

“Camp Pitt” and the Continuing Education of Government Archivists: 1989-1996

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Abstract: This article traces the development, implementation, and effects of a series of advanced institutes held at the University of Pittsburgh from 1989 to 1996. It provides an in-depth assessment of each year's program and commentary about its usefulness. These grant-funded institutes offered a unique opportunity for government archivists to receive a continuing education on advanced technology, and their impact on state archival programs has been significant.

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Introduction and Background

THE FORMAL NAME FOR the series of institutes which was co-sponsored by the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) and the University of Pittsburgh was “Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists.” However, in the minds of all who attended these events over the several years that they were held, the event will always be remembered as “Camp Pitt.” Held each June from 1989 to 1994, and again in 1996 and 1997, each of these institutes brought together a diverse group of records professionals who carried away from Pittsburgh an educational event unparalleled in the history of American archivists.

While the emphasis and curriculum changed over the years, each institute attempted to assist government records professionals in developing programs to deal with records in an electronic form. Funding for these events began with a grant from the Council on Library Resources and continued thereafter with three separate grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). What was the significance of these institutes and how effective were they in educating American government records personnel in the challenge of electronic records administration?

Camp Pitt would not have happened were it not for the vision and efforts of Edwin C. Bridges, director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Bridges set out to establish some kind of advanced training forum for people involved in government records work—especially state archivists. These efforts grew out of two important events from earlier in the decade: the NHPRC-sponsored state archival program assessments from which twenty-seven state reports were completed by 1984; and the *Report of the Committee on the Records of Government*, completed the following year.¹ These studies pointed out in vivid detail the problems that contemporary government archivists were having with new technologies.

Bridges soon entered into discussions with Anna K. Nelson, who was the project director for the Committee on the Records of Government, and pointed out that those charged with the administration of state archival programs generally held degrees in history and were not trained to manage the technological change confronting the profession.² In June 1984, discussions were held between the Committee on the Records of Government and representatives of the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators (NASARA), the predecessor of NAGARA (the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators). At these discussions, the idea of some kind of advanced training for state archivists began to receive serious consideration, and soon Bridges set about formulating ideas for both the funding and the content of the proposed institutes. Shortly after the meeting, Bridges wrote to Nelson that the lack of adequate professional educational opportunities for state archivists was one of the key issues in need

¹National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators, *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States* (Albany, N.Y., 1984) and Committee on the Records of Government, *Report* (Washington, D.C., 1985). See also Richard J. Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists in the United States: A Study of Professionalism* (New York, The Haworth Press, 1994), 170. Cox’s chapter on the NAGARA institute in this book is the best available summary of the early institutes.

²The author gratefully acknowledges the use of early files on the institute which Edwin C. Bridges shared with him. Many of the following footnotes refer to materials in these files.

of resolution, and soon thereafter efforts began to find an educational institution which might take on this issue.³

At this early point in the discussions, there was a feeling that the needed educational opportunities were in the area of teaching general management skills; only gradually did the concept of centering the institutes on electronic records management take hold. Approaches were made to Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, Syracuse University, and Drexel University, but these came to naught. By early 1985, however, the Council on Library Resources (CRL) expressed interest in funding such an effort. Meetings were held with staff of the Council, and there seemed to be a realistic hope that funding for the effort might be forthcoming.

Bridges began drafting proposals for the planned institute early in 1986. He stated in one of these drafts that "Modern information systems and other changes in the nation's information environment have caused archivists to recognize the common interests that all share. The documentary requirements of these larger information systems are beyond the span of control of any one or two institutions."⁴ Bridges also noted that a new generation of archival leadership was taking the helm in many states and improved communication among the various programs was becoming a reality. This proposal was subsequently sent to the NAGARA Board of Directors which approved the plan as a goal for the organization. The next step was the formation of a steering committee (officially called the NAGARA Professional Development Committee) to guide the project. In addition to Bridges (who served as chair), Larry J. Hackman, at that time state archivist of New York, and David Hooper, the state archivist of Arizona (and a member of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission) were appointed to the committee.⁵ Throughout 1987, more elaborate and detailed proposals were written, contacts maintained with the CRL, and the plan further refined. As this process continued, the concept for the institute gradually shifted from a general administration seminar to an event to assist state archivists in dealing with the challenge of electronic records.

