

Official Word – The Government Records Section Newsletter

The membership of the Government Records Section is made up of individual Society of American Archivists (SAA) members who are concerned with the administration, organization, and care of the records of government.

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/gov/index.asp>

2006 – 2007 SECTION STEERING COMMITTEE TAKES OFFICE AT ANNUAL MEETING



The new Steering Committee for the Government Records Section was installed during the Section’s Annual Business Meeting, during the SAA Annual Conference, on August 4th in Washington, DC. Pictured (left to right) are: John Slate, Dallas City Archivist and Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect; Kelly Eubank, North Carolina State Archives; Lucy Barber, Director of Technology Initiatives, NHPRC-NARA and Chair; Sharmila Bhatia, NARA – Center for Electronic Records; and Mark Myers, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Not present at the time the photo was taken: Jan Hart, Senior Archivist, Irving (TX) Public Library.

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NASS & eC3 JOINT REPORT PROVIDES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING DIGITAL ARCHIVING

A joint report released last month by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) and the National Electronic Commerce Coordinating Council (eC3) provides state archivists and records custodians with proven strategies for improving states' digital archiving efforts and generating the support and funding necessary to develop new archiving programs and maintain existing ones.

The research paper, "Digital Archiving: From Fragmentation to Collaboration," was developed during an eC3 digital archiving symposium sponsored by NASS June 26-27, 2006. Secretaries of State, state archivists, state librarians and private sector IT organization representatives participated in the symposium and shared their perspectives on state government digital archiving strategies.

"The strategies outlined in the paper focus on how best to communicate to key stakeholders the public value of digital archiving and how to make a compelling business case for funding digital archiving

projects," said North Carolina Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, a key supporter of the symposium.

The paper's findings are based on case studies of four states: Kansas, Georgia, New Jersey and Washington. Symposium presentations made by representatives of these states examined policy, political and management practices that affect the states' ability to develop successful digital archiving initiatives.

The purpose of the paper is to help states map their way to a successful digital archiving program. "The strategies presented in the paper are recommended practices that have been successfully implemented by a number of states and could likely be adopted by other states interested in pursuing digital archiving initiatives," said Minnesota Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer, a proponent for advancing technology and programs in state government.

The paper's findings were presented at the eC3 Annual Conference in Sacramento, CA on December 4th. A copy of the report is available on the NASS website at <http://www.nass.org/>.

SAA SENDS LETTER TO CONGRESS REGARDING SMITHSONIAN/SHOWTIME DEAL

On November 28, 2006, SAA issued an appeal to key members of Congress to continue working to "shed light on the secret contract between the Smithsonian Institution and *Showtime* to create a joint venture with some exclusive rights over use of the Smithsonian archives and staff." The text of that letter appears below and has been posted as a *pdf* file on the SAA website at www.archivists.org:

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are writing to you today regarding your ongoing efforts to shed light on the secret contract between the Smithsonian Institution and Showtime to create a joint venture with some exclusive rights over use of the Smithsonian archives and staff. We

understand that the Smithsonian has taken the position that the Showtime contract “has to date created no problems” and “there is no further opposition.” The 4,700 members of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) remain deeply concerned about the agreement between the Smithsonian Institution and Showtime/CBS.

Archivists have long recognized the fundamental principle that patrons be given equal access to collections. Given that the “nation's attic” is supported by more than \$660 million in tax dollars annually – and that much of its vast collections have been given by donors for public use – we are disturbed by the Smithsonian’s new requirements to use its materials based on preferential treatment of Showtime. We emphatically concur with the American Historical Association, which has concluded that the Smithsonian’s relationship with Showtime constitutes a “violation of the trust of generations of -Americans who have donated materials to which they believed the public would have free, open, equal, and non-discriminatory access forever.”

Among our continuing concerns:

- The contract is still secret, and indeed was even initially withheld from members of Congress. What we know about the contract is disturbing, including an unprecedented 30-year term, a non-competitive procurement, the declaration that organizations such as PBS are “commercial,” and the limitations that this arrangement places on Smithsonian public Web sites.
- Congress has requested a study of the contract by the Government Accountability Office. This study has only recently been delivered in draft form to Congress and is as yet unavailable to the public.
- Questions sent by the Senate Finance Committee, the House Appropriations Committee, and the House Committee on Administration have not been adequately addressed by the Smithsonian. Further, answers to Questions for the Record posed by the House Committee on Administration have yet to be formally released to the public, but the version briefly posted online gives evidence of confusion (even among Smithsonian administrators) about the full impact of the contract.

