



Welcome to the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA)

Upcoming...

• Open Houses

Tuesday mornings	Thursday afternoons
9:30-11:00am	1:30-3:00pm
October 4	October 27
November 1	November 17
December 6	December 22

Email us at [rim@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:rim@sec.state.vt.us)

or

Call Rachel Muse at 828-2397

[See p. 4](#) for more information

• Trainings

*Got Records? Now What?*

November 2, 12:30-3:30pm  
(site TBD).

[See p. 5](#) for more information

Fast Fact

Water-damaged records? Act quickly!

[See p. 2](#)

Reminders

Records transfer checklist

[See p. 6](#)

Did you know...

about our *Right to Know* database?

[See p. 7](#)

Contact us!

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[vermont-archives.org](http://vermont-archives.org)

TOP STORY: A Record Flood

VSARA is saddened by the personal and work-related losses and damages suffered by state employees. Our records analysis staff assisted several public agencies in the days following Tropical Storm Irene as agency staff tried to assess the condition of their records and information infrastructure and continue their operations, albeit limited.

We are deeply impressed by the dedication and perseverance demonstrated by agency staff and volunteers throughout the state. They tried to recover and salvage records, hardware, and equipment essential to government functions, the State of Vermont, and our citizens; and worked to make the best of out of a bad situation. [\(continued on p. 2\)](#)



After the flood, Waterbury

VSARA in the News

Vermont State Archives Awarded Grant to Preserve Court Records

The Vermont State Archives and Records Administration has been awarded a grant of \$118,078 from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to preserve and make more accessible archival court records. The Vermont project is one of nineteen archival projects from around the country that the NHPRC awarded funding for this year. [\(continued on p. 4\)](#)

Meet VSARA

Meet VSARA: The State Archives Unit

Agency and department records officers and liaisons who have made visits to VSARA's Middlesex facility have had a glimpse of some of what we do beyond records analysis. We'd like to use this space to acquaint you with the other units, activities and people that are VSARA. [\(continued on p. 5\)](#)



VSARA Goes Forth

Sweet Harmony & Solid Gold: Archivists and Records Administrators Make Beautiful Music in Nashville, TN

Records Analyst Rachel Muse attended the National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA)/Council of State Archivists (COSA) annual meeting in July in Nashville, Tennessee. Rachel reports on some of the conference activities. [\(continued on p. 6\)](#)

## In Emergencies...

Responders need records to react effectively to the situation and to continue operations.

Government agencies need records to provide essential services.

Individuals need government records to prove their identity and re-establish their lives.

## Fast Fact

### • Water-damaged records?

Act quickly! Drying or freezing irreplaceable records damaged by water must happen as soon as possible: mold can develop within 72 hours, making restoration even more difficult and expensive.

For more information see:

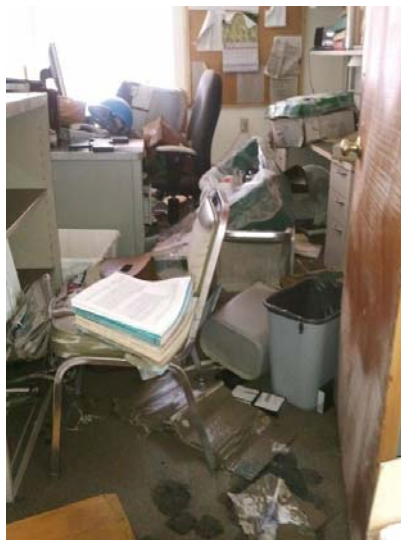
- The Northeast Document Conservation Center's [Preservation Leaflet 3.6: Emergency Salvage of Wet Books and Records](#)
- VSARA's [Flood-Damaged Records FAQ page](#)

## TOP STORY: A Record Flood

*(continued from front page)*

Your agency's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is the "go-to" document for preparedness and mitigation strategies in an emergency. In addition to addressing physical infrastructure and systems, your continuity plan should include detailed information on how to protect and ensure continued access to essential records in case of natural disasters or human-caused threats.

Essential records should be evaluated, identified, and incorporated into a continuity plan. It is crucial to have an accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date plan in which essential records critical to the continuity of operations are secured and the plan is readily accessible to agency staff.



Devastation around the Waterbury complex

Many continuity plans currently lack important documentation, information and guidance in the section on essential records. VSARA had been preparing to implement a FEMA-endorsed training called Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER) in mid-2012. We are now committed to rolling out this training as soon as possible. In addition, VSARA is committed to assisting agencies so that all the necessary plans, skills, training, resources, and contracts are in place to respond as quickly, responsibly, and as effectively as possible in any given emergency.

