

# Building a Public Archives in Delaware for the Twenty-First Century

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**Abstract:** The late 1990s is a period of transition for the Delaware Public Archives. Current trends in public administration and government records management, coupled with vestiges of its first ninety years of operations, have coalesced to drive activities today. Four specific circumstances propel these activities: construction of a new Public Archives facility; the impact of information technology on government recordkeeping; enhanced demands for open and accountable government and public access to government information; and rising expectations of government records users. The Delaware Public Archives has found strategic planning to be an essential tool in mapping responses to these challenges.

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ON FEBRUARY 13, 1995, a group of Delaware citizens along with current and former government officials met with Governor Thomas R. Carper in his office atop the State Office Building in Wilmington. Those present included former Governor Elbert N. Carvel for whom that State Office Building is named, former State Archivist Leon deValinger, Jr. for whom the Hall of Records in Dover is named, and former Governor Russell W. Peterson who, as governor, opened the State Records Center in Dover in 1970. Also in attendance that day were Jacqueline Skinner, chair of Project START, the citizen's group she formed to coordinate a petition drive to convince the governor and general assembly of the need to better protect the state's archives, and former Secretary of State [and current Superior Court Judge] William T. Quillen who, during his brief tenure as secretary of state in 1993 and 1994, was the first high-level official to champion the building of a new facility for the Delaware Public Archives.<sup>1</sup>

At this gathering, Governor Carvel and Mrs. Skinner presented Governor Carper with a petition signed by more than 5,500 Delawareans, specifically calling on the governor and General Assembly to build a new state archives facility to replace the now grossly inadequate Hall of Records and State Records Center which, according to the petition, "jeopardize the continued existence of the State's archival records." The petition also challenged the governor and General Assembly to provide the Delaware Public Archives (DPA) with "sufficient funding to properly carry out its legal mandate to safeguard and make readily available our valuable records."<sup>2</sup>

This meeting between the governor and constituents petitioning their government stands as a pivotal event in the effort to put together an archives program in Delaware that will meet requirements of the early twenty-first century. Without the citizen petition drive, it is doubtful that there would have been sufficient gubernatorial and legislative support for the key element in this effort—a new Delaware Public Archives facility. However, with the petition in hand, Governor Carper and the General Assembly responded affirmatively to this expression of the "people's will." Ground was broken for the new \$17.5 million Delaware Public Archives on September 18, 1997, with construction scheduled for completion in the fall of 2000.

From the beginning of facility planning, current Delaware Secretary of State Edward J. Freel challenged Delaware Public Archives staff to view "Building an Archives for the Twenty-First Century" as more than just construction of a building. Indeed, the staff's view is that planning for the new DPA facility provides the opportunity to define and build supporting program structures that will enable the Delaware Public Archives to meet statutory and fiduciary responsibilities as the agency enters both a new building and a new century. Although DPA staff has been planning this "new archives" for more than a decade, it is the promise of the new building that has focused decision makers' attention on the archives' mission and program for service delivery, and that will enable the archives to better satisfy its statutory mandates.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Project START evolved into a nonprofit support organization for the Delaware Public Archives, called Friends of the Delaware Archives, Inc., or FODA. Additional information on FODA can be found on the DPA website, <[www.lib.de.us/archives](http://www.lib.de.us/archives)>.

<sup>2</sup>For background information on conditions leading to the petition initiative, see Ted Spiker, "Delaware Archives: Not Just Musty, Dusty & Crusty," *Delaware Today* 33 (November 1994): 60–61, 128–31.

<sup>3</sup>The guiding statutory mandates are found in the Delaware Public Records Law, 29 Del. Code §§ 501–526.

## The Context for Planning an Archives for the Twenty-First Century

Delaware had one of the first state archives programs in the nation. As early as 1817, Governor John Clark proposed legislation to create a state archives and a bill was introduced to “erect and construct a house or building of suitable size and dimension for the preservation and safe-keeping of the public papers and documents belonging to this State.”<sup>4</sup> However, nearly a century was to pass before the General Assembly established a Division of Public Archives in March 1905.<sup>5</sup> In 1913 the first “Hall of Records” was set up in segregated space in the basement of the State House. That same year, the Public Archives Commission appointed Walter G. Tatnall as part-time state archivist.<sup>6</sup>

