



State & Local Records News

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State Transportation Department, Mobile and Marshall Counties win awards

On January 28, 2009, the State and Local Government Records Commissions selected three agencies to receive the first annual awards in records management and preservation. The commissions initiated an awards program in November to recognize state agencies, public colleges and universities, local governments, and local historical entities that make special accomplishments or have outstanding records programs.

The 2008 State Records Commission award went to the Department of Transportation. Archivist Chris Davidson, a former ADAH staff member, and his staff developed agency-wide records management policies and procedures, provided records training to DOT staff, inventoried records at agency headquarters and at divisions all across the state, renovated an agency building as an archives and records center, and supervised the digitization of department records. The commission lauded DOT for establishing a “strong foundation” for its records program and serving as “a model for other large agencies.”

The Local Government Records Commission selected the Marshall County Preservation Society and the Mobile County Probate Court as recipients of its 2008 awards.

Members of the Marshall County Preservation Society prepared historical probate and circuit court files that resulted in 168 rolls of loose records microfilm. They also helped to preserve old county newspapers. More recently, with support

from the county probate office and commission, they were instrumental in establishing a Marshall County Archives, which will be staffed by society members when it opens to the public.

Mobile County’s probate court has had a records microfilming program since the 1950s. In 1989, the discovery of the county’s oldest records in a courthouse attic led to the creation of a probate court archives. Since then, archivist Coll’ette King has overseen the indexing and microfilming of hundreds of rolls of probate records, including the translation of French and Spanish colonial documents that date back to the founding of Mobile.

The awards, which are Governor’s Certificates of Appreciation, will be presented to all recipients at the State Records Commission meeting on April 29. Nominations for 2009 records commission awards must be submitted to the ADAH Government Records Division by December 1. Guidelines for the 2009 awards will soon be available on our website at: <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/officials/guidelines-nominationform.pdf>.

Records commissions approve new, revised RDAs

At its meeting on January 28, the **State Records Commission** approved new RDAs for the Agricultural Center Board and the Governor’s Com-

mission on Physical Fitness and Sports, as well as revised RDAs for ADAH and State Health Planning and Development Agency. The commission also reviewed annual RDA implementation reports from 31 state agencies, 26 public colleges, and 13 public universities.

Also meeting on January 28, the **Local Government Records Commission** approved a revised RDA for regional planning commissions. It also reviewed a summary report on RDA implementation by Alabama's 35 local health care authorities.

The State Records Commission's next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, April 29, 2009**, beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Region's Board Room at ADAH.

The Local Government Records Commission will not meet in April. Local records staff is working with the Secretary of State's Office on a major revision of the RDA for county boards of registrars. However, the RDA (which has been suspended since the implementation of Alabama's new voter registration system began in 2004) will not be ready until the commission's July meeting.

Local governments may now submit records destruction notices online

Some time ago, ADAH web gurus Mark Palmer and Alan Legleiter revised our Local Government Records Destruction Notice (which has long been available for downloading from the ADAH website) so that it can be completed and submitted electronically. Alan recently "tweaked" the form again to make it easier to use online.

We also updated the destruction notice form's instructions, which had caused confusion when filling out the "audit" column on the form. The current form requests the "date [the] latest records listed [on the form] were audited," but the instructions still asked for the date of the agency's

last audit. That oversight has been corrected. What we need is verification that all auditable records proposed for destruction have been kept, as required in our RDAs, for two years after audit.

Naturally, agencies may still print out and mail paper copies of the destruction notice form. Whether a form is submitted by "snail mail" or electronic mail, ADAH local records staff will still return a letter of acknowledgment to the agency and retain the destruction notice permanently in our division files. For more information, contact local records archivist Tom Turley at (334)353-4607 or Tom.Turley@archives.alabama.gov.

ADAH services adversely affected by state budget cuts

Due to a mid-year budget reduction after proration of all state agencies, the Archives has been forced to eliminate or reduce a variety of services.

ADAH has lost 11 employees since March 2008, amounting a 20% reduction in its staff. Because four of the lost positions worked on weekends, we had to discontinue Saturday hours in the reference room and museum galleries, effective February 1. Dr. Ed Bridges, director of ADAH, expressed his regret:

"For Alabamians who work during the week, Saturdays are often the best time to visit the museum galleries with their families or to do family history research. We . . . hope to restore [Saturday hours] when the state's budget is in better condition."

Recent budget reductions will also impact ADAH services to state and local agencies. Effective April 1, the monthly cost of storing temporary records at the State Records Center will increase from 35 cents to 42 cents per box. Records pick-up and retrieval services, as well as storage boxes and labels, will still be included at no extra charge.

Local government agencies may be affected by decreases in our travel budget. Although on-site

advisory visits from ADAH staff will still be free, agencies may now be asked to cover mileage costs.

For more information on these changes in ADAH services, contact the Government Records Division at (334)242-4452, or records@archives.alabama.gov.

Thirty applicants vie for HRAB historical records grants

By the January 31 deadline, we had received 30 applications for records preservation grants offered by the State Historical Records Advisory Board (HRAB). The board has available \$50,000 in federal funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Successful proposals may receive a maximum of \$3,000 each.

Grant applicants included county and municipal agencies, archives and museums, local historical societies, public libraries, state universities, and state historic sites. They have requested a total of \$79,389.45 in HRAB grant support. Adding in required local matching funds, the 30 proposals would expend \$189,665.47 on historical records management and preservation work.

Because funding is limited, hard choices must be made among a promising group of applications. The HRAB grant review committee is evaluating the proposals and will make recommendations on funding to the board. Meeting on March 25 (at 10:30 a.m. in the Regions Board Room at ADAH), HRAB members will select the grant recipients. The awards will be announced, and projects may start work, on April 1.

Given recent projections of NHPRC funding for 2010 in President Obama's budget, we hope to be able to offer HRAB historical records preservation grants again next year. For more information on the program, please contact Tracey Berezansky or Tom Turley at (334)242-4452, or records@archives.alabama.gov.

ADAH continues to microfilm newspapers and collections

Our reformatting section at ADAH still microfilms approximately 95 current Alabama newspapers. We receive complimentary subscriptions to many of the newspapers, but microfilming protects the originals and makes their information more readily available for research use.

The current newspaper collection includes titles from every Alabama county. At first, we focused on newspapers from Alabama's larger, more populated areas or from county seats. Those papers carry more obituaries, wedding announcements, legal notices, etc. We have recently dropped major titles now filmed by University Microfilms (UMI), or by Bell and Howell, but we are filming nine current titles donated by Auburn University.

The ADAH reformatting section formerly employed five camera operators, had a full-blown laboratory, and did all of its own film processing and duplication. As time went on, we lost staff, and our machinery got old and outdated. We sent the processing equipment to surplus property and now outsource processing and duplication. Today, we have only one camera operator and a supervisor who quality-checks and edits film. We still make duplicate copies for our patrons and diazo copies for the Reference Room. The microfilm masters are preserved in our vault in the new West Wing.

ADAH will continue preservation microfilming as long as we can keep the camera running. Besides current newspapers, we also film departmental collections to preserve the information and lower the security risk of records being stolen. Although some ADAH patrons dislike microfilm and prefer to examine the original collections, once a collection is filmed it is normally placed on restricted access.

For more information on our microfilming program, contact Alice Ulrich at (334)353-4721, or Alice.Ulrich@archives.alabama.gov.