

ANNUAL REPORT

Progress to Date in Reducing the Archival Backlog

TO: The Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Nolan T. Yelich, The Librarian of Virginia
Conley L. Edwards III, State Archivist

DATE: 22 November 2004

RE: Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog

Per the Commonwealth's Appropriation Act, Chapter 1042, Section 1–75, Item 259, Paragraphs B.1 and B.2, for the biennium ending 30 June 2004, the Library of Virginia annually receives \$650,000 in General Fund monies to support fifteen full-time positions "to relieve the 54-year backlog in processing significant archival, special, and other historical collections."

The following report is submitted in compliance with the Budget's instructions that the Librarian of Virginia and the State Archivist shall report annually to the Governor and to the Chairs of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees on the Library's "progress to date in reducing its archival backlog."

This report is for the period 1 July 2003 through 30 June 2004, and thus covers the fifth fiscal year under the special program, instituted 1 July 1999.

Staffing: The Library's Archival Description Services program currently includes twenty-four positions for assessing and processing local, state, and non-governmental archival records.

Of these twenty-four positions, six are assigned to organizing and describing Private Papers collections, six for State Records, and ten for Local Records. One position thus far is dedicated to coordinating electronic records, and one position provides administrative coordination as well as processing assistance. Budget reductions in fiscal years 2002 and 2003 reduced project funding and staffing within the Appropriation Act, from \$787,943 annually in support of seventeen positions to \$650,000 each year and fifteen positions.

Collections Processing: For the twelve-month period 1 July 2003–30 June 2004, the Library processed 169.0 cubic feet (approximately 253,500 items) of Private Papers, an additional 282.3 cubic feet (approximately 423,450 items) of State Records, and 361.9 cubic feet (approximately 542,850 items) of Local Records Collections.

Cubic feet processed for the period total 813.2 (approximately 1,219,800 items), or 67.8 cubic feet per month.

The total does not include 934 architectural plans and drawings also processed, nor does it include the increasing number of electronic and digital collections received and processed, particularly from government agencies.

This compares with 1,012.6 cubic feet (approximately 1,518,900 items), or 84.4 cubic feet per month, in 1999–2000; 1,062.9 cubic feet (1,594,350 items), or 88.6 cubic feet per month, in 2000–2001; 1,192.4 (1,788,600 items), or 99.4 cubic feet per month, in 2001–2002; and 1,084.4 (1,626,600 items), or 90.4 cubic feet per month, in 2002–2003.

The average rate of processing over the first five years of the program equals 1,033.1 cubic feet per year, or 86.1 per month—versus the annual target of 904 cubic feet, or 75.3 cubic feet per month. An overview of collections processed by category is provided as follows:

	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	To Date
Local Records	446.9	485.4	570.0	448.4	361.9	2,312.6
State Records	332.5	344.5	393.5	409.0	282.3	1,761.8
Private Papers	233.2	233.0	228.9	227.0	169.0	1,091.1
Totals:	1,012.6	1,062.9	1,192.4	1,084.4	813.2	5,165.5

In analyzing the year's activity, multiple factors affected the processing total, all of which shed light on several challenges facing this ongoing program. For example, Archival Description Services lost considerable staffing in the budget crisis of 2002; four positions remained lost or vacant while two other positions were not filled until mid-year. Staffing in fiscal year 2004, therefore, was approximately 16 percent less than when the program began in 1999.

One key element this past year was the significant amount of staffing and funding increasingly required to address collections involving electronic media—either collections “born digital” or other media received damaged or in an unstable format. Both require reformatting to an appropriate digital yet archival-quality surrogate. For example, the project devoted more than 160 workdays reformatting two collections to an archival-quality medium, with the full description work still remaining. Moreover, conversion of materials to stable media is immensely expensive; one collection, for example, required more than \$49,000 in project-specific donated funding to produce 650 archival tapes and public-service CD surrogates. These sorts of activities—and expenses—are not captured in the overall project statistics.

And in part the reduction in the rate of processing is also due to the necessary, and expected, time required to adopt and enhance the Library's new and complex Integrated Library System, an implementation process that began in October 2003 and continues.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a report of progress to date.