Using archival material held by a public institution to generate revenue for the institution through non-exclusive commercial alliances is an accepted practice among public archival institutions. But the Smithsonian’s attempt to control use and distribution of information found in its archives through an exclusive agreement is virtually unprecedented among public archives. In our opinion, it is a violation of the public trust invested by donors and tax payers in public archives. We urge the Smithsonian to revisit the agreement and to abandon those portions that limit either access to the archives or distribution of a researcher’s final results.

Having expressed our continuing concerns about the contract, we must also clearly state our opposition to efforts by members of the House to slash the Smithsonian’s budget. Although there may be serious management issues at the Institution that trouble lawmakers, the appropriate response to these matters is not to cripple the work of the Smithsonian’s curators and other staff through budget cuts, but rather to hold the administration accountable for its actions to Congress and the American people.

We thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter and for your continuing leadership in preserving and expanding public access to the Smithsonian Institution.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth W. Adkins, CA
SAA President, 2006-2007

BUSH FY07 BUDGET REQUEST: \$338 MILLION FOR NARA, \$0 FOR NHPRC

President George W. Bush sent to Congress a proposed Fiscal Year 2007 budget for the Federal Government calling for \$338,054,000 for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), an increase of \$12,519,000 over the FY 2006 appropriations of \$325,535,000. However, the President's FY 2007 budget request provides no funding for grants and staff support for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), NARA's grant-making arm. Over the past four decades, NHPRC has awarded more than \$153 million to more than 4,000 state and local government archives, colleges and universities, and individuals to preserve and publish important historical records that document American history.

Highlights of the President's budget request for NARA:

- The Electronic Records Archives (ERA) program, a key NARA strategic goal aimed at providing a means to preserve and make accessible electronic records far into the future, is funded in the FY 2007 request at \$45,455,000, which is \$7,920,000 over the FY 2006 appropriated level. This higher funding level will allow NARA to build the first increment of ERA and to ingest in their original formats a number of very important electronic records, including those of the Columbia (Shuttle) Accident

Investigation Board and the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9-11 Commission). Subsequent versions of ERA will address long-term preservation and access issues.

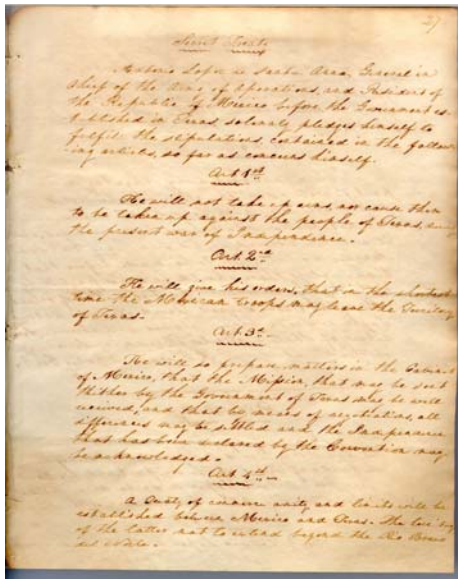
- For NARA's overall operating expenses, the President's budget proposes \$289,605,000, an increase of more than \$7 million compared to this year. The additional money is needed to fund staff pay raises as well as increases in the cost of rental space and security measures.
- \$655,000 of the operating funds will go to support the Public Interest Declassification Board.
- \$3,692,000 will be for the staffing, operation, and maintenance in FY 2007 of the Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California, which is scheduled to be transferred to NARA later this year.
- \$6,900,000 will be put toward construction of an archival storage addition to the Nixon facility that will house the Nixon records now in NARA's College Park, Maryland, facility.
- \$485,000 will be used to begin preparations for a new George W. Bush Presidential Library.
- To relocate the regional archives operations of the Central Plains Region in Kansas City and the Southwest Region in Fort Worth, the budget provides \$4 million.
- For repairs and restoration to facilities owned by NARA, \$6,120,180.

