

**Vermont Secretary of State  
Vermont State Archives and  
Records Administration**

SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT

on

ARCHIVAL AND RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT

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## **Report of the State Archivist 2009**

This report, required by 3 V.S.A. §117(3)(c), covers the activities of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) during calendar year 2009.

Created July 1, 2008, VSARA continued designing and implementing a records management program for state government during 2009. Over twenty agencies/departments have become partners through our Targeted Assistance Program in order to develop current, standards-based records management programs. Two partners now have approved current record schedules while four general schedules, governing records common to many agencies, were approved in 2009. Every agency now has a records officer responsible for its records management; many record officers are supported by record liaisons responsible for records within agency subunits; and regular open houses for the officers/liaisons provide opportunities for learning about VSARA's operations and our evolving policies and procedures. We continued to work with the Department of Information and Innovation (DII) to incorporate recordkeeping practices into information technology systems, particular within DII's enterprise management initiative.

These efforts are integral to state government's ongoing search for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and service delivery in an environment of reduced resources. Information technologies, on their own, can not provide efficiencies or improve effectiveness. We use those technologies to create, receive, manipulate and store records and information. Without consistent, standards-based records and information management, information technologies can only, at best, recreate current practices and problems. Good record and information management plans can help improve workflow; bring government into compliance with legal mandates governing public records; and allow government information to be viewed, and used, as a business asset to government and citizen alike.

Equally exciting, during 2009 funding was approved for, and construction begun on, Phase II of the work to improve VSARA's Middlesex facility. Construction is scheduled for completion in February 2010 and VSARA, which consolidated in Middlesex in March, will have expanded archival vault and processing space to complement the renovated reference and office space accomplished during Phase I.

This is a time of wonderful opportunities for VSARA and the government it serves. The dedication of VSARA's staff and of our partners make those opportunities attainable.

Respectfully submitted,



D. Gregory Sanford  
State Archivist

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) is a division within the Office of the Secretary of State.

It is the mission of VSARA to:

- Advise and guide public agencies in records and information management.
- Appraise and schedule public records so they are preserved only as long as they have a legal or administrative value.
- Preserve and enhance access to the State government's archival records.
- Operate a secure State Records Center for non-permanent and inactive agency records.

To achieve this mission VSARA will establish and maintain partnerships with other public agencies and organizations, including the Department of Information and Innovation and its different units in order to effectively manage digital records.

The statutory authorities for VSARA are primarily within 3 V.S.A. §117 and 3 V.S.A. §218. In addition VSARA fulfills other statutory responsibilities assigned the Secretary of State including supervising Vermont notaries; providing clerical oversight for the Administrative Procedures Act; and helping meet Legislative Clerk obligations.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration will be widely acknowledged for its professional archival and records management expertise and role in supporting the effective and efficient management of public records within the State of Vermont.

## **GOALS**

- The State of Vermont will have a professionally managed and accessible research facility that enhances access to the State's archival records.
- Public agencies will have the tools and resources necessary to manage their records and information in an effective and efficient manner.
- Constituents will receive professional and responsive administrative services.
- State agencies will have a low-cost, secure facility for storing records that must be maintained for a set period of time to meet audit, fiscal, legal, or administrative needs.

## **STAFF**

VSARA has two professional archivists, three records analysts, an administrative services coordinator, three records center staff, two clerks, and three administrative assistants. One archivist position is currently vacant due to the recent retirement of the incumbent. In January seven positions in the former reformatting unit were eliminated.

During 2009 VSARA continued to make significant strides toward creating the knowledge, partnerships and tools required for the effective management of State records and information. The following list of performance measures, while not inclusive, provides a sense of the progress made this year.