The final link in the chain was forged in 1988 when the idea for the institute received the enthusiastic support of the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) at the University of Pittsburgh. With the appointment of a new dean, Toni Carbo Bearman, the plans presented by NAGARA began to move toward action. At the same time, Pittsburgh was seeking to expand its programs in the field of archival education, and Richard J. Cox was hired from the New York State Archives to teach archives management.⁶

By the fall of 1988, plans for the first institute were well underway. The NAGARA Professional Development Committee met in Pittsburgh in October to put the final touches on a grant proposal and plan the actual schedule for the June 1989 institute. In November, Warren J. Haas, President of the Council on Library Resources, wrote SLIS that the proposal submitted by Toni Carbo Bearman had been funded for \$60,676. This meant that two years of institutes were going to be supported.⁷ "Camp Pitt" was underway, and the

³Bridges to Nelson, 19 June and 7 September 1984.

⁴Proposal by Edwin C. Bridges, 8 January 1986.

⁵Frank B. Evans of the National Archives also assisted the project with his guidance and counsel.

⁶Previous to his appointment at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Library and Information Science, Cox had worked not only at the New York State Archives, but earlier in the Alabama program as well. Thus two of three members of the NAGARA steering committee had been Cox's supervisors.

⁷Letter from Warren J. Haas to Ruthann Manglesdorf, 8 November 1988.

committee set out to firmly establish the program for June 1989. In so doing, they set the basis, not only for the first institute, but also for the others that followed.

The First Institute—1989

Perhaps the most consistent feature of all the annual NAGARA institutes was their basic format. Each institute consisted of three parts: (1) lectures on the latest technological trends and developments which were usually given by professors from Pittsburgh’s School of Library and Information Science; (2) work on strategic planning as a tool for change; and (3) small group projects which were generally done in the afternoons. By developing this format, the planning committee established a balanced program which would hold the interest of the attendees and assist them in modernizing their programs.

The first group which assembled in Pittsburgh on June 4, 1989, included representatives from sixteen states (Mississippi sent two people, making a total of seventeen state representatives), plus two representatives from the National Archives. While the programs represented were diverse in size and location within state bureaucracies, the participants had very similar backgrounds. As Richard Cox pointed out, there was a “remarkable homogeneity” in this group since twelve of the representatives had been trained in history.⁸ All nineteen of the representatives attending the 1989 institute had at least ten years of experience in the profession.

The 1989 program speakers included John McDonald, the director of the Automated Systems Division of the National Archives of Canada; Margaret Hedstrom, then of the New York State Archives; David Bearman, of Archives and Museum Informatics; and Edwin Levine of Florida’s Joint Committee on Information Technology Resources. Each gave their views on how archivists could cope with modern information systems. In addition, SLIS faculty members Edie Rasmussen, Michael Spring, and Kenneth Sochats gave presentations on the latest in information technologies. Strategic planning techniques were presented by John E. Prescott of the University of Pittsburgh Katz School of Business. Richard Cox served as session reporter and Liisa Fagerlund of the World Health Organization served as facilitator. Each speaker delivered carefully organized presentations which were replete with overhead projections and numerous handouts. There was always an opportunity for the class to query the speakers, which was often a lively experience, as the archivists struggled at times to relate what seemed like alien material to their world.⁹

According to the institute’s reporter, Richard Cox, there were five conclusions from the deliberations at the 1989 “Camp Pitt.” These were: (1) the establishment of archival care for electronic records is the most important issue facing the profession; (2) dealing with this problem will lead to fundamental rethinking of existing programs; (3) that strategic planning tools are a powerful means of dealing with these problems; (4) that electronic records issues are as much political as theoretical matters; and (5) that the present situation is still fluid enough that archivists can still play a role in the management of electronic records. However, there was also some sense of urgency and many of the presenters pointed out that drafting new plans to deal with technological change implied “hitting a moving target.”

⁸Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists*, 172–73.

⁹The University of Pittsburgh published formal reports for these early institutes and these are a most useful source for information on them. They were compiled by Richard Cox.

Camp Lore

From the start, the afternoon sessions reserved for small group work were an integral part of the institute experience. At the 1989 sessions, these groups were related directly to the training being received on strategic planning from Professor Prescott. The three groups on policy, management, and technology gave regular reports to the full group sessions. Each participant was to work on the development of his or her own strategic plan, and the small groups in 1989 were to be a kind of sounding board for individual projects. In later years, more latitude was given to groups to define their own projects. The small groups were a good alternative to the structured classes. However, in many respects they were the most difficult part of the institutes to bring off successfully. Participants regularly stated in their evaluations of the institutes that the small groups were useful, but the least useful of the activities. However, as Richard Cox pointed out in his review of the early institutes, these group projects furnished the first concrete products from the program. These included an important pamphlet on electronic records policy done by a 1990 group, and subsequently published by NAGARA.¹⁰

From the first sessions of the institute in June 1989, certain aspects of the two week experience in Pittsburgh became a unique part of the "Camp Pitt" experience. These began with the very first facility that confronted the participants—Litchfield Towers. Besides the Tower of Learning at the center of the Pittsburgh campus, the three high-rise cylindrical dormitories were the university's most memorable skyline feature. Living in the dormitory for the middle-aged administrators who attended the institutes, while obviously necessary given the institute's spartan budget, was daunting, memorable, and nostalgic (memories of undergraduate days twenty-some years before came quickly to mind). A certain spirit of unity (even to the extent of becoming a kind of rite of passage) emerged from the experience. From the first year on, most of the groups designed and issued a camp T-shirt. As one would expect, Litchfield Towers was often portrayed in these shirts. This, along with informal group events, some planned and some spontaneous, provided a kind of bonding that has united a generation of government archivists. A good example of these events was the annual trek to Three Rivers Stadium for a Pittsburgh Pirates game. Other participants attended the Shakespeare Festival that often happily and inadvertently coincided with the June institutes.

Another example was the tradition of satirical awards which were usually given on the last night in Pittsburgh at a local "watering hole." Almost nobody took offense at these highly personal certificates which often made light of a participant's malapropisms or contributions to the sessions. All was in the spirit of fun. While perhaps these could be considered too incidental (or even sophomoric) to bear mention, these aspects of the institutes, when taken together, made for an important part of the total "Camp Pitt" experience. All participants in the institutes agreed on one thing—that the staff at the University of Pittsburgh's SLIS could not have been more helpful. Each year some kind of recognition was given to Mary K. Biagini, the associate dean, who handled the myriad of local arrangements with skill and friendliness. At the 1997 NAGARA meeting in Sac-

¹⁰Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists*, 175–77. The booklet was published by NAGARA and the National Association of State Information Resource Executives (NASIRE) as *A New Age: Electronic Information Systems, State Government and the Preservation of the Archival Record* (Lexington, Ky: Council of State Governments, 1991).

ramento, Biagini received a well-deserved commendation for her years of service on this project.

The 1990 Institute

Everyone left Pittsburgh at the end of the 1989 institute with an assignment to conduct a strategic planning event in their agency. These were to be duly reported and critiqued when the second institute (which had been funded by CLR) assembled on June 3, 1990. Although there were a couple of 1989 participants who did not reappear in 1990, their places were taken by two new participants—one each from Kentucky and the State of Washington. Although the presentations in 1990 were similar to those in 1989 (especially from the SLIS staff), there was some change in emphasis. Much time and attention was given to the state and national implications of the revision of federal paperwork reduction legislation and to OMB Circular A-130 on government information policy. These had significance for information policy at all levels of government, and they were explained by Dean Bearman; Jerry Berman from the American Civil Liberties Union; and J. Timothy Sprehe of the Office of Management and Budget, who had written widely on information policy questions. It became apparent that input from state archivists would be timely given the status of A-130, and institute participants via a small group developed a position paper on this issue.

