



The CONNservator

Newsletter of the Office of the Public Records
Administrator

March 2005

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- Kathy Makover, Field Archivist

Inside this issue:

State Archives Notes	2
New Staff Introduction	2
Financial Report	2
Surviving a Real Disaster	3
List of Grantees	3
Upcoming Events	4

2005 Cycle 2 Grant Recipients

The Office of the Public Records Administrator announces thirty-three grants totaling \$276,000 from the Historic Documents Preservation Grant Program. This year's grants range from \$7,000 to \$17,000. The awards consisted of \$26,000 for Inventory and Planning grants to conduct records management, preservation or disaster planning surveys; \$117,000 for Organization and Indexing grants to improve indexing or automate the retrieval process; \$141,000 for Preservation/Conservation grants; \$7,000 for a Program Development grant to implement a town wide records management program; and \$61,000 for Storage and Facilities grants for upgrading records storage and environmental monitoring equipment.

For a complete list of grantees, please turn to page 3.

The Historic Preservation Fund: A Partnership

Eunice G. DiBella, Public Records Administrator, Connecticut State Library

The Public Act creating the Historic Documents Preservation Fund had two related but distinct purposes. First, it mandated a grant program to improve the condition and support the management of municipal historic records in the State of Connecticut. Second, it provided support for the State Library's preservation activities as well as for administering the grant program.

Enacted in 2000, the legislation took effect immediately. This meant that the State Library had to quickly develop a program to be able to distribute grants by July 2001. It had to be a fairly uncomplicated program, given the limited time to plan and implement it. Financially, we had no clear idea of what our revenue would be because we had nothing on which to base our projections. Furthermore, by the date we needed to set the grant amounts for the coming fiscal year, we would not yet have collected a complete year's revenues and would have no reserves upon which to count if we miscalculated.

We were committed from the very beginning to develop a program in which every municipality could participate and receive a grant award. For this reason, we decided to distrib-

ute targeted grants for a narrow range of projects. This made the program unique among other local records grant programs by guaranteeing that every municipality was eligible to apply for a grant within the established categories and receive an award. Even today, every other state grant program, with one small exception, is competitive. Applicants compete against each other for limited funds based upon the merits of their proposed projects.

Since the passage of PA 00-146, our program has developed and matured. We have been able to distribute larger grants for more types of projects. We are about to enter a new phase by adding a competitive grants component in FY2007, with the first grants awarded in July 2006. The grant program staff is working on the initial categories and evaluation criteria for the competitive grants. In response to a request made by the President of the Town Clerks Association, we will be surveying all towns that have had a planning survey in anticipation of competitive grants. The results will help us establish the initial grant categories and eligible pro-

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

jects for the competitive grants. We are also developing training to aid both the targeted and competitive grant applicants.

In addition to developing the competitive grant program, we have been re-evaluating the criteria used to determine the distribution of the targeted grants. Our goal is to ensure the greatest equity in grant allocation as intended by PA 00-146.

For FY2006 grants awarded this calendar year, we have maintained the current distribution formula. After we complete our revenue evaluation, we will decide if we need to make any changes for FY2007.

As always, we ask for your input and comments. We look upon this program as a constantly evolving partnership.

“A Word from the Archives”

Mark Jones, State Archivist, Connecticut State Library

Tax abstracts, sometimes called “Tax Lists” and “Grand Lists,” can yield valuable information to researchers interested in local history, family genealogy, or economic history. For example, the valuations on selected items, arranged in columns on the forms, can be useful in estimating the price of goods and services in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Generally, the books from those periods are large and thin. Sometimes assessors added covers made of wallpaper or local newspapers. Often the leather cover has disintegrated into red rot, making handling of each book a messy operation involving health risks for some.

The current municipal records retention schedule designates abstracts as permanent items. Through an active collecting policy in previous years, the State Archives has acquired the largest collection of pre-1900 Connecticut abstracts in the state. When one confronts abstracts of the twentieth century, size and weight become important retention issues. The Office of the Public Records Administrator recently received several questions about disposition of tax abstracts. Two towns have also made requests to the State Archivist to transfer decades of abstracts to the State Library in Hartford.

In order to respond to these queries and offers, the State Archivist has decided to undertake an informational reappraisal project to determine what abstracts to save and what preservation strategies to pursue. As a first step, he will solicit the opinion and advice of the State Library’s History and Genealogy Unit reference librarians. He will also survey other states to determine their practices.

As another step in this evaluation, he invites town clerks, historians, genealogists and tax assessors to answer the following two questions:

1. Is there a compelling informational need to retain modern twentieth century tax abstracts?
2. What strategies should be employed:
 - a. Take all into the State Archives when offered;
 - b. Acquire selected years, such as every five years;
 - c. Microfilm selected years;
 - d. Leave their disposition up to local assessors?

To express an opinion about either or both of these questions

or to refer a researcher, e-mail State Archivist Mark Jones at mjones@cslib.org or call (860) 757-6511. Please share this request with the town assessor, historians and genealogists. Thank you.

Staff Announcement



We are pleased to announce the appointment of Kathy Makover as full-time Librarian 1, Field Archivist. She joined the Office of the Public Records Administrator on Friday, February 18, 2005. Ms. Makover received her MLS from the State University of NY at Albany and her BA in American Studies from Yale University. Ms. Makover will assist with the Historic Document Preservation Program, including the development of a competitive grants program. She will also help plan workshops and conduct site visits to town clerks’ offices throughout the state.