### **GOAL #1**

**The State of Vermont will have a professionally managed and accessible research facility that enhances access to the State's archival records. (3 V.S.A. §117(g)(7))**

The Archives moved to the renovated Middlesex facility in March after a quarter century at Redstone in Montpelier, a lovely 19<sup>th</sup> century building that was inadequate for a modern archival program. The move accomplished the physical consolidation of the Archives with the former Public Records Division. Renovations to the Middlesex facility included an expanded reference room; a reception area where all visitors register and researchers can store their personal belongings before entering the reference room; and a suite of offices that provide both staff and visitors better privacy, particularly when non-archival services are being sought or delivered.

#### *Research Facility*

The Capital Construction Act passed in 2009 included funding for renovating the existing archival vault in the State Records Center; adding an additional archival vault and secure file rooms; renovating the former reformatting area for office, archival processing, and meeting space; upgrading fire suppression and other security issues; and addressing some deferred maintenance. Construction is scheduled for completion in February 2010.

The new vault areas will create storage for approximately 25,000 boxes of the state's most valuable records. This will allow VSARA to not only accept legal and physical custodianship of more paper archival records, but also provide a controlled environment that can support their long-term preservation. This improvement will also allow state agencies to systematically transfer archival records to the State Archives, thus relieving agency staff from storing and trying to manage such records on their own.

#### *State Archives Activities*

During 2009 VSARA focused most of its resources on creating a professional records management program for state government; day to day archival responsibilities were primarily carried out by the assistant state archivist who split her time between staffing the reference room and providing additional reference assistance for the archival records that remain at Redstone until construction is complete. Record analysts and other staff members also staffed the reference room and responded to requests for archival records.

Though archival research was not tracked until after the programs were combined at Middlesex, VSARA welcomed 839 researchers into its reference room between March 6, 2009 and December 31, 2009. And additional 808 researchers were assisted during the same time frame through our mail and e-mail services.

The record analysts' work has an archival component. Their analysis of agency records through the Targeted Assistance Program (TAP) provides a more comprehensive and consistent framework for identifying archival records. Appraisal decisions will help guide, and will be refined by, archival processing, including of legacy archival series that are often inadequately arranged and described.

Within the reality of limited resources the Archives achieved several successes. In the wake of the 2009 special session the Archives added a history of special sessions to our online presentation of "continuing issues" as well as updating previous presentations such as the section on the veto (<http://vermont-archives.org/govhistory/governance/index.htm>).

Additions were also made to the spotlight on records section of our web site (<http://vermont-archives.org/research/spotlight/records.htm>). "Spotlight" is used to highlight selected archival documents, particularly those that provide some context to an ongoing public dialogue. During 2009 Deane Davis's Governor's Commission on Environmental Control, 1970 (related to current discussions on Act 250 changes); the Vermont Emergency Relief Administration (a New Deal economic "stimulus" program); the 1931 Committee on the Costs of Health Care; and the 1944 Committee on Rural Policy post-World War II planning documents (which also touched on health care) were posted.

### ***2009 Highlight: Christie Carter***

On November 30, 2009, Assistant State Archivist Christie Carter retired. Christie worked at the Archives for over 21 years. In addition to her traditional reference and processing work Christie moved the Archives to the use of computer-assisted microfilm, which vastly improved access to the records while retaining microfilm's space and preservation strengths. Christie also helped design the Archives first Web page and helped manage its content.

Christie's career spanned the transformation of the State Archives into VSARA. She walked through a blizzard one night to check on an alarm that went off at Redstone; she helped marshal the response when the Redstone vault periodically flooded; and she survived the onslaught of opposition researchers and reporters during Governor Howard Dean's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. Christie helped process the records of Governors Kunin, Snelling and Dean and took particular interest in working with the Archives' photographs.

- We, as friends and colleagues, wish Christie well in her retirement and thank her for all her work over the years.

## GOAL #2

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### **Public agencies will have the tools and resources necessary to manage their records and information in an effective and efficient manner.**

- *Records Officer and Records Liaison Program*

Pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 218, each agency and department head is required to designate an individual on his or her staff to serve as records officer and carry out the agency's records management program in accordance with State law. Although this law has been on the books for more than 30 years, there has never been a program or process for tracking records officer designations or providing records management training to designees.