In addition, two new studies were available in 1990 and were given some significant attention at the 1990 institute. The first of these was from NASIS (which later became NASIRE—the National Association of State Information Resource Executives), which evaluated state-level information policy in selected states. Sharon Caudle from Syracuse University, one of the study’s authors, presented this to the participants. The other study, entitled *Management of Electronic Records: Issues and Guidelines*, was published by the United Nations. Three individuals who had played central roles in this important study, Liisa Fagerlund, Charles Dollar, and David Bearman, were involved in the discussions at the institute.¹¹

The critique of the strategic plans done to date proved to be an illuminating experience for the participants. Everyone had submitted their plans prior to the June sessions. Professor Prescott had reviewed them, and he made several general comments. He found that the group had trouble clearly identifying data that would be useful to support planning; that a plan, to be effective, must be integrated with every aspect of the agency (and become part of the corporate culture); and that the plans were generally too verbose. He indicated that he thought archivists had great difficulty in stating things simply and briefly (a fact the group conceded). He also said that the plans appeared to have been written to appeal to other archivists, rather than to those in authority who could appropriate resources for change.

As the 1990 institute wound down, discussions began to center on the future. It seemed clear to all participants that the two years of programs held so far had been useful, and should be continued. It was also apparent that a future effort would require new

¹¹As noted earlier, Richard Cox served as reporter for the 1989 and 1990 sessions and his account which was published under the Council on Library Resources grant (*Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age: An Advanced Institute for Government Archivists, June 3–15, 1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, School of Library and Information Science, 1990) is an invaluable source for this article’s discussion of those years.

funding, as the CLR grant was coming to an end. A new planning committee was appointed which included Gordon Hendrickson of Iowa, Virginia Newton of Alaska, and David Olson of North Carolina, with Edwin Bridges continuing as chair. Work began on a new grant proposal, and a decision was soon made to seek funding from NHPRC. Most of the grant writing for this second round of institutes was to be done by Richard Cox. At the final summary session of the 1990 event, the participants directed the new planning committee to "fine-tune" the institute for another group of archivists and record administrators. It was also believed that the agenda for the new institute should include a "reunion" where the progress from the first group could be monitored, and the second group could receive some benefit from this as well.¹² None of these participants could foresee that Camp Pitt would continue until 1997.

These first two institutes showed the way for those that came later, and the general format remained constant for the succeeding programs. As the archivists/participants returned to their jobs after two weeks at "Camp Pitt," an increased awareness of the impact that technological change was having upon their programs went with them. Strategic planning techniques taught by a reputable expert were available to be tried, and the first group of institute veterans was now able to put four weeks of intensive training to the test. By the measure of every questionnaire that was used to monitor the effect of the event, the participants rated the experience as one of the most important opportunities in their careers. All involved felt that there was a need to not only present a new round of institutes to another group of government archivists, but also to monitor the progress being made in the states as a result of these institutes.

The 1991 and 1992 Institutes

Immediately after the first group of participants left Pittsburgh, work began on a grant proposal to fund another round of the institutes. This proposal was submitted to NHPRC by the October 1, 1990, deadline. The planning committee met in Pittsburgh in December 1990 under the assumption that the institute would go forward, and word was received February 27, 1991, that the University of Pittsburgh had received a grant of \$65,061 to fund two more institutes.¹³

According to Richard Cox, "the participants in the 1991/92 institute represented a slightly different mix, with both the directors and senior staff of the state archives in attendance. These participants had an average of 13.8 years experience in the archival profession Most of these individuals (15 of 22) had academic preparation in some field of history Their profile was, then, extremely similar to that of the 1989/90 participants, certainly supporting the need for re-tooling in information science and technology which the planners of the institute perceived as a strong need."¹⁴ The same general format for the institute was followed, and Richard Cox continued to take notes at all sessions and serve as reporter, but Edwin Bridges became the institute facilitator.

