

Newsletter
of the
Illinois
State
Archives
&
The Illinois
State Historical
Records
Advisory Board

Jesse White
Secretary of State
&
State Archivist

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ARCHIVES ACCESSIONS — Secretary of State and State Archivist Jesse White and Archives staff member John Reinhardt examine the contents of a recently accessioned state record. All records held by the State Archives are considered permanent records of administrative, legal or historical research values.

State Archives spotlighted in *Illinois Stories*

The Illinois State Archives building in Springfield was the focus of the local PBS series *Illinois Stories*. The story was developed following last October's 75th anniversary of the opening of the State Archives building. *Illinois Stories*, an Emmy award-winning program that chronicles life in Central and West Central Illinois, is produced and hosted by Mark McDonald. The State Archives program initially aired in February on WSEC, whose broadcast area includes Decatur, Springfield, Jacksonville, Quincy and Macomb. The episode is now available on You Tube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nt9yHDWE_A.

Professional development scholarships available



The ISHRAB is offering scholarships to Illinois archivists and archival volunteers to attend a professional archival workshop/seminar of their choice in Illinois, or an online professional archival development course. Awards are available for up to \$200 per applicant, per year, and may be used toward the cost of registration, housing and/or travel to the event. It is a reimbursable award.

ISHRAB and its representatives will award scholarships on a first-come, first-served basis until the funding is exhausted. Complete information and an application are available at www.cyberdriveillinois.com (click Departments, Illinois State Archives, Illinois Historical Records Advisory Board). For more information, please contact:

Illinois State Archives
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M.C. Norton Building
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ILLINOIS STATE ARCHIVES

Margaret Cross Norton Building
Capitol Complex
Springfield, IL 62756
217-782-4682
Monday-Friday: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Closed state holidays

DATES & REMINDERS

Society of American Archivists Workshop

Archives: Principles and Practices

June 9-10, DeKalb

saa.archivists.org/events

Society of American Archivists/ Council on State Archivists/ National Association of Government Archives & Records Administrators

Joint Annual Meeting:

*ARCHIVES * RECORDS: Ensuring Access*

Aug. 10-16, Washington, D.C.

www2.archivists.org/2014

Midwest Archives Conference

Fall Symposium 2014:

Oral History, Archives, and Innovation

Sept. 12-13, Urbana

www.midwestarchives.org

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

2014 Conference on Illinois History

Sept. 25-26, Springfield

www.illinoishistory.gov

217-524-6045

Illinois Association of Museums

2014 Annual Conference

October 22-24, Rockford

www.state.il.us/hpa/iam/default.html

217-524-6977

Downstate Local Records

Commission Meeting

1st Tuesday of the month, 10 a.m.

Margaret Cross Norton Building, Springfield

www.cyberdriveillinois.com

Cook County Local Records

Commission Meeting

2nd Tuesday of the month, 11 a.m.

Video Conference Room, 9th floor

Thompson Center, Chicago

or Capital City Center, Springfield

130 W. Mason St.

www.cyberdriveillinois.com

State Records Commission Meeting

3rd Wednesday of every month, 9:30 a.m.

Margaret Cross Norton Building, Springfield

www.cyberdriveillinois.com

Are you prepared?



Every year the Illinois State Archives along with other cultural institutions around the world participate in MayDay, a global effort to encourage disaster preparedness. On May 1, libraries, museums, archives, historical societies and preservation organizations are encouraged to do *something* that will make a difference when and if a disaster occurs. A disaster can range from a catastrophic weather event to a burst water pipe to a fire. Being prepared for emergencies and disasters is essential to preserving historical records collections. Being prepared means taking precautionary measures and knowing what to do in an emergency.

Risk Management — Take steps to identify, assess and prioritize risks to collections in order to put in place the necessary resources (including insurance) to reduce, spread or transfer the risks and minimize the impact of unfortunate events.

Emergency Management — Knowing in advance what to do when disaster strikes increases personal safety and can help avoid the catastrophic loss of collections by promoting a response that is timely, calm and effective. Emergency manage-

ment covers information that includes:

- Planning for continuity of operations
- Contracting for disaster services
- Conducting emergency exercises
- Knowing what to do in an emergency
- Keeping up with new information and available resources

Response and Recovery — An informed, calm and timely response maximizes recovery by focusing first on stabilizing collections. Response is the immediate (within 48 hours) actions taken to stabilize affected collections. The objective is to prevent further damage and, in situations with water, to prevent mold growth. A complete response means collections have been stabilized and all active threats (e.g., fire, wetness, growing mold) have been eliminated. Now there is time for recovery: to consider addressing the damages, if necessary or desirable.

