

December 8, 2016

TO: The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe  
Governor of Virginia

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.  
Co-chair, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.  
Co-chair, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable S. Chris Jones  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog at the Library of Virginia

Gentlemen:

Per the Commonwealth's Appropriation Act, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, I am pleased to submit the following report in compliance with the Act'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 July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please contact John Metz, Deputy of Collections and Programs, at 692-3607 or [john.metz@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:john.metz@lva.virginia.gov)

Sincerely,



Sandra G. Treadway

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Dietra Trent, Secretary of Education  
Daniel S. Timberlake, Director, Department of Planning & Budget  
Adam Henken, Budget Analyst, Department of Planning & Budget

## Library of Virginia

### FY 2016 Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog

The Library of Virginia has served as the official archives at the seat of Virginia state government since 1823. The State Library expanded its mission in the 1830s to include adding non-governmental manuscripts to provide a more comprehensive historical accounting of Virginia history. The volume of archival material has increased significantly over time as donations have increased, government has grown more complex, and recording practices have become more detailed. Today, the Library's archival collections number in excess of 124,000,000 items making it one of the largest collections of its type in the United States.

A backlog of unprocessed archival material developed in the second half of the twentieth century as the volume of incoming archival material increased and exceeded the capacity of staff to keep pace. The volume of unprocessed manuscripts continued to grow such that in 1998, archivists estimated that it would take an additional 54 years to process the backlog in addition to managing the rate of incoming archival material. The vast quantity of unprocessed material that existed at the end of the twentieth century represented a significant problem due to the inability to have a complete and accurate knowledge of items in the collection (allowing archivists to determine level of access due to any potential legal restrictions as well as insurance value), to identify and address preservation needs (including mold that could jeopardize other collections), and to make Virginia's documentary heritage accessible to its citizenry (collections remain closed to the public until archivists can determine if they include privacy protected material or items subject to other legal restrictions).

The Virginia General Assembly recognized the seriousness of the Library's need for appropriate resources to address the archival backlog in 1999. Passage of the budget bill that year included provisions to increase the level of staffing to more effectively reduce the backlog while managing the level of incoming archival accessions (Item 265, 1999 budget bill, Virginia General Assembly, <http://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?991+bud+21-265>). Specifically, the bill provided funding for 17 positions in the second year of that biennium (2000), "to relieve the 54-year backlog in processing significant archival, special and other historical collections before the year 2020." Moreover, this action called upon the Librarian of Virginia and the State Archivist to conduct an annual study of Library's archival preservation needs and priorities and to report annually to the Governor and the co-chairmen of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees of the General Assembly on The Library of Virginia's progress to date in reducing its archival backlog. This report seeks to fulfill those requirements.

Given the addition of 17 positions by FY 2000 to address the growing backlog, the Library of Virginia estimated that archivists would need to process at least 904 cubic feet of archival items per year in order to eliminate the backlog by 2020 while effectively managing incoming

collections. Library staff exceeded this target for all but one year (FY 2004) between FY 2000 and FY 2008 (Table 1). The situation since FY 2008 has been dramatically different due to a continuous series of budget reductions that have seriously impacted the ability of the Library to reduce its backlog, much less keep pace with the current volume of incoming material. In the eight years since FY 2008, the Library has only met or exceeded its target-processing quota of 904 cubic feet once in FY 2010 (Table 1). Budget and staffing reductions over the past eight years have resulted in a decline in full-time processing archivist positions from twenty FY 2008 (including two supervisors) to thirteen (including one supervisor) by the end of FY 2016. As a result, the processing rate dropped to a low of 380.3 cubic feet by the end of the June 2016 (Table 1).

As of June 30, 2016, the Library’s Government Records Services Division included ten full time positions in Local Records Services, four full-time positions in the State Records program for assessing and processing local and state records, and an administrative assistant. The Manuscripts & Special Collections department included two full time positions assigned to organizing and describing non-governmental Private-Papers collections. Of these, a total of twelve filled, full-time positions in Local Records, State Records and Private Papers were dedicated to processing archival collections, while five positions provided management, consultative, and/or administrative coordination for the archival units.

For the twelve-month period between July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016, the Library processed a total of 152.21 cubic feet (approximately 228,315 items) of Private Papers, 135.07 cubic feet (approximately 202,605 items) of State Records, and an additional 93.05 cubic feet (approximately 139,575 items) of Local Records Collections. An overview of collections processed by category is provided as follows:

**Table 1: Volume of Archival Materials Processed by Cubic Feet, FY 2000-FY 2016**

	<b>Local Records</b>	<b>State Records</b>	<b>Private Papers</b>	<b>Yearly total</b>
1999-00	446.9	332.5	233.2	1012.6
2000-01	485.4	344.5	233.0	1062.9
2001-02	570.0	393.5	228.9	1192.4
2002-03	448.4	409.0	227.0	1084.4
2003-04	361.9	282.3	169.0	813.2
2004-05	353.5	349.7	339.6	1042.8
2005-06	356.7	593.3	451.8	1401.8
2006-07	202.5	621.0	219.2	1042.7
2007-08	370.1	528.8	367.7	1266.6
2008-09	268.2	367.4	257.2	892.8
2009-10	411.9	312.3	207.1	931.3
2010-11	245.39	196	144.9	586.29
2011-12	244.7	245.82	222.98	713.48
2012-13	265.47	489.36	154.3	643.66
2013-14	228.46	85.76	72.50	386.72

2014-15	193.65	113.96	137.33	444.94
2015-16	93.05	135.07	152.21	380.33
<b>To date</b>	<b>5,280.75</b>	<b>5,800.27</b>	<b>3,817.92</b>	<b>14,898.94</b>

A total of 380.33 cubic feet of records was processed by all archival sections in FY 2016 (approximately 570,495 items), or 31.69 cubic feet per month, falling short of the cumulative target-processing quota of 904 cubic feet per year by 57% (Table 1). The average rate of processing over the first sixteen years of the program was 915.66 cubic feet per year, or 76.31 cubic feet per month—versus the annual target of 904 cubic feet, or 75.3 cubic feet per month. Just as the volume of Government records have increased since the beginning of the backlog reduction initiative, other collections, such as Private Papers, have grown at a significant rate due to donations and transfers. This adds to the total holdings figure and should be remembered when examining the processing statistics. If the holdings grow faster than the processing figures, then the backlog, in fact, increases.