The participants received a briefing on what happened during the previous two years of the program, and had an opportunity to give a brief report on the electronic records situation in their home states. For small groups, the program was made more specific with two assignments: a group on state policy was to define the elements for a successful state

¹²Cox, *Archival Administration in the Electronic Information Age*.

¹³Letter from Gerald George to Wilfried Daehnick, 27 February 1991.

¹⁴Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists*, 173.

electronic records program, and another group was to review national-level issues such as standards, the need for educational programs, and state input on national studies. Charles Dollar of the National Archives gave a presentation on the basic issues which faced archivists in organizing programs for electronic records, pointing out that permanent preservation—the long-held goal for archivists—must be altered somewhat. Dollar advocated that, for electronic records, the less stringent concept of “continuing value” would be the optimum. In addition, commonly held standards would be essential in the world of frequent data migration which the upgrading of systems necessitates.

Generally, the same speakers from Pittsburgh’s SLIS gave presentations related to recent technology, John Prescott gave the program on strategic planning, and Margaret Hedstrom briefed the group on the developing program in New York. Hedstrom gave an extensive presentation, pointing out the elements of an effective state-level program, stressing the importance of a “coherent” state information policy which emphasizes the value of information as an important state resource. She also discussed the difficulty archivists will have in appraising electronic data systems, since traditionally they have done retrospective analysis of records content. The need to appraise a system at the earliest possible point in its design makes traditional appraisal impossible. Hedstrom also offered suggestions for participants whose states lack an effective information policy.

The small groups at the 1991 institute were particularly productive. The summary report for the event has an appendix with four fully developed small group reports: a plan for an NHPRC program of challenge grants for the development of electronic records programming; a listing of strategic issues which will be encountered in any program for these records; a basic program to establish dialogue between records administrators and information resource managers; and a study of state records laws.¹⁵

At the end of the 1991 institute when plans were discussed for the 1992 event, some disagreement was evident. The plan had been for the 1992 meeting to feature a gathering of both the 1989 and 1990 participants for an update, along with the 1991 group. The 1991 group balked at the idea of the earlier groups joining them. They wanted a full two-week institute for their own study. The result was something of a compromise, which was made possible by the fact that only a few of the earlier participants expressed a desire to return for 1992.

The 1992 institute was, in many ways, a transitional event between the early phase of programs and those that came later. One important change was the fact that Richard Cox ended his active participation in the event. Although he continued to be a speaker in nearly all of the institutes, he no longer served as reporter and on-site coordinator for “Camp Pitt.” Although there was much in the 1992 program that was similar to the previous three—for example, many of the speakers were the same (David Bearman, Richard Cox, Margaret Hedstrom, John McDonald, Kenneth Thibodeau, and John Prescott on strategic planning)—the emphasis for much of the program shifted to case studies on existing programming. These included state programs which had benefitted from the earlier institutes: Alabama, Kentucky, Maine, New York, and North Carolina. In addition, programs at the national level at both the U.S. and Canadian National Archives and a model program at the World Bank were discussed. Lee Stout of Pennsylvania State University

¹⁵This was the last year that Richard Cox served as reporter and prepared an extensive published report on the institute. This not only serves as a record of the 1991 institute, but also contains many important documents, such as the small group reports, in its appendix.

discussed a university program. National information policy was examined in a panel that included Toni Carbo Bearman. The small groups became more involved in the evaluation of programming: one group looked at the status of electronic records programs in states that had participated in "Camp Pitt," while another group continued to study strategic issues, and a third explored the key elements for an electronic records program. In order to find time for all of these sessions, it was necessary to cut the number of presentations on technology updates.