Whether your agency was affected by Irene or not, below are some basic strategies and steps for identifying your agency's essential records. VSARA's records analyst team is also available to help agencies further expand their continuity plans by identifying essential records. If records have been damaged or your agency is being relocated, we can assist in the development and implementation of interim plans.

### Identifying Essential Records

Essential records provide an agency with information it needs to conduct business under other-than-normal conditions, and to resume more normal business afterwards. These records, combined with other components of a continuity plan, allow the agency to continue functioning under a range of adverse conditions, whatever their intensity and duration. [\(continued on p. 3\)](#)



**Record essentials...**

**Records are considered essential when they:**

- Are necessary for emergency response
- Are necessary to resume or continue operations
- Protect the health, safety, property, and rights of residents
- Would require massive resources to reconstruct
- Document the history of communities and families

**TOP STORY: A Record Flood**

*(continued from p. 2)*

Determining which of your records are "essential" requires a great deal of thought, and opinions will vary widely. All records are useful to your agency in some way, though usually not all are essential to your immediate continuity of operations. However, some agencies, based on their functions, roles, and responsibilities, may legitimately designate a more substantial percentage as essential. It is also important to note that as disruption time due to the emergency increases, more records become essential.

Essential records are either dynamic or static. Dynamic essential records contain information that can change periodically -- for example, phone trees. In order to be useful in emergency situations, dynamic essential records must be kept up to date.

Static essential records contain information that does not change over time, such as birth records, final permits, court orders, etc. These records may also be referred to as *vital*, *mission-critical*, or *business-critical* records.

Essential records require special protection strategies, such as back-up systems, or copying and dispersing files and resources off site. These strategies ensure that essential records are not only protected from the effects of an emergency, but are also accessible during and after an emergency.

**Which of Your Agency's Records Are Essential?**

Essential records are generally those which support essential functions for which the agency is responsible by law, and will differ from agency to agency. Essential functions are the functions that enable a government to provide vital services, exercise civil authority, maintain the safety and well-being of the general population, and sustain its jurisdiction's industrial and economic base in an emergency.

Essential functions are those that must continue under all circumstances with minimal disruption, and cannot be interrupted for even a short period of time without compromising the agency's ability to perform its mission.

**Step 1: Identify and Analyze Your Agency's Business Functions**

Review agency and department statements, internal directives, laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to your agency's mission; and talk with key stakeholders.

**Step 2: Determine the Essential Business Functions**

Analyze and prioritize business functions based on what functions your agency must perform under adverse operating conditions.

- Is there anything that your own agency or department does that is critical to the larger agency or government of which it is part? If your operation were shut down, how greatly would it affect the rest of your agency, other agencies, the government as a whole, or the public?
- Which of these critical functions are performed only by your own agency or department and not elsewhere?

[\*\(continued on p. 4\)\*](#)



**Upcoming...**

• **Open Houses**

Tuesday mornings	Thursday afternoons
9:30-11:00am	1:30-3:00pm
October 4	October 27
November 1	November 17
December 6	December 22

Open houses are generally held at VSARA twice a month.

At these events we provide informal, basic training in records management and using the State Records Center.

We give you the opportunity to tour our facilities and meet our staff.

We encourage new records officers and liaisons, or anyone who has never been to VSARA, to attend.

We tailor our open houses to meet the needs of attendees, so pick a session!

Email us at [rim@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:rim@sec.state.vt.us)  
or  
Call Rachel Muse at 828-2397

**TOP STORY: A Record Flood**

*(continued from p. 3)*

- For the functions essential to your agency or department and not done elsewhere, are there alternative methods of carrying out those functions during the emergency and recovery periods?

After eliminating the business functions for which there are alternative methods of support, what functions are left? These functions constitute your essential business functions.

**Step 3: Determine the Essential Records That Support Essential Business Functions**

- Do you consider any of these records to be invaluable? If these records were lost or unavailable because of an emergency, would there be any dramatic effect on your agency's ability to perform its essential functions?
- Are there records your agency or department creates or maintains that the public would need in an emergency?
- How soon would you need duplicates if these records were lost or unavailable during an emergency?
- Think about what records your agency creates or maintains that may be essential to other agencies or emergency services, but are NOT essential to your essential functions (for example, building plans or the floor plan of your agency).

**VSARA in the News**

**Vermont State Archives Awarded Grant to Preserve Court Records** *(continued from front page)*

The 22-month project, beginning in October, will provide for the long-term preservation of and access to 446 cubic feet of recording books, dockets, and case files from the Caledonia, Lamoille, and Orleans County Courts. VSARA intends to build upon the experience of this project to launch a wider effort that eventually will address the archival needs of all of Vermont's court records.

Dating from 1794 to 1945, the records chronicle not only the Vermont judicial system but also the larger American experience, and will expand perspectives on numerous issues, including crime and punishment, economics, and all facets of social history.

