

**Council of State Archivists
Society of American Archivists
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators**

February 26, 2013

The Honorable Hank M. Huckaby, Chancellor
Office of the Chancellor
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
Suite 7025
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Chancellor Huckaby:

The proposed reassignment and transfer of the Georgia Archives from the Office of the Secretary of State to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia presents an important opportunity for the University System to showcase its high standards even as it meets the critical needs of its faculty and students, the citizens of Georgia, and researchers from around the world. Known formally as the Division of Archives and History, the Georgia Archives is a venerable institution that has earned its outstanding reputation as a highly effective public institution and a leading state archives. Unfortunately its staffing and budget have been eviscerated, its services have been reduced or terminated, and its public hours have been virtually eliminated. The institution is in grave and immediate need of strong support to revitalize its functions, staffing, and technical and financial infrastructure.

The Council of State Archivists, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and the Society of American Archivists (the undersigned) together represent the vast majority of the more than 11,000 professional archivists in the United States. We are very concerned about the future of the Georgia Archives and we write to share our perspectives on issues that we hope you will consider as you move forward with this transition. We're confident that the Board of Regents shares our goal of ensuring the success of the Georgia Archives.

For your consideration:

The Georgia Archives should be placed in an administrative context in which it will receive the support and attention necessary to restore its mandated functions. Because some functions of the Archives are not commonly undertaken by universities, it is important that you consider how the University System will support the Archives in fulfilling its mandates, such as managing access to state government records with privacy or other federal or state restrictions (and, in particular, Freedom of Information requests).

The Georgia Archives should receive an appropriate level of support to ensure that it fulfills its mandate to meet the research needs of the public. For example:

- Until the cuts of recent years, the Archives had an active digitization program to provide broad access to its holdings online. This effort should be revitalized and integrated with the very impressive Digital Library of Georgia.
- The Archives had been collaborating with online genealogical service providers Ancestry.com and Family Search to address the substantial family history research community's desire for access to its holdings. Revitalization of these efforts would require very little in the way of resource investment and would yield considerable benefits in terms of access.
- The Archives has a superior collection of state government records dating from the colonial period to modern times that meshes well with other important research resources held by members of the University System. These include the University of Georgia's considerable government documents collections as well as a number of governors' records not already held by the Georgia Archives.

Careful attention to the Georgia Archives would create opportunities and support for revitalizing its mandated role to support state and local government records management. For example:

- Based on recently introduced legislation, there appears to be an intention to transfer the Georgia Archives' records management functions to a different part of the University System. We strongly urge you to advocate on behalf of keeping the records management function within the Georgia Archives in order to ensure uninterrupted and consistent service for state government records—from their creation and use by agencies to their archival transfer or disposition. These functions are operated by the state archives in nearly all states, and this has proven to be an essential connection for effective management of government records.
- To trim costs, the Secretary of State suspended nearly all of the training and services provided by the Georgia Archives to state agencies. Our experience tells us that this decision inevitably will lead to additional costs (and potentially enormous losses in materials) as those agencies flounder without sufficient training. Reinstatement of these services by the Georgia Archives should be considered in a way that would integrate its efforts with those of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government in its research and training efforts with state agencies, local officials, and legislators.
- The Archives' provision of services to, and collaboration with, local governments must be restored. From maintenance of statewide records retention schedules to training and issuance of standards, the Georgia Archives' engagement with local governments has been critically important in ensuring the completeness of the Georgia record.
- Following Hurricane Katrina, the Georgia Archives became a state and regional leader in disaster/emergency preparedness and response. Its role in providing training for state agencies and local governments ensured the protection of records that are essential for continuity of government operations. The Archives has worked closely with the Georgia

Emergency Management Agency since 2005 to coordinate disaster response for records, and this important relationship must be sustained.

The Georgia Archives' critical functions in regard to processing and conservation of records, provision of user access, and managing electronic records must be restored.

- The Georgia Archives continues to receive materials from state agencies but lacks sufficient staffing to adequately evaluate and describe the volume of incoming records. In an effort to expend its limited resources wisely, the Archives has determined that its services to the public should be its top priority. Effective management of new materials entering the Georgia Archives has diminished as a result, which will pose long-term access problems and will increase significantly the backlog of review actions required in the future.
- A functional state archives must have the capacity to preserve materials in its collection, care for at-risk materials, ensure the integrity of the materials under its care, and be a source of materials for exhibition. Capacity for each of these functions should be restored to the Georgia Archives.
- The nation's state archives are leaders in advancing the systems and training for electronic records. The Georgia Archives' electronic records program must be resurrected and provided with sufficient staff to ensure establishment and maintenance of systems that will preserve, protect, and provide access to the electronic records of Georgia government.

If our organizations may assist you by providing information about archival programs in other states or universities, about archival standards and practices, or about any other matters of interest, please do not hesitate to contact us. Archivists nationwide share a strong interest with Georgia's citizens and the Board of Regents in ensuring the capacity and sustainability of the Georgia Archives.

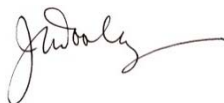
Sincerely,



Jim Corridan, President
Council of State Archivists



Daphne DeLeon, President
National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators



Jackie M. Dooