

# THE GOVERNMENT RECORDS SECTION NEWS

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The Government Records Section

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**Jim Cassedy**  
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### Your GRS Steering Committee:



Front row, left to right: Virginia Fritsch, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Vice Chair; and Deborah Kennedy, King County (WA) Archives.

Back row, left to right: Arian Ravanbakhsh, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD; Paul R. Bergeron, Nashua (NH) City Clerk, Chair; and Randy Jones,

National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta, GA.

*From where I sit...*

**Paul R. Bergeron**  
**Chair, Government Records Section**

I'm heading into my ninth year of government service, which follows 15 years in retail. Cartoons and jokes often suggest that the service-cultures in the government and retail industries are exactly contrary, the former is staffed by snarling, indifferent, slow-moving, date-stamping clerks while the latter is staffed by bubbly, smiling, friendly, energetic young employees. Neither is true.

My Filene's (May Co.) employee handbook of ten years ago, includes the following introduction: "This tradition is achieved by...associates who...are interested in helping our customers meet their needs in a friendly and professional manner. Our customers judge us by how well you perform your job every hour of every day. In every one of the hundreds of jobs within our company there are unlimited opportunities to make friends for the store and to help increase our record of...customer satisfaction."

I try to impress upon my staff that customer service is the most important aspect of their jobs – (well, accuracy and confidentiality rank up there too). Acknowledge the folks waiting at the counter. Smile (it doesn't hurt). That's nothing new, of course. Some communities have even issued a formal Code. This comes from a St. Louis City Employee Code of Citizen Service published in 1996:  
 (Continued, page 5, col. 2)

## NARA Ready to Roll Out AAD Online Reference Tool

Michael Carlson

In January NARA will unveil Access to Archival Databases (AAD), a new online reference tool for public and NARA staff use. The goal of AAD is to provide ready access to a selection of NARA's electronic records holdings to anyone, anywhere, at any time via the Internet. The project has been developed and funded under the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) project and will become the first publicly available ERA tool. The contractor Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) designed the application and the Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division (NWME) populated it with records and metadata.

In its initial rollout AAD will feature electronic records from over 400 files from 30 series that contain over 100 million unique records. The databases span a wide variety of subjects, including records of casualties from the Vietnam and Korean Conflicts and combat operations in Southeast Asia, indexes to NASA photographs, insider securities trading records, and records of people emigrating to America during the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, and records of Japanese Americans interned during World War II. These are just a sampling of accessioned records NARA will soon make available to persons with access to the Internet. During the coming year records from over 50 series will be included in AAD.

Mr. Michael Carlson is the Director  
Electronic and Special Media Division  
National Archives and Records Administration.

## New England's State Historical Records Advisory Boards

### Seeking to Promote and Sustain Regional Cooperative Planning

William Milhomme

#### Introduction

There are many levels of cooperation. It can be as simple as two people agreeing to cooperate, or as complicated as cooperation among organizations, institutions or even nation states. At all levels, cooperation is an ongoing process of openness, acceptance and commitment to further the achievement of a vision or a goal.

*Intrastate* collaboration between state historical records advisory board and the historical records community remains a long time primary goal of the National Historical Publications. But interest in *Interstate* collaboration among state historical records advisory boards is more recent and becoming more evident in planning and fundability.

Recently, representatives of the six New England State Archives, state historical records advisory boards (SHRAB's) and NARA Northeast Region attended a retreat to initiate planning for regional collaborative projects. An NHPRC Administrative Grant to Massachusetts funded the retreat.

#### Concept

The idea for the retreat came out of a casual meeting between Ann Newhall (former NHPRC Executive Director) and Massachusetts state historical records advisory board (MHRAB) members John Warner, state archivist and Bill Milhomme, field archivist. The meeting took place between Christmas and New Years, December 2000. Newhall was home in Connecticut for the holidays and was visiting colleagues in Boston. She was asked, "What projects is the NHPRC interested in funding?" To paraphrase Newhall, the answer was, "projects that document underdocumented communities/subjects and/or

projects that encourage interstate cooperation.”

A few weeks later, in January 2001, the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators held their annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Whether circumstance or fate, whenever food was being served, the New England representatives found themselves seated together at the same table. The idea of a Massachusetts-managed administrative grant to bring together the New England SHRABS to plan for regional documentation was discussed several times and encouraged.