On December 1, 1930, Leon deValinger, Jr. began his distinguished career with the Delaware Archives as assistant state archivist, moving on to assume responsibilities as the first full-time state archivist in October 1941. He served in that capacity until 1970.<sup>7</sup> Construction of the present Delaware Public Archives facilities—the Hall of Records, completed in 1938 and opened to the public on May 1, 1939, and the underground State Records Center opened in September 1970—bookended his tenure.<sup>8</sup> During deValinger’s long stewardship, the Delaware Archives became one of the most respected state programs in the country.<sup>9</sup> Central to his term in office were forward-looking applications of technology for archival processes. For example, preservation microfilming was introduced in 1938 and the archives purchased Barrow Laminator #2 in 1940. In his classic *American State Archives*, Ernst Posner summed up the situation in Delaware toward the end of the deValinger years: “The otherwise fine program of the State of Delaware suffers from an acute shortage of storage space.”<sup>10</sup>

Following deValinger’s departure in 1970, the archives suffered from more than just an acute shortage of space. It suffered through a decade of unstable leadership and uncertain direction. DeValinger’s leaving coincided with the abolition of the commission form of government in Delaware. The citizen-led Public Archives Commission was eliminated and the archives function was incorporated into a newly created Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs under the Department of State as the Bureau of Archives and Records Management. As consultant R. Nicholas Olsberg noted in his report to the Delaware Historical Records Advisory Board in 1984, “For some years, there was a succession of administrators, each with a different set of priorities, and frequent changes in reporting and management structure.”<sup>11</sup> Between 1970 and 1981, ten different individuals formed this “succession of administrators” who had responsibility for the archives program in Delaware.

<sup>4</sup>AN ACT to establish an Archives at Dover in Kent County, Delaware Public Archives, Record Group 1111, *Legislative Papers*, Legislative Acts — Not Passed, 1817.

<sup>5</sup>AN ACT for the better preservation of Certain Public Records, 23 Delaware Laws 1905, c. 77.

<sup>6</sup>AN ACT for the establishment of a Hall of Records and appropriating money therefor, 27 Delaware Laws 1913, c. 10; Leon deValinger, Jr., “Horizons Unlimited,” *American Archivist* 27 (January 1964): 4–7.

<sup>7</sup>For the best review of deValinger’s career in Delaware, see Jerry Shields, “Achiever at the Archives: The deValinger Years, 1930–1972,” *Delaware History* (Fall/Winter, 1994–5): 63–93.

<sup>8</sup>In addition to his service to Delaware, deValinger is a founding member and Fellow of the Society of American Archivists and served as SAA president in 1962–1963.

<sup>9</sup>deValinger, “Horizons Unlimited,” 7; Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 74–81.

<sup>10</sup>Posner, *American State Archives*, 81.

<sup>11</sup>R. Nicholas Olsberg, *Report on Delaware’s Records Program: State and Local Governments, Submitted to the State Government and Local Government task forces as part of a statewide study of records conditions and needs sponsored by the State Historical Records Advisory Board* (20 September 1984), 2.

This situation began to change with the appointment of Roy H. Tryon as state archivist and records administrator in June 1981. During his almost seven-and-a-half years in Delaware, Tryon's initiatives centered on the need for a new facility, implementing the records management program that had remained dormant despite the statutory authority for it,<sup>12</sup> bringing technology to bear on the problems of archival description, renewing program attention on the records of local governments, developing a professional staff, and updating of the Delaware Public Records Law.<sup>13</sup> Tryon's efforts in the 1980s provided a solid foundation for the Delaware Public Archives initiatives of the 1990s.

Among Tryon's last actions as state archivist and records administrator was publication of the "Million Dollar Solution," a white paper that, for the first time since the deValinger years, succinctly defined the scope of records management problems in Delaware. Leaked to the press, the "Million Dollar Solution" detailed state agency off-site storage requirements from data that archives staff had gathered in an office-to-office survey in July and August 1988.<sup>14</sup> The report concluded that there were more than 155,000 cubic feet of records in agency-controlled space, and that "most agencies are not in compliance with the state's records management program, have incomplete retention schedules, and apparently ignore their records problems until they reach crisis proportions."<sup>15</sup> Inadequate conditions at the Delaware Public Archives, inadequate attention to records preservation, and widespread state agency records management neglect were brought to public light in the media. Although largely ignored by the then secretary of state, governor, and General Assembly, once the furor over the "leak" had passed, the "Million Dollar Solution" offered a departure point for the newly appointed state archivist and records administrator to craft a strategic plan and chart direction for the program soon after taking office in January 1990. The initial seven months of my tenure as archivist concentrated on working collaboratively with staff and constituents to define "what we are about" and develop a strategic plan for the Delaware Public Archives to carry the agency through the 1990s.

