



State & Local Records News

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ADAH will host Archival Training Collaborative workshop on July 16

Looking for good, inexpensive, modern archival training? The Archival Training Collaborative will offer a day-long workshop (9:00-3:00) at ADAH on July 16, 2010. Its focus will be on arranging, describing, and preserving archival collections at local government archives, historical societies, genealogical societies, libraries, church archives, or other institutions that do not have full-time, trained archival staff.

Every institution faces different challenges in dealing with archival collections. This workshop highlights hands-on activities and readings to illustrate the methods for:

- Determining the origin and provenance of your collections
- Arranging collections efficiently
- Describing collections so that researchers can find and utilize them easily
- Storing and handling collections in ways that ensure their long-term preservation

Lunch and instructional materials will be provided. For more information on the program, go to <http://www.archivaltraining.org/alabamaworkshops.html>. Click on "Click Here to Register" for the registration form, and click on "More Information" for the flyer.

If you would like to attend the workshop, please print out the registration form and send it, with your registration fee of \$30.00, to: ATC Workshop, Attn: Tracey Berezansky, ADAH, P.O. Box 300100, Montgomery, AL 36130-0100. We look forward to seeing you on July 16. If you have questions, please

contact Mike Breedlove at (334)353-4614, or Mike.Breedlove@archives.alabama.gov.

Records commissions present 2009 awards at April meetings

At the State and Local Government Records Commissions' meetings on April 28, Dr. Ed Bridges presented the commissions' 2009 awards in records management and preservation to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Shelby County Historical Society, and the Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society.

During 2008 and early 2009, the **Department of Rehabilitation Services** transferred its headquarters and Montgomery district office from rental space on South Boulevard to a new location in downtown Montgomery. Under the leadership and coordination of its records manager and legal office, the agency applied its RDA to a large volume of records stored in its warehouse at the old location. This clean-up project resulted in the destruction of about 1,355 cubic feet of obsolete records and the transfer of 1,175 cubic feet of temporary records to the State Records Center.

The project also triggered a major RDA revision effort. Technological developments, programmatic changes, and new legislative mandates all contributed to the need to reassess the agency's RDA. In July 2009, the DRS formed a committee to work with state records archivist Richard Wang on

the RDA revision project. The State Records Commission approved the draft revision at its meeting on January 27, 2010. Thus, receiving the SRC's 2009 award marks the culmination of a two-year re-invention of its records program by the DRS. We congratulate the agency on its accomplishments.



Dr. Ed Bridges presents the award to James Carden, deputy commissioner of DRS

The **Shelby County Historical Society** received its Local Government Records Commission award primarily for its operation of the Shelby County Museum and Archives. Society president Bobby Joe Seales “was very instrumental in saving the Historic Shelby County Courthouse,” which has housed the museum and archives since 1974. A nationally-known research center for local history and genealogy, the SCMA holds “old original county records” including will books, marriage records through 1936, and historical newspapers. Many of these records have been indexed and are listed on the county’s website.

In 1979, the SCHS produced the first cemetery survey book of any Alabama county. During the 1980s-90s, it lent old newspapers to ADAH for microfilming under the Alabama Newspaper Project. It sponsored one of Alabama’s first loose records projects (1999-2000), which prepared historical estate files and divorces that yielded 66 more rolls of microfilm.

Finally, with an award from the Alabama Historical Records Advisory Board during our 2009 grant cycle, the SCHS purchased a digital camera and photographed 21 old marriage books as a pilot project to digitize historical records held by the museum. We are grateful to the society for its four decades of service in preserving Shelby County’s records.



Dr. Bridges and SCHS president Bobby Joe Seales

The Local Government Records Commission’s second award recipient was the “Night Group” of the **Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society**. This group has become very active in preserving Tuscaloosa County’s records. Between 2004 and 2007, it conducted a loose records project in the circuit court that produced 50 rolls of microfilm.

Once that work was concluded, members began a campaign to save historical records from “the seventh floor attic of the courthouse, an area that is dry, but without climate, dust or insect control. . . . Many books have red rot, broken spines, and missing covers.” The oldest found dates from 1822. So far, the TGS has brought 327 books to its off-site processing center, where each is assigned an identification number, vacuumed and dusted, wrapped in Tyvak, cataloged, and computer-indexed using Archives Toolkit.

The TGS also received a HRAB award for 2009, with which it acquired a computer, monitor, and metal shelving for its processing center, as well

as Tyvak for wrapping the old books. Project coordinator Jan Hutchison remarks that her volunteers' "dedication and enthusiasm . . . continue to spark interest in the community." They have fostered a cooperative relationship between the TGS and courthouse officials that she hopes will "be instrumental in the establishment of a permanent Tuscaloosa County Archives." We thank these dedicated volunteers for their fine work.