TEXAS LEGATION RECORDS (1836 – 1845) COME HOME TO TEXAS STATE ARCHIVES

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, with the help of Texas Christian University and the Texas State Historical Association, unveiled the restored *Texas Legation Records* and recognized the efforts of organizations and individuals that brought them home on November 3, 2006 at Texas State Archives. A public viewing of selected documents followed the presentation.

The Texas Legation Records contain about 250 documents. According to Texas State Archivist Mr. Chris LaPlante, many of the original documents in the collection have

never been seen by scholars or the general public. Of particular importance are the original copies of specific general and private orders that were signed and sent by then Secretary of State Stephen F. Austin to Texas Chargés d’Affaires William H. Wharton instructing him on how he was to proceed with gaining the official recognition of the independence of Texas and the annexation of the country to the United States. Another extremely significant document is a copy of the Treaties of Velasco signed three weeks following the defeat of the Mexican forces at the Battle of San Jacinto. Other documents deal with a variety of topics including boundary issues, Native Americans, relations with Mexico, the Texas Navy, and financial arrangements for loans, bonds, etc.



Signed and certified copy of page one of the public and private Treaties of Velasco, signed by David Burnet and Santa Anna, following the defeat of the Mexican forces at the battle of San Jacinto (Nov. 18, 1836). All of the documents in the Texas Legation Records will be digitized. (From the collections of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.)

Based on records in the State Archives, following the close of the Legation Office in 1845, the newly elected U. S. Senator Sam Houston was directed to “obtain control over the books, papers, etc. belonging to the Legation of the late Republic of Texas” that had been placed with the Office of the U. S.

Adjutant General in Washington, D.C., following the close of the Legation. Houston did acquire custody of the records but, rather than depositing them with the Texas Secretary of State in Austin, he took them to his home.

The records were passed down to Sam Houston's son, A. J. Houston, and at an undetermined time came to be in the custody of other individuals. The records survived Hurricane Carla and a house fire in 1961.

In March 2006 the Texas State Historical Association was offered the opportunity to auction the right of a donor to select a state-approved institution to exhibit and provide researcher access to the collection for five

years in accordance with the Texas State Library and Archives Commission's rules for the loan and exhibition of state archives. The collection has been conserved through the efforts of private donors and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. The documents will be placed at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, for five years, beginning this winter. Following the end of their loan to TCU, the Legation records will return to the Commission for permanent retention in the State Archives.

IRVING, TX ESTELLE HERITAGE SOCIETY HOSTS BASEBALL FESTIVAL



The Irving Archives branch of the Irving Public Library worked with the Estelle Heritage Society and the Irving Parks Department to present a vintage baseball festival on October 7, 2006. The event, which would be called a tournament today, featured teams from Conroe and Buffalo Gap, Texas, plus two teams from the Irving area. The nines played by 1860 rules and

used reproduction 1860 equipment. The visitors wore vintage-style uniforms.

The Heritage Society, whose goal is to build a historical park on the former site of the Estelle community's schools, sponsored the event to bring visibility to their project. Members used photograph exhibits to illustrate their community's history and their vision for the park.

Estelle was a farming community in what is now northwest Irving. The settlement began in 1853, and by 1885, the community included a post office, a cotton gin, two churches, a blacksmith, two doctors, a school, and numerous farms. The population began to decline thereafter. The community's remaining business closed about 1941; by 1948, Estelle's population was thirty-eight. The Estelle School became part of the Irving school Independent School District in 1955. The City of Irving annexed the Estelle community in 1968.

EXCERPTS FROM DR. WEINSTEIN'S "STATE OF THE ARCHIVES" ADDRESS

Dr. Allen Weinstein, U.S. Archivist, delivered his second *State of the Archives* address on Thursday, November 30th, at Archives II in College Park Maryland. The remarks were followed by a Special Awards ceremony honoring NARA employees for their special contributions to the agency and to the public. Following are excerpts from Dr. Weinstein's remarks:

"Good day, ladies and gentlemen of NARA throughout the country, and welcome to my second State of the Archives talk....

As you may have noticed, I have a lilt in my voice and a spring in my step today. Why? Because it is my belief that together—NARA employees and stakeholders, veterans and new recruits, National Archives senior staff, and our colleagues throughout the archival world—we can point with pride to a genuine sense of accomplishment since we last gathered here a year ago.

