

**Vermont Secretary of State
Office of Vermont State Archives**

**FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT
on
ARCHIVAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

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Report of the State Archivist 2007

This report, required by 3 V.S.A. §117(3)(c), covers the Archives' activities during calendar year 2007.

It has now been four and a half years since Vermont enacted its first comprehensive archival management law. The law provided opportunities for managing thousands of cubic feet of public archival records not previously under the Archives control. During 2007 the Archives developed data entry standards and completed the initial work on an online database to all public records currently identified as archival, regardless of physical location. The database enhances awareness of what records are available and is complemented by a "Spotlight on Records" section of our webpage, which was also added in 2007. We are now appraising and managing these legacy archival series.

More importantly the law allowed us to establish partnerships within and across agencies for the prospective management of records and information. The need for such assistance is constantly re-enforced as a growing number of State and municipal entities contact us for help on everything from incorporating recordkeeping into new information technology systems to addressing traditional public record requirements.

One of the most positive steps during 2007 was the voluntary collaborative effort known as "Information Strategies: Archives, Records, and Technology" or *iSTART*. This collaboration among the Archives, the Department of Information and Innovation (specifically with its Enterprise Project Management Office), and the Department of Buildings and General Services is adopting policies and standards-based guidelines to help agencies manage their records and information. The collaboration is an essential tool for realizing an enterprise approach to managing records and information across agencies.

Vermont is at a crossroads. We have an opportunity to plan and implement record keeping systems that can truly make public records and information a resource to government and citizen alike. Or we can continue the tradition of only viewing information within the boundaries of individual agencies and of perceiving recordkeeping as distinct from our core legal and business requirements. The partnerships developed during 2007 promise to move us toward the better management and greater accessibility of public records.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory Sanford
State Archivist

ARCHIVAL RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Archival records are institutional records with a continuing legal, administrative or informational value. *Archival management* is “the systematic identification and management of archival records to assure their authenticity and accessibility from point of creation to ultimate disposition” (3 V.S.A. §117(a)(1)). Disposition includes transfer to the custody of the archives.

Records management, while not defined in Vermont statutes, is defined by the Federal government as the “managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, records maintenance and use, and records disposition in order to achieve adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and effective and economical management of agency operations” (36 CFR 1220.14).

While Vermont does not define records management it does require agencies to “establish, maintain, and implement an active and continuing program for the effective management, preservation, and disposition of records” (3 V.S.A. §218(b)) and assigns the Commissioner of BGS and Secretary of State authorities for approving components of those programs.

Appraisal, the analysis of records to determine how long they retain legal, administrative or informational values, is essential to both archival and records management. Authority to appraise records resides with the Archives (3 V.S.A. §117(a)(3)).

The advent of information technology further diffuses the broad authorities over the management of records. The Secretary of Administration, for example, shall annually submit a technology plan to the general assembly. The plan shall address the “creation, collection, processing, storage, management, transmission or conversion of electronic data, documents or records” (3 V.S.A. § 2222((a)(10)(A)). In addition the Agency of Administration oversees the Department of Information and Innovation (DII) and, within DII, an Enterprise Project Management Office to assist with creating a unified approach to managing information technology systems.

As described elsewhere in the report, during 2007 the Archives continued to work toward improved communication and, where possible, coordination among programs with broad record and information responsibilities, as well as with public bodies working on information technology projects.

Such collaboration is essential, particularly as State and municipal governments turn toward information technologies for service delivery and administration. Too often the emphasis in planning is on the *technology*, not the *information*. According to the Chief Information Officer’s online technology strategic plans, over \$120 million was spent on information technology from FY 02 through FY 05 (this figure is exclusive of agencies that did not submit five year technology plans). There are 336 information technology positions in State government. In contrast, there are four record specialist positions (one in Public Records and three at the Archives) to offer guidance on integrating record management practices into IT development. While by law each public agency has a

records officer, these positions report a lack of training and authority for effectively implementing and sustaining record management practices.

As in the past, the overview must include reference to the inadequacy of the Archives' current physical space. Vermont lags far beyond the rest of the country in terms of the capacity to store archival records in an environmentally secure space. The Archives' current vault, for example, has a capacity to hold 1,500 cubic feet of records and is full. By comparison, North Dakota had the next smallest vault capacity at 15,000 cubic feet but added an additional 20,000 cubic feet of capacity during 2007. In the 2006 Capital Construction Act \$650,000 was appropriated for design of a new archives facility and in 2007 \$1.7 million was appropriated to begin construction. While several sites have been examined, design and construction have not begun.

