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Planning for Archival Programs: An Introduction

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The series editor welcomes proposals for future publications and comments from readers.

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Planning for Archival Programs: An Introduction¹

by Bruce W. Dearstyne

Definitions. Planning is the management technique of systematically establishing program goals, and organizing staff and allocating resources to meet those goals, by established deadlines.

Planning is a process, not a one-time exercise to produce a document. It is useful to distinguish between long-range "strategic" planning and short-range "operational" planning. Strategic planning concentrates on broad issues of program direction, priorities, and resource allocation over the long term, while operational planning, more modest in scope and intent, focuses on a limited period of time such as a year or two. It is important not to confuse the two types of planning. In fact, it is essential to undertake strategic planning, or at least to do a long-range analysis of mission, goals and objectives, before turning to operational planning. This paper describes planning in general terms and hopefully includes suggestions that are applicable to either strategic or, in particular, operational planning.

The need for planning. Planning is common in the business world, and most archivists would concede that charting a course for their programs is preferable to drifting aimlessly into the future. Few archives, however, have initiated systematic, long-term planning, and many archivists fall into the complacent attitude of letting past developments more or less determine future program direction. Explanations (or excuses) for not undertaking planning include:

¹A similar version of this paper was previously published by MARAC and accompanied the *Mid-Atlantic Archivist*.

- (A) staff limitations and the press of day-to-day work leave no time;
- (B) the archives' parent agency does not plan;
- (C) the archivist does not recognize the benefits of planning;
- (D) archivists lack experience in planning.

Planning is challenging and requires a commitment of time and resources. Because it implies a disruption of the status quo it also may inspire apprehension or even resistance among employees. Nevertheless planning is an investment that will yield great dividends. It has many benefits:

- (A) it enables managers to achieve and maintain direction and control;
- (B) it insures that managers and staff have a common understanding of program goals and objectives;
- (C) it encourages effective marshaling of staff and other resources;
- (D) it insures that the program proceeds according to established guidelines rather than in reaction to everyday pressures and problems;
- (E) it provides a clear way to explain and justify the program to governing boards, researchers, and the public;
- (F) it furnishes a framework of accountability for managers and others on staff.

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Once you decide that planning is worth the time and effort, you can begin the process by following the five steps described below.

1. Prepare to plan. Prior to the formal planning process, you must resolve five questions:

- (A) Who supports the planning process? It is essential for the process to derive its momentum from a clear statement of endorsement and support by trustees and high-level administrators.
- (B) Who will lead the planning process? While everyone on the staff may be involved in and contribute to the process, final responsibility should be lodged with one person, preferably the program head.
- (C) How will staff be involved? The leader should explain the purpose and process of planning and should make provisions for maximum staff contribution and participation.
- (D) What period of time will the plan cover?
- (E) When will the planning document be completed? The leader should establish a timetable and deadlines for completion of Steps 2-4.

2. Formulate a program "mission statement". The next step is preparation of a "mission statement" -- a description of the fundamental nature, scope, functions and *raison d'être* of the program. The statement may include information on:

- (A) why the program was initiated;
- (B) its relationship to the parent agency's basic work and goals;
- (C) what types of groups, activities, developments, or experiences the program aims to document;
- (D) what types of records or information it aims to collect;
- (E) what research groups or interests it exists to serve and support.

The process of formulating the "mission statement" challenges archivists to transcend everyday concerns and reflect on their program's ultimate purposes. Moreover, a clearly written "mission statement" will serve as a basis for formulation of the program goals in Step 4.

3. Carry out a self-analysis of program resources and services. The next advisable step is an analysis of all factors that may effect the nature and future direction of the program. A useful guide to program self-analysis is the Society of American Archivists' *Evaluation of Archival Institutions: Services, Principles, and Guide to Self-Study* (Chicago, 1982). This manual outlines four broad areas for archival program analysis:

- (A) the organizational and institutional setting (including legal authority and purpose, governing authority and administration, budget and other financial resources, staff, and physical facilities);
- (B) acquisition policies;
- (C) preservation; and

- (D) making holdings available for use (including arrangement and description, reference services, and public programs).