The past 22 months of my tenure as Archivist of the United States (to paraphrase a recent *U.S. News and World Report* issue on American leadership) has provided an opportunity to set directions: "by building a shared sense of purpose, by setting out to

make a positive social impact, and by implementing innovative strategies." ...And so I begin this brief review of the situation by thanking each and every one of you...for your personal effort over the past year in meeting the challenges that I set out only 12 months ago.

To begin with, we decided to write the Strategic Plan (to the extent possible) in plain English. Consider this clear summary statement: "The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our government, ensuring that people can discover, use and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience."

To carry out our mission, the National Archives has set down six clearly stated broad goals in our Strategic Plan:

- ...We will ensure the continuity and effective operations of Federal programs by expanding our leadership and services in managing the Government's records.
- We will preserve and process records to ensure access by the public as soon as legally possible.
- We will address the challenges of electronic records in Government to ensure success in fulfilling NARA's mission in the digital era.
- We will provide prompt, easy, and secure access to our holdings anywhere, anytime.
- We will increase access to our records in ways that further strengthen civic literacy in America through our museum, public outreach, grants, and education programs.

- We will equip NARA to meet the changing needs of our great customers.

...Do they reflect the reality of our efforts as an agency? I think they do, and here is why.

As the nation's record keeper, NARA is in the access business, and we are now actively engaged on many fronts to ensure, for generations to come, the preservation of and accessibility to the vital records we hold.

To deal with a huge backlog of traditional records—more than a million cubic feet—we have made major staff changes in our Washington, DC, research centers to expedite the processing of these records so that researchers can use them more easily....Eliminating this backlog of unprocessed records is absolutely critical to NARA.

Many of the records which customers want to see are declassified records, and after the discovery early this year of activities aimed at reclassifying previously declassified records, with support from our senior managers, I took some major steps at reaffirming our commitment to transparency and maximal access.

First, in quiet discussions with the relevant agencies, we are now returning to the open shelves the overwhelming majority of the affected records. So far, 53 percent of the records removed have been released in full and 46 percent with some redactions.

Second, we are working with other agencies, with NARA's Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO) and our Washington, DC, Office of Records Services, in taking the lead on developing a Government-wide policy for the declassification of classified records. This is our National Declassification Initiative, and

you'll be hearing more about that....Declassification, after all, is just one hurdle to public access; and access delayed can often mean access denied.

We are also moving ahead on schedule to ensure the preservation of and access to electronic records to respond to the urgent need which confronts us. We are building...our Electronic Records Archives, or ERA. In developing plans for ERA, we have partnered with some of the nation's leading research centers and universities....

As the system's development progresses, we look ahead to future researchers accessing traditional records by way of the ERA. To that end, we are moving ahead with digitizing projects for records now available only on paper or on microfilm. These are two more major steps toward our "archives without walls."

Earlier this year, we announced a partnership between the Kennedy Library and the EMC Corporation of suburban Boston to digitize the entire collection of papers, documents, photographs, and audio recordings of President Kennedy and make them accessible via the Internet, and we welcome similar projects for other NARA components. We also entered into an agreement with Google for a pilot program to make some of the National Archives' holdings available online. Today, you can go to the Google site and see a collection of NARA's rare and historical films.

As more and more of the Federal Government's business is conducted electronically, we have moved quickly in response. Today, every agency and department can transmit documents to the *Federal Register*—which we publish in cooperation with the Government Printing Office—electronically, and 75 percent of all

documents in the *Federal Register* are managed electronically. We have received much praise for the constantly updated electronic version of the *Code of Federal Regulations*, which is revised daily to reflect amendments published in the *Federal Register*.

The disasters of the past year or so have demonstrated the need for the National Archives to take the lead in preserving and maintaining access to valuable, vital records in the aftermath of natural disasters, such as the hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast last year. We have now taken a lead role in making records preservation, recovery, and accessibility a part of the Federal disaster response plan. NARA is working with the Council of State Archivists, which elicited from each state a records recovery plan to be implemented in the event of a disaster....

Day in and day out, we continue to help agencies improve the management of their records, traditional and electronic, through special NARA programs. The Federal Records Center program saw its seventh year of profitability, bringing in more than \$5 million in retained earnings. At the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, responses in less than 10 days to more than 1.2 million requests annually are now the rule, not the exception.