### The 1990s—Coming in from the Cold

In 1990, strategic planning was just being adopted as a tool in government records management. For state archives, the NAGARA-University of Pittsburgh Institute on Advanced Archival Administration offered a critical opportunity to learn strategic planning techniques. "Camp Pitt" provided strategic planning skills training for archives administrators from more than half the states, teaching them the techniques of "thinking strategically" with a concentrated focus on the management of electronic records.<sup>16</sup> Strategic planning implies that there is a vision of the future toward which the archives aspires and a stated mission that defines its *raison d'être*. As David Bearman has noted, "Strategic thinking begins with establishing appropriate goals and objectives. It then emphasizes the discovery, invention, or production of mechanisms to achieve stated objectives."<sup>17</sup> Finally, strategic planning implies that there are criteria against which to measure the degree of

<sup>12</sup>52 Delaware Laws 1959, c. 86.

<sup>13</sup>66 Delaware Laws 1988, c. 211; 67 Delaware Laws 1990, c. 257.

<sup>14</sup>Tryon has confirmed that he was not the source of this leak.

<sup>15</sup>*A Million Dollar Solution: State Records Center Expansion: A Report on Conditions and Needs* (Dover: Bureau of Archives and Records Management, September 1988).

<sup>16</sup>For more information on the institutes, see the article by David Olson in this issue of the *American Archivist*.

<sup>17</sup>David Bearman, "Archival Strategies," *American Archivist* 58 (Fall 1995): 384.

success in attaining objectives and further that these criteria measure real results and do not simply count inputs and outputs.<sup>18</sup>

The 1990 version of the Delaware Public Archives Strategic Plan detailed a program philosophy based on statutory authority and an established vision of the future. DPA grounded its philosophy in an understanding that government is the one institution of our society that touches the lives of each individual living within its jurisdiction, and that inherent in that contact between government and citizen is a complex relationship of rights and obligations, of mutual responsibility and accountability.<sup>19</sup> From the concept of government as a contract with the citizen, the role of records as central to this interdependence follows. The DPA's strategic plan concluded: "The information that government creates, receives, and maintains in response to the directives of the citizenry through its elected representatives is one of government's, and society's, most important resources. As a resource, records and information must be systematically, impartially, and effectively administered . . . A state archives and records management program serves as trustee for the citizens of the State to care for their records."<sup>20</sup>

DPA also formally adopted the operating principles issued for government archives programs by the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators.<sup>21</sup> Staff defined an alliterative three part mission statement: support, service, and stewardship. DPA was to provide support in partnership with agencies of government for accomplishment of agency missions through effective records and information management. It was to provide expert service to partner agencies and the public to ensure economical and efficient administration of, access to, protection of, and disposition of government records and information. It also was to act as steward for the citizens of Delaware to select, protect, and promote use for records of enduring value that warranted permanent preservation.<sup>22</sup>

The most telling section of the 1990 strategic plan, setting forth both obstacles and opportunities for the Delaware Public Archives, was the "environmental scan." This exercise identified critical issues that DPA had to address to be successful in meeting both statutory mandates and stewardship obligations. The list was long and included the following observations:

- There was an inadequate understanding and faulty perception of DPA's mission and programs on the part of client agencies, government decision makers, and the general

<sup>18</sup>This is the planning structure the State of Delaware has subsequently adopted as mandatory in its budget development process.

<sup>19</sup>Samuel S. Silsby, Jr. best articulated this role for a state archives in his early writings, notably in *Report of the State Archivist 1973* (Augusta: Maine State Archives, 1973), 9–13 and in *Archives and Professionalism*, Information Bulletin No. 3 (Augusta: Maine State Archives, 1976). Silsby, a lawyer by training, changed the then-prevalent paradigm of the state archives as historical resource to one of governmental resource for accountability as he established the program at the Maine State Archives in the late 1960s and early 1970s. An earlier pioneer, Illinois State Archivist Margaret Cross Norton, writing in the 1930s, expressed similar views on the purpose of a government archives. See "The Scope and Function of Archives" in *Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management*, edited by Thornton W. Mitchell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 3–24.

<sup>20</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s* (Dover, 8 August 1990), 3.

<sup>21</sup>*A New Age: Electronic Information Systems, State Governments, and the Preservation of the Archival Record* (Albany, N.Y.: National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, 1990).

<sup>22</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s*, 6–7.

public. There was a popular notion that the archives is only concerned with “old records” and “genealogical research.”