Several months later, at the National Association of Government Archivists and Record Administrators (NAGARA) conference held in Portland, Oregon, Milhomme was introduced to Guy Louis Rocha, Assistant Administrator for Archives and Records Nevada State Library & Archives. At the time of the NAGARA meeting, Nevada was awarded an NHPRC administrative grant that included funds to meet jointly with the State Historical Advisory Board of California in 2002. The focus of this interstate meeting was to discuss potential cooperative activities on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada.

In September 2001, Richard Cameron, NHPRC Director for State Programs, was contacted regarding the concept of an administrative grant to promote regional interstate documentation planning. Cameron encouraged the application and advised the MHRAB of the recent NHPRC funded collaborative project, “Documenting Change in Minnesota and North Dakota.” Milhomme contacted James E. Fogerty, at the Minnesota Historical Society, who generously provided developmental insight and project reports.

Encouraged by the success of the collaborative shrab projects of Nevada & California and Minnesota & North Dakota, and accompanied by letters of support from the state archivists/historical records coordinators of all the New England states, the MHRAB submitted a two-year administrative grant application to the NHPRC. The application was approved in December 2002.

## Planning

The grant is funding two documentation-planning retreats. The first retreat was held September 27-28, 2002, at the Warren Inn & Conference Center in Ashland, Massachusetts. A consultant, Diane Strock-Lynskey was contracted to plan and facilitate the meeting. The several months leading to the September meeting afforded the time to gather the information necessary to facilitate the dynamics necessary to assist the participants to identify and prioritize potential collaborative regional projects.

The information gathered and employed in the planning process was a liberal collection of expectations, data and statistics. A four-question survey was sent to participants: What is the greatest documentation issue/challenge facing your state? What is your state’s uniqueness as it pertains to documentation? What are the documentation successes of your state? What are your expectations/hopes for this retreat? Past NHPRC funding (1980-2002) for each New England State historical records advisory board was compiled and compared. Copies of the all the New England States strategic plans were examined with attention to expectations, goals, and activities. The Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC) research and reports were analyzed regarding the New England States. These reports included: *Maintaining State Records in an Era of Change: A National Challenge A Report on State Archives and Records Management Programs* (1996); *Where History Begins: A Report on Historical Records Repositories in the U.S.* (1998); National Forum on Archival Continuing Education (NFACE) Project (2000-2002); *Connecting the Archival Community: Report of the Archival Education and Information Web Needs Assessment* (July 2002). Additionally, the New York State Archives, *A Manual for Documentation Planning in New York*, and *New York Documentation Topics Framework*, were referenced for planning methodology.

## Participants

The depth and diversity of experience and interest of the participants guaranteed interesting dynamics for the retreat. Attending from Connecticut were Mark Jones, State Archivist; Barbara Austen, Local Government Records Archivist, CSL; Susan Brosnan, Archivist, Knights of Columbus Supreme Council; and Bruce Stark, Assistant State Archivist, CSL. Traveling from Maine were Jim Henderson, State Archivist, and Ellen Dyer, Maine Memory Network, a project of the Maine Historical Society. Representing Vermont were Gregory Sanford, State Archivist; Chris Burns, Deputy Coordinator, UVM Special Collections; and Pete Chase, VHRAB member, surveyor. New Hampshire sent Frank Mevers, State Archivist; Philip N. Cronenwett, Chief of Special Collections at Dartmouth College; Paul Bergeron, City Clerk of Nashua; and Elizabeth Hamlin-Morin, NH SHRAB administrative support project specialist and President of the NH Archives Group. From Rhode Island came Marlene Lopes, James P. Adams Library, Special Collections; Donna Longo DiMichele, Department of Administration, Office of Library and Information Services; and Allison Cywin, Rhode Island Historical Society Library. Representing the National Archives, New England Region was Stuart Culy, Director of Archival Operations, and joining the group Friday afternoon were Diane LeBlanc, NARA Northeast Regional Administrator, and David Powers, Assistant Regional Administrator.