STAFF

The Archives has three professional archivists and two administrative assistants. The administrative assistants also supervise Vermont notaries; provide clerical oversight of the secretary of state's rulemaking responsibilities under the Administrative Procedures Act; and fulfill the Legislative Clerk duties as set out in 3 V.S.A. §106(4) and (5).

MISSION

Document the rights of citizens, the actions of government, and the history of public policy by:

- Supporting the efficient and effective management of essential government information;
- Appraising recorded information, regardless of format, for evidentiary and archival value;
- Systematically receiving a comprehensive, reliable, and authentic body of State archival records;
- Promoting and enhancing the use of the State's archival records by Vermont's government and citizens.

GOALS

- Advocate for openness and accountability in government.
- Ensure the preservation of, and access to, evidence of key government transactions through the development and implementation of a sustainable archival management program for all of state government.
- Provide expert advice and guidance on the principles and practices of archives, records, and information management.
- Support state institutions, political subdivisions, and individuals engaged in archival management and historical research.

AUTHORITY

The primary statutory authority for the State Archives can be found in 3 V.S.A. §117 and in the broader accountability requirements of Article VI, Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution.

During 2007 the Archives continued to make significant strides toward creating the knowledge, partnerships and tools required for the effective management of State records and information. While the year's accomplishments are too extensive to enumerate in detail, the following list of performance measures provides a sense of the progress made this year.

CUSTODY OF RECORDS (3 V.S.A. §117(g)(7))

- *Archives and Research Facility*

The ability to take custody of archival records has long been stymied by the lack of physical vault space. On-going records appraisal has identified at least 15,000 cubic feet of archival records eligible for immediate transfer to the State Archives. The Archives' vault, however, is full. With a capacity of 1,500 cubic feet, it continues to be the smallest vault among all state archives.

Support for a new archives and research facility, including design funds appropriated in 2006 and initial site development and construction funds in 2007, continues. During much of 2007 the Archives assisted the Department of Buildings and General Services in exploring the Dog River Road site designated by the legislature as the site for the Archives and a new Department of Motor Vehicles building.

Concern about the costs of developing the Dog River Road site led, in November-December, to exploration of the current Department of Libraries location. Although much work was accomplished during 2007 as of December the site for the facility remains uncertain; designs have not been approved; and construction has not begun.

ACCESS TO RECORDS (3 V.S.A. §117(g)(9))

- *Research Requests*

In September 2006, the State Archives implemented a new tracking system to record research and administrative requests. Between December 1, 2006 and November 30, 2007, the archives staff responded to a total 1,294 individual research requests:

- 44% of all research requests were received by e-mail
- 41% of all research requests were received by phone
- 11% of all research requests were walk-ins
- 4% of all research requests were by mail

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Online Research Services

In 2007, the archives staff increased the number of research services available on the Archives website by:

- Adding a database for digitized images of 244 land surveyor maps and lotting plans, all indexed by town name; and
- Expanding the Archives online records database to include scope statements for 678 record series and content descriptions for 3,028 boxes and 810 microfilm reels of archival records.

As a result, the archives website was visited in 2007 by 132,539 unique researchers, resulting in 1,806,429 hits to research sections available on the Archives' website.

- Researchers represent 53% of the Archives' total website visitors and use 87% of the Archives' website.
- Since February 2006, when the Archives first offered web access to an index of State Archival records, our online research community has increased by 18% and traffic to our website has increased by 61%.

MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS (3 V.S.A. §117(g)(3))

- *Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO)*

The Archives is collaborating with the Department of Information and Innovation's Enterprise Project Management Office (EPMO) to assist several agencies with incorporating records management into their information technology activities, including:

- The Office of Professional Regulation within the Secretary of State's office and their new system for tracking licensees and regulatory actions; and
- The Natural Resources Board and their new system for documenting ACT 250 permits and providing online access to permit files.