TGS volunteers Charlotte Tucker and Jan Hutchison receive their award

Records commissions approve new, revised RDAs

Since our last issue (August 2009), the State and Local Government Records Commissions have approved new or revised RDAs for the following state, county, or municipal agencies:

State Records Commission. *October 2009:* Governor's Office on Disability (new). *January 2010:* Armory Commission of Alabama—State Military Department (new, Department of Archives and History, Department of Rehabilitation Services (revised)); *April 2010:* Office of the District Attorney of Lauderdale County, Office of Personnel—Department of Finance (new), Office of the Attorney General, Alabama State Bar, Alabama Credit Union

Administration, Alabama Department of Forensic Science, Alabama Department of Transportation (revised).

Local Government Records Commission.

October 2009: County Boards of Registrars, Local Boards of Education (revised); *April 2010:* Alabama Public Libraries, County Boards of Registrars, County Taxation Offices (revised).

The State Records Commission will meet again on **Wednesday, July 28, 2010**, in the Regions Board Room at ADAH, beginning at 10:00 a.m. The Local Government Records Commission will postpone its next meeting until October 27, 2010.

HRAB receives NHPRC funding for second regrant cycle

FLASH!! *In late May, ADAH learned that the NHPRC had approved funding for a second HRAB regrant cycle in 2010. Second-cycle application information will be forthcoming soon. Meanwhile, here is a report on the first grant cycle:*

In May 2008, the Alabama Historical Records Advisory Board (HRAB) received a grant of \$66,964 from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for historical records preservation. Most of the award (\$50,000) went toward a regrant program for local governments and historical repositories. Twenty-two (out of 30) applicants received up to \$3,000 each for individual records preservation projects. Among the applications funded were:

- Projects to inventory and improve storage conditions for historical county or municipal records. Such projects (known colloquially as "clean up the basement" projects) involved records from the Morgan and Shelby County Probate Offices; Tuscaloosa County's circuit court; and five municipalities: Aliceville, Heflin, Killen, Leeds, and Locust Fork.

- Projects to inventory, rehouse, and catalog collections of historical records, photographs, and artifacts held by local archives, museums, or historic sites. Work approved related to the World War II German prisoner-of-war camp in Aliceville, important figures in Alabama's Civil Rights Movement, the family of Confederate General Joe Wheeler, two Alabama counties and three municipalities, and the Crimson Tide football program.
- Projects to process and/or digitize private collections, photographs, audiotapes, or oral history collections that document daily life in Anniston, Florence, Monroeville, and Mobile during the early- to mid-20th century, as well as two important Alabama literary figures: Truman Capote and Harper Lee.

As noted, second-cycle application information will be available soon. To learn more about the program, see the HRAB's website at: <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/hrb#>, or contact ADAH local records archivist Tom Turley at (334)353-4607 or Tom.Turley@archives.alabama.gov.

Alabama's PeDALS project under way

Funded by the Library of Congress's National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program, the Persistent Digital Archives and Library System (PeDALS) project began in 2008, with five state libraries and archives in Arizona, Florida, New York, South Carolina, and Wisconsin participating. In September 2009, the project expanded to include Alabama and New Mexico.

PeDALS is one of the Library of Congress's projects in the "Preserving State Government Information" initiative. Archivists and librarians recognize that traditional approaches to acquisition, arrangement and description, storage, preservation, and access to records may need to be adjusted to

address the acquisition of large quantities of electronic records. The PeDALS project aims to create an effective and efficient curatorial system to handle the preservation of digital records.

After nearly two years of brainstorming sessions and other collaborative efforts, most of the original partners are in the process of ingesting their first records series into the PeDALS system. Because ADAH has yet to receive all of the necessary software, its first ingestion will take place sometime this summer. We plan to work with electronic records created by the Governor's Office, the Attorney General's Office, and several other agencies. Once these records have been ingested, they will be available for online viewing on the ADAH website.

For more information, please contact archivist Christine Garrett at (334)353-5039 or Christine.Garrett@archives.alabama.gov.

Two county archives enjoying new quarters

For the first time since its founding in 1989, the Mobile Probate Court Archives will "finally [as archivist Collette King exults] be located in ONE space!" The archives had previously occupied scattered areas in the old Mobile County Courthouse, including the attic and basement, a pigeonhole on the first floor; the second floor mezzanine; large and small courtrooms on the second floor; a "working archives" on the second floor; and a first-floor office. Archival materials were also stored on the third and fourth floors of the courthouse and in Mobile's old *Press-Register* Building.

With a replacement courthouse now complete, the probate court archives moved at the end of March into beautiful, unified new quarters on the 2nd floor. Here, it will continue a program that has won numerous awards, including a Local Government Records Commission award in 2009. A picture of the archives' new facility appears on the next page.