The Massachusetts contingent included John Warner Jr., State Archivist; Nancy Schrock, Chief Collections Conservator of the Harvard College Library; Terry French, Senior Records Analyst, Massachusetts Archives; Sam Lowe, Institute for Asian American Studies, University Massachusetts at Boston; and Bill Milhomme, MHRAB Field Archivist. The facilitator for the meeting was Diane Strock-Lynskey, Chair/Program Director, Social Work Program, Siena College, New York.

## Process/Dynamics

The group entered the process with an open attitude and high aspirations for a successful process. Expectations were high, but the territory was uncharted. During the first work session, the consultant gently, but firmly, facilitated contributions and insight from each attendee. The forthcoming remarks, suggestions, and expectations were listed by state. The meeting room walls gradually became papered with multiple colorful sheets of comments. By the following morning session the consultant had distilled and collated the information into a list of suggestions for regional cooperative efforts. The task for the second meeting was to prioritize, select and commit to several 'doable' and 'sustainable' activities. The success of this session resulted from the skillfulness, experience and confidence of the facilitator. Truthfully, most participants were surprised (frightened?) by the scope of involvement and resources necessary to further regional collaboration of the potential identified, prioritized activities. But the facilitator prodded and guided the group along until a consensus of several activities was finally agreed upon.

## Results

Clearly there was a unanimous group consensus that the planning process itself is necessary to promote and sustain regional cooperative planning. The group acknowledged and appreciated the support of the NHPRC and the leadership/facilitation of the consultant to participate in the process. The aggregate identified areas of consideration for potential collaborative efforts were: (1) Archival Education and Training, (2) Interstate/New England Records Collections, (3) Electronic Clearinghouse/Data Pooling/Access, (4) Visibility/ Awareness/ Promotion/ Advocacy (For Profession/SHRABS), (5) Partnerships /Collaborative Work with Other Professions/Non-Archivist Community(s) (Communication/Resource Sharing/Funding), (6) Electronic Records Preservation and Management, (7) Best Practices/ Assessment /Outcomes

/Evaluation Models and Tools (Accountability/Viability/ Documentation of Impact of Work), (8) Documentation of Underrepresented Groups/Communities, (9) Use of Archives in the Schools (Interstate Projects/Collaboration), (10) New England Consortium/Development and Support /Coordination, (11) Disaster Preparedness.

From this list five areas were selected as priorities and a proposed work plan for October 2002 – September 2003 established. The focus of the efforts of the work groups is on data collection/ information gathering as it relates to the types of resources currently available from each State in each priority area, and ways to begin to organize/consolidate and catalogue information (curriculum, models, materials, frameworks, etc. currently being utilized).

The areas and work groups include:

- (1) Electronic Clearinghouse – ME,
- (2) Archival Education and Training– MA, CT,
- (3)Records Collections – Naturalization Records – NH, MA, CT, NARA, (4) Disaster Preparedness – VT, MA, ME, (5) Documentation of Under-Represented Groups/Communities – RI, CT, Institute Asian Studies.

### Conclusion

The recent New England Shrabs effort is evidence that where there is openness and acceptance among colleagues, whether within our institutions, intrastate and interstate, there is a mutual commitment to achieving common goals.

Mr. William Milhomme is a Field Archivist with the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board  
Massachusetts Archives.



*Speakers Confer after GRS Annual Meeting*

Bruce Craig (left), Director of the National Coordination Committee for the Promotion of History, and Lewis J. Bellardo, Deputy Archivist of the United States, chat following the conclusion of the Government Records Sections Annual Meeting in Birmingham. Craig addressed efforts by the federal government to restrict access to information, especially in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Bellardo discussed the National Archives and Records Administration’s plan to re-think and re-design how records are managed in the federal government.

### **Chair, from page 1**

- Remember that you are always in the public eye. Consider every action, rest period, or public contact as if it were appearing on the front page of the newspaper or on the evening news broadcast.
- Be courteous, have a ready smile and a pleasant tone of voice, even when you have to give citizens news they don’t want to hear. Use phrases such as “Good afternoon, may I help you, sir/ma’am?” or “I’d be happy to look into that and get back to you later today” or “I’m sorry, but I can’t do that; could I make another suggestion?” (if that’s appropriate in the circumstance).
- When dealing with the public, whether on duty or off duty, try to keep a positive manner. Yes, there are negative aspects. We want residents and potential residents to know about the positive aspects of our City. We

only hurt ourselves when we run down some aspect of our City.