- Resource allocations were not aligned with core functions and resources generally were insufficient to meet core statutory mandates.
- There existed a blurring of traditional boundaries among archivists, records managers, data processing professionals, librarians, and program administrators for records responsibility. The role of DPA in this new administrative environment was unclear, and its ability to articulate the archives role to decision makers was lacking.
- Government agencies were making decisions on application of information technology and implementation of both automated and manual recordkeeping systems that focused on immediate agency needs with little regard for the impact of these decisions on the records’ life cycle beyond agency use, or on long-term accessibility to recorded information traditionally preserved as archival to document government accountability, define mutual obligations, and define citizen rights.
- Staff classifications, professional development opportunities, recognition, and internal staffing patterns did not map well against program requirements and statutory obligations. Staff sorely lacked competencies in electronic records management.
- Records retention schedules and archives finding aids were both outdated and lacked a comprehensive foundation.<sup>23</sup>

The environmental scan exercise yielded overriding evidence that the Delaware Public Archives faced a critical situation. Its inadequate facilities only added to these other obstacles. Indeed, the 1990 Strategic Plan concluded that as greater demands were placed on existing DPA staff and resources, there loomed on the horizon a “potential breakdown of the whole records management infrastructure that supports [the] state archives and records management program as defined by the Delaware Public Records Act.”<sup>24</sup>

To address the situation, DPA staff in 1990 defined eight program objectives, along with a series of strategies to address each for the period 1991–1996. These objectives were to:

- Increase client agency awareness and general understanding among government officials of the concepts and values of records management and archives programs to their agency missions, and of their responsibilities under the Delaware Public Records Law for adequately documenting the activities of their agencies and caring for agency records.
- Increase agency compliance with the Delaware Public Records Law by 20 percent each year with a goal of full compliance.
- Create a work environment that fosters integration of individual creativity, high productivity, and job satisfaction into an effective, responsive DPA team.
- Provide comprehensive centralized micrographics services for state and local government (as required by the Public Records Law) with a capacity to meet all filming required by authorized records retention schedules, and eliminate the backlog of filming projects.
- Provide a full range of archives and records center storage options and a records care program to secure and protect the integrity of government records in DPA’s custody.

<sup>23</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s*, 9–11.

<sup>24</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s*, 10.



- Provide a full range of records access services including gaining complete intellectual control over archives holdings.
- Fully integrate electronic records into the DPA program of services.
- Develop and implement a fully functioning Local Records Program as required by legislation passed in 1990.<sup>25</sup>

This 1990 Strategic Plan had several deficiencies. It was ambitious but not necessarily practical given program resources and political constraints. While it provided DPA administration and staff with a framework for program activities and resource allocations, there was little success in convincing government decision makers within the Department of State, the State Budget Office, or elsewhere of the need to tie the plan's objectives to resource allocation.<sup>26</sup> Thus in a 1993 plan revision, DPA staff, while maintaining the list of eight objectives, greatly scaled back its actions to meet those objectives, identifying three categories of activity: (a) those it would pursue at current or enhanced levels; (b) those it would pursue at a minimal level until more resources are allocated to the program; and (c) those that it would not pursue without additional resources, even though by so doing, it would fail to address certain of its statutory responsibilities.<sup>27</sup> Staff thinking in 1993 revolved around the notion that efforts to meet all statutory mandates fragmented energies and resources. We concluded that it was better to concentrate on doing a few core functions well than to attempt many activities and do few, if any, of these satisfactorily. Again, there was no reaction to this change in program focus from government decision makers.

### Beginning a New Direction

As the five-year time period for the 1990 Strategic Plan reached its final year, DPA staff again revisited its strategic plan. Early in this process, staff decided not to simply realign the existing plan as it had done in the 1993 revision but to build the plan from the "ground up," with two guiding parameters: the overarching charges in the Delaware Public Records Law and the fact that constructing a new facility now seemed a definite possibility after presentation of the citizen petition to the governor and General Assembly.

Unlike previous planning efforts, this time the Delaware Public Archives contracted with an organizational development consultant to facilitate the strategic planning process. The consultant, attached to the State Personnel Office, worked with DPA staff for six months. With building construction on the horizon, DPA envisioned another five-year time period for the revised plan, terminating with occupancy of the new building. In making this decision, staff recognized that the very fact of planning a new facility and program

<sup>25</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s*, 12–21.

<sup>26</sup>Indeed, under the Delaware Budget Office guidelines and procedures, the Delaware Public Archives does not have a strategic plan and program objectives. Its plan and objectives are part of its immediate parent in the Department of State hierarchy, the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs which also includes the Delaware State Museums and the Office of Historic Preservation. This placement in the structure of Delaware government continues to feed the stereotype that the Delaware Public Archives is only concerned with the "old" and "historical." This placement mitigates against a view that the archives is part of the information agency cluster of Delaware government, the role the archives in its strategic planning views for itself. As consultant Nicholas Olsberg noted in his report to the Delaware Historical Records Advisory Board in 1984, "There is, however, very little relationship between the records management function of the Bureau [now Delaware Public Archives], and the cultural activities of the Division as a whole." Olsberg, *Report on Delaware's Records Program*, 6.