This analytical approach provides a realistic basis for developing goals, objectives, and activities (Step 4) in conformity with the "mission statement" (Step 2).

4. Formulate goals, objectives, and activities. The next step is to write a series of goals, objectives and activities that will serve as a guide to action during the planning period.

Set goals. The initial task is to set a limited number of goals -- broad statements of desired outcomes to be achieved during the planning period. The goals, considered together, should clearly point the program in the direction indicated by the mission statement. They also should be realistic in light of the conclusions reached through the program self-analysis.

Establish objectives. Within each goal, establish objectives -- clear, measurable, and attainable targets intermediate to the goal.

Define activities. Within each objective, establish activities -- specific, distinguishable work units that must be performed in order to meet the objective. Tie activities (the most numerous, concrete, and immediate units of the total plan) as closely as practical to individual employees' work assignments.

Designate deadlines. Finally, designate deadlines, target dates, or time spans (e.g. first, second, third, or fourth quarter of the year) for completion of each activity and objective so that the entire set of goals is met within the established time frame.

The mission statement, goals, objectives, activities, target dates, and staff assignments, taken together, constitute a planning document and should serve as a basis for managing the archival program.

The formulation of goals, objectives, and activities is difficult and can best be learned through experience. To provide some additional guidance, the last section of this paper reprints an annual records management plan for the City of Portland, Oregon, prepared by City Records Manager Stanley Parr, and City Archivist Liisa Fagerlund. The "mission statement" is shorter than most archival programs would require, but otherwise the Portland document is an excellent example of an operational plan.

5. Implement the plan. No plan, however well developed, ever implements itself, and a planning document that is relegated to the shelves to gather dust represents a waste of time and effort. Sound judgment, determination, and good overall management skills are required to put the plan into action. Some suggested approaches to implementation:

- (A) make sure everyone on the archives staff understands that the plan is a blueprint for action;
- (B) link individual staff assignments as closely as possible to the plan's activities;
- (C) hold periodic staff meetings to discuss progress on and problems with the plan;
- (D) use the plan as a basis for making reports on the archival program; and
- (E) regard the plan as a flexible document that you can modify and adjust to meet unforeseen circumstances.

Conclusion. By nature, the planning process requires addressing three fundamental questions:

"Why does the archival program exist?"

"What do we want to accomplish?"

"How can we make sure that it will accomplish these things?"

While it may be difficult to answer these questions, archivists -- individually and collectively -- must make the attempt. As a result, our programs will be run more efficiently. Even more importantly, perhaps we will also develop a better sense of our mission as a profession.

Bibliography

There is little archival literature on planning and professional archival organizations have not, until recently, given much attention to it. Hopefully that situation is improving as the Society of American Archivists begins to include sessions on planning at its annual meetings, moves to launch a standing Committee on Goals and Priorities to consider long-term archival issues and needs, and conducts a series of seminars about management. The Historical Records Assessment and Reporting Projects now being carried out in 27 states should also produce more attention to planning issues. In the meantime, the SAA's *Evaluation of Archival Institutions: Services, Principles, and Guide to Self-Study* (Chicago, 1982); *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago, 1986); and *An Action Agenda for the Archival Profession: Institutionalizing the Planning Process* (Chicago, 1988), a report to SAA Council by the Committee on Goals and Priorities, provide extensive guidance on the self-assessment that is essential as a basis for planning. For more guidance on planning, archivists may turn to library literature.

Planning for Archival Programs

City of Portland, Oregon

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Records Management Performance Plan

FY 1980-81

MISSION STATEMENT: PROVIDE THE CITY WITH EFFICIENT, COST-EFFECTIVE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF ITS INFORMATION RESOURCES.

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE CITY GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO GENERATE INFORMATION IN A MORE COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER.

OBJECTIVE 1: DETERMINE THE NEED FOR A CITY-WIDE FORMS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Perform needs analysis.	Policy statement to pursue activity.	RMO/RMT*	2.
2.	If need identified, present cost/benefits to Council.			2.
3.	Establish activity if Council so directs.			4, & FY81/82.