The numbers visiting NARA's various installations in this past year—especially the Presidential libraries and regional archives—remain impressive. But these figures are topped by the million-plus visitors to National Archives headquarters in downtown Washington, DC, who now (thanks to visiting not only the Charters of Freedom in the Rotunda but the unique "Public Vaults" exhibit on American history and our engaging exhibits in the Lawrence F. O'Brien Gallery) remain in the building for well over an hour. What used to be a five-minute visit—Mom, Dad to take you to look at the Charters and you're gone—and now it

takes them more than an hour. It's wonderful.

Throughout the National Archives system, in fact, educational programs are expanding greatly in number and range—and this in the absence of supplemental funding to cover their costs. We have begun to make measurable progress on our goal of helping to improve the civic literacy of the American people so that they can more readily appreciate the history of our country and their place in it....

In pursuit of our goals, the National Archives in the past year forged new partnerships with customer and stakeholder groups, other government agencies, and private companies—here in Washington and all around the country.

We welcomed to Washington, in their first-ever joint meeting, some 2,100 archivists who are members of the Society of American Archivists, the Council of State Archivists, and the National Association of Government Archives and Records (Administrators)...the meeting allowed us to strengthen our partnerships with all of these groups which are so essential to helping us meet the challenges ahead....

I would be remiss in this connection if I did not mention the role of these groups in supporting restoration of funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which I also strongly support, and our cooperative efforts in urging full funding for the innovative "Partnership for the American Historical Record" (PAHR), which I also support. Let me take this opportunity to compliment Max Evans and the NHPRC staff who are working with dedication despite the cloud of fiscal uncertainty....

In the year ahead, we will pursue our strategic goals vigorously while recognizing the limited fiscal resources at our command now and in the foreseeable future. Is there some contradiction in that? Not if you recall the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald's observation that the test of a civilized intelligence is the ability to keep two opposed ideas in the mind at once while retaining the capacity to function.

And function we will, with the invaluable help of our partners in and out of government;

new and old; national, regional, and local; professional and personal...

...let me sum up. The Archivist has closed the door on 2006 with the following sentence or two: Staff morale remains solid despite hiring freeze: Budget needs fattening up (but not the Archivist): the place is jumping, NARA is alive and well on all fronts, and it's time for awards..."

[A Webcast of Dr. Weinstein's complete remarks may be viewed on the National Archives website at <http://www.archives.gov/about/speeches/index.html> (under "Speeches and Writings by the Archivist.")]

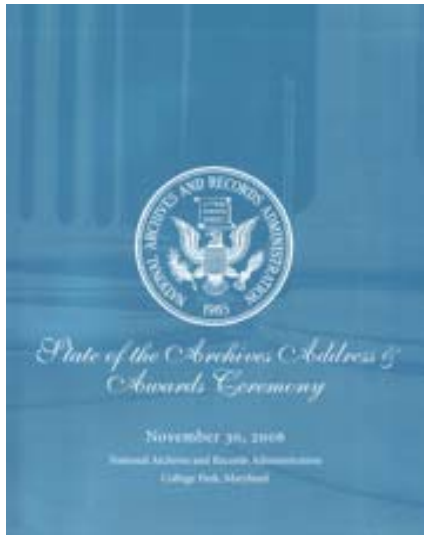
IMAGES FROM THE STATE OF THE ARCHIVES PROGRAM AND AWARDS CEREMONY

Dr. Allen Weinstein, U.S. Archivist (second from left), extended an invitation to the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the Council of State Archivists (CoSA), and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), to attend this year's address. The group met in Dr. Weinstein's Office prior to the event. Pictured here are (l to r): Paul Bergeron, City Clerk, Nashua, NH and NAGARA Board of Directors representative; Dr. Weinstein; F. Gerald Handfield, Washington State Archivist and CoSA Board of Directors representative; and Nancy Beaumont, SAA Executive Director.



During his address, Dr. Weinstein cited the Learning Center at the National Archives as one example of the agency's growing efforts to engage teachers and students in educational activities. Here, staff provides examples of the resources available in this educational training area.





Left: Program cover.

Right: Awards are lined up, ready for presentation, prior to the start of the *State of the Archivist Address & Awards Ceremony*.