<sup>27</sup>Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, *Strategic Plan for the 1990s: 1993 Update*.

operations within it would require a continuous and continuing extension of this strategic planning effort for the entire period prior to occupancy, and beyond. Staff also realized that the planning and building of a new facility would focus more executive and legislative oversight of the program, as well as build public expectations for new levels of services.

The resulting strategic plan revised the agency's mission statement, giving it a more definite citizen emphasis while retaining the guiding principles and philosophy of the earlier plans.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, staff adopted a new operational name—the Delaware Public Archives—as more adequately representing its mission and indeed the records it holds. The new mission statement reads:

*The Delaware Public Archives safeguards the public's right to know. We are entrusted to manage a valuable public asset—the records of our democracy that document the obligations and rights of Delaware citizens and enable them to judge the performance and accountability of government officials in carrying out public policy.*

Further, this new mission statement recognizes three primary responsibilities that the Delaware Public Archives has:

- Ensure access to public records for present and future generations of Delawareans and promote the availability and use of public records as a unique and invaluable source of information;
- Identify, collect, and preserve public records of enduring historical and evidential value; and
- Advise and educate in the creation, management, use and preservation of public records.

From these responsibilities flow five operational goals for the years 1996–2000:

- Help design a state-of-the-art facility and implement its operations;
- Preserve and provide access to government records/information of enduring value;
- Re-engineer the entire records management process to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness;
- Establish public programming as a core function to clarify the mission, improve the image, and promote the use of the agency by the public; and
- Expand the competencies of the staff and provide more opportunities for their development and interaction.

Finally, DPA staff defined six operating principles to guide activities during facility planning and construction:

- Records will not be imperiled more than they currently are in existing facilities.
- Current services to the public will not be eliminated at any time during the project.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup>This change in focus is consistent with efforts in Delaware government to improve citizen services with the adoption of a Total Quality Management philosophy in the mid-1990s with its emphasis on citizens as "customers."

<sup>29</sup>This principle is proving to be a real challenge. As the new DPA facility is being constructed on the site of existing facilities and incorporating these into the new structure, DPA has transferred most archival holdings to a site forty-five miles distant from the research room in Dover while continuing to provide research room services at the Dover location.



- DPA staff will be included in all decision and design discussions for the new facility and all staff will be informed regularly on the progress of the project.
- The architect, general contractor, subcontractors and the Division of Facilities Management will be encouraged to maintain open communications with DPA throughout the project.<sup>30</sup>
- DPA will view the construction project as an opportunity to challenge traditional thinking about all facets of how we do our job.
- DPA will keep all constituents informed on project progress, especially as it relates to the delivery of DPA services.

Succinctly stated, strategic planning provides the focused view DPA needs for the challenges we face. It has allowed staff to begin the process of evolving to a new organizational model for functions and services in the new facility that has a strong focus on meeting specific needs of a variety of program customers (Figure 1).<sup>31</sup> Strategic planning has enabled DPA to allocate scarce resources more effectively on targeted activities. Finally, strategic planning has allowed us to better assess and take advantage of opportunities as they appear. Three of these opportunities will be detailed: (a) coming to terms with information technology; (b) positioning DPA for the future; and (c) building a public-private partnership. While each is considered separately below, in fact their elements intertwine.

### Information Technology

Perhaps no single issue confronts and confuses government archivists more in the last decade of the twentieth century than the application of information technology to the recordkeeping of parent governments. Questions on how to guarantee that electronic records remain authentic and accessible over time are complex. There are no easy answers or agreed upon approaches.<sup>32</sup> Conditions change at a rapid pace with each new generation of technology released, and there is a gross deficiency in archives program resources necessary to meet the challenges.