* RMO= Records Management Officer, RMT= Records Management Technician.

OBJECTIVE 2: ADVISE BUREAUS ON METHODS TO ENHANCE EFFICIENT DATA GATHERING, RECORDING, AND DISSEMINATION.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Identify appropriate technologies in records creation, e.g., possible word processing applications, computer applications, active office microfilm applications.	Assist Planning Bureau's Historic Sites Inventory data gathering activity through SPINDEX use. Continue identification.	RMO/Archivist/RMTs.	Ongoing.
2.	Assist bureaus design better records creation and management systems, i.e., work flow planning, correspondence control.	Assist Metro Arts Commission in identifying cost-effective word processing applications for arts collection. Continue identification.	RMO/RMTs.	Ongoing.
3.	Ascertain cost-effectiveness in current records production systems and compare with model systems.	Identify similar bureau projects for implementation in FY 1981-82.	RMO/RMTs.	Ongoing.

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GOAL 2: MAXIMIZE VALUE OF RECORDS THROUGH INCREASED RECORDS USE.

OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASE EMPLOYEES AWARENESS OF RECORDS RESOURCES.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Hold ten city-wide training sessions: 2 forms, 2 word processing, 4 disposition, and 2 open.	Maintain 85% participant evaluation.	RMT.	2,3,4.
2.	Hold in-bureau training sessions.	One per targeted bureau.	RMT and bureau RMT	2,3,4.
3.	Develop training plans and aids.	Produce necessary aids to support 10 training sessions.	RMT.	1,2.

OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE COMMUNITY AND SCHOLARLY AWARENESS OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN CITY GOVERNMENT.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Give tours and talks for targeted service groups program out-reach, e.g., neighborhood associations, scholarly community.	2 tours and 4 Neighborhood Association presentations.	RMO/Archivist.	3,4.
2.	Work with school district to develop curriculum packets.	Develop prototype packet.	Archivist.	3,4.

OBJECTIVE 3: ESTABLISH USABLE FINDING AIDS AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS FOR ACTIVE AND ARCHIVAL RECORDS.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Investigate alternative electronic transmission of data from Records Center.	Report to Director, OGS.	RMO.	2,3.
2.	Provide centrally produced file labels and encourage use for administrative files.	Meet bureaus requests for labels.	RMTs.	Ongoing.
3.	Produce an updatable, indexed archives guide.	Print Guide.	Archivist.	2,3.
4.	Serve as a central information point for records resources.	Provide successful id for 90% of requests.	Staff.	Ongoing.

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| 5. | Provide expertise on filing and automated indexing systems to bureaus, on a consultant basis if necessary, and improve filing efficiency through files reorganization projects. | Respond to requests and develop sufficient BUD-5s to meet city expenditures. | RMO/RMTs. | Ongoing. |
| 6. | Maintain an accurate shelf list. | To be determined. | Staff. | Ongoing. |

OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDE PHYSICAL ACCESS TO CITY RECORDS.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Provide reference and retrieval service.	Maintain a 24 hour retrieval time.	RMO/RMTs/ Archivist.	Ongoing.
2.	Train staff in reference techniques.	Monthly review sessions.	RMO/RMTs/ Archivist.	Ongoing.
3.	Provide photocopy service.	Comply with and produce receipts for 100% of requests.	Staff.	Ongoing.
4.	Implement use of electronic transfer, if feasible.	Implement Report to OGS.	RMO.	3,4 & FY81/82.
5.	Maintain reshelving backlog to a manageable size.	To be determined.	Staff.	3,4.

GOAL 3: MAXIMIZE BENEFITS ACHIEVABLE THROUGH COMPLIANCE TO THE CITY'S RECORDS MAINTENANCE SYSTEM (ORDINANCE 146843).

