

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

On June 16, 2008, Roy Tryon chartered the Task Force on Archives and Records Management Education and Training, to function during the first half of fiscal year 2008-2009. The Task Force Charter stated:

This Task Force has as its responsibility reviewing the Archives and Records Management Division's education and training activities for state agencies and local governments regarding archival and records management matters. It is to include all aspects of Division education and training, including that provided via the website, on-site visits/training, and the annual records management conference. The task force is to make recommendations for changes, where warranted, on the topics/subjects that need to be addressed and with special regard as to the employment of information technology and the web in more effective delivery.

The task force is constituted to consider the ARM's available resources in developing recommendations and to seek input from other individuals (staff or otherwise) where appropriate.

The task force shall complete the review by the end of October 2008 and submit a report and recommendation to the State Archivist by December 12, 2008.

The Task Force membership was designated as follows:

John Mackintosh, Chair
Bryan Collars
Matt Guzzi
Erin Morris
Heather South

Meeting Summaries

After the issuance of the charter and the appointment of the committee membership, the Task Force briefly met with Roy Tryon and discussed their duties. A series of regular meetings were then held which, at the onset, included a thorough review of the division's current training efforts. The report of the preceding training task force, submitted in early 2001, was referenced. The training opportunities offered by other State Archives across the country were reviewed as we went through relevant webpage printouts and members followed up with website visits. After discussion, it was decided that a survey of state and local government contacts focusing exclusively on training needs was an appropriate means of gaining direct input from those we serve. An eight-question survey was then drafted. Prior to the final date for the return of the surveys, Paul

Harmon attended one meeting and provided much detail on what is available in the realm of web-based training.

Current and Recent Records Management Training Efforts

During our first two meetings, we reviewed what the division currently offers to our constituents in state and local governments. Recent and current training efforts as constituted include:

Archives and Records Management Annual Conference—Inaugurated in April 2005 and hosted here at the Archives and History Center, this one-day event has quickly become a centerpiece of our training. With a reasonably priced registration fee, we have averaged over one hundred attendees at the four conferences held thus far. The conference has provided instruction in basic records management, electronic records issues, micrographics, and issues pertaining to disaster preparedness and recovery. It has also enabled first time visitors to tour the Archives and History Center as well as the Laurel Street Records Center.

On-Site Training—The most basic and long running form of training we offer. This means of outreach is characterized by analysts and/or related staff visiting the offices of those who are faced with records management challenges and answering their questions in the context of their work environment where records to be scheduled are readily available. In the case of state agencies especially, these meetings are often one-on-one and are held quite frequently as there is much turnover among records liaison officers. An excellent means of training as it is very practical and relevant to both state and local agencies. At times, on-site training has also included workshops done exclusively for a particular agency or local government. Whether done individually or collectively, there are two disadvantages to on-site training: a.) It doesn't reach as wide an audience in as concentrated a time as occurs with the annual conference; b.) Since this can involve going out of the Columbia area, travel expenses are incurred.

SHRAB-Related Training—In conjunction with SHRAB, Heather South has conducted and coordinated disaster and recovery workshops, arrangement and description workshops, basics of archives for local governments, and policies and procedures classes. Both Heather and John Mackintosh have also conducted workshops promoting SHRAB regrants which, indirectly, also promote sound records management practices for both local governments as well as those running private repositories.

Regional Training—The Records Management Training Task Force that met from September 2000 to January 2001 included among its recommendations a suggestion that Local Records pursue regional training of local government officials, using the offices of the ten Councils of Governments that are comprised

of member county and city governments across the state. Records management workshops were thus held from 2002-2004 at all but one of the COGs.[•] The impetus for holding these meetings was to make it easier for local government members to attend, as having a workshop in their region would result in less time spent in transit than going to a comparable event in Columbia. This proved to be a very successful means of outreach. The relationship established with the COG offices has continued to be positive one, as we have used their facilities for electronic records training conducted by Tom Legge as well as recent regrant training efforts. From the standpoint of the Archives, this form of training was financially beneficial in that the burden of promoting the training was borne by the COGs. On the negative side of the ledger though, such trips involved the travel expense of meals and gasoline and (in the case of the Waccamaw COG in Georgetown), overnight lodging expense. Needless to say, such costs are an especially important consideration in times of fiscal constraint.

For state agencies, the TEC schools could offer a similar regional venue, should the decision be made to pursue that type of training for those large agencies having statewide offices.