The Delaware Public Archives tried several approaches to managing electronic records in the early 1990s. Staff in DPA's records management unit undertook these initiatives with little training and little understanding of the technology and policy issues involved, and with marginal success. In short, it was a reactive approach. A section on computer records in a mainframe environment was added to the General Schedule for State Government Records in 1992.<sup>33</sup> DPA also issued a statement on optical imaging systems that same year. Its basic provision called for records of archival value maintained in optical imaging systems either to be transferred to the Delaware Public Archives in a human-

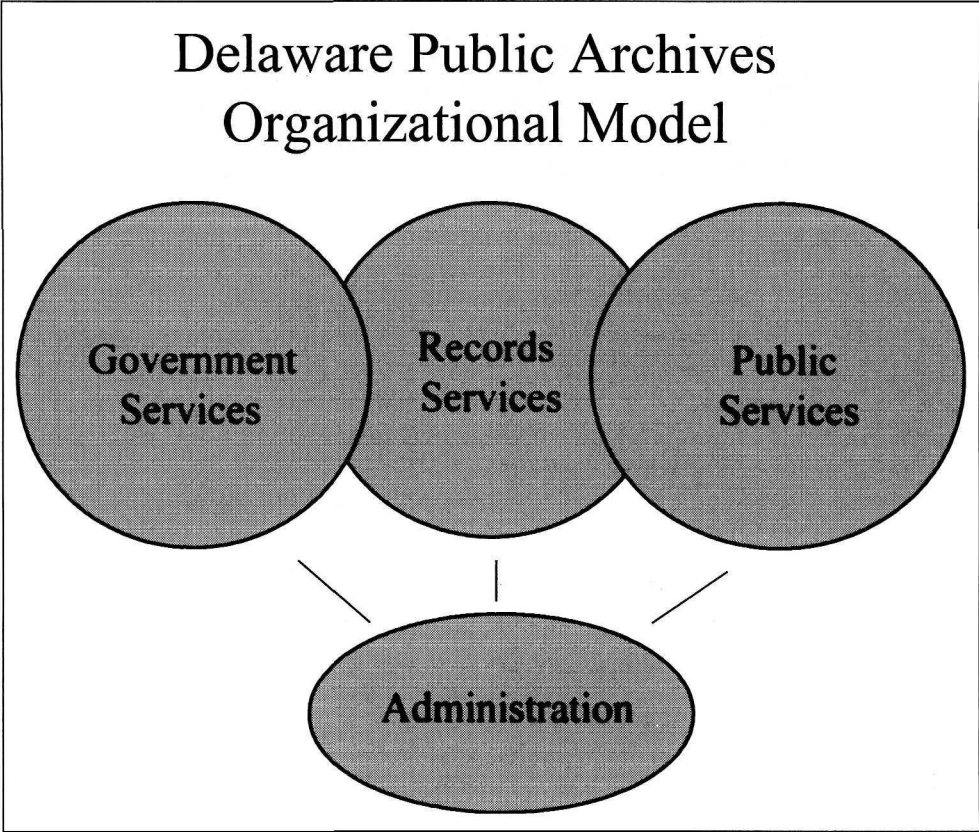
<sup>30</sup>For public works projects such as the new Delaware Public Archives, the Division of Facilities Management is the state entity actually contracting for architect and construction services, not the Delaware Public Archives.

<sup>31</sup>For the Government Services cluster, the customers are state and local government agencies and officials. The Public Services cluster of functions will administer a wide variety of activities to meet the needs of public customers. For the underlying Records Services cluster, the "customers" are the archival records themselves.

<sup>32</sup>For examples of questions to consider, see David Bearman and Jennifer Trant, "Electronic Records Research Workshop Meeting, May 28-30, 1997: Report from the Archives Community," *D-Lib Magazine* (July/August 1997), <[www.dlib.org/dlib/july97/07bearman.html](http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july97/07bearman.html)>.

<sup>33</sup>This section of the General Schedule essentially mirrored NARA General Schedule #20.

Figure 1.



readable format, or to be retained in the agency on the agency’s system under a negotiated agreement with the archives.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-1994, as a result of strategic planning discussions, DPA decided to make a more significant resource commitment to emphasize its role with information technology and policy issues. A vacant records analyst position was reclassified through the State Merit System to a new position, Information Policy and Technology Coordinator.<sup>35</sup> Tim Slavin, at that time state archivist and records administrator for Rhode Island, came to Delaware in this new position in February 1995.

The positive benefits of the decision to hire an information policy and technology coordinator were quickly apparent. After more than a decade of requesting funds to support a local area network in the Hall of Records and for the building of PRIMIS, a life-cycle tracking management system for Delaware records, the General Assembly provided funds

<sup>34</sup>*Optical Imaging Systems: Policy Statement and Guidelines* (Dover: Bureau of Archives and Records Management, 13 October 1992). From the beginning, DPA viewed this policy statement as a stopgap enacted to address the optical imaging system of a specific agency, the Delaware Housing Authority. In the intervening years, DPA has applied these general guidelines to other agency optical imaging and electronic records systems.