Grant Funds Financial Report

Starting Balance (January 2005)	\$2,096,000
Encumbrances	
Disaster Recovery	\$ 100,000
FY2006 Targeted	\$1,413,000
FY2007 Competitive	\$ 300,000
FY2007 Targeted	<u>\$ 283,000</u>
Total Encumbrances	\$2,096,000
Unallocated Funds	\$ 0

Surviving a Disaster: The "Real Deal"

Jean E. Blaser, CRM, CCTC

The phone rang at 12:30 AM. Coming out of a deep sleep, your first thought is for your family. As a public official, your second thought is for your town. This call concerned my town.

I am the Records Manager for the Town of Enfield, Connecticut. The call was from Town Clerk Suzanne Olechnicki. She was at the Town Hall, picked up at her home in the middle of the night by emergency management personnel during the blizzard of January 2005, to unlock the vault and check her records. A heating coil or pipe had frozen and burst in the attic system mechanicals. Steam and water had spurted out into the space, over the floor, down every hole the water could find, into the elevator shaft, and onto three floors of offices below. The vault was fine, but other spaces were not. Water was everywhere, and the building was saturated. The attic was used for inactive paper records storage, and the offices below held active records. Suddenly, we were being tested.

Suzanne reported the damage to me, although it's difficult to describe all the necessary details over the phone while walking through a cloud of water vapor and a pool of water. She needed the name of the vendor who could help us with the

damage and moisture control on an emergency basis. How did we know who to call? We had done our homework, and knew in advance whom we would call.

Emergency preparedness is critical. Why am I being so dramatic? Because it is critical. If you don't think so, ask our Town Manager, Town Clerk, Director of Public Works, Chief Building Official, Town Planner, Inland Wetlands Agent, Director of Finance, Assessor, or Risk Manager. They'll tell you first-hand.

As Records Manager, I knew that the storage of records near a potential water source in the attic was a risk, but the space was assigned. I mitigated the risk by placing boxed records on pallets up off the floor and covering selected pallets with waterproof covers. This paid off in a very large way. During this disaster, the water flowed "under and between", but not "on" the records. No attic records were wet, or even damaged. Rapid dehumidification of the area by our vendor closed the attic recovery effort within 48 hours.

Another good move on our part was attending the disaster recovery workshop sponsored by the Office of the Public Re-

(Continued on page 4)

2005 Cycle 2 Grant Recipients

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Grant Category</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Grant Category</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Ashford	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	Naugatuck	Storage and Facilities	\$12,000
Bethany	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	New Fairfield	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Bethel	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	North Haven	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Bethlehem	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	North Stonington	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Bolton	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	Pomfret	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Bridgewater	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	Roxbury	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000
Bristol	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Sharon	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Chaplin	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000	Simsbury	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Colebrook	Inventory and Planning	\$7,000	Southbury	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Danbury	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000	Sprague	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Darien	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	Stonington	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Durham	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	Suffield	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Eastford	Inventory and Planning	\$7,000	Thomaston	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000
Franklin	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	Thompson	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000
Granby	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	Trumbull	Preservation/Conservation	\$12,000
Hampton	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	Voluntown	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000
Harwinton	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000	Washington	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Kent	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	Watertown	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Killingly	Organization and Indexing	\$7,000	West Haven	Organization and Indexing	\$12,000
Lebanon	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000	Westbrook	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Lyme	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000	Wethersfield	Inventory and Planning	\$12,000
Mansfield	Program Development	\$7,000	Wilton	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000
Middlefield	Storage and Facilities	\$7,000	Wolcott	Preservation/Conservation	\$7,000

NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS ADMINISTRATOR

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This newsletter is published semi-annually by the Office of the Public Records Administrator. Please send submissions to:

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(Continued from page 3)

cords Administrator and State Archives with funds from the Historic Documents Preservation Grant Program in March 2004. It was *free of charge* to any Connecticut Town Clerk or designated representative. Presented by State Library staff and Lori Foley, Field Representative for the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), we learned a lot.

I cannot detail here all the ways this workshop helped us. I will say, however, that my first priority when I returned to work after the workshop was to put together not only emergency response guidelines, but also an assortment of emergency response supplies, as recommended at the workshop. These supplies were complete, easy to locate, and ready to use within minutes of the disaster. We started our triage to dry out active records from offices within hours, not days.

Disaster response and recovery guidelines are extremely important, but rarely is one disaster the same as another. A lot depends on your knowledge, training, initiative, and improvisational skills. Most of the people reading this article are Town Clerks. You're perfect for the job.

For more information, call me at (860) 253-5141 or email me at jblaser@enfield.org or contact LeAnn Johnson at (860) 566-1100 x301 or ljohnson@cslib.org.



Reminder Dates/Upcoming Events

LeAnn Johnson, Public Records Grant Program Specialist

On June 14, 2005, the Office of the Public Records Administrator and State Archives will hold an IIMC certified workshop on "Winning Strategies for a Successful Municipal Records Management Program" at Central Connecticut State University's Institute of Technology and Business Development Conference Center in New Britain. Dr. Mark Langemo, CRM, a professor *emeritus* in the College of Business and Public Administration at the University of North Dakota, who has conducted over 600 records management seminars in more than 40 states, Canada, and Europe, will present the workshop. Topics will include:

- Establishing and Managing Successful City and Town Government Records Management Programs
- Tried-and-Proven Strategies for Program Development and Implementation
- Managing Electronic Records in 2005
- Digital Imaging and Applications in Records Management

The workshop is available free of charge to any Connecticut Town Clerk or designated representative. More information will be forthcoming. Please mark your calendars!