In December 2008, VSARA launched its Records Officer and Records Liaison Program and made it available not only to agencies and departments required to designate records officers, but also to the offices of constitutional officers, the Vermont Judiciary, and the Vermont Legislature. The program provides structure and continuity to agency records management programs while also ensuring that best practices, recordkeeping requirements, and procedures are well communicated across State Government.

As of December 31, 2009, the State of Vermont has a network of 627 individuals who have been designated as records officers or liaisons for their respective agencies, departments, divisions, or units. VSARA provides informal training opportunities through its *Open Houses*, which are offered on the first Tuesday and last Thursday of every month.

- *Record Appraisal and Scheduling*

In 2009, VSARA started issuing record schedules to help agencies comply with 1 V.S.A. § 317a, which states that: [a] custodian of public records shall not destroy, give away, sell, discard, or damage any record or records in his or her charge, unless specifically authorized by law or under a record schedule approved by the state archivist pursuant to subdivision 117(a)(5) of Title 3.

To date, four (4) General Record Schedules (GRS) have been developed by VSARA to provide consistency in recordkeeping by Vermont public agencies for common functions and activities in the areas of administration, operations, contracting, and licensing. Any Vermont public agency may adopt any or all of the requirements in a general record schedule approved by the Vermont State Archivist. Adopting an approved GRS means that the agency agrees to implement, at a minimum, the retention and disposition requirements outlined in the GRS (where applicable).

VSARA also completed agency-specific record schedules for the Vermont Labor Relations Board and the Board of Professional Responsibility. Agency-specific record schedules are developed by VSARA and an agency through the Targeted Assistance Program (TAP). Like general schedules, agency-specific record schedules satisfy the requirements of 1 V.S.A. § 317a and also, where mandated, 3 V.S.A. § 218. They are subject to annual certification and may be amended by mutual consent at any time.

- *Targeted Assistance Program (TAP)*

The Targeted Assistance Program (TAP), which replaced the Archives' Records Appraisal Program in January 2008, is designed to assist State and local government agencies in resolving issues and problems with their current records management policies and procedures. TAP embraces statewide strategies for managing records and offers agencies an opportunity to partner with VSARA and, where possible, its collaborators.

Agencies, who must provide staff time and subject matter expertise, may request assistance in developing record schedules, customized records training, record taxonomies or file plans, and other records management related tools and resources.

Current TAP partners include: Department of Mental Health, the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; Finance and Management Department; Department of Children and Families; Agency of Commerce and Community Development; Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; Vermont Clerks' and Treasurers' Association; Vermont Judiciary; Defender General's Office; and the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services.

- *Information Strategies Taskforce: Archives, Records, and Technology (iSTART)*

During 2009 VSARA continued to develop record management tools through the Information Strategies Taskforce: Archives, Records, and Technology (iSTART). This is a volunteer collaboration with the Department of Information and Innovation's Enterprise Project Management Office to "provide a forum for identifying and addressing common concerns and to offer consistent advice on records and information management, including electronic records." The Attorney General's Office also participates when legal issues need to be addressed.

During 2009 iSTART issued two best practices:

- Electronic Messages Best Practice for All Public Agencies
- Information Security for All Public Agencies

Statewide guidance is not only an important resource for agencies establishing their own recordkeeping systems but also is essential to developing enterprise systems for the consistent management of information across agencies. A newsletter keeps agencies apprised of iSTART's work and provides opportunities for comment on proposed policies and guidelines. More details about iSTART are available online at:

<http://vermont-archives.org/records/iSTART>.