AWARDS CEREMONY RECIPIENTS



[Editor's Note: Jim Cassedy (third from left) chaired the Government Records Section from 2000 – 01 and served as GRS Newsletter Editor from 2003 – 04.]

Outstanding Accomplishments in Achieving Organizational Goals

Pictured at left are some of the award recipients in this category from the *Office of the Archivist; Office of Records Services – Washington, DC; and Office of Regional Records – Rocky Mountain Region, Great Lakes Region, and Pacific Alaska Region* (l to r): Henry Wolfinger, Leslie Malek, James Cassedy, David Brown, Deborah Armentrout, and Rich Noble. Not in the picture: Kathleen Arntz, James Hurst, and Candace Lein-Hayes.

Recipients of this award from the *Office of Records Services – Washington, DC*, included: Margaret Adams, David Kepley, Gregory LaMotta, David Langbart, Don McIlwain, David Mengel, Vivek Navale, and Marvin Russell.

NARA Recognition for Active Duty Service to the United States of America as a Member of the Armed Services: Howard Feng, Michael Gellings, Anthony Hughes, Benjamin Jordi, Melvin Kurtz, Jonn Lilyea, Joseph Majid Jr., John A. Mazzei, Nicholas R. Norton, Joseph Penaranda, and Christa Townsend.

Outstanding Achievement in Customer Service to Internal NARA Customers: *Office of Information Services* – Samuel Watkins and William Day.

Outstanding Achievement in Customer Service to External NARA Customers: *Office of Regional Records Services – Mid-Atlantic Region* – Daniel Bedesem, Heather Bolander, Michael Brown, Mitchell Buffone, Derek Kennedy, Larry Wilkes, and George Williams; *Office of Records Services – Washington, DC* – Shawn Smith; *Office of Presidential Libraries – John F. Kennedy Library* – Ronald Whealan.

Outstanding Achievement in Promoting Civic Understanding in a Diverse Society: *Office of Regional Records Services – Northeast Region, Mid Atlantic Region, Southeast Region, Central Plains Region, Southwest Region, Rocky Mountain Region, Pacific Region, Pacific Alaska Region* – Eric Bittner, Mary Burtzloff, Carol Buswell, Patrick Connelly, Dorothy Dougherty, Meg Hacker, Daniel Nealand, Jean Nudd, Mary Evelyn Tomlin, and Paul Wormser.

Outstanding Contribution to NARA: *Office of Regional Records – Great Lakes Region* – Mary Ann Zulevic; *Office of Records Services – Washington, DC* – Robert Kvasnicka; *Office of Regional Records – Central Plains Region, National Personnel Records Center, Office of Information Services, Office of Records Services – Washington, DC, and Office of Administration* – Ronald Hindman, Lawrence Hines, Stefanie Hutchins, Alan Kramer, Jefferson Lunsford, Ronald Noll, Angeleta Tillery, Jay Trainer, David Weinberg, Rosemarie Weisz, and J. Michael Whitacre.

Lifetime Achievement Award: *Office of Records Services – Washington, DC* – Timothy Mulligan.

INTERESTED IN SERVING THE GOVERNMENT RECORDS SECTION AS ITS NEWSLETTER EDITOR?

Paul R. Bergeron, Editor of GRS' *Official Word*, is planning to step down from his duties following the 2007 SAA Annual Meeting in Chicago next August. Bergeron has served as Section Newsletter Editor since 2004.

Currently, *Official Word* is formatted as a *pdf* file. This is the Editor's preference, and there is no requirement that a new editor use Adobe. Once completed, the newsletter is emailed to the Section Web Liaison who then posts it to the SAA site. *Official Word* is currently published three times each year: November/December, February/March, and June/July (the pre-conference newsletter). A new editor may choose to expand the frequency of the publication if he or she wishes.

If you have an interest in learning more about the Newsletter Editor's responsibilities and workload, please feel free to contact Paul at 603-589-3004 or via email at bergeronp@ci.nashua.nh.us. There are two more newsletters to be published in 2006 – 2007, and he would be glad to bring on a "co-editor" to give that person some "guided experience" prior to next year's Annual Conference. Under Section by-laws, the appointment of the Newsletter Editor is made by the Section Chair with the advice of the Steering Committee. The Newsletter Editor also serves as an officer of the GRSection Steering Committee.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS ROUNDTABLE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Local Government Records Roundtables of the Society of American Archivists and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators met in a joint meeting during the associations' annual conference in Washington, DC, Wednesday, August 2nd.