Outside Groups and Organizations—Bryan Collars, Matt Guzzi, John Mackintosh, and Heather South have all addressed outside organizations and groups. Examples of such groups include SCPRA, SCAA, PALMCOP, SCASL, CSLA, and events sponsored by both the Municipal Association as well as the Association of Counties.

Archives and Records Management Training Survey

A survey of our constituents was a valuable addition to our learning process, both from the standpoint of clarifying what we are doing correctly as well as garnering constructive criticism on where improvements might be made. Our predecessor team, the Records Management Training Task Force of 2000-2001, had benefited from studying the results of a 1999 survey and we feel that we have profited from the fresh information that we gathered. The survey consisted of seven multiple-choice questions, two of which included a segment for a specific comment or suggestion concerning the question. The survey concluded with question eight and its query designed to produce a narrative response in both rating our training offerings as well as providing suggestions for future improvements. The survey was sent out via email on Tuesday, September 23 to everyone comprising the “On the Record” recipient list. A reminder notice about the survey was sent approximately a week before the October 14 deadline for completion. Nancy Piester and her familiarity with installing surveys on Surveymonkey.com proved invaluable to the Task Force.

[•] For no stated reason, the Pee Dee COG in Florence opted out of hosting a local government records management workshop. In 2007, they did host a SHRAB regrant training session for area local governments.

One hundred and forty-five survey recipients completed the questionnaire, with state agencies (40.8%) as our largest group of respondents, followed by county governments (31.7%) and cities (11.3%). Most (62.8%) answered for just their immediate office or department, with those describing themselves as records managers comprising 42.8% of those doing so. Nearly half of those responding had attended the 2008 ARM conference compared to 29.3% for 2005, the debut year of the event. Of course, the survey doesn't tell us how many of those answering worked in records management in 2005, so no firm conclusions can be drawn from this but it is certainly better to see this number increase for each of the four years that the conference has existed than to see it decline.

The questions and responses for question numbers five through seven are of such importance that they are worthy of being reproduced verbatim:

5. As currently constituted, SCDAH's Annual Conference, workshops and other educational offerings are appropriate for my records management situation and meet my needs.
 - Strongly Agree, 21.1%
 - Agree, 45.9%
 - No opinion, 25.7%
 - Disagree, 1.8%
 - Strongly Disagree, 0.0%
 - Does Not Apply, 5.5%

6. Overall, SCDAH's advisory services adequately serve the needs of my organization.
 - Strongly Agree, 22.5%
 - Agree, 56%
 - No opinion, 16.2%
 - Disagree, 1.8%
 - Does Not Apply, 2.7%

7. What type of training do you think has best enhanced the records management knowledge of you and/or your staff? Feel free to check more than one. Indicate at the bottom if you are new to records management and have not received training. Check all that apply.
 - Direct, on site consultation with archives staff generally conducted in your records keeping area, 39.6%
 - On-site workshops in which a number of personnel can attend, 34.4%
 - Regional training, using the training facilities of the local Council of Governments or a TEC school, 21.9%
 - Annual Archives and Records Management Conference, 64.6%
 - Web-based training, 27.1%
 - Live interactive training via television, 5.2%

Training offered by professional organizations such as SC Public Records Association, SC Archival Association, and ARMA, 37.5%

In summary, the results of these three questions indicate that those who answered the survey are, for the most part, pleased with the training offered by us and rate the annual conference, on-site workshops and training offered from professional organizations as among the three most helpful means by which they increase their knowledge of sound records keeping practices.

Task Force members gained insight into studying the responder comments, especially those that accompanied questions 4,5,6, and the final question that reads “please share with us any thoughts or suggestions you may have regarding the quality and content of our training.” Some of the more insightful comments were discussed at committee meetings, including:

- *“Without the initial 1-on-1 meeting with my SCDAH contact, the conference would have meant nothing.”* (From question 5)
- *“I feel that the conferences and other offerings are too brief-one hour isn’t enough to do anything but touch the surface. I would prefer longer sessions, half day perhaps, to really dig into the subject matter.”* (From question 5)
- *The lament of “we keep hearing the basics over and over again” contrasted with another person’s opinion of “I really needed an introduction training seminar.”* (From question 5)
- *“The Electronic Document Management System is being implemented in local government agencies at a rapid pace. We need more training in how this affects the Records Manager and Records Management as we know it today.”* (From Question 8)
- *A comment praising the 2008 conference as well as the assistance of Bryan McKown was coupled with “I do think that on site consultations are the best way for Records Managers to get answers on more complicated issues.”* (From Question 8)
- *“I feel that maybe web training may become the way of the future should the price of gasoline continue to soar.”* (From Question 8)
- *“Would like to see a session on rules governing Special Education Records.”* (From Question 8)
- *“I would like to know more about imaging documents and if the state is headed toward this type of storage instead of hard copy storage.”* (From Question 8)