OBJECTIVE 1: SECURE BUREAU COMPLIANCE WITH SCHEDULES.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Assist bureaus to implement retention and disposition schedules - target bureaus: Police, HRB, Fire, Buildings, PDC, Auditor's Office, Expo-Rec, and assist incoming Mayor's Office.	To be determined.	RMO and assigned RMT.	2,3,4.
2.	Audit bureau records for compliance once every three or five years or as circumstances warrant.	One model audit.	RMO/RMTs.	4.

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OBJECTIVE 2: MAINTAIN RECORD SCHEDULES WITH ACCURATE DESCRIPTIVE AND RETENTION DATA FOR EACH CITY AGENCY.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Update schedules.	Meet 100% schedule change requests.	RMTs.	Ongoing.
2.	Develop a more efficient and cost-effective schedule maintenance procedure	Changed system.	RMO/Archivist.	2,4.
3.	Develop schedules for newly created bureaus	100% of needs.	RMTs.	Ongoing.
4.	Reduce retention spans in individual records series while maintaining information integrity.	Document reduced retention span compared to original span.	RMO/RMTs.	Ongoing.

OBJECTIVE 3: REDUCE THE COSTS OF RECORDS RETENTION BY TIMELY DISPOSITION: CENTRALIZING NON-CURRENT RECORDS AND ELIMINATING VALUELESS RECORDS.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Establish annual file breaks in city file systems.	Establish file breaks in targeted bureaus.	RMTs.	2,3,4.
2.	Transfer potentially archival or administratively useful inactive records to Records Center.	Transfer 100% of identified eligibles.	RMO/Archivist/RMTs.	Ongoing.
3.	Recycle or destroy inactive records after they have reached the end of their retention period.	100% of destructible records.	RMTs.	Ongoing.

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GOAL 4: CREATE A MULTI-FACETED RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE COMPLETE RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

OBJECTIVE 1: SECURE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT USE OF RECORDS CENTERS.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Present to the various managements concerned the economic advantages of a centrally administered records repository.	Target participation for 2nd stage: PSU, PCC.	RMO.	1,2,3,4.
2.	Plan for refurbishing first level of records center.	Operational Center (March, 1981).	RMO/ Archivist.	1,2,3,4.
3.	Plan, develop, and implement procedure for regional records center.	Develop procedure for participating jurisdictions.	RMO/ Archivist.	2,3,4 & FY 81/82.

OBJECTIVE 2: SECURE OUTSIDE FUNDING FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS.

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Investigate the feasibility of a grant to integrate PBS and Metro into city records system.	Grant proposal.	RMO.	2,3.
2.	Investigate the possibility of a grant to provide an updatable and cost-effective ordinance index.	Grant proposal.	RMO/ Archivist.	2,3, & FY 81/82.
3.	Investigate the possibility of a grant to assist Public Works and citizen use of Auditor's A, B, and C files.	Grant proposal.	RMO/ Archivist.	3,4, & FY 81/82.

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OBJECTIVE 3: GUARANTEE THAT RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM MEETS CITY NEEDS

	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Activity Leader</u>	<u>Time Frame Quarter</u>
1.	Design a feedback system for gathering information to ascertain the effectiveness of records management.	Secure necessary bureau concurrence statement.	RMO/RMTs.	2,3.
2.	Further plan and develop procedures for the Record Center.	Develop internal procedures manual.	RMO/Archivist.	2,3.
3.	Develop with Budget Office participation a reorganized benefit schedule for records management activities.	Joint Budget Office/RM Report to Director, OGS and Budget Officer.	RMO.	2.
4.	Increase bureau use of Auditor's ordinance and resolution files.	Determine cost of appropriate indexing system.	Archivist.	2.
5.	Increase Public Works use of Auditor's A, B, and C files to eliminate duplication of files.	Determine cost of appropriate indexing system.	Archivist.	2,3.
6.	Analyze cost effectiveness of Auditor's microfilm service.	Report to Director, OGS.	RMO/RMT.	2.
7.	Develop with Personnel Bureau the personnel cost in program transition, forms management, and increased program responsibility.	Report to Director, OGS and Personnel.	RMO.	3.