Additional information on disaster preparedness can found on these websites:

Library of Congress:

www.loc.gov/preservation/emergprep

Northeast Document Conservation Center:

www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview



35 YEARS OF SERVICE — Secretary of State Jesse White recently recognized employee Beverly Hickox-Whitton for 35 years of service to the Secretary of State's office. Beverly began her career with the Secretary of State's office in July 1977 and joined the State Archives staff in September 2002. She currently serves as the Archives' chief fiscal officer and is responsible for all financial and budgetary operations.

A guide for sustainable file formats for electronic records

Electronic records are produced and preserved in a wide variety of file formats, often dictated by the type of software used to create and access a record. Accessibility and user convenience also are common factors that determine the use of one format over another. When dealing with electronic records, one must take into consideration the sustainability of the format used.

Sustainability in this context refers to continued accessibility over time. For example, will a given electronic record be available for users in 10 years? 20? 50? While no file format can guarantee perpetual accessibility, certain formats have distinct advantages over others in this regard. These formats are often referred to as “sustainable” formats. Sustainable formats often include these features:

- 1. Published Documentation and Open Disclosure** — Specifications for the format are published and accessible to the public. Formats that share these characteristics are commonly called “open-source” or “non-proprietary.”
- 2. Widespread Adoption and Use** — The more widely a format is used, the more likely it is to have multiple tools used to access and manipulate it. This reduces the chance of a format becoming inaccessible due to one software publisher going out of business.
- 3. Self-describing Formats** — These formats contain metadata (data about the data) within their structure that interprets the content, context and structure of the file. This means that descriptive information (file name, date of creation, identification of data within the file, etc.) can be kept within the file itself and external documentation is not required.
- 4. Unencrypted Files** — Electronic records with long-term retention should not be encrypted in any way as this can severely compromise the future accessibility of those records. Encryption methods change dramatically over time, and the specific software tools needed to access current encrypted records may not exist in the future.

Following is a list of formats currently recommended by the Illinois State Archives for long-term preservation. The list may be updated or expanded as technology warrants.

TEXT:

Best Choice: PDF/A (Portable Document Format/Archives) — A variant of PDF specifically aimed at long-term preservation, its specifications are published in the standard ISO 19005-1:2005. The format sacrifices certain functions, such as the ability to have external hyperlinks or embed audio or video, for the sake of greater reliability.

Other Options: PDF (Portable Document Format) — A format commonly used to present formatted, page-oriented documents. PDFs can contain text, images, graphics, video and audio, as well as hyperlinks to outside documents and is widely adopted around the world. PDFs are acceptable for short- to medium-term storage, but are not suitable for long-term (20+ years) or permanent preservation.

XML (Extensible Markup Language) — A standard format for structured documents and data on websites, XML is a preferred format for the preservation of metadata associated with records. XML is open-source, enjoys nearly universal adoption, and can be accessed and worked on by scores of freely available software tools.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) — A standard format for structured documents and data on websites. HTML is open-source and universally adopted. Unlike XML, HTML does not contain descriptive metadata headings.

Plain Text — The most basic form of a text file, plain text can be rendered by any software that can read text, across any platform. Plain Text renders only basic characters, spaces and punctuation, however, and does not preserve formatting such as italics or bold letters. Plain Text is open-source and universally adopted.

ODF (OpenDocument Format) — An XML-based file format used for spreadsheets, charts, presentations and word-processing documents. ODF is an open format, freely available to anyone, and has been published as an ISO standard (ISO/IEC 26300:2006). Owing to its relatively recent creation (2005), ODF is not as widely adopted as some other formats, but it is supported by almost all current office suites and word-processing programs.

STILL IMAGES:

Best Choice: TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) — The international standard for electronic images, TIFF specifications are open and freely available. TIFF files can contain “tags” that store descriptive metadata about the file.

Other Options: JPEG 2000 (Joint Photographic Experts Group) — JPEG-2000 is the next-generation format for electronic images, which is part of an international standard: ISO/IEC 15444:2004. The format is still relatively new and thus does not have the same widespread use as TIFF.

