



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

Dennis T. Clark
Librarian of Virginia

December 19, 2024

To: The Honorable L. Louise Lucas
Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Luke Torian
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

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

Chair Lucas and Chair Torian,

Per item 225B in the Commonwealth's Appropriation Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, I am pleased to submit the enclosed report on the Library's progress in reducing its archival backlog. This report covers the period July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.

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.

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
Dennis Clark, Librarian of Virginia, Library of Virginia
Michael Maul, Director, Department of Planning & Budget
Adam Henken, Budget Analyst, Department of Planning & Budget

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Annual Report on Reducing the Archival Backlog at the Library of Virginia (FY2024)

The 2024 Appropriations Act (item 225B) 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 Appropriations Committee and House Appropriation Committee 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. As we enter our third century, permanent records transferred to the Library primarily from state agencies and the governor's office are transitioning more to an electronic format than physical.

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 20 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 2024, there are sixteen 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 fourteen FTE devoted to processing.

The following table shows the number of FTE whose time is predominantly devoted processing and funding sources as of June 30, 2024:

Professional Staff	Department	Funded by
3	Private Papers Collection	General Fund
5	State Government Records	General Fund*
7	Local Government Records	CCRP**
1	Virginia Untold Project Manager	General Fund

*Federal LSTA funds partially support five 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 280,000 cases indexed in the database and over 13 million images of chancery causes available online.

Private Papers

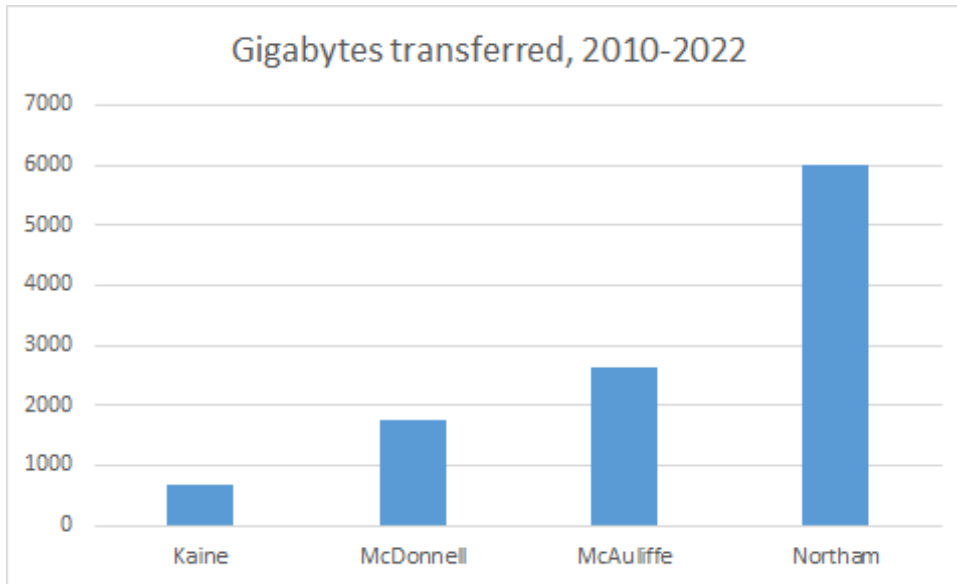
The Library's Private Papers collection encompasses Bible records, business records, cemetery and church records, genealogical notes and charts, organization records, and personal papers. These collections, which range in size from a single sheet of paper to more than 1,000 cubic feet of material, represent 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 ~14 TB of electronic archival content of gubernatorial records the Library manages, we prioritized the processing of the email received since 2006. 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 Kaine’s emails are available for public use online; the remaining governors’ emails will be made publicly available once further internal processing has been completed, which includes the review and redaction by staff of privacy/legally protected information from 37,094 emails (Warner, McDonnell & McAuliffe). The ~6 million Northam administration emails will be processed once funding becomes available.

In FY2024, state records staff began processing non-email electronic archival records of gubernatorial administrations starting with Governor Kaine. They consist of a myriad of electronic files (Word docs, Excel spreadsheets, pdfs, jpegs, tifs, etc.) that record the activities of the governors and executive agencies. The total amount of electronic records increases exponentially with each administration.

The Library of Virginia stores ~4 TB of electronic records transferred by state agencies for permanent storage. Most of these records have not been processed due to lack of staffing and resources. Additionally, the Library of Virginia has a backlog of electronic records currently stored on ~3000 antiquated media formats – cd, dvd, usb drives, cassette tapes, VHS tapes, etc. Most are House of Delegates recording sessions. These records will need to be transferred to the latest digital format to ensure integrity and viability.

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. The loss of state funding that supported these positions in the budget reductions between 2008 and 2014 combined with the huge influx of electronic material that has come into the archives from state agencies and the administrations of Governors Kaine, McDonnell, McAuliffe, and Northam has greatly increased the backlog of unprocessed archival material. The backlog will substantially increase even more after Governor Youngkin's term ends in January 2026. It costs approximately \$60,000 per year to securely store permanent electronic records. This amount will increase as the collections continue to grow. 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 Northam administration paper records totaling 279 cubic feet is on schedule to be completed by 2026. However, the multiple terabytes of gubernatorial electronic records will take longer without additional staffing and resources.

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

Collection	FY23 Backlog	FY24 Accessioned	FY24 Processed	FY24 Deaccessioned	FY24 Backlog
State Government Records*	18,777.62	365.70	-1295.48	-4.00	17,843.84
Local Government Records	12,274.56	224.10	-124.42	-229.75	12,144.49
Private Papers	5,863.85	40.59	-30.76	0	5,873.68
Total	36,916.03	630.39	-1,450.66	--233.75	35,862.01

*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.

Next Steps

While in 1999, 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 25 years later. Technology has enabled amazing advancements in the way government runs daily.

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.