

COOK COUNTY



ARCHIVES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Report to the Cook County Board of Commissioners First Quarter FY 2017

Introduction

This report is required by County Board Resolution 16-3645 establishing an Archives Advisory Committee (AAC).

The mission of the Archives Advisory Committee (AAC) is to capture the history of Cook County Government and the role it played in the growth and development of the region, state and the nation. Additionally, the AAC is to coordinate documentation of the historical significance of each County agency and office, providing a context for County residents and employees for understanding the importance of their agency's role in County government, past and present.

The AAC will determine and develop methodology and standards for historical evaluation of Cook County documents and records, and will identify options to preserve and store materials determined to have historical value and make those materials accessible to members of the public interested in researching county history.

The resolution indicated that AAC shall work closely with the President, the Board of Commissioners and all County elected and appointed officials to achieve goals of the Advisory Committee, taking into consideration all existing efforts at historic preservation by elected and appointed officials.

AAC Committee Members

The initial membership of the Archives Advisory Committee consists of the following County officials or their designees: Secretary to the Board of Commissioners (Chair); Chief Administrative Officer; Chief of the Bureau of Asset Management; Chief Information Officer and the Executive Law Librarian. Consideration will be given to adding members to the committee with specific knowledge and expertise in establishing and operating governmental archives.

The members of the committee provide two different functions towards fulfilling the goals of the Committee. First, the members set goals and policies to be followed by committee staff (in the Secretary to the Board's office) and the Historic Archive Liaisons.

Second, committee members are presented with various options for proceeding with certain aspects of this project and asked to approve the necessary steps. On a topic by topic basis, special committees will be formed to explore some of the arising issues in greater detail, relating to certain areas of expertise; for example, the creation of a physical archive vs. a virtual archive, the establishment of strong academic and professional partnerships, the search for outside sources of funding for our efforts.

Some of the AAC mission may already dovetail with an existing County project which an agency or department initiated relative to their own historical documents. Our intention is to not reinvent the wheel,

but to take advantage of the expertise which is already available within the County and linked to outside partners.

Three meetings of the Committee occurred since the resolution's passing, 8/8/2016, 9/19/2016 and 4/17/2017. At the August meeting, the Committee approved the AAC Goals and Timeline, which appear below and on which this report is based. At the April meeting, the Committee approved this report, and established committees to examine further the issues related to the project. Those committees are:

Virtual Archives: This committee will be responsible for the identification of current efforts by County agencies to electronically preserve documents and files, and for the development of recommendations to the President and the Board of Commissioners regarding the establishment of a publicly accessible electronic archive.

Physical Archives: This committee will be responsible for the identification of current efforts by County agencies to physically preserve documents and files, and for the development of recommendations to the President and the Board of Commissioners regarding the establishment of a publicly accessible physical archive.

Support and Resources: This committee will be responsible for the identification of non-county sources of funding for archive related initiatives. The committee will review and approve grant applications and legislative requests in coordination with the President and the Board of Commissioners.

Educational Experiences: This committee will be responsible for developing creative, interesting and thought-provoking virtual and physical displays of archived material to generate interest in County history and the archive project, in general.

Historical Archive Liaisons

In August 2016, a memo was sent to offices throughout Cook County, asking each to identify a Historical Archives Liaison to provide the AAC with local expertise for historical evaluation of documents related to the mission of your agency.

The Historical Archives Liaison for each department is, ideally:

- An individual with decision making responsibility for the department or agency;
- An individual with significant institutional knowledge of the department or agency;
- An individual familiar with the Records Management and Disposal process operated by the Bureau of Administration

The Historical Archives Liaison is the key person for AAC in initially evaluating each agency's documents for historical significance.

The Historical Archives Liaison assists AAC in developing a history for each agency which will be made part of the overall history of County Government.

A meeting of the Historical Archives Liaisons was held on 9/19/2016. At that meeting, the role of the liaisons was described and guest speaker Dr. David Joens, Director, Illinois State Archives, Office of the Illinois Secretary of State addressed the group.

Goals Timeline and Current Progress

Goals are placed into a timeline format to indicate *completion* of the goal, not the start. It is anticipated that all of the listed goals are to be started as soon as possible. Updates on the first year of AAC goals are:

- **Immediate goals (0-1 year)**
 - Assignment of Archive liaisons across all offices: Departments have identified Historic Archive Liaisons to assist the AAC in the execution of the committee goals.
 - Identify and document best practices and current practices of other jurisdictions around the region and country: Committee staff is examining examples of Cuyahoga County, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Seattle, Washington and others. Established a Twitter account (@CookCoArchives) and Instagram account (@cookcountyarchives) for the County Archives Project.
 - Set standards and guidelines for document retention: The current instruction to HALs is to utilize the Records Retention Schedule and their Department Histories to determine which documents should be identified for historic retention.
 - Determine universe of potentially historical documents: Several pallets containing boxed documents identified as belonging to the Secretary to the Board and several former presidents have been examined and those documents repatriated to appropriate departments. Departments are being asked to evaluate these documents for retention.
 - Determine spaces for storage and display of historical documents: Space on the 30th and 36th floors of the George Dunne Building was initially identified by the Real Estate Management Division, Bureau of Asset Management. Recently, Chairman Daley's office has provided space under their control for additional Archives work, and Commissioners Morrison and Tobolski also made storage cages on 31/2 available to the Archives Project for temporary storage while reviewing documents.
 - Assemble county history timelines, within departments and for County overall: The following departments have prepared Historical Timelines for the project:, Administration, Administrative Hearings, Animal Control, Auditor, Budget and Management Services Circuit Court, CCHHS, 14th County District, Independent Inspector General, Law Library, Medical Examiner, Public Defender, Technology.
- **Near term goals (2-3 years)**
 - Catalogue documents deemed historical
 - Preserve virtual and physical versions of historical documents
 - Establish Cook County Historical Archives: both virtual and physical
- **Mid-range goals (five years)**
 - Identify every outside source of data and information, articles, clippings related to Cook County Government
 - Identify outside entities as partners or funders of historic preservation effort
 - Maintain an online, searchable database of Historical Archives

- Identify education partners who may wish to engage in research projects to help fill in County history
- Complete the second volume of the Cook County History document
- **Long term goals (10-15 years)**
 - Celebrate the 200th anniversary of Cook County Government, with celebrations, recognitions, events in the year leading up to and during the January 2031 date.
 - Explore if the cornerstone of the County Building still contains a time capsule
 - Complete the third volume of the Cook County History document

Staff Contacts

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