



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Sandra Gioia Treadway
Librarian of Virginia

December 2, 2021

TO: The Honorable Ralph Northam
 Governor of Virginia

 The Honorable Janet D. Howell
 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

 The Honorable Luke E. Torian
 Chair, House Appropriations Committee

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

Per item 245 B in the Commonwealth's Appropriation Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the Library's progress to date in reducing its archival backlog. This report covers the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at 804-692-3913 or kathleen.jordan@lva.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Jordan".

Kathleen Jordan
Acting Virginia State Archivist, Director of Government Records Services

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Frances Bradford, Secretary of Education
 Daniel S. Timberlake, Director, Department of Planning & Budget
 Adam Henken, Budget Analyst, Department of Planning & Budget
 Sandra G. Treadway, Librarian of Virginia, Library of Virginia

800 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

www.lva.virginia.gov

804.692.3500 *phone*
804.692.3976 *tyy*



Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog at the Library of Virginia (FY2021)

The 2021 Appropriations Act (item 245B) requires the Librarian of Virginia and the State Archivist to conduct an annual study of the Library's archival preservation needs and priorities and to report annually to the Governor and the co-chairs of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees of the General Assembly on the Library's progress to date in reducing its archival backlog.

Background

The Library of Virginia has served as the official archives for the commonwealth since the Library's founding in 1823. The Library holds the records created by the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, and all agencies of state government since 1776. Our comprehensive archival holdings also contain many of the surviving records of colonial government prior to statehood and the records of many Virginia localities from the earliest days of settlement through the modern era. In addition, the Library holds the papers of Virginia families, businesses, churches, and organizations whose activities document the daily lives of Virginians across four centuries and provide insights into our collective history not found in official records alone.

Since its founding nearly 200 years ago, the Library's collection of archival materials has grown to number approximately 130 million items, making the Library's collection one of the largest of any state archive in the United States.

Staffing

The Library's staff apply professional archival standards and practices to ensure that collections are organized, described, and preserved in order to guarantee public access to the records of government not only now, but also in perpetuity. This expansive growth of the collections, as well as periodic budget reductions/stagnation over the past 15 years, has made it difficult for the Library to keep pace with our backlog of "unprocessed" archival collections, while meeting the research needs of 21st century users.

In 2008, the Library had thirty staff processing all of its archival collections; due to several budget reductions over the years, at the close of FY 2021, there are fifteen full-time staff members whose time is split between processing collections, as well as providing consultative services, creating digital content, and providing donor, reference, and outreach services; these additional duties result in approximately the equivalent of 12 FTE devoted to processing.

In 2021, the Library received funding to support the addition of three archivists for State Government Records; two of these positions (processing archivists) were filled in October 2021. The Library will recruit for the third position, a manager to oversee the department, in early 2022. The addition of these positions will enhance the Library's ability to proactively plan for and accomplish processing goals and public access to the records of state government.

The following table shows the number of FTE whose time is predominantly devoted to processing and funding sources as of June 30, 2021:

Professional staff	Department	Funded by
2	Private Papers Collection	General Fund
4	State Government Records	General Fund*
5	Local Government Records	CCRP**
1	Virginia Untold Project Manager	NHPRC grant (2 years)

*Federal LSTA funds partially support one archivist working on electronic archival records.

**Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (<https://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/CCRP/>)

The Archival Collections

As previously stated, the archival collections of the commonwealth are comprised of state and local government records, as well as materials created by private Virginia citizens, corporations, businesses, and religious organizations. These records pre-date statehood and extend to the most recent electronic and paper materials that document Virginia today. A brief overview of the three collections follows.

Local Government Records

The Local Government Records program oversees a large collection of historically significant records created by Virginia cities and counties from the earliest days of Virginia history. The greatest proportion of records in this collection are from the Circuit Courts and span from the 1600s through the early 20th century. Heavily used by researchers, these records include wills and administrations, deeds, military records, marriage records, records related to enslaved individuals, plats and surveys, tax records, and much more. Of note are the Chancery Records (<https://www.virginiamemory.com/collections/chancery/>), which contain considerable historical and genealogical information. Because the records rely so heavily on testimony from witnesses, they offer a unique glimpse into the lives of Virginians from the early 18th century through the First World War. There are over 274,000 cases indexed in the database and over 11.5 million images of chancery causes available online.

Private Papers

The Library's Private Papers collection encompasses Bible records, business records, cemetery and church records, genealogical notes and charts, organization records, and personal papers. These collections, which range in size from a single sheet of paper to more than 1,000 cubic feet of material, represent about 10 percent of the Library's holdings but are heavily used by genealogists and historians. They often arrive at the library completely unorganized and require careful processing before they can be used effectively by researchers.