<sup>35</sup>In the FY96 budget year, DPA was successful in getting a replacement records analyst position created.

to begin both initiatives in FY97.<sup>36</sup> Having a staff position dedicated to information technology was key to gaining support for these appropriations. From a position prior to 1996 in which DPA used antiquated, stand-alone information technology for its own operations, the archives now has a level of office systems technology comparable to that of the state agencies it advises.

As important as the acquisition of a LAN and building of PRIMIS are to internal operations, another initiative from the information policy and technology coordinator resulting in National Historical Publications and Records Commission support for a two-year electronic records project will have a longer-term impact if its stated purpose—to establish a program for the management of electronic records in Delaware government—is achieved.<sup>37</sup> As envisioned in the grant application, the project consists of two concurrent tracks: training existing DPA staff; and assessing current electronic records systems already in place. The survey track will identify vital electronic information systems that are in place (or under design) in select functional areas of Delaware government. Pilot studies of these systems will help define functional requirement criteria for agencies to use in developing recordkeeping systems to ensure they create records that adequately document core agency functions.<sup>38</sup>

The training component of the project is bringing experts both from within Delaware government and from other states to Dover for a series of seminars and workshops for all DPA professional staff and selected agency information resource managers and agency records officers. Topics during the initial year of the project included functional requirements for recordkeeping systems, elements of compliant recordkeeping systems from legal and audit perspectives, electronic program strategies, and strategies for successful program implementation. The outcomes from this activity will be a higher level of understanding about the unique attributes of electronic records systems and integration of a series of functional requirements for recordkeeping systems into the “toolbox” of records management services that DPA offers to state and local government agencies. A specific goal for DPA is to formulate a new management approach to its archives and records management services with emphasis in three areas—inventory and description, long-term access, and accessioning—as we move operations into the new building.

### Positioning the Agency

Critical to the success to date of the electronic records project has been partnering with the Delaware Department of Justice, Office of Information Services, and Office of the Auditor of Accounts in its management. Similarly, another activity undertaken by the information policy and technology coordinator was to work with a state management fellow assigned to the archives to develop a theoretical framework on access to government information and map that framework against Delaware’s Freedom of Information statute.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>For a full description of PRIMIS, see Public Systems, Inc., *Public Records Integrated Management Information System (PRIMIS)* (February 1997), available from the Delaware Public Archives. A brief description of PRIMIS can be found at <[www.publicsystems.com/projects/primis.htm](http://www.publicsystems.com/projects/primis.htm)>.

<sup>37</sup>The two-year Delaware Electronic Records Project began in September 1996.

<sup>38</sup>The starting point for the Delaware Electronic Records Project in defining functional requirement criteria is the work of the NHPRC-funded University of Pittsburgh Project, <[www.sis.pitt.edu/~nhprc/evidence.html](http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~nhprc/evidence.html)>. The latest version of the Delaware Functional Requirements can be found on the DPA website, <[www.lib.de.us/archives](http://www.lib.de.us/archives)>.

<sup>39</sup>*Freedom of Information in Delaware: A White Paper from the State Archives* (Dover: Bureau of Archives and Records Management, 1 October 1995); 29 Delaware Code §§ 10001–10005.

About the same time DPA partnered with the Office of Information Services, the Delaware Historical Records Advisory Board, and the Public Policy Institute at the University of Delaware to present a public forum on government information policy. Following on the heels of the forum, Secretary of State Freel detailed both the information policy and technology coordinator and the state archivist and records administrator to serve on a Task Force on Citizen Access to Government Information, chaired by the state librarian, that included representatives from the University of Delaware, the State Office of Information Services, the Division of Libraries, the Department of Labor, and the public.<sup>40</sup>

The task force's work led directly to a new DPA initiative, in partnership with the Division of Libraries, to investigate development of a Delaware Government Information Locator Service (D-GILS). It also led to a decision to include a Government Information Center within the new Public Archives facility. This center will serve as a point of ready access to current Delaware government information, primarily in electronic format, and is a logical extension of DPA's traditional mandate to collect publications of state and local government.<sup>41</sup> It also offers an opportunity to take advantage of the information technology infrastructure Delaware has built over the past several years.<sup>42</sup>

### Public-Private Partnerships

Historically, Delaware has seen a series of public-private partnerships to support government functions. For example, in the 1930s T. Coleman duPont funded construction of a one hundred mile, concrete highway connecting northern Delaware through Sussex County to the Maryland line and gave the road to the state.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the donation of \$1.3 million from an anonymous source to support "enhancements" to the new Public Archives facility was not without precedent in Delaware. However, the donation, following a public presentation that archives staff member Russ McCabe made in June 1995 to a patriotic society, certainly was a surprise and an unanticipated opportunity to focus on the DPA objective to "establish public programming as a core function" as called for in DPA's strategic plan.