For nine years I have been caring for municipal records. I've used them within the context of my job. I've helped fill research requests and offered guidance or suggestions for further research. But I've never been on the other side of the government records counter – until recently.

You see, Nashua, NH is going to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its incorporation as a city in 2003. *Nashua* is a local Indian name with two meanings: “land between two rivers” and “beautiful river with a pebbly bottom.” I knew there were other “Nashua’s” in the United States, and I wondered how the name traveled westward.

I did my research by telephone, mail and e-mail. I talked to town clerks, historical society members, librarians, and even the great-grandson of the founder of Nashua, Montana. Every single person that I talked to or heard from has been polite, patient, and helpful. When they couldn't help me, they referred me to someone who could. (They even seemed interested in my research topic!) I was not a neighbor, a taxpayer from their town, a person standing right in front of them. I had no face. I was a long-distance phone call, a letter, an e-mail.

Frankly, I was surprised. I expected to be brushed off. I expected some of the folks would “get back to me” months from now. (Maybe somewhere in the back of my mind I still have that cartoon-stereotype-image of what government employees are like?) To these government archivists, record-keepers, and employees, I was a customer in need. And I received great service! From everyone.

I received the following at a seminar some years ago. Don't remember the seminar. Don't remember when or where it was either. But I kept the quotation:

“Sometimes when I consider what tremendous consequences come from little things...I am tempted

to think...there are no little things” (*Bruce Barton.*) I hope that when people come into my office, call, or send us an e-mail, they receive the same courtesy and level of assistance I received from the folks in Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Minnesota, and Illinois. After all, “Our customers judge us by how well we perform our jobs every hour of every day.” Good customer service is no little thing.

### **Union Square Park, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan – September 17, 2001**



Credit: NYC Municipal Archives, Michael Lorenzini

### **Documenting the World Trade Center Spontaneous Memorials**

Leonora A. Gidlund, Deputy Director of Municipal Archives for the City of New York, gave a presentation, during the Local Government Records Roundtable meeting in Birmingham, on the department's efforts to document and preserve the spontaneous memorials that arose following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center.

**Leonora recapped her presentation as follows:**

“Throughout New York City on and soon after the September 11, 2001 disaster, New Yorkers created temporary memorials, small and large, to express their varied emotions, concerns, and sympathy. These spontaneous memorials appeared on public and private land: parks, firehouses, streets, sidewalks, schools, religious institutions, hospitals and medical centers, libraries, and stores. Although the majority of memorials were temporary, some continue to exist and materials are added daily.

While ephemeral in nature, these shrines have become significant historically because they document the outpouring of human emotion and response to the attacks. The above photo illustrates the variety of materials placed in Union Square Park soon after the WTC Attack. The site, located at 14th Street and Broadway, is under the jurisdiction of the NYC Department of Parks.

Two weeks after the attack, Parks personnel removed the materials and placed them in storage. The Municipal Archives received the items six months later. We continue to sort and catalog them. The Municipal Archives also received materials from a large memorial wall (260 feet long, 9 feet high) created by the victims’ families from September - December 2001. On September 11, 2002, we visited Ground Zero at 7:00 PM to gather the flowers and other items placed by the victims’ families during the day; we also photographed the small memorials left at the site.

The Municipal Archives, city, state and federal government agencies, museums, historical societies and private citizens, have photographed or videotaped the various memorials, and/or removed a representative sample of items. It is hoped that this method of documentation and preservation of the memorials will be available for all those interested in historical research.”

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### **NARA Policy on “Records of Concern”**

Steve Tilley

In the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, NARA began to re-evaluate access to certain previously open records and reinforced screening procedures for records that were not yet open for research. In doing so, NARA sought to prevent access to records that might support terrorist activities.

Documents and other materials withheld from research under this program have been designated “Records of Concern.” Any records withheld under the records of concern (ROC) program must contain information that can be withheld from disclosure under one of the exemptions established in the Freedom Of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552 as amended). The Department of Justice has instructed agencies that it is proper to withhold information that could be used to harm the government under exemption (b)(2). Other applicable exemptions should also be cited when denying access to records of concern.