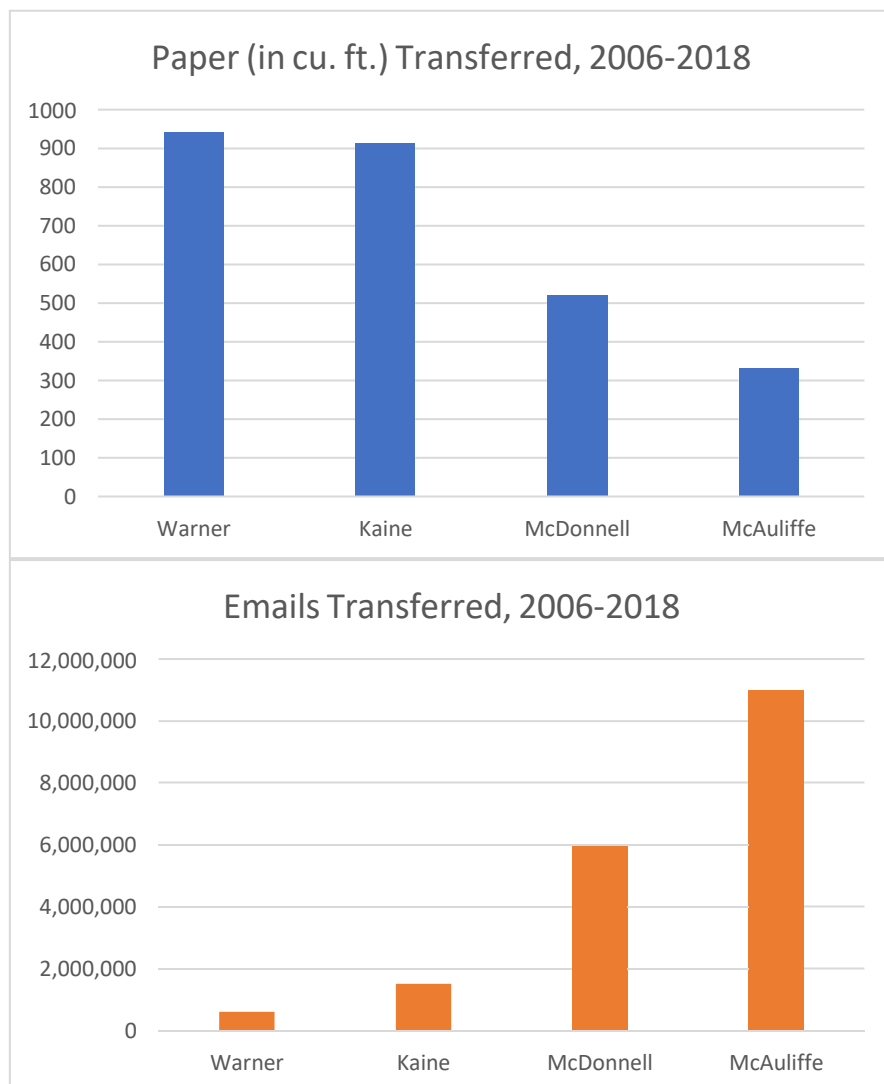
State Government Records

The State Government Records collection contains the historically significant records created by the executive, legislative and judicial branches of Virginia government. The State Records collection, the Library's largest, provides the official documentary record of Virginia government from 1776 through present. In addition to the records of Virginia's governors, the collection

includes the papers of state agencies, boards, commissions, constitutional conventions, the General Assembly, and the Supreme Court. The state archive also contains the surviving records of Virginia's colonial and revolutionary governments that preceded statehood, including the earliest records of the Virginia General Assembly.

Growth and Electronic Records

By far, the largest collection growth occurs in State Government Records, which regularly receives archival records from state agencies, as well as the every-four-year transfer of materials from the out-going governor. The backlog has increased exponentially with the huge influx of electronic records that the Library now receives from each gubernatorial administration. Whereas Patrick Henry's official correspondence as the first governor of Virginia numbers just 163 letters, Governor McAuliffe's transfer of records in 2018 included over 300 cubic feet of paper records and nearly 11 million emails.



As required in the Code of Virginia (§ 2.2-126) the Library must process (catalog) gubernatorial records before we release them to the public and, with just four people dedicated to processing records from state agencies, it has been impossible to keep pace with the amount of records we receive. However, in the past year, the Library has made considerable strides to address processing priorities and streamlining workflows to tackle the backlog. We are hopeful that with additional staff, we will be able to make even more progress to at least stem the tide.