All twenty states that had participated in the 1991 and 1992 institutes were asked to prepare status reports on the nature of programming in each state. The small group which studied these reports developed several interesting conclusions. It found that only Kentucky and New York had full-scale programs to deal with electronic records. However, it also found that sixteen other states were in the midst of planning for a program and that eight of these sixteen states had created final written plans. Many of these states appeared on the verge of establishing electronic records programs. The committee also found that "every state reports some level of activity regarding electronic records. Activity clusters in three areas: education and training, guidelines, and developing program strategies. Fourteen of the states have done some sort of training." At this juncture, which was the mid-point of the institutes, activity in the states was well underway, and would bear further evaluation and study.¹⁶

As the 1992 institute wound down, accompanied by the end of NHPRC grant funding, discussions ensued about future directions. When Edwin Bridges indicated that he could no longer head the NAGARA Professional Development Committee, which had been centrally involved in institute planning, David Olson of North Carolina became Bridges' successor. There also was a consensus that the effort should continue through another round of institutes and an attempt was made to reach the states that had not previously sent representatives to Pittsburgh. Another grant application to NHPRC was necessary. A new planning committee with representation from the most recent institute class was selected at the end of the 1992 session. The new committee consisted of Frank B. Evans of the National Archives; Gerald Newborg, the North Dakota state archivist; Kathryn Otto, the state archivist of Montana; and Timothy Slavin, then state archivist of Rhode Island. David Olson served as chair of the committee. The committee soon set to work on a third edition of the institutes.

The 1993 and 1994 Institutes

A third grant proposal to fund the effort was submitted to NHPRC for the October 1992 deadline. Written by David Olson, it outlined two major purposes for the next round of "Camp Pitt." The first was to reach the twenty-three states which had not yet sent a representative to the previous institutes, and the second was to evaluate and sum up the progress which had been made as a result of the institutes' effort.¹⁷ This grant was eventually funded for slightly less than \$56,000.

One major change in the institute occurred at this time. All of the states had received questionnaires about their intentions to send representation to a future institute. Many of the respondents from the states which had not previously participated indicated that one

¹⁶Report of the Small Group on Program Evaluation, unpublished, 1992.

¹⁷Proposal submitted to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 30 September 1992.

of the problems was the length of the institute. These administrators said that a two-week session constituted too long a time to be absent from their offices. The decision was made, therefore, to reduce the session to a week's time, and this also had the advantage of being less costly and a bit easier to manage. The 1993 “Camp Pitt” began on the evening of Saturday, June 5, and was completed at 1:00 p.m., Friday, June 11, thereby having the additional advantage of eliminating the unscheduled weekend in the midst of the institute. The group that assembled in 1993 was the largest of the institute classes, with twenty-seven representatives from twenty-three states. The total number of states to have participated in one or more “Camp Pitts” reached thirty-five.

In addition, it was decided to continue a feature of the 1992 institute: case studies from existing programs. Many of the speakers were familiar participants in previous institutes (Richard Cox, John Prescott, other staff from the university's SLIS, and David Olson served as institute facilitator). However, the keynote speaker was Jerry Mechling, an expert in government information technology from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He gave a presentation entitled “An Environmental Scan for State Governments in Dealing with Information Resources.” In it, he indicated the major challenges which archivists and records administrators faced in presenting their services to the information community. Mechling also pointed out that it was not just the archivists/records administrators who needed assistance from the technologists—the reverse was also true—the world of information needed input from archivists on such questions as privacy, access, and record longevity. Participants in the 1993 institute rated this as the most useful presentation. Another featured speaker was J. Timothy Sprehe, who lectured on national information policy. “Case Study” presentations were given on programs in Alabama, Missouri, Wisconsin, and in the U.S. and Canadian National Archives.

