers, interior designers, and project managers from the National Park Service (NPS) to develop the archival facility.

Early phases of the MEB rehabilitation project included demolition of the interior, removal of hazardous materials and installation of reinforced structural elements throughout. The final phase of the remodeling began in the spring of 2001 and included the installation of heating, air conditioning, plumbing, electrical, fire and security systems. A vapor barrier surrounds the processing room and archival storage areas and a computer program monitors and maintains an HVAC system separate from the rest of the building. Fire protection is provided by a detection system that permits a sensitivity range of 0.0015 to 6% smoke obscuration per foot resulting in fire detection at the earliest possible stage. These up to date environmental control systems and park resource protection programs ensure preservation and security for the collections.

The Library and Archives facility in MEB will occupy 4000 square, double its current space. Compact mobile shelving storage allows consolidating records from several locations. There is space for 25 years of growth for both book and archival collections. The layout includes a generous workroom for library staff and volunteers, an adequate processing room for archives staff, volunteers and a separate flat files storage room for maps, plans and drawings.

For the past year, the library and archives staff has been planning and preparing collections for the move to MEB. With help from several volunteers and a series of student interns, they undertook re-housing projects to folder and box unprocessed records and prepared container lists. In the process, boxes were packed more efficiently and parts of collections were consolidated. Duplicate materials were weeded out. The most important preservation project

re-housed negatives for the Research and Study Photograph Collection from filing cabinets to boxes for storage in the stacks. Staff prepared shelf lists for materials located in every storage area to facilitate shelf assignments in the mobile stacks.

To reduce the amount of inactive records the archivist worked with the National Archives and Records Administration, Targeted Assistance Programs staff to set up a records management program. Staff devoted many days to surveying offices, creating records appraisal recommendations, conducting training sessions, and monitoring a Files Cleanup Day. Future plans involve creating filing plans for each division, conducting files management training and preparing a records management manual using the NPS revised retention schedule and records management handbook now under production.

The INHP Archives contains nearly 1000 linear feet of materials of all record types and categories including sizeable collections of archeological and construction project records, research and study photographs, research note card files, maps, plans and drawings. These collections preserve the documentary research and field investigation products used by NPS staff and contractors as well as the general public for planning, interpretation, exhibit, public affairs, education program development and scholarly publication purposes.

The bulk of archival materials consist of mission critical records necessary for the long-term mission fulfillment of INHP. These materials document the administrative, research, educational, interpretive, and cultural resource management activities of the park staff from the early beginnings of INHP in the late 1940's to the present. They also document the story of local efforts from the 1920's to the 1950's to promote Independence Hall as a national shrine and the management of Independence Hall by the City of Philadelphia as a national museum from 1873 to 1951. In FY2001, 557 researchers used the INHP Archives, more than half of them NPS staff and contractors.

For the last 30 years the Library and Archives has served NPS staff and the general public. The move to the new MBE facility ensures that INHP will continue to meet its information management program needs for years to come.

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NARA Redesign of Federal Records Management

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has long recognized that it needs to make significant improvements in its approach to Government records management, in particular because of the enormous challenges the Federal Government faces in managing and preserving electronic records. NARA's Strategic Plan calls for us to "advocate executive-level attention to records management" and "to revise our records disposition policies, processes, and tools." To bring this about Deputy Archivist Lew Bellardo is spearheading a project to re-think and re-design how records are managed in the Federal Government.

This effort began with an assessment of the current Federal recordkeeping environment. In December, NARA issued a *Report on Current Recordkeeping Practices within the Federal*

Government by SRA International. The Report documented the views and perceptions of Federal agency staff about records and records management as well as how records were actually being created and managed in agencies. Based on the results of this assessment, Bellardo and his team have been working to develop a new approach to records management, and are now meeting with various groups, both inside and outside NARA, to get feedback.

NARA set out to develop an approach to records management that is flexible, recognizes that different agencies have different records needs, supports the business needs of agencies, safeguards citizen rights and ensures government accountability. Just as importantly, it is expected that such an approach will bring more records of continuing value into the National Archives.

Recognizing that resources are tight all over the Government, this new approach focuses on program areas and work processes that are core functions of the Government and on the records that are essential for protecting citizens rights and entitlements, ensuring government accountability, and documenting the national experience. NARA would establish priorities for committing its resources to assist agencies in records management based on an agency's quantity and concentration of records relating to rights and accountability, records of continuing value, and records perceived to be at risk in a particular program area.