PNG (Portable Network Graphics) — A file format initially created as a replacement for GIF (Graphics Interchange Format), PNG is most often

used to present images on the Web and can be accessed with a wide variety of Web browsers and image-display software.

SPREADSHEETS:

Due to the complexity of spreadsheet structure it is challenging to perfectly represent data over time. Different software uses varied means to record formulae and link data, and so advanced functions are not always replicable in more open formats. The following formats represent the best approach for long-term accessibility, but may be unable to represent certain formatting or functions of spreadsheets originally created in such formats as Microsoft’s XLS. Users may want to save copies of spreadsheets with long-term retention in both the native format and in one of the below. This redundant method can preserve the maximum functionality of the spreadsheet while still protecting the core data from format obsolescence.

CSV (Comma Separated Values) — A simple format, CSV files may be accessed with any spreadsheet software or text editor but at the cost of potential loss of advanced functionality enjoyed by more proprietary spreadsheet formats.

ODF (OpenDocument Format) — ODF is a good choice for the preservation of spreadsheets as it supports more advanced functionality than CSV. However, spreadsheets originally created in other formats such as XLS may suffer some functionality loss upon conversion to ODF due to the non-standardized methods by which different software execute formulae.

AUDIO:

Best Choice: BWF (Broadcast WAVE Format) — A variant of the WAVE format, BWF (or BWAVE) was developed with long-term preservation in mind. The specifications for BWF are open and freely available. The format is a de facto standard for digital audio for those in the radio, motion picture and television industries. This format also is used extensively by audio archives throughout the world.

Other Options: WAVE (Waveform Audio File Format) — A proprietary format that is fully documented and has been used as the basis for the preservation-oriented variant BWF. WAVE files are uncompressed so they lose no audio data as with some other audio formats. The format also enjoys near-universal adoption, as it is compatible with virtually every audio player available, across computer platforms.

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A guide for electronic records

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VIDEO:

Whereas best practices typically dictate that only uncompressed formats be used for the preservation of electronic content, the area of video preservation becomes more complex. Uncompressed video can take up huge amounts of space in a storage environment, and thus formats utilizing “lossless” or “near-lossless” compression have become more acceptable in some cases.

MPEG-4 (Motion Picture Experts Group) — MPEG-4 is an open-standard format developed for encoding video content for dissemination on the Web. There are two main encoding versions and numerous subcategories of the format. Documentation for all varieties of MPEG-4 is extensively published as part of an international standard: ISO/IEC 14496-14:2003.

Motion JPEG 2000 (Joint Photographic Experts Group) — Motion JPEG-2000 is a derivative of JPEG 2000 that codes and displays video. The format is still relatively new, so adoption is not yet as widespread as older video formats.

For more in-depth information on sustainable file formats for electronic records, visit: www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/records_management/sustainableformats.html.

Midwest Archives' Fall Symposium to focus on oral history

The digital age has changed many things for archival institutions and archivists, including the ways we collect, curate and disseminate oral histories. On September 12-13, the Midwest Archives Conference will host its 2014 Fall Symposium, “Oral History, Archives, and Innovation,” at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Because Urbana-Champaign is home to many unique oral history projects, including the Evolving Archives (EVA) Initiative, the Lincoln Hall Storyography Project, eBlack C-U, and Illinois Public Media WILL TV’s World War II stories, symposium participants will be immersed in the community’s rich tradition of capturing the history of the “living source.”

Doug Boyd, Ph.D, director of the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky Libraries, will lead participants through discussions of collection management strategies, transcribing and indexing interviews, format obsolescence, metadata collection, digital preservation, ethical and legal issues, and digital tools for enhancing access to oral histories online. The symposium will collaboratively explore models for processing, preserving and facilitating access to oral histories, drawing heavily from the Oral History in the Digital Age initiative, which continually explores innovative approaches to curating and disseminating oral histories, as well as models created by the Louie B. Nunn Center.

For more information, contact Anke Voss at 217-531-7040 or avoss@tufll.info.

The Midwest Archives Conference is the nation's largest regional professional association for archivists. Founded in 1972, MAC now has approximately 1,000 individual members. MAC's 177 institutional members include a variety of corporate, government, religious and university archives, as well as historical societies and other manuscripts repositories and special collections. The MAC region is comprised of the 13 heartland states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin. However, MAC has individual and institutional members from more than 30 other states and five other nations, and more are always welcome. For more information on MAC, visit www.midwestarchives.org.

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Jesse White • Secretary of State & State Archivist
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