

Keeping Appraised

Newsletter of the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State

Digital Archivists at the Best Practices Exchange

Employees of the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA) attended this year's Best Practices Exchange (un)conference in Boston, MA. Nick Connizzo (Digital Archivist/Records and Information Specialist) and Zack Whitaker (Digital Archivist/Records and Information Specialist) gave a presentation titled, "Theory and Practice: Collaborative Records Management in Vermont." The presentation focused on building and sustaining collaborative partnerships throughout state government in order to facilitate better information governance.

Within this context of collaboration between VSARA and state agencies, Nick and Zack highlighted the transfer of digital audio recordings of Legislative Standing Committee meetings and supplemental records to VT Re-Tain. As it was one of the first transfers of born-digital records to VSARA, the project offered an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of the workflows and systems of all parties. By juxtaposing records and information management best practices with what happened in reality, Nick and Zack analyzed successes and areas for potential improvement in the future. Because legislative sessions in the State of Vermont end every two years, continued collaboration between partners is assured, ensuring multiple opportunities for refinement over time.

Also included in the presentation was an explanation of the Vermont Functional Classification System (VCLAS) and its role in the classification of records in Vermont. In addition, the methodology by which VSARA records analysts conduct records scheduling was explored, with particular attention given to the Targeted Assistance Program (TAP), where VSARA staff consults closely with representatives of state agencies to build records management programs.

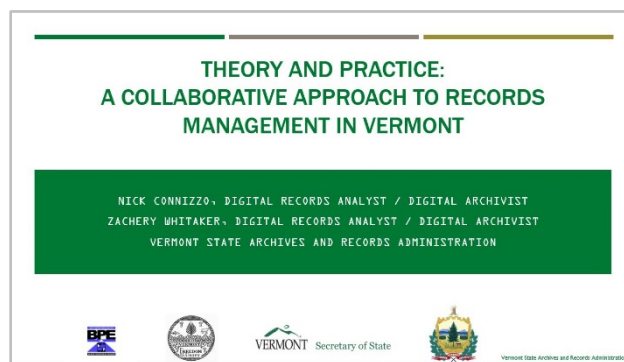
The Best Practices Exchange (un)Conference "is open to practitioners in government and university archives and libraries; educators and researchers in the fields of library science, information science, technology, archives, and records management; and product developers working to

create systems for managing and preserving digital assets." Keynote speakers for the event were Nancy McGovern, from MIT Libraries, and David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States. One of the goals of the conference was to provide a relatively informal setting for practitioners to convene and discuss strategies and solutions for dealing with electronic information. Nick and Zack met several fellow practitioners and were able to share their expertise with them and, in turn, were able to forge potentially useful partnerships and garner information about tools and resources to inform and improve records management in the State of Vermont. Applying lessons learned and taking advantage of opportunities to leverage the knowledge of other practitioners in the digital information field assured that Best Practices Exchange 2017 was a successful venture for VSARA.

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Inside this issue:

Archives Month Recap.....	2
Public Records Law.....	2
Upcoming Events	3
From the Vault.....	3
On this Day in History	3
Contact Us.....	3



Archives Month Events Examine Historical Context

Every October we celebrate American Archives Month, an opportunity to reflect on the importance and value of historic records. The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration took part in several events to observe the month. In the virtual world, Vermont archivists went live on Twitter for two events, Ask an Archivist Day (#AskAnArchivist) and Electronic Records Day (#ERecs). These events allowed us to engage directly with researchers, other archives professionals, and the public in live discussions of the value of archives.

VSARA also hosted two open house events at our facility in Middlesex, VT, giving people a chance to view archival records, tour the vaults, and to hear lectures exploring current topics in an historic context. The first lecture, “The Archival Mirror: Reflections on Race and Ethnicity in Vermont,” was presented by former state archivist Gregory Sanford. He shared his analysis of racial issues through the ethnic attitudes expressed in the eugenics survey, as well as debates over racially-charged place names. The second presentation, “Lawyers, Opium, and Rails: Exploring Vermont’s Early Courts, Drug Abuse, and

Railroads” was given by author and historian Gary Shattuck. Connecting seemingly unrelated topics, he traced the early roots of Vermont’s 19th century opium epidemic.