The meeting opened with a brief business meeting followed by a presentation on the Council of State Archivists' *Closest to Home* Project which is analyzing current conditions relative to local government archives and records and will attempt to determine what services, standards and funding strategies would work best to ensure the long-term preservation of and access to local government records. It is being supported by a two-year grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Following the *Closest to Home* presentation, a three-member panel led an interactive discussion on *Building Strong Local Government Records Programs*.

John Slate, CA, City Archivist, Dallas, TX (at the podium); William Dow, CRM, Deputy City Clerk in Keene, NH; and Dr. Judith G. Cetina, Cuyahoga County Archives, Cleveland, OH,



discussed the dynamics of their programs and reviewed their failures, successes, and best practices. Among the topics and challenges that were addressed were: statutory support and authority, local legislative support, records management committees, points of responsibility, effective use of department liaisons, and training.

GOVERNMENT RECORDS SECTION ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING RECAPPED

The Government Records Section meeting on August 4th at DC2006 in Washington, DC, this year was a fast-paced session, filled with many different topics of conversation and lots of give and take between the audience and the speakers. We wanted to try something a little bit quicker paced and varied this year.

One of the big orders of business was voting. The members (including a few voting by absentee ballot) passed the revisions to the bylaws unanimously, and you can find the text of the revised bylaws online. The new bylaws include the following changes:

- Clarified the chair's responsibility and term
- Formalized the existing process for choosing the chair
- Clarified the makeup of the steering committee and the procedures to follow in the case of changes to the makeup over the course of the year
- Inserted procedures for finalizing a vote in the event of a tie vote
- Revised the deadline for absentee ballots
- Removed unnecessary language from the bylaws

Our assortment of speakers began with Bruce Dearstyne giving a brief presentation on the Council of State Archivists' new "Closest to Home" project, which is focusing on how to improve the management of archives in local governments across the country. (See the CoSA website — www.statearchivists.org — for more information.)

Maria Holden, of the New York State Archives, made a presentation about CoSA's Emergency Preparedness Initiative, which hopes to improve disaster response related to archival records, especially in the face of huge disaster (such as Hurricane Katrina) that we have seen recently. (The CoSA website also has more information on this project.)

Ann Marie Przybyla gave an interesting talk entitled "Random Observations on the State of Disaster Management in New York State," in which she described the New York State Archives' wide-ranging program of services for disaster management and explained that the Archives still has had difficulty convincing people of the value of good disaster planning. The audience discussion led to a number of ideas on how to solve this problem, including the following:

- a. Awarding points on archives grants to applicants who had disaster plans
- b. Emphasizing the cost savings of good disaster planning
- c. Including disaster management training in any standard records management training
- d. Targeting information technology professionals
- e. Developing disaster management advocates
- f. Making it as easy as possible for people to do
- g. Emulating the New Jersey model, where the Division of Archives and Records Management brought together records officers, emergency management personnel, information technology staff, and central office staff (from the same organizations) to discuss and plan for disaster management.

Arian Ravanbakhsh ended the presentation with a report on some NARA guidance products that will be out near the end of the federal fiscal year. These included guidance on managing



web records, including wikis and blogs. Arian also discussed the growing importance of instant messaging (IM'ing) as a source of records. He reported that the new generation of workers regards email as a symbol of authority but IMs as a symbol of freedom. This has led to the switch of much communication over to IM. In fact, much of Operation Iraqi Freedom was fought with support from IM communications. Arian also noted that interest in wikis has come significantly from intelligence agencies that often use wikis in their work. He ended with the point that archivists must become comfortable with these new technologies.

At the point of adjournment, section member Nancy Melley rushed the podium to present outgoing chair Geof Huth with gifts memorializing his prowess at belly dancing.

And this is why you should always attend the Government Records Section meeting at SAA.

*Geof Huth, Outgoing Chair
Government Records Section*

2006 – 2007 GOVERNMENT RECORDS SECTION STEERING COMMITTEE¹

Federal	Local	State
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¹ Term expiration dates: August 2007 – Barber, Hart, Myer; August 2008 – Slate, Bhatia, Eubank.