Small groups worked on generic job descriptions for electronic records personnel, a study of checklists necessary for “accurate, reliable, and trustworthy electronic records” (thus laying the groundwork for legal admissibility), and the evaluation of the effect of the institutes on state records programming. It should be added that in the opinion of all who were involved in the planning and carrying out of the 1993 and 1994 institutes, very little had been lost by shortening the format.¹⁸

The 1993 group reacted similarly to the 1991 institute participants when informed that 1994 would entail bringing together all three classes for a “reunion” which had as its purpose the evaluation of the “Camp Pitts” for their six years of operation. There was a consensus among the 1993 group that they wanted additional time to continue their own study. As was done earlier, a compromise was reached whereby the 1993 group would reassemble four days before the reunion phase for a continuation of their program. Therefore the 1994 institute began on June 7 and continued in its first phase until the full group (from the earlier institutes) joined them on Saturday, June 11. This first phase of the 1994 institute consisted largely of the small groups (which continued their operation from 1993), and case studies from South Carolina, Utah, Michigan, Kentucky, Missouri, and Massachusetts. All twenty-seven of the 1993 participants returned for 1994. On Saturday they were joined by fourteen participants from the earlier institutes (six from 1989 and 1990, and eight from 1991 and 1992). There were forty-one participants during the last four days of the 1994 institute, more than double the number that had attended the first session in 1989, and the largest of all of the “Camp Pitts.”

¹⁸Information for the 1993 institute was taken from the author's files as institute facilitator.

The program for these final days consisted of major presentations by Margaret Hedstrom, on "Reinventing Archives," and by David Bearman and Richard Cox, on the research from their NHPRC-funded project on "functional requirements" for an electronic records program. Daniel Fogel of Pittsburgh's Katz School of Business presented a session on "Managing Change," and there were several presentations on national issues, including one by Lisa Weber from NHPRC. The "Camp Pitt" veterans joined in on the small group projects. A goal was set to publish the results of the self-examination with which the institute had been involved for the past two years, which was done in the fall 1994 issue of *NAGARA Clearinghouse* (see "Conclusions" for summary). By the end of the 1994 session, it was clear that, while the institute might continue in some form, the six sessions to date had run their course. A completely new orientation should be present for future "Camp Pitts."¹⁹

It was apparent that there would be no institute in 1995, and that the year would be needed to plan new directions for the effort. In addition, there was a change in leadership as David Olson stepped down as chair of the NAGARA Professional Development Committee and was replaced by Peter Gottlieb, the state archivist of Wisconsin.

The 1996 Institute

Peter Gottlieb assembled a new committee to work on the next iteration of the institute. This committee included Marie Allen and Lisa Weber of the National Archives, Bruce Dearstyne of the New York State Archives, and Terry Maxwell of the New York State Forum on Information Resource Management. The 1996 program constituted a major shift in emphasis and the official title for the program became the "Pittsburgh Institute on Government Information Policy." The event received a new co-sponsor, the National Association of State Information Resource Executives (NASIRE). The purpose was to bring staff together not only from the archival community, but also from the information resource community, in order to explore common agendas. At its June 1995 meeting, NHPRC funded this last round of Pittsburgh institutes. While there was some change in emphasis, at least at the 1996 session, many of the traditions from the first three rounds continued. Twenty-five participants assembled in Pittsburgh in June 1996, and significant work by small groups continued as a part of the institute. The 1996 effort included three groups which worked on archivists' and records managers' roles in information policy, patterns of development in state government information policy, and management policy for Government Information Locator Systems. It should be added that there was a new constituency present at this institute—local government. In two cases, North Dakota and Pennsylvania, representatives attended from both the state and local levels of government.

Speakers included Dwight Toaves of the National Defense University, Congressman William Clinger of Pennsylvania, Bruce McDowell of the Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, Lisa Weber of the National Archives, and Henry Perritt of the Villanova University Law School. Each speaker addressed their perspective on government information policy.