- *Vermont Emergency Management*

Disaster mitigation and response is a crucial component of records and information management. In 2007 the Archives began cooperating with Vermont Emergency Management on its continuity of operations planning. The Archives, through the Council of State Archivists, has access to grant funds for training agency staff on identifying and protecting records necessary for continuity of operations in the event of a widespread catastrophe.

During 2007 the Archives also funded five disaster preparedness and response workshops for municipalities. The workshops were conducted by the Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance.

- *eLegislature Initiative*

The Archives entered into a partnership with the Minnesota State Archives to develop a records management program for digital legislative records. The Legislative Committee on Information Technology will examine this possible partnership in January 2008 for the records of Vermont's General Assembly.
- *Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS)*

In September 2006 the Archives drafted a memorandum of understanding with BGS. The memorandum commits BGS and the Archives to being "unified in their advice, assistance, and information to public agencies concerning archives, records and information management;" to adhering to industry standards; and to sharing resources. A new MOU was presented to BGS in December 2007.
- *Information Strategies Taskforce: Archives, Records, and Technology (iSTART)*

The most significant development during 2007 was the work of the Information Strategies Taskforce: Archives, Records, and Technology (iSTART). This is a volunteer collaboration with the Department of Information and Innovation and the Department of Buildings and General Services to "provide a forum for identifying and addressing common concerns and to offer consistent advice on records and information management, including electronic records."

iSTART has issued two policies and one guideline to assist agencies in creating standards-based records and information management programs. A monthly newsletter keeps agencies apprised of iSTART's work and provides opportunities for comment on proposed policies and guidelines. More details about iSTART is available online at: <http://vermont-archives.org/records/iSTART>.
- *Record Appraisal and Scheduling*

The Archives continued to improve its system for appraising and scheduling records. Key to the system is the use of controlled vocabulary terms and definitions for record types, government functions, and business activities, which allows for an enterprise-wide approach to records management. The system also facilitates compliance by associating records with State and Federal laws and regulations; existing disposition orders issued by BGS over the years; agency histories, and other information needed for establishing comprehensive record management plans. The system is being tested through partnerships with other state agencies.
- *Consolidating Records Management Authorities under State Archives*

The Archives continued working with the Legislative Council on possible public records legislation based on the Council's study mandated by Act 132 of 2006. The Senate Government Operations Committee consequently drafted and approved a bill consolidating records management authorities under the Archives. The goal is to create a unified program that can offer consistent, standards-based guidance on managing records and information.

This past year was particularly productive in further developing the processes and tools necessary for modernizing Vermont's management of records and information. Many of the accomplishments of the year are cited in the performance measure section and elsewhere. Other highlights include:

Processing Procedures:

- The Archives began to test new processing procedures that have emerged from the archival community. The goal of accelerated processing is to provide potential users with enough information about record series to make informed choices about what records to use. It promises to shave hours from traditional processing procedures that required item level work. Though our test of this approach has been limited, it could help us address the immense backlog of archival records acquired as a result of the Archives law of 2003.
- A new processing manual was created to guide both our retroactive management of the archival records acquired as a result of the 2003 law and for addressing future acquisitions. The processing manual sets out the steps for accelerated processing and is supported by templates for consistent content entry for the linking tables within our databases.

Improved Access:

- Series descriptions were created for all archival records at the Archives and incorporated into our online database.
- A new section on town lotting plan maps, including images of the maps, was added to the website (<http://vermont-archives.org/lottingplans.asp>). These maps have multiple applications, including use in locating Vermont's "ancient roads."
- A new "Spotlight of Records" web offering provides for highlighting particular records for potential users.

Management Programs:

Three areas previously mentioned deserve further elaboration: *i*START, the Office of Professional Regulation, and the potential consolidation of the Public Records Division (BGS) with the Archives.

***i*START:** The mission of this unique, voluntary, cross-agency collaboration is, as noted: "to provide a forum for identifying and addressing common concerns and to offer consistent advice on records and information management, including electronic records." It is unique in bringing together programs with statewide responsibility for assisting in the development of information systems within an enterprise environment and with statewide responsibilities for managing public records and information.

The participants realized that their work often overlapped, though the programs did not have sustained opportunities for sharing and understanding their related responsibilities. Too often when agencies turned to the individual programs for advice that advice was not coordinated; on occasion it was inconsistent. After a series of initial meetings where

professional perspectives and related issues were discussed *i*START agreed on a mission and began to identify and craft coordinated policies and guidelines.