Because they often provide details about the lives of individuals in a way that few other records do, court records also are particularly useful to genealogists and family historians. When court records concern land disputes and similar issues they may also document rights that persist today.

Recent collaborative efforts between VSARA and the Judiciary to improve records management in the courts have contributed to the success of the grant proposal.

See also: [Grant will help Vermont organize court records](#) (*Burlington Free Press*, 8/23/11)

## Upcoming...

### • Training

#### ***Got Records? Now What?***

On November 2, 12:30-3:30pm, we're offering one last session this fall of our course *Got Records? Now What?*

#### **Note:**

The course is still being held through the Summit Center, but because of the flooding in Waterbury, its location has yet to be determined.

After you register for the course, you'll receive location details as soon as they have been confirmed.

The first half of this workshop introduces concepts of records and information management, including best practices, tools and resources currently available.

The second half of the session helps attendees:

- understand the statutes surrounding public records in Vermont,
- be able to respond efficiently to public records requests,
- and understand exemptions and how to apply them.

Register for this course through the [Summit Center](#).

*Or for more information:*

Email us at [rim@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:rim@sec.state.vt.us)

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Call Rachel Muse at 828-2397

## Meet VSARA

### **Meet VSARA: The State Archives Unit** *(continued from front page)*

The Vermont State Archives is made up of those public records that have been identified as having enduring value to the State of Vermont.

Because these records document the rights of citizens, the actions of government, and the history of the state, they will be retained permanently.



Archivists Scott Reilly and Mariessa Dobrick

These records have been transferred from the legal custody of the creating agencies or individuals to the State Archives — an important distinction from those records stored at the State Records Center, which are still the property of the agencies which created them. And unlike the records stored at the State Records Center, the records in the State Archives are made available to the public.

The Vermont State Archives documents state government from its creation in 1777 to the present. These records are searchable in an online database, [Archival Records in the Vermont State Archives \(Record Series\)](#) and can be accessed through VSARA's reference room, open Tuesday-Friday, 9:00am-4:00pm. Reference room staff are available to respond to questions about the state's archival records, and can be reached at [archives@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:archives@sec.state.vt.us) or (802) 828-2308.

While the most used records in the archives are vital records valuable to genealogists tracing their family histories and legislative records helpful in developing and interpreting state statutes, a number of historic state agency records have been transferred to the State Archives to be preserved and made available to researchers. Among these are a large number of Agency of Transportation records, including early maps, plans and photographs of Vermont's roads.

As we consider the effects of the recent flooding in Vermont, a review of Transportation reports and data from the 1927 flood can shed some light on how the state responded at that time, and influence what happens today. Agency and legislative records held in the archives often are a reminder that most of the issues the state wrestles with are not new, and having the opportunity to study decisions made and data gathered in the past allows us to better prepare for and understand similar situations in the present.

As Secretary of State William Slade put it in 1823,

"Every government...should possess, and should place within reach of the people, a complete history of its own legislation. Without the possession of such a history, and a practical regard to the lessons it inculcates, legislation will be, at best, but a succession of experiments, and as a necessary consequence, every operation of government will be characterized with instability and want of wisdom." 📖

*(See p. 8 for a portion of the 1927 Flood map!)*



## Reminders

### Records transfer checklist

Are you preparing records for transfer to the State Records Center? Check against this list to ensure that your boxes meet all requirements and your transfer will go smoothly.

- Maintain an index of records being sent to the Records Center for easy retrieval later
- Acquire accurate box numbers from the Records Center supervisor
- Use Paige Miracle boxes for packing records (Staples item #656762)
- Use printed, adhesive labels providing the records series number and box number
- Box numbers should be complete, providing your departmental or agency alpha prefix and the five digit box number (ex: TX-04278)
- If you expect that records will be interfiled into your boxes, leave room for new records to be added
- Tape boxes closed with clear packing tape
- Provide the Records Center with a typed box transfer list (VSARA-05)

You can see the complete, detailed procedure for transferring records on our website at <http://vermont-archives.org/records/handbook/pdf/VSARA0008.pdf>.

If you have any questions or concerns about preparing your boxes for transfer, contact [recordscenter@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:recordscenter@sec.state.vt.us), or call 828-3280 for assistance.

## VSARA Goes Forth!

### Sweet Harmony & Solid Gold: Archivists and Records Administrators Make Beautiful Music in Nashville, TN *(continued from front page)*

I was thrilled to receive an award from the New England Archivists (NEA) which helped to fund my trip to Nashville to attend this year's NAGARA conference. While at NAGARA, I took in as many sessions and talks as I could fit into my two and a half days.

The first session I attended proved to be one of the most interesting and relevant to my work. *It's 10 p.m. Do You Know Where Your Governor's Records Are?* featured a panel of speakers from New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee, who each confront unique challenges when it comes to the disposition and preservation of governors' records.