NARA's goals for this new proposal are that:

- Federal agencies will be able to economically and effectively create and manage the records necessary to meet their business needs;
- Records will be kept long enough to protect rights, assure accountability, and document the national experience, and
- Records will be destroyed when they are no longer needed and it is practical to do so.

NARA also intends to expand its advocacy role within the Government. NARA's involvement as the managing partner of the Electronic Records Management E-Government Initiative, membership on CIO Council committees, and support of agency-sponsored records management events has begun to raise the profile of NARA and records management in the Government.

NARA will continue targeted assistance to agencies based on the priorities mentioned above. In addition, for agencies that have records needs that do not fall within those priorities, we will help them get assistance from another source. One idea being considered is the establishment of a training, certification, and monitoring program for contractors who offer records management assistance.

NARA's approach to guidance and training for agencies would change to focus on helping agencies manage their information, rather than on defining what is or is not a Federal record. The idea of "trustworthy records," as established by international standards (ISO Standard 15489), would be the basis for guidance to help agencies ensure that their records meet their business and legal needs for as long as necessary. This is most critical with electronic records because it is harder to ensure the authenticity, reliability, integrity, and usability of these

records over time.

NARA also recognizes that current processes for scheduling and appraising records put an enormous burden on NARA staff as well as agency records officers. The current process requires the same amount of effort for all records, whether they are needed by the agency for a short time or if they have important long-term national significance. The new approach would allow agencies to schedule records in ways that meet their individual business needs, such as grouping the records of a program area to simplify the description and retention requirements. Records of continuing value would still require a complete description of the records, however, to facilitate their legal transfer to NARA. The development of new appraisal criteria and the establishment of Government-wide minimum retention standards for disposable records is also being explored.

For more information, and to review the complete proposal go to:

http://www.archives.gov/records_management/initiatives/initiatives.html.

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Statewide Historical Records Forum

Recently 270 Massachusetts historians, scholars, archivists, genealogists, librarians, educators, citizens, state and municipal employees attended the "The Fifth Annual Community Forum on Historical Records, Documenting Underdocumented Populations & Communities."

The attendees of the forum – an annual activity of the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board (MHRAB) – mirrored the ethnic and racial diversity of Commonwealth, including: Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Cape Verdeans, Portuguese, Brazilians, Koreans, Chinese, Afro-Americans, Somalians, Native Americans, Swedes, Lithuanians, Central & South Americans. A diversity of religious faiths was represented: Christians, Mormons, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Eastern Orthodox and Agnostics.

The focus of the forum was to provide an opportunity to network among the diverse historical records community and for presentations related to planning for the adequate documentation of underdocumented communities and groups. The unifying flux of the daylong forum was the common interest and passion to promote the awareness, identification, preservation and accessibility of governmental and non-governmental records for future historians.

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Grant for Regional Documentation Planning

The MHRAB recently received a National Historical Publications and Records Commission administrative grant to initiate discussion and planning related to regional New England documentation issues. Diane Strock-Lynskey, former Development Consultant of the National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE), will facilitate two planning retreats (Sept. 2002/Sept. 2003) attended by representatives from each of the New England state historical records advisory boards.

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Steering Committee Officers

Federal Representatives	State Representatives	Local Representatives
<p>Archie DiFante Archivist AFHRA/RSA 600 Chennault Circle Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424 USA T: 334-953-2447 archie.difante@maxwell.af.mil</p>	<p>Chair: Jelain Chubb Administrative Archivist Missouri State Archives --Local Records Program Office of the Sec. of State 600 W. Main P. O. Box 1747 Jefferson City, MO 65012 T: 573-751-1819 F: 573-526-3867 chubbj@sosmail.state.mo.us</p>	<p>Vice Chair: Paul R. Bergeron City Clerk 229 Main Street Nashua, NH 03060 T: 603-589-3010 F: 603-589-3029 BergeronP@ci.nashua.nh.us</p>
<p>Arian Ravanbakhsh Archives Specialist National Archives and Records Administration NWML, Room 2200 8601 Adelphi Rd. College Park, MD 20740-6001 T: 301-837-2086 F: 301-837-3697 arian.ravanbakhsh@nara.gov</p>	<p>R. Jackson Armstrong- Ingram State Archivist Alaska State Archives 141 Willoughby Avenue Juneau, AK 99801-1720 T: 907-465-2275 F: 907-465-2465 Jackson_ArmstrongIngram@eed.state.ak.us</p>	<p>Diana Banning City Archivist Recorder's Division Office of the City Auditor City of Portland, Oregon T: 503-823-4564 dbanning@ci.portland.or.us</p>
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Comments and questions regarding this web site can be directed to [Janet Waters](#)