By working together participants learned how their respective professional perspectives could be integrated into a project management, business analysis, and records management approach to assist agencies in planning for new information systems. That integration, in turn, facilitates an enterprise approach so that like activities, generating like records, can be consistently identified and managed across agencies.

By partnering with the EPMO the records programs gained entry to agency information planning efforts beyond what had been possible in the past. Each new partnership provides experience that is formalized into policies, guidelines, and tools that continually enhance the efforts of each participant. This, in turn, creates awareness within agencies for the need to have current record management plans in order to effectively employ new technologies.

The Office of Professional Regulation: The Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) with the Office of the Secretary of State needed to upgrade its licensing databases. It became the first public agency to work with EPMO and the Archives from planning to purchase of an information system. Implementation will begin in December 2007. We hope to use the OPR project as a case study.

In addition the OPR project is the first to use business and functional analysis to identify record types; any legal or administrative needs associated with those records/activities; and to test a controlled vocabulary so activities and records are consistently described. This will allow the Archives to work with OPR to create general record schedules setting baseline retention periods for similar records across agencies (for example, other agencies with licensing or permitting responsibilities). Among the Archives' goals is to move the State from the existing system of thousands of individual disposition orders telling public agencies when various records can be destroyed to general schedules that establish common retention periods for similar records across agencies.

Consolidation of the Public Records Division with the Archives: At the end of the 2007 session the Senate Government Operations Committee voted out a bill consolidating Public Records with the Archives. This good government measure recognizes that records and archival management need to be combined in order to provide consistent professional guidance for all records from point of creation to ultimate disposition (including transfer to the Archives). This model has become common in other states and Vermont is one of only 12 states where the programs remained administratively fragmented. The proposal, which will be taken up by the full senate in 2008, is the logical outcome of years of work starting with Act 3 of 2003 which mandated coordination between the programs and continued by the 2006 memorandum of understanding between the Archives and BGS and the current collaboration with *i*START .

The solid progress made during 2007 has led to an increasing number of opportunities for the archives, while refining our understanding of the challenges before us. While we maintain sufficient flexibility to take advantage of unanticipated opportunities, during 2008 we have identified five priorities:

- Complete design and begin construction of a new archives facility.
- Support consolidation of the records programs and create an administrative structure for effective service delivery by the consolidated program.
- Continue to support comprehensive approaches to recordkeeping through the *iSTART* collaboration.
- Create and test common tools for managing information and records, including adoption of the first general record schedules.
- Increase awareness and use of archival records.

Archives and research facility

The greatest challenge remains the inadequate archival and research space. The current space is a barrier to implementing an enterprise-wide archival management program.

A site for the new facility should be confirmed; initial construction started; and additional construction funds necessary to complete the facility will be sought.

Support consolidation of the records programs

In order to create more effective management of government records and information, work with the general assembly to pass the consolidation bill and work with BGS for the smooth transition of Public Records to the Archives.

Continue to support a comprehensive approach to recordkeeping

During 2008 the archives will continue to work through *iSTART* to identify the recordkeeping needs of agencies and develop policies and guidelines to assist agencies in managing their records, including their digital records.

Create common tools for managing information and records

Continue to develop tools for the consistent appraisal, identification and scheduling of records. Initiate a new system of providing general record schedules so that common records are managed consistently across government. Provide training on using the tools.

Increase awareness and use of archival records

The Archives will continue to add to the online record series database so users have consistent, basic information about what archival records are available.

CONCLUSION

The increasing number of public agencies and municipalities contacting the Archives for assistance in managing their records is both a measure of the need for such assistance and our initial success in providing it. The challenges remain immense; indeed, our very success has become a challenge as we try to remain responsive to the growing number of public agencies seeking our assistance. The pace of information technology deployments within State and municipal governments is particularly challenging given the disparity between resources allocated for technology and those accorded to the Archives. The partnership with the EPMO and with individual agencies only partly mitigates that disparity.

It is only now becoming clear to agencies that information technologies, to be effective, must be built on a solid foundation of information management practices. The historic lack of consistent and current information management practices, however, has weakened that foundation.

Through consolidation and collaboration we can buttress that foundation. We look forward to continued improvement of our services during 2008.