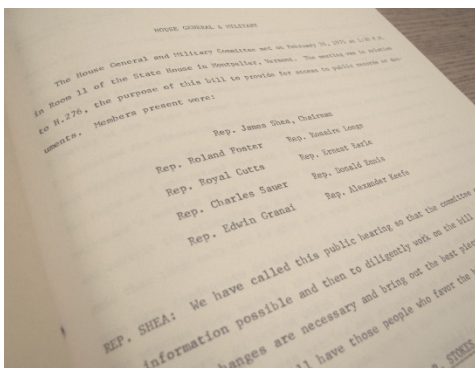
Throughout all events, both virtual and in person, we had the opportunity to showcase the importance and relevance of historic records and how they are connected to current and ongoing issues. A [recording](#) of Mr. Sanford’s presentation is available, as well as the [transcript](#).



Former State Archivist Gregory Sanford speaks at the Vermont State Archives [courtesy of VSARA staff]

Vermont’s Public Records Law

This fall, the Vermont Supreme Court unanimously ruled to require state employees to release public records stored on personal accounts, reversing the earlier decision of the Superior Court. The new decision does not



Transcript from legislative hearing about the Public Records Act, 1975 [courtesy of VSARA, series PRA-102]

compel employees to give access to their personal accounts, but only to provide the relevant records from those accounts. “This ruling is a win for transparency, and for Vermont citizens who have a right to know how decisions are being made by their government,”

Secretary of State Jim Condos stated about the Supreme Court’s decision. “We don’t believe that this ruling changes anything, only clarifies. I’ve said from early on my belief is that ANY record created during the course of agency business, state or municipal, is a public record, regardless of where that record is held. Transparency is important – let the sun shine in on government!”

As part of the appeals process, some records submitted as evidence were discovered through legislative research undertaken at the Vermont State Archives. Through close evaluation of archival legislative records, researchers are able to interpret and understand the intent and history of our present laws. As Vermont’s former Secretary of State William Slade said, “Every government...should possess, and should place within reach of the people, a complete history of its own legislation.” An archivist’s job is to maintain that history by preserving and providing access to the many different types of legislative records. Our [legislative research guide](#) can help researchers navigate the different legislative resources. To read the [full story](#) about the Supreme Court decision, you can visit the Burlington Free Press website.

Upcoming Events at VSARA

Volunteer! Write a biographical sketch of a Vermont Suffragist

Be part of a national crowdsourcing project that is creating the *Online Biographical Dictionary of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the United States*, which will include sketches of over 2,500 suffrage supporters affiliated with the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) from 1900 to 1920. The sketch should be about 500 words. Sample sketches and research tips provided. Flexible deadlines.

Want a name? Questions?

Please contact the Vermont Coordinator, Rachel Onuf:

rachel.onuf@sec.state.vt.us

802-828-2204

NOTICE: Winter Holiday Closures

The Vermont State Archives Reference Room will be closed on the following dates – please plan accordingly:

- Monday, December 25 – Christmas Day
- Monday, January 1 – New Years' Day
- Monday, January 15 – Martin Luther King Day
- Monday, February 19 – Presidents' Day
- Tuesday, March 6 – Town Meeting Day

From the Vault



This November marked the 90th anniversary of the 1927 flood. The largest in Vermont's history, the flood of '27 affected thousands of homes and businesses, racked up millions of dollars in damage, and claimed the lives of 84 Vermonters, including Lieutenant Governor Jackson. This image, from a series of transportation photographs and films ([A-082](#)), documents the flood damage in the Bolton Flats.

On This Day in History

This issue remembers significant dates in Vermont's transportation history – showing you *can* get there from here!

1849 (Dec. 18) - The first train to Burlington arrived by way of the Rutland Railroad, which connected Boston to the Queen City. This helped to establish Burlington as one of the biggest lumber ports on the continent.

1934 (Jan. 22) - The nation's first ski tow was established in Woodstock. The rope tow was based on a model seen in Quebec was powered by a Model T Ford on tractor wheels.

1787 (Feb. 27) – An act regulating ferries in Vermont is passed in order to provide suitable roads to the ferry sites, and to prevent ferrymen from “demanding unreasonable prices for their services”.

Contact Us

Have research questions?

Contact the VSARA Reference Room!

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Our email address will be changing in 2018!

Visit our website!

<http://www.sec.state.vt.us/archives-records/state-archives>

Find us on Twitter: [@VTStateArchives](https://twitter.com/VTStateArchives)