In Tennessee, the disposition of governors' records is not dictated by state statute. A strong tradition of donating these records to the state archives, however, means that most of the state's gubernatorial records are held under one roof.

In North Carolina, statutes allow for the collection of governors' papers by the state archives, and so records are routinely transferred into archives throughout the course of each administration. Their gubernatorial records are managed like the records of any other state agency -- through retention schedules -- although recent controversy concerning retention of certain types of electronic records has proven problematic for the governor's office and the state archives.

Finally, in New York State, governors' records are not collected by the state archives under statute and have not traditionally been transferred to the archives. Rather, they frequently end up in the hands of colleges and universities or other collectors. The variety of ways governors' records are handled in each state is a fascinating glimpse into the reach of state law and the position of the governor, and state archives, in different settings.

Having been the primary contact with Governor Jim Douglas's office during the transfer of his records to the state archives in Vermont in 2011, I was interested to learn how different states deal with the unique issues of governors' records -- the relatively fast transition, the heightened interest by researchers and the public, and the fact that a much larger percentage of these records (including electronic records) may be considered archival than those of other state agencies.

The disposition of governors' records also creates publicity for an archival repository, and the speakers discussed the negative and positive effects of this intense publicity. My counterparts in different states took on these challenges in different ways and found opportunities in the heightened publicity and interest in these records.

Another motivating session I attended was entitled *A Better Mousetrap: Marketing Records Management in a Budget-Cutting World*. The issue of ever-shrinking budgets was a recurring conference theme, both in and out of formal sessions. The presenters, records managers at the county level from Tennessee and Kansas, have developed strong records management programs by treating and publicizing records management as a business function in their agencies. They spoke in terms of compliance, auditing and adding value to their business activities. *(continued on p. 7)*



**Did you know...**

- about our *Right to Know* database?

This tool allows users to identify relevant laws which affect access to public records in Vermont.

If you're wondering what exemptions to public access may apply to records in your agency or department, a search in this database can help you determine what records are open and what are restricted.

The database can be searched by keyword, agency or department name, and exemption category.

The Right to Know database can be found on our website at

<http://vermont-archives.org/records/access/database/index.htm>.

**Contact us!**

**VSARA**

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**Sweet Harmony & Solid Gold: Archivists and Records Administrators Make Beautiful Music in Nashville, TN** *(continued from p. 6)*

This business-speak gets the message across to executive level, non-records staff: records management is a crucial function of government that helps other business units meet their goals. I left this session with a stronger than ever sense that records and information management is not a luxury but a necessity for a well-run government agency.


While the sessions were inspiring, they were certainly not the only source of new information at the conference. The conference featured two very different plenary sessions, each valuable in its own way.

The first plenary featured Deputy Archivist of the United States Debra Wall, who'd stepped into this role just days before her appearance at NAGARA. She spoke of the major transitions taking place at NARA under the leadership of National Archivist David S. Ferriero. In a refrain that echoed throughout the conference, this transition period at NARA is marked by a focus on new technologies and a more business-like sensibility toward management and operations.

The next plenary session, *Will You Still Need Me... Will You Still Feed Me... in 2064?* also took a forward look at the future of archives and records management. Panelists from the worlds of archives, public history, a genealogical organization, and academia asked how archival repositories will remain relevant and engaged in an ever-more web-based, fast-paced world where researcher expectations of accessibility are higher and higher.

The answer? Change! Grow! It's only by embracing the world of technology and social media that we will retain our audience. This session was particularly inspirational, filling my head with ideas for blogs, web sites, and new ways to interact with state agencies and the general public.

We did not shy away from discussing the dark side of government archives at this meeting. Budget and staff cuts, dramatic changes to archives and records management programs in a shifting world, and an ever-increasing focus on the bottom line may not sound like the most pleasant dinner conversation. But despite the concerns we face in the current economic climate, I think the thing that would amaze an outsider looking in on this event is how much archivists and records administrators, people working in a field that is best known for preserving the past, look toward the future with excitement and enthusiasm.

During my three days in Nashville, partnerships were formed and plans hatched to find ways to meet the challenges that we are all facing. I left the conference impressed by the work I saw being done, with a strong sense of optimism over what's coming next, and inspired to bring positive change to the Vermont State Archives and Records Administration. 

**Meet VSARA: The State Archives Unit** *(continued from p.3)*

Below, an extract showing some of the 1927 flood damage.

Damaged or destroyed by flooding, 1927    Key: red circles = bridges; green lines = roads



To see this map in its original format, as well as many other fascinating records, visit our Reference Room at VSARA. We are open Tuesday through Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm. (We are closed Mondays and state holidays.)