*Site of the new Probate Court Archives
in the nearly-finished Mobile County Courthouse*



*Records storage area at the new
Montgomery County Archives*

Meanwhile, after two years of construction, the Montgomery County Archives moved into its brand-new facility in February 2009. The archives area was planned as part of the complete renovation of the old *Montgomery Advertiser* building, one block north of the main courthouse, on the corner of Washington Avenue and Lawrence Street.

The archives occupies almost the entire lower floor of the building and features three climate-controlled storage areas totaling approximately 7,000 square feet. These areas are equipped with Space-Saver compactable shelving that almost doubles the storage space available. Two other, smaller storage areas provide room for future expansion. The new reference room offers public computers and microfilm reader/printers, as well as public access to microfiche of older county records. Current property-related records are available on computers to assist the title research community.

With the dramatic expansion of available storage space, the Archives was able to gather most of Montgomery County's historic records in a single location for the first time. Chancery court, city court, and circuit court records dating from the 1820s were brought in from substandard housing in the main courthouse basement. The Archives was also able to negotiate the return of almost 1,000 cubic feet of Montgomery County records from ADAH, where

they had been kept for many years. The new facility has made research into Montgomery County's records much more of a "one-stop shopping" event.

For more information, contact Lyn Frazer, Montgomery County Archivist, at LynFrazer@mc-ala.org.

News from ADAH and other state repositories

Here, as reported in the Spring issue of the Society of Alabama Archivists (SALA) newsletter, is information on newly available collections at several state historical repositories:

- ADAH has recently accessioned the James H. Pepler Collection of Civil Rights-related photographs. Pepler was a staff photographer for the Montgomery weekly *Southern Courier* in the late 1960s. About 2,000 images are now available online.
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham Archives has processed several photographic collections portraying UAB from the 1980s to the mid-2000s. It has recently scanned over

200 items relating to Birmingham Medical College (the city's first medical school) between 1894 and 1915. Other items to be scanned include materials on pellagra, photographs of an Alabama physician's service in World War I, the Civil War journal of a hospital pharmacist, and a handwritten 1781 pharmacopeia.

- With its 2009 HRAB grant, the University of South Alabama Archives processed the collection of Wilson C. Burton, an African-American photographer who was active in Mobile ca. 1945-1994. Significant items in this collection include the graduation picture of Vivian Malone (one of two students who integrated the University of Alabama) and photographs of an anti-Vietnam War Rally at Bishop State College. USA has also recently acquired the records of the Mobile Historic Development Commission and the Mobile Junior League.

For more information on these and other records, see SALA's Spring 2010, newsletter, available at: http://alarchivists.org/pubs/2010/SALA_newsletter_Spring2010.pdf.

Intriguing vendor approach to digitization

Through the years, one of the many interesting aspects of working with the state and local government records programs has been the opportunity to talk with vendors about their new technologies, equipment, and services. Each vendor talks about or demonstrates useful products and/or services that would solve one or more record-keeping problems faced by local and state agency personnel. Of course, the problem solving comes at a price, and price has been an issue for many agencies.

Recently, we had the opportunity to talk with one vendor about a new approach to digitization of back-log files for agencies. Traditionally, the majority of vendors have outlined a pricing strategy based on the price to scan each page, anywhere from 7 to 11 cents per page or higher. Any indexing terms added to the scanned image increased the project's cost. When agencies have 100,000 to 1,000,000 pages to be scanned, the price per page adds up quickly and can move the digitization option off the table due to budget constraints. The unique quality about this new digitization approach is that there is no "per page scanned" cost. As offered by the company, it is almost a self-funding model. Because this novel approach may meet many agency digitization needs, we wanted to ensure that agencies had an opportunity to know about the service's availability.

The vendor, Geodesy Associates, Inc., has researched the number of records in several county probate offices to determine the number of pages that need to be digitized for deeds and mortgage records. The average or "typical" county surveyed was found to have 525,000 loose pages and 150,000 permanently bound pages. Based on its research, the vendor has developed a process whereby a "typical" county can fund a digitization project of back-log records for an initial fee of less than \$2,500, and a monthly, recurring fee of less than \$100. This approach involves modest initial funding from an agency, provides internet access to the records via subscription, and uses funds from the subscriptions to cover some of the agency's costs. In addition, the projected time-tables for completing the digitization project for a "typical county" is 1-2 weeks on-site. The vendor recoups its investment by charging the users for access.

This is not a service that the Archives is making available to our constituents or endorsing, but a service offered by a vendor. All rules and regulations for working with vendors would apply, and each prospective user must determine whether the service is appropriate for the records and services of its office. For additional information, contact Tom Pemberton at: Geodesy Associates, Inc., (303)249-2740, or tom@geodscans.com.