Institute participants continued the tradition of giving the institute high marks for usefulness, and only complained about the living accommodations (Litchfield Towers). One obvious problem was the lack of a significant presence from the NASIRE community,

¹⁹From the files of the institute facilitator.

as only three information resource staff were part of the institute and these from relatively lower echelon positions. Plans continued soon after the 1996 institute for a final one in 1997 (for which it is not possible to give an account here).²⁰

Conclusions

Richard Cox established three criteria by which the Pittsburgh Institutes could be judged: one is to look at the actual products of the institutes, another is to assess what the participants said in their evaluations of the institutes, and a third is to try to judge the impact of the institutes on electronic records programming in the government archives and records programs which participated in them.²¹ Although these make sense, it is still not possible to make a final evaluation of the institutes.

The list of products from the years of institutes is very impressive. As of the 1994 evaluation, nine states and the National Archives had a published information policy, seven states had published reports and strategic plans (or white papers) based on the institutes, and every state that participated reported some level of electronic records activity. In addition, there were several position papers (such as the NAGARA brochure published from the 1990 small group effort), which would not have existed without the time and study which “Camp Pitt” provided. The small groups served as a continuing source for studies, draft job descriptions, and environmental scans.

If one goes simply by the institute evaluation forms completed each year by participants, one could say that “Camp Pitt” was a spectacular success. Year after year, participants rated the event as one of the most important opportunities of their careers. Naturally, these evaluations are apt to solicit a positive response. However, even given this natural “gradeinflation,” these views are unusually positive. In both 1991 and 1993, participants questioned plans to bring in former participants for “reunion meetings.” In both cases the groups felt strongly that they wanted the entire range of experience and instruction which could be made available to them. This shows the importance that participants placed on this experience.

The impact on the programs in the states and the federal government (it should be remembered that the National Archives sent representatives to every single institute) is more problematic. It would seem that any attempt to calculate the effect of the institute in isolation from other program factors is doomed to failure. Also, as Cox points out, it is perhaps still too early to calculate this impact—even if a vehicle capable of doing so were devised.²² It is clear that participants themselves saw that monitoring program progress was an important element and dedicated a great deal of small group time to studying this.²³ NAGARA needs to find a vehicle by which program progress can continue to be monitored.

Another aspect of the enterprise which should be mentioned are the “spin-offs” from the institutes. In many states, the strategic planning techniques, which were a consistent feature of the program, came to be useful in dealing with other administrative situations such as budget cuts. As state government faced an era of change in the 1990s,

²⁰Interim Report to NHPRC, by Peter Gottlieb, July 1996 (unpublished).

²¹Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists*, 174–75.

²²Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists*, 184.

²³See *NAGARA Clearinghouse* 10 (Fall 1994).

many participants were able to use these planning skills in areas beyond electronic records and information policy as they worked to restructure their agencies.

Perhaps, then, the effect of the NAGARA institutes held each year at the University of Pittsburgh from 1989 through 1997 (with the exception of 1995) is found at another and more subjective level. One can only imagine what the world of government archives would have been like if Edwin Bridges had *not* set out in the mid-1980s to establish the institutes. The network of state personnel which has used not only the information imparted at "Camp Pitt" but also the many friendships established there to check and double check programming ideas, would have found their situations much more difficult. Did the advanced institutes create a new millennium of archival programs? No, they did not. However, it is safe to conclude that the steady progress that government is making in dealing with the vexing issues of contemporary records policy would not be so clear were it not for the years of "Camp Pitt." Time will tell if this progress has been effective and timely enough to hit the moving target of technological change and its affect on records programming.

Every recent Program Committee Chair for the NAGARA Annual Meeting has attended the institute. One has only to look at a program for one of these recent meetings to see that government records personnel have made giant strides in dealing with contemporary records. Without "Camp Pitt" this would not be the case. Session after session is directed at the latest technological developments. (One now has to look hard to find a NAGARA program session on paper records!) This is just one of the many legacies of "Camp Pitt."