



# LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

**Sandra Gioia Treadway**  
*Librarian of Virginia*

November 3, 2023

TO:           The Honorable Glenn Youngkin  
                  Governor of Virginia

                  The Honorable Janet D. Howell  
                  Chair, Senate Finance Committee

                  The Honorable Barry D. Knight  
                  Chair, House Appropriations Committee

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

Per item 238 B in the Commonwealth's Appropriation Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, 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, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please feel free to contact me at 804- 692-3505 or [gregory.crawford@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:gregory.crawford@lva.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory E. Crawford".

Gregory E. Crawford  
Virginia State Archivist, Director of Government Records

Services Enclosure

cc:     The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Secretary of Education  
          Michael Maul, Director, Department of Planning & Budget  
          Sam Nicholson, Budget Analyst, Department of Planning & Budget  
          Sandra G. Treadway, Librarian of Virginia, Library of Virginia

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## **Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog at the Library of Virginia (FY2023)**

The 2023 Appropriations Act (item 238B) 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 nearly 132 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, now and 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 2023, there are fourteen 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.

The following table shows the number of FTE whose time is predominantly devoted to processing and funding sources as of June 30, 2023:

Professional staff	Department	Funded by
2	Private Papers Collection	General Fund
5	State Government Records	General Fund*
6	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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 279,000 cases indexed in the database and over 12.8 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.

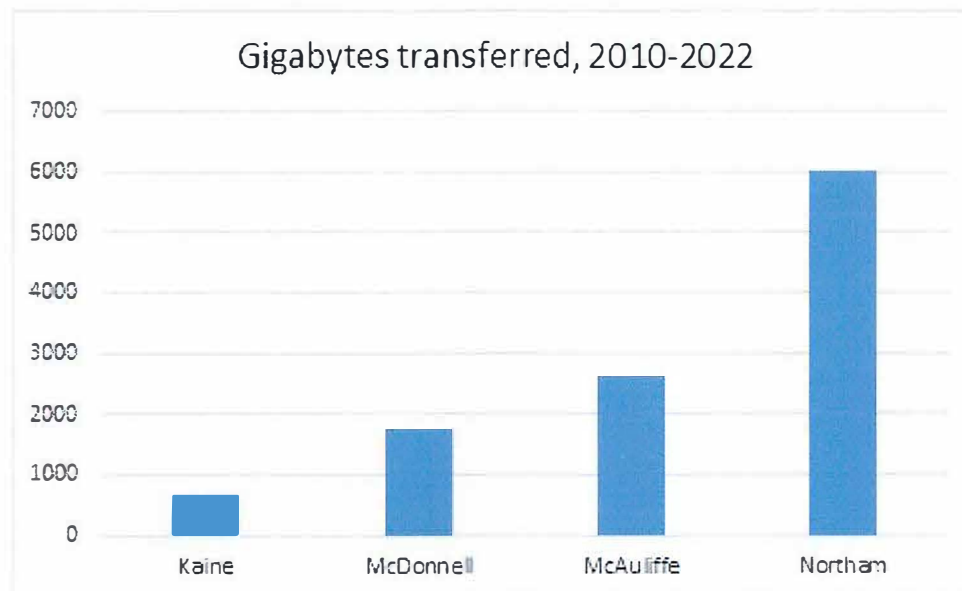
### **State Government Records**

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 outgoing governor. The backlog has increased exponentially with the huge influx of electronic records, primarily email, that the Library now receives from each gubernatorial administration. In 2010, the Library received 690 gigabytes of electronic records from the Kaine administration. In 2022, we received 6020 gigabytes from the Northam administration.



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 2023-2024, 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.

### 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. 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.

As required in the Code of Virginia (§ 2.2-126) the Library must process (catalog) gubernatorial records before we release them to the public. State Government Records staff continue to make progress addressing the backlog of gubernatorial paper records. The McAuliffe administration is nearly completed and staff have begun processing the Northam administration paper records. Totaling 279 cubic feet, processing should be completed by 2026.

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

<b>Collection</b>	<b>FY22 Backlog</b>	<b>FY23 Accessioned</b>	<b>FY23 Processed</b>	<b>FY23 Deaccessioned</b>	<b>FY23 Backlog</b>
State Government Records*	19,319.24	550.05	-1091.67	0	18,777.62
Local Government Records	12,375.75	110.75	-152.56	-59.38	12,274.56
Private Papers	5,696.98	181.35	-14.48	0	5,863.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,391.97</b>	<b>842.15</b>	<b>-1,258.71</b>	<b>-59.38</b>	<b>36,916.03</b>

\*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.

### **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.