



National Archives News

September

Vol. 2 No. 9

(The Newsletter of the Archives and Records Management Unit)



Records Officers at Appraisal Workshop

Records Management

Continuing Education

RM Workshops

Records Officers from 27 Ministries and Departments attended Appraisal workshops conducted by Kelvin Smith, the Archives Consultant recommended by the IRMT, August 18-22

Participants were introduced to the principles, practices and methodology of appraising records including both traditional paper and electronic records.

It is expected that the knowledge and skills learnt will help equip records personnel to better cope with managing inactive files in their offices and records store rooms.

A programme of 'applying the skills' in the workplace will be developed jointly with departments and the ARMU, so as to initiate the mammoth task of scaling down the backlog of inactive files.

The aim of Appraisal and Disposal

The aim of appraisal and disposal is to ensure that records are either destroyed or transferred to an archival institution at the right time, as a result of systematic implementation of decisions made concerning the continuing utility and enduring value of records.

It is neither practical nor desirable to preserve all records created by every department. Records **must** be removed and records **must** be destroyed. Though practice will vary between agencies, the often quoted estimate is that less than five percent of government records are of enduring value and therefore ought to be preserved permanently. While the destruction of records is irreversible, the retention of records of no further value involves high and continuing costs. Striking the right balance between destruction and retention requires a planned and consistent approach to appraisal and disposal.

Outreach: Community participation

We welcome Picture donations

Father Keith Perry Gore Jr., who now resides in Canada, has donated a very significant picture collection of Church, family and community life in the Virgin Islands dating back to the 1930s. The donor's father was a former Rector of the Anglican community in the Virgin Islands.

We have also been promised another collection which documents how a Virgin Islands Church was built strictly by community effort.

It is from such collections that researchers will glean the facts and write the social history of this country both now and in the next 100 years.

Do you have old picture albums so old that the pictures have started to fade and stick to pages of the album? Don't let your history and that of the Virgin Islands fade away. Share them with the Archives Unit and let us scan them into our collection for the future generations.

Reminder

Please submit applications for the Deputy Governor History Research Awards now. The theme is "Historical Sites in the Virgin Islands" and the deadline is Nov 1.

The purpose of the **DG's History Research Awards Programme** is to promote, encourage and recognise local history research in the Virgin Islands. Participants are invited to list historical sites in a particular locality and to do an in-depth research study on one of the sites. Sites may be on land or at sea, and may cover any subject or period. Application forms and guidelines are available from the Help Desk, DGO and the Archives Unit., Tele: 468-3701 ext. 2365, 3044 or 2562.

Coming Soon! Selections from the Old Pictures Exhibition

The Friends of the National Archives (FONA) has recently embarked upon a project to make the 2007 Old Pictures Exhibition a permanent compendium for current and future generations. The committee, organized to support the Virgin Islands National Archives, is compiling selected pictures from the exhibition into a book. The compilation will be a catalogue of the photographs and other submissions to the popular exhibit, and will include pictures from various sources from as far back as 1789.

Along with adding to the growing number of Virgin Islands historical and pictorial publications, the project is intended to ensure this unique documentary is available to everyone. The Friends are working to have copies available by Christmas. More information is available from the Government Archivist at the Archives and Records Management Unit. He can be reached at cvarlack@gov.vg or by phone: 284 494 3701 ext. 2562.

INFORMATION INDUSTRY NEWS

White House officials lost millions of e-mail messages

It's estimated that more than 90% of the records being created today are electronic. Coupled with the overwhelming growth of electronic messages - most notably e-mail and instant messaging - the management of electronic records has become a critical business issue. How that information is managed has significant business, legal, and technology ramifications. Ultimately, it doesn't matter what medium is used to create, deliver, or store information when determining if content is a record and should be managed accordingly.

How does the US Government manage data that was born digital, meaning it was created in electronic form? Organizations as varied as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the White House, open-government groups, and House members have recently offered recommendations for managing the growing volume of such

information. Their approaches underscore the differences of opinion about how much responsibility and power various entities should have over future federal recordkeeping.

Electronic records management has been the topic of proposed legislation and rules, court cases, congressional investigations, hearings, and government audits as agencies weigh options for maintaining the vast amount of official communication that is conducted electronically. Because federal employees use e-mail and other technologies daily for routine notes and important information, it's not always easy to decide which messages qualify as records that must be preserved. And once a decision is made, the next question is how best to store the messages.

Under the Federal Records Act, NARA approves agencies' recordkeeping schedules and maintains data once it is submitted for archiving, but each agency decides whether to keep a document. In the case of e-mail messages, individual users typically make the decision.

"I think there is a growing consensus that electronic mail and other forms of electronic records that are born digital need to be managed and preserved in electronic form," said Jason Baron, NARA's director of litigation.

But lacking a statutory prescription for maintaining electronic records, most agencies print and file them as they would paper documents, according to a recent investigation by the Government Accountability Office. GAO's report states that top agency officials are not properly maintaining their electronic communications, and NARA has not been inspecting agencies' recordkeeping practices.

Those revelations provided fuel for House Democrats who were already angered by allegations that White House officials lost millions of e-mail messages generated during the prelude to the invasion of Iraq.

The Virtues of Scanning

- In March, the National Archives and Records Administration awarded a \$2.1 million contract for a solution to scan and process millions of government documents.
- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management recently used a service bureau to scan archives into a virtual file cabinet, providing online access to more than 9 million documents.
- Austin, Texas, implemented document imaging in two city departments since 2006 and is eyeing further applications.

Despite the e-government trend and the move toward enterprise wide information systems, there's still no end of paper in the public sector. Between government's

historical archives and the myriad forms used to transact business, paper management is still a major challenge.

Many use document imaging systems to close the gap between hard copy and digital business processes.

Document imaging captures electronic copies of pages and provides tools for indexing, storing and retrieving them.

It allows users to manage workflow, ensuring employees handle documents according to established protocols.

Also, this technology may automatically apply records management rules, such as how long different document categories must be stored and when to purge them.

Document imaging is a subset of document management, a category that also includes documents that are "born digital"- word processing files, spreadsheets, e-mails and the like. Document management, in turn, is a subset of content management, which also may encompass photographs, videos, voicemail messages and other digital materials.

Merrill Douglas (IN Policy & Management) *Aug 25, 2008*

Quote for Today

"Establishing a sound records management programme in today's environment requires not only a thorough understanding of the fundamental records principles but also the legal, regulatory, financial, and operational requirements of the organization." Michelle Rush. *Information Management Journal*, Vol. 42. No 4. pg 49

Friends of the Archives

The objective of the Friends is to provide support as required to the National Archives. Please become involved today! Telephone 494 3546.

National Archives and Records Management Unit
Deputy Governor's Office
Upstairs Burhym (Civil Registry) Building
49 de Castro Street, Road Town, Tortola
Virgin Islands VG 1110
Tele: 1 284 468 2365; Fax 468 2582
Email: vpenn-moll@gov.vg
www.dgo.gov.vg