Recommendations

From our meetings, discussions, and the results of the ARM training survey, we submit the following recommendations and do so with full awareness of the severe budget constraints challenging our agency. We recognize the reality that these proposals are subject to not only their merit in terms of improving training but also their impact, if any, on our spending.

Training Methodology

- Many of the comments on the survey reinforce our belief that direct, on-site training has proven and will continue to be highly beneficial to those involved. Indeed, in those agencies that experience a frequent turnover of records management liaison officers, such training is of paramount importance. It should continue to be pursued.
- The annual records management conference is a major success that should be resumed when the budget crisis has subsided. We can improve it by the addition of a question and answer session at the end of the day in which all attendees reconvene in the auditorium for final questions that may have arisen during the course of the day.
- Continued outreach via presentations at meetings of regional and state organizations.
- Web-based training to supplement or replace face-to-face training:
 - ___ We can enhance our telephone conversations with state and local contacts by incorporating the use of Google.docs at no cost. This will enable us to interact with callers on completing both inventory worksheets and destruction forms.
 - ___ Beyond that, as funding permits, we may be able to hold meetings, trainings sessions, and conference calls using the internet and VOIP (Voice Over IP). There are many web-based training products available such as Wimba, Cisco's WebEx and Microsoft's Windows Live Meeting. WebEx and Live Meeting are compared in the accompanying table. Using one of these would allow us to host presentations or collaborate on line with records officers throughout the state.
 - ___ Most of these products have free trials, enabling us to try them out without a commitment. There are also many additional products available and some of them may be free or available at a reduced cost.

Training Content:

- One respondent requested a session detailing electronic document management systems and how such systems are impacting records management. At the April 2008 records management conference, Tom Legge explored much of this topic in his “EDMS and Digital Imaging” session. When the annual conference recommences, we should consider repeating this session and perhaps refining its content to emphasize records management to a greater degree.
- Despite one person’s complaint about hearing the basics over and over again, we should continue to offer training in basic records management whenever possible. There is a demonstrated need for this, based on the comments of others, as well as what our analysts know about the degree of turnover among those who work with records in not only state agencies but local governments as well.
- In order to satisfy those attendees who may feel they have progressed beyond the basics, we should consider developing either advanced sessions or an entire advanced track to run opposite the basic track, as has been done at some of the SCPRA conferences.
- Disaster preparedness to remain part of the ARM Conference. In light of recent emergencies, it is clear that the majority of agencies and local governments have not thought about hazards and response for records.
- Greatly expand the Records Management Training page on the agency’s website with the following:
 - __ Develop a Frequently Asked Questions page to address the most common inquiries that we have fielded in the past.
 - __ Supplement the training page section with links to Power Point presentations on the basics of records management, similar to what is currently on the website from the latest conference. This could even be improved with the addition of voice-over.
 - __ Create a records management blog that all Records Management staff can contribute to as and when the situation warrants. As with any blog, we would encourage our “public” to participate and thus it could, given time, develop into an effective and ongoing learning tool.

Publicity of Training

- Our outreach efforts to professional organizations (for example, an analyst speaking to a meeting of School District Business officers) should be listed on our Records Management Training page as is already done under “Other Training Opportunities” which includes web links to organizations to which we directly belong (i.e., SCPRA, SCAA, and PALMCOP).
- Publicize efforts in COG newsletters, ARMA chapter newsletters, and SCPRA website through links.

- To promote visits to the training portion of our website, consider the low-cost purchase of both pens and magnets bearing the website address as well as printing a new style bookmark with the web address. Also consider a poster (similar to that for Archives Month) advertising training web addresses promoting new training offerings.

Conclusion

It is our hope that this report will prove beneficial in improving the depth and variety of training offered by the Archives and Records Management Division of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. As mentioned earlier, we are aware of the budget constraints that currently exist but we hope that, over time, this situation will improve and that the recommendations contained herein will be judged worthy of implementation.