NARA's policy is designed to minimize access to four types of information that might aid terrorist or other groups that wish to cause harm to the government or individual citizens. These are:

1. Identity theft - deny access to information that could be used to assume the identity of another individual, especially through the protection of social security numbers for living persons.
2. Public sites and infrastructure - deny access to information that could be used to target public buildings or other public sites or components of the national infrastructure.
3. Vulnerabilities of systems and plans - deny access to information that could be used to penetrate or disrupt government programs, plans, emergency procedures and similar activities.
4. Weapons of mass destruction - deny access to information on the use and construction of these weapons.

NARA began the program by compiling a list of series in various record groups that contained potential records of concern. At first, this list was very broad, including many series that were listed in an excess of caution.

At the same time, a NARA-wide oversight committee was established to develop policy for the program. The committee was made up of representatives of headquarters and regional NARA offices. NARA reference and processing units began to identify boxes that were of concern by placing bright labels on the boxes to identify those records that should not be taken to the research room before screening. Records in boxes that had been labeled were screened in a timely manner, and the boxes that could be released were sent to the research room. This policy has continued.

In December 2001, NARA representatives attended a meeting at the White House where they briefed a number of agencies, including representatives of the National Security Council, on our ROC policy. The agency representatives were impressed with the policy, praising it as a model for other agencies, citing the cautious but careful approach taken in identifying possible records of concern. It was noted that a heavy-handed approach involving total closure of a wide variety of records was not acceptable.

Implementation of NARA's ROC plan has also involved assistance for staff in the regions. Many regional staff members have been briefed on the background and implementation of NARA's ROC policy. Series of records identified by the staffs of the regions as potential records of concern were reviewed and eliminated from further consideration as records of concern.

NARA is undertaking a systematic review program this year to narrow the current list of records that have been identified as containing potential records of concern. NARA has begun by screening series previously identified and removing many of these series from the list. NARA will assign staff to

systematically review the remaining series for actual ROC documents that must be withheld. By the end of this year, this project will hopefully have narrowed the list of records of concern to a few groups of records that meet the established criteria.

Mr. Steve Tilley is Head of the Special Access/FOIA Section, Textual Archives Services Division, National Archives and Records Administration.

**“Archives of *EPIC* Proportions: A Problem Solving Approach to Managing Congressional Papers” Presented by Herb Hartsook, Curator of Modern Political Collections at the University of South Carolina, and Cynthia Pease Miller, archivist for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, in Tucson at the University of Arizona, March 20-21, 2003.**

The School of Information Resources and Library Science at the University of Arizona in conjunction with Special Collections at the Main Library are pleased to announce a problem-solving workshop on the management of large congressional collections. Course fees of **\$195** include study materials and coffee breaks. There will be a reception and behind-the-scenes tour at the Center for Creative Photography.

Registration is limited to 30 in order to facilitate discussion and individual problem solving. Registration must be received no later than February 28, 2003. For registration information and course details, link to the School of Information and Library Science webpage: <http://www.sir.arizona.edu>. For questions about course content, contact Rebecca Hankins: [hankinsr@u.library.arizona.edu](mailto:hankinsr@u.library.arizona.edu).

**Review: Seattle Municipal Archives Online**  
<http://www.cityofseattle.net/cityarchives/>

“The staff of the Seattle Municipal Archives has created a Web site that facilitates the work of amateur and professional historians (along with satisfying the

curiosity of the general public) seeking to utilize their archival holdings. A quick reference area allows visitors to obtain information about historical election results and some basic facts about Seattle, as well as read their in-house newsletter, which documents their ongoing archival projects. Additionally, an online exhibit section offers perspectives on subjects such as Seattle's City Halls and Pike Place Market's Corner Market Building. The centerpiece of this site is the online photograph collection, which contains over 40,000 images of Seattle from the last century. The photograph archive is searchable by time-period, neighborhood district (a neighborhood map is also provided), and user-identified search terms. Finally, the site also includes a variety of research guides, including a guide to the archives held by the City of Seattle and the Pike Place Market Records.” (Review source: *The Scout Report*, December 20, 2002. For more information about the *Internet Scout Project*, visit <http://scout.wisc.edu/>).

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