***2009 Highlight: Archives and Records Management Handbook***

*The Handbook consists of the Records Management Procedures Manual and additional advice on issues concerning records and how to manage them in accordance with Federal and State laws and regulations and industry standards. Several additions to the Handbook were made in 2009, making it a great resource for public agencies. The Handbook is at: <http://vermont-archives.org/records/handbook/index.htm>.*

### GOAL #3

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**State agencies will have a low-cost, secure facility for storing records that must be maintained for a set period of time to meet audit, fiscal, legal, or administrative needs.**

The State Records Center has consistently provided low-cost storage for records that must be maintained for audit, fiscal, legal, or administrative needs, but are no longer used frequently enough to justify storing the records on-site, which is generally more expensive. Services of the State Records Center are available to all state agencies and include box pick-up, storage, retrieval, and destruction. Current practices and procedures are being evaluated and improvements are being made as needed.

- *Records Storage*

The State Records Center currently has 89,050 boxes of records and more than 78,000 reels of microfilm in storage on behalf of state agencies. In 2009, VSARA accepted 10,926 boxes of records from state agencies for storage at the State Records Center. In addition to boxes, 9,972 individual files were processed and re- or inter-filed in their respective boxes. Retention requirements for 8,082 boxes of records were also satisfied this year and VSARA effectively destroyed the records on behalf of the agencies using the State Records Center services.

- *Record Retrievals*

For records stored in the State Records Center, both legal control and control of access to the records are retained by the agency until the records are either transferred to the State Archives or destroyed. Unless there is a formal agreement between the agency and the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA), the State Records Center does not have the authority to release records to the public under any circumstances or respond to public record requests. Therefore, if a private citizen or staff member from another agency contacts the State Records Center to access records, they are referred to the appropriate agency Records Officer.

In 2009, Records Center staff fulfilled 11,954 requests from agency Records Officers to pull records from storage and return them to the creating agency. This number includes requests for records that have been converted to microfilm. VSARA tries to maintain a 24-hour turn around for this service.

***2009 Highlight: Operation Box***

“Operation Box” is an ongoing VSARA effort for, investigating records stored in the State Records Center that have either been abandoned by their creating agencies or were kept longer than their retention requirements for no apparent reason. In 2009, State Records Center staff and the VSARA records analysts worked to identify and resolve issues with boxes of records that had already met their legal retention requirements but, for reasons unknown, had not been destroyed. Through this particular effort, which also involved relevant agency personnel, more than 2,400 boxes of records were destroyed.

## GOAL #4

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### **Constituents will receive professional and responsive administrative services.**

VSARA carries out the following administrative services: document authentication on behalf of the Vermont Secretary of State; vital record certification on the behalf of the Department of Health; and statutory filings for administrative rules, legislative acts and resolves, and State deeds and leases. The lobby and offices at Middlesex were designed so these administrative services are provided outside the Archives reference room providing privacy for those seeking such services while limiting distractions to those using archival records.

- *Document Authentication*

Pursuant to the *Convention of 5 Octobre 1961 Abolishing the Requirements of Legalisation for Foreign Documents* (Hague Conference on Private International Law), the Vermont Secretary of State is a designated competent authority to “certify the authenticity of the signature, the capacity in which the person signing the document has acted and, where appropriate, the identity of the seal or stamp which it bears” on documents originating from Vermont public agencies or notarized by Vermont Notaries Public. VSARA issued 2,117 authentications, including Apostilles, in 2009.

To support document authentication, certificates of notary public appointments are dually filed and preserved in the office of the county clerk and the office of the Vermont secretary of state. Upon request, the Vermont Secretary of State may certify the appointment, qualification and signature Vermont notaries public. In 2009, VSARA processed 1,238 notary applications or amendments.

- *Vital Records Certification*

VSARA shares the responsibility of certifying Vermont vital events such as birth, death, marriage, and divorce with the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). For events older than 5 years, this function is performed exclusively by VSARA. In 2009, VSARA issued 6,463 certificates to individuals seeking certified copies of vital records. On behalf of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), which is required under Federal law to verify birth certificates for individuals seeking State services, VSARA also confirmed 9,294 birth records for individuals born prior to 1980.