Last year’s report included many challenges related to the backlog of unprocessed governor’s archival records dating back to the Wilder administration. The Library had received in recent years negative publicity regarding the unavailability of governors’ email records, as well as the paper records from several administrations. The Library acknowledged its error in not having the Wilder papers publicly available and worked diligently to rectify the situation. In December 2020, staff completed processing Governor Wilder’s records, and now 447.8 cubic feet of his records, within 1,013 boxes and described in 25 finding aids, are available to the public for research.

While the issues related to the processing and availability of born-electronic archival records are complicated (and costly), the Library also committed to processing the backlog of emails from the Warner, Kaine, McDonnell, and McAuliffe administrations. The Kaine collection is fully available online, while the email records for the Warner, McDonnell, and McAuliffe administrations (numbering in total 2,837,436 open emails) are being prepped for public access and will be available to the public between 2022 and 2023.

Current Archival Backlog

In 1999, when the General Assembly added 17 staff positions to the Library to address the backlog of unprocessed archival material, the backlog of State, Private, and Local records together stood at 17,186 cubic feet or approximately 25,779,000 manuscript pages. The archives contained no electronic records at that time so the backlog consisted exclusively of paper records. Overall, the current backlog of governors' records is 1,046 cubic feet of paper records and approximately 8TB of electronic records, which include emails as well as documents, spreadsheets, images, videos and sound recordings. It costs approximately \$12,000 per year to securely store these permanent electronic records, an amount which will increase as the collections continue to grow; and unlike paper records, that can sit on shelves safe and sound for years, electronic collections require regular monitoring and management to ensure integrity, security, and viability.

The following table shows backlog data for paper records (measured in cubic feet):

Collection	FY20 Backlog	FY21 Accessioned	FY21 Processed	FY21 Backlog
State Government Records*	20,327	330.1	979.8	19,677.3
Local Government Records	12,207	415	122.7	12,449.3
Private Papers	5,140	328.25	33.023	5,435.02
TOTAL	37,674	1,073.35	1135.73	37,611.62

*State Government Records incorporates “minimal processing” standards for certain modern archival records that require less close analysis and description due to the nature of the materials. This helps increase the number of cubic feet processed and made publicly available in a year.

Of the ~8TB of electronic archival content the Library manages, we have prioritized the processing of the email received since 2006. Governor Kaine’s emails are available for public use online; in 2022-2023, the remaining governors’ emails will be made publicly available following further internal processing, which includes the review and redaction by staff of privacy/legally protected information from 37,094 emails (Warner, McDonnell & McAuliffe). Initially, one processing archivist manually reviewed nearly half of Governor Kaine’s emails. The remaining Kaine emails, as well as the emails from the Warner, McDonnell, and McAuliffe administrations, were processed using Artificial Intelligence and the services of partners at the University of Waterloo. While this greatly accelerated the Library’s ability to process the emails, it cost approximately \$850,000 to achieve. Half of that cost was covered by General Funds, while the remainder was paid for with Federal LSTA funds.

Governor	Accessioned	Processed*	Open Records	Open/Redact**	Restricted***	Non-Records
Warner	600,000	600,000	174,673	1,579	2,567	421,181
Kaine	1,523,470	1,500,000	434,470	4,000	25,000	1,036,530
McDonnell	6,000,000	4,500,000	1,425,560	24,186	47,594	3,002,660
McAuliffe	10,940,979	5,812,357	1,237,203	11,329	17,127	3,862,963
TOTAL	19,040,979	12,412,357	3,271,906	41,094	92,288	9,007,069

*Processed records are those emails that remained after de-duping of the emails received from each administration.

**Open-Redact items are those emails that are generally open to the public except for certain contents that require redaction before public access.

***Restricted items are those emails that are closed to public access for a prescribed period of time (for ex. 75 years). At the end of the restriction period, these emails will be made publicly available.

Continuing Challenges

While in 1997, the challenge appeared to be acquiring the right number of staff needed to whittle away at the backlog of 17,186 cubic feet of material, Library leadership and members of the General Assembly could not have anticipated the impact of technology on record-keeping, governing, communication, and the economy as we now know it 24 years later.

Technology has enabled amazing advancements in the way government runs on a daily basis. However, the fallout on archives – not just in Virginia, but across the world – has been overwhelming and disheartening at times. The Library of Virginia’s accomplishments with emails are much greater than many others working in this area, but the challenges continue to grow more complex and more costly over the years. While the amount of paper records will continue to decrease, and over time the paper backlog will along with it, a new electronic backlog has emerged and will only continue to grow without significant changes to processes, staffing, and funding.