The following are figures for new records acquisitions for each year since the beginning of the archival backlog reduction initiative in 1999 and organized by record type (Table 2). Although the Library of Virginia has exceeded the set level of processing for nine of the past seventeen years (FY 2000-FY 2003, FY 2005-FY 2008, and FY 2010), new items have been added to the collections at a rate that far surpasses the level of collection processing, resulting in a backlog that continues to increase.

*Table 2: Volume of Archival Materials Accessioned by Cubic Feet, FY2000-FY2016*

	<b>Local Records</b>	<b>State Records</b>	<b>Private Papers</b>	<b>Yearly total</b>
1999-00	264.0	832.0	172.5	<b>1,268.5</b>
2000-01	444.0	424.1	272.8	<b>1,140.9</b>
2001-02	658.8	161.9	39.2	<b>859.9</b>
2002-03	102.5	701.3	82.5	<b>886.3</b>
2003-04	927.2	452.5	37.7	<b>1,417.4</b>
2004-05	563.2	667.4	69.7	<b>1,300.3</b>
2005-06	490.8	1,958.5	274.2	<b>2,723.5</b>
2006-07	491.6	839.4	138.1	<b>1,469.1</b>
2007-08	966.8	606.7	507.4	<b>2,080.9</b>
2008-09	505.8	682.9	210.2	<b>1,398.9</b>
2009-10	508.9	1,707.6	300.7	<b>2,517.2</b>
2010-11	294.9	705.0	199.9	<b>1,199.8</b>
2011-12	106.0	492.6	213.1	<b>811.7</b>
2012-13	213.6	566.8	135.7	<b>916.1</b>
2013-14	3.0	801.5	58.0	<b>862.5</b>
2014-15	5.0	313.7	117.0	<b>435.7</b>
2015-16	13.0	417.0	54.7	<b>484.7</b>
<b>To date</b>	<b>6,559.10</b>	<b>12,330.90</b>	<b>2,883.40</b>	<b>21,773.40</b>

The cumulative rate of acquisition between the beginning of FY 2000 and the end of FY 2016 was 32.5% higher than the cumulative processing rate for the same period. It is of even greater significance to note that for accounting purposes in Private Papers only those collections that were processed and made available to the public are represented in the figures below. Unprocessed Private Papers collections, not being a public record, were not included.

There are multiple challenges facing the Library’s archival program beyond the growing volume of material. One key element is the significant number of staff and funding increasingly required to process collections involving electronic media—either collections “born digital” or other media received in a damaged condition or in an unstable format. Damaged and unstable media require reformatting to an appropriate digital yet archival-quality surrogate. There are few standards or guidelines for the archival processing of digital records and other institutions nationwide are watching the Library of Virginia as staff carefully develops our best practices, particularly in the area of government email processing and preservation. The development of these best practices — and the related expenses — are not captured in the overall statistics since the backlog initiative began before electronic records became a significant part of state record keeping. State Records archivists processed a total of 116,173 born-digital files in FY 2016 (compared to 36,011 electronic state records processed in FY 2015). The Local Records Services branch also added 243,326 images to the online Chancery Records Index during the same period.

The Library now has a total of 3,196.34 gigabytes of electronic and digital records in the collection (nearly a 5% increase over the previous year), presenting a whole new realm of storage and access issues that were not considered before the inception of the backlog reduction initiative in 1999 (Table 3). The transfer of electronic records for the current administration is expected to more than quadruple this amount. Additionally, paper records from this gubernatorial administration and all administrative agencies continue to be produced to document the work of government, thus ensuring large amounts of paper and electronic records accessions on a continuous basis, but especially every four years during the change in administrations.

**Table 3: Volume of Electronic Records (in megabytes) Processed by Hour, FY2000-FY2016**

	eRecs Processed - # of files	eRecs Processed – hours
2007-08	18,140.00	163.65
2008-09	61,715.00	257.50
2009-10	41,689.00	127.75
2010-11	3,692.00	9.50
2011-12	121,032.00	499.50
2012-13	325,511.00	420.80
2013-14	110,856.00	1,054.00
2014-15	36,011.00	964.00
2015-16	116,173.00	1,191.70
<b>To date</b>	<b>816,679.00</b>	<b>3,560.75</b>

In summary, the actions taken by the Virginia General Assembly in FY 1999 to provide the funding necessary to hire the staff necessary to address a 54-year backlog in unprocessed archival material within twenty years allowed the Library to make significant progress in the first eight years of the initiative. However, and not surprisingly, progress diminished significantly as the dismal financial climate since FY 2008 forced the Library to take cuts throughout its programs and staffing, including the archivists needed to process collections, preserve them, and make them available to the public. Moreover, electronic records have emerged as a complicating factor in the timely reduction of unprocessed records. Unlike manuscripts, electronic records by their ephemeral and unstable nature require immediate attention by archivists to ensure their preservation, servers to store the data, as well as on-going care to prevent data corruption and migration to new formats as information technology changes. The advent of electronic records also calls for archivists with specialized training beyond what was required in FY 1999 when the backlog initiative was first funded.

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