The terms of this anonymous gift called for the Delaware Public Archives to match the donated amount from nonpublic sources within Delaware.<sup>44</sup> The Department of State, parent agency of the Delaware Public Archives, established an "Archives Enhancement Fund" to receive the gift and contracted with a professional development specialist to advise archives staff on mounting a campaign to match the donation. This campaign has three distinct phases: soliciting the Delaware foundation community; soliciting the Delaware business community; and soliciting individual contributors. Early in the campaign planning, the consultant suggested the need for both working co-chairs and honorary co-chairs to lead the effort. With support from Governor Carper, two prominent Delawareans with wide name recognition throughout Delaware were approached to chair the campaign,

<sup>40</sup>Recently both have been tasked by the governor's office and secretary of state to work on another task force to help draft legislation that addresses electronic commerce issues.

<sup>41</sup>29 Delaware Code § 519.

<sup>42</sup>For example, in Delaware through an initiative of the Division of Libraries anyone with a public library card has access to the Internet through his or her public library from home or office with a local telephone call.

<sup>43</sup>John K. Winkler, *The Du Pont Dynasty: The Story of the Most Wealthy and Powerful Family in American History* (New York: Reynold & Hitchcock, 1955), 247.

<sup>44</sup>The donor later removed this restriction, but the Delaware Public Archives continued to view it as a moral challenge to meet the original stipulations of the gift.

and both agreed to do so. Former governors Pierre S. duPont and Elbert N. Carvel agreed to the governor's request to serve as honorary co-chairs.

The first foray with raising the matching funds in the spring and early summer of 1997 proved successful. DPA approached five Delaware foundations with a collective request of \$1.2 million; collectively, these foundations committed \$955,000 to enhanced facilities in the new Public Archives. The corporate initiative began at the time of groundbreaking and will continue through June 1998. Solicitation of individual contributors is scheduled for spring 1998.

DPA anticipates that the model of seeking private financial support will be a continuing one. Combining federal grant support, targeted appropriated state funds,<sup>45</sup> earned income from the Enhancement Fund, as well as a general fund appropriation, addresses one operational objective of the Delaware Public Archives—to maintain a funding source mix as a hedge against total dependence on a single funding source for program support. The strategy also anticipates that the model of actively seeking program partnerships with other public and private agencies will be a continuing one.<sup>46</sup>

### The Delaware Experience: A Work in Progress

As this is written in late autumn 1997, a full measure of the success of the efforts outlined in this article can only come in the future. Construction of the new Delaware Public Archives facility is just beginning. The initiatives to squarely align DPA with other "information agencies" in Delaware government have borne some fruit, but future directions of the state toward an integrated records and information management "system" and a uniform statewide information policy remain murky.<sup>47</sup> As in other states, and in the federal government, information technology is the driving force in these high-level discussions. Information technology decisions are often viewed as information policy decisions which *de facto* they become without recognizing that information technology policy and information policy, though related, are not the same. The public-private initiative has opened several doors and to date has proved successful for supporting "bricks and mortar." It remains to be seen how successful future initiatives will be in garnering support for on-going program operations as well as special projects. The NHPRC-funded electronic records project suggests an agenda and approaches for managing electronic records that promise success, but the continuous, and rapid, evolution of information technology and its applications in government offer no clear vision of electronic records management five years from now, not to mention fifty. One has only to think of the influence of the Internet on government operations over the past three years to get a sense of the magnitude of electronic records issues the future will require us to address.

There is an old maxim that states, "Failing to plan is planning to fail." Here the DPA experience over the past decade proves instructive. Attention to planning—to iden-

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<sup>45</sup>For example, in Delaware the program of archives and records management services for local governments is funded by a fee collected by the County Recorder when any instrument is recorded. The fee is then transferred to the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund which DPA administers with advice of a Local Records Commission.

<sup>46</sup>One initiative under early consideration is a joint program with the Historical Society of Delaware to utilize the conservation laboratory facility in the new Delaware Public Archives to meet the conservation treatment needs of both organizations.

<sup>47</sup>Recently DPA's information policy and technology coordinator was asked to participate in a cabinet-level task group to explore electronic commerce issues and their relationship to current Delaware statutes, court decisions, and policies.

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tifying a vision, core values, a mission—has proved its worth time and again. While the future will play out in ways that we cannot anticipate in the daily moment, the planning that the Delaware Public Archives has undertaken over the past decade allows it to stay a course, define activities, make decisions, form the benchmarks against which actions can be measured, and most importantly enables us to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves, and perhaps even create a few.