- *Statutory Filings*

Administrative Rules: The Vermont Secretary of State, Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules (ICAR) and Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR) share the responsibility for carrying out administrative services pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act (APA). The Secretary of State is required to accept proposed and final rules for filing; publish notices of proposed rules; and to keep open for public inspection a permanent register of rules. In 2009, VSARA accepted, filed, published, and preserved 153 administrative rule filings.

Acts and Resolves: At the commencement of each legislative session the Secretary of State must appoint a legislative clerk. The duties of the Legislative Clerk are currently split between VSARA and the Division of Elections and Campaign Finance. In 2009, VSARA processed 78 acts and 277 resolutions, which includes indexing, certifying, and, where applicable, distributing certified copies as directed by the General Assembly

Land Conveyances: Under State law, all deeds, contracts of sale, leases, and other documents associated with conveying land or an interest therein to the State, with the exception of highway rights of way, leases, and conveyances, must be filed in the Office of the Secretary of State. VSARA accepted 184 instruments from state agencies and departments for filing in 2009.

***2009 Highlight: Vital Record Requests Web Portal***

In 2009 VSARA began the process of updating its web portal for requesting vital records online. Patrons can go to a single web address to request vital records from both VSARA and Vermont Department of Health. The portal will appropriately route the requests based on the event year. There will be the option to request to have an apostille or authentication attached to the vital record. We will also be able to offer expedited shipping options for those needing fast delivery. These enhancements promote efficiency and improved customer service. This upgrade will be activated early in 2010.

The solid progress made during 2009 has led to an increasing number of challenges and opportunities for VSARA. As with all of state government the chief challenge is the economy and its impact on budgets and other resources. To the degree that economic issues create a willingness to re-examine government functions and activities there is also a remarkable opportunity for re-enforcing awareness that properly managed government records and information are important corporate assets. Effective recordkeeping is essential for being able to measure performance and results.

We have identified four main opportunities for 2010:

1. Link the development of comprehensive records programs within agencies to improving service delivery and performance measures.
2. Develop practical steps toward archiving digital public records.
3. Use archival records to understand why and how State services/programs have evolved.
4. Continue to build on the delivery of efficient and effective administrative services.

**Link the development of comprehensive records programs within agencies to improving service delivery and performance measures.**

The partnerships required by the Targeted Assistance Program and the products and tools produced by those partnerships help agencies develop a comprehensive understanding of their activities and what records they create, acquire, or manage. Understanding information flows provides agencies with opportunities to improve effectiveness and develop record-based performance measures.

**Develop practical steps toward archiving digital public records.**

With the retirement/transition of several state officers there are opportunities for developing procedures for transferring digital archival records. The partnership with the Department of Information and Innovation and the collaboration within iSTART can be used to understand what is required both to build and maintain a digital record center and a digital archives.

**Use archival records to understand why and how State services/programs have evolved.**

The pressing need to develop a professional records and information program has come at the cost of the archival management component of VSARA. During 2010 we will begin to redress this imbalance with a focus on making records and information on government services and programs more accessible. This not only dovetails with the work of the record analysts but also could provide contextual information to help the ongoing reexamination of government.

**Continue to build on the delivery of efficient and effective administrative services.**

In 2010 we hope to expand our ability to provide online and digital access to vital records and our other administrative services. We will continue to look to ways to streamline administrative services, reduce redundancies and paper, and make these services as accessible as possible to Vermonters.

This has been one of the most notable years in the history of the State's efforts to manage its records and information. Through collaborations such as *iSTART*, partnerships developed through TAP, and training through the Summit program significant steps have been taken toward creating a community within state government that values and practices sound recordkeeping. As that community grows we will continue to reduce the legal liabilities associated with poor recordkeeping; improve the use of information technologies; and enhance records and information as an important business asset for government and citizen. The challenges facing us in this unsettled economy are significant, but the opportunities offered by cooperation and collaboration are great.