

ARMA Greater Cincinnati Chapter 11/10/2009

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# Records Management From an Archivist's Point of View



# Records Management and Archives

- There should be strong links between the two professions
- In many countries, they have never been separated
- In this country they are usually seen as two separate disciplines, but both are members of the allied information professions

# The Local Government Archivist (1)

- In local government, the records manager usually has archivist duties in addition to records management duties
- Archival duties include reference work, providing a reading room for researchers, and balancing accessibility to records with their care and preservation for future generations

# The Local Government Archivist (2)

- A local government archivist must consider the needs of the public as well as those of the employer
- The local government records belong to the public—they are “public records”, for the most part
- The archival records form part of the national and local heritage and they must be retained safely

# The Local Government Archivist (3)

- There is a need for sound records management practice to ensure that the archival records—those records of enduring historical value that document the rights of people, provide accountability, and tell the story of the community--will get to the archives

# Ohio's Local Government Records Program (1)

- Records Management is required by law–The Ohio Revised Code
- The Ohio Historical Society serves as the archives administration for the state
- A Local Government Records Program is administered by the Ohio Historical Society

# Ohio's Local Government Records Program (2)

- In 1970 the Ohio Network of American History Research Centers was founded
- It was composed of the OHS, five state universities and the two largest historical societies in the state
- The LGRP was administered by the OHS through the network, which also undertook to store historical local government records

# Ohio's Local Government Records Program (3)

- Ohio has 88 counties.
- Fewer than six have a professional archivist on staff
- There is a great reliance on the Local Government Records Program
- As the network is no longer funded, more recently CARMA—the County Archivists and Records Managers Association—has provided assistance and networking opportunities

# Ohio's LGRP (4)

## --Published Assistance

- The Ohio County Records Manual contains recommended records retention periods for county records
- The Local Government Records Handbook has basic information about setting up a records management program

# Ohio Law--County Records Commission (1)

- ORC 149.38 mandates the creation of a county record commission composed of the president of the board of commissioners as chair, the prosecuting attorney, the auditor, the recorder, and the clerk of the court of common pleas

# Ohio Law--County Records Commission (2)

- The commission shall appoint a secretary, who may or may not be a member of the commission
- The commission may employ an archivist
- The commission shall meet at least once every six months

# Background (1)

- Greene County has held meetings of their Records Commission since 1972
- I was hired by the Board of Greene County Commissioners in 1996 as the first Records and Information Manager
- I was appointed by the Greene County Records Commission in the same year as Archivist to the Records Commission

# Background (2)

## --Reporting Structure

- I work for the County Commissioners
- I report directly to the County Administrator
- Records management and archival administration provide a service for the entire county government system

# Background (3)

## --County elected officials

- Autonomy of elected officials—commissioners and others
- Their view of “their” records
- Need for diplomacy
- “County government...is structured to encourage inefficiency and it is highly resistant to change.” Carl Broberg, *Local Government in Ohio*, 1995.

# Background (4)

## —Greene County Needs

- There was a desperate need for storage
- The commissioners had designated a space for a records center and archives and they had consulted with other counties regarding the necessary requirements

# Background (5)

## --Storage Areas

- Records were stored everywhere, but mainly in basements, attics, closets, etc.
- This situation is very typical for local government offices
- There was often a dirty, smelly, damp environment, with no temperature or humidity control and little security

# Background (6)

## --Storage Areas

Records Stored in a Garage



# Background (6)

## --Immediate Concerns

- Many valuable historical documents, such as commissioners' journals, probate court records and engineer's records were at risk.
- In addition, many early nineteenth century original books, documents and maps were still being used on a daily basis.

# Greene County Program (1)

- There was upper management support for a RIM/ Archives program
- Group training sessions were held for county employees
- A LGRP representative attended to discuss the legal issues
- The Greene County archivist discussed the program specifics

# Greene County Program (2)

- The training included the goals and values of a records management/archives program, emphasizing the need for a systematic control of records throughout their life cycle

# Greene County Program (3)

The first step was that the commissioners requested that the Greene County historical records stored in the network center (Wright State University) be returned to the newly formed Greene County Archives

The next step was the development of office retention schedules for current records by the following means:

- Personal interviews with employees
- Physical inventory of records
- Appraisal of records value--fiscal, legal, administrative, and historical

# Greene County Program (4)

Greene County retention schedules include:

- A General Schedule which lists records common to many offices, including duplicates, transitory records, reference material, etc.
- The unique office schedules

# Greene County Program (5)

- Retention Schedules are signed by the department head, the chair of the county records commission (at a public meeting), the state archivist and the state auditor
- Once the schedules are returned from the state auditor, eligible records can be destroyed or transferred to archives

# Greene County Program (6)

Transfer of records to archives:

- The records must be listed on a retention schedule
- They must have a permanent, or long term, retention
- A transfer document must be filed
- This is a controlled procedure--the archives is not a warehouse for unwanted records

# Greene County Program (7)

- Concurrently with the inventory of county records the selected location for the records center and archives was prepared
- Problems included that it was a second story location and that, although there was a freight lift for boxes, there was no elevator

# Greene County Program (8)

- Purchases included steel shelving, some mobile shelving for confidential and fragile records, records center boxes, acid free archival supplies and conservation materials for in-house minor repairs
- Eventually 2 microfilm storage areas, with hygrothermographs to monitor environmental conditions, and a chairlift to assist handicapped researchers were provided

# Greene County Program (9)

Researchers' needs were met over time:

- Tables and chairs were provided first
- Indexes of stored records and guidelines for the use of historical documents were made available
- Later came a paper scanner and a microfilm reader/scanner
- Later still, a digital camera for copying bound books and maps

# Greene County Program (10)

- The Archives-exterior view



# Greene County Program (11)

- Archives—interior view



# Greene County Program --Follow Up (1)

- An internal Greene County Records Management Manual was published for all county offices, departments, and agencies' reference purposes
- The manual includes guidelines for the management of e-mail
- The manual is available electronically on the County Intranet system
- Department retention schedules are also available on the County Intranet

# Greene County Program --Follow Up (2)

To address ongoing needs:

- Continuous one-on-one training is conducted during periodic records retention reviews
- There are occasional exhibits of archival records
- Tours of the records center and archives are held for interested groups (both internal and external)

# Records Center and Archives Website (1)

- [www.co.greene.oh.us/archives.htm](http://www.co.greene.oh.us/archives.htm)
- The website includes pages on genealogical services, offsite research policy, records request forms, databases, FAQs, and links to other family history resources

# Records Center and Archives Website (2)

- Databases include birth records (1869-1909), divorces (1804-1900), court cases (1980-present), elected officials (1803-present), Recorder's Office document search (1980-present), current property maps and information, selected Engineer's maps (1870-1970), and links to the GC Public Library's genealogy databases
- We continue to work on digitization projects for the website

# Greene County Program --Results (1)

- Improved research facilities (for both internal and external researchers)
- Irreplaceable primary source records, previously at risk, now environmentally protected and secure
- Professional conservation work is undertaken as finances allow

# Greene County Program --Results (2)

- Local officials, department heads, and many other county employees are now aware of the records program, the value of historical records, and the work and care needed to ensure their continued protection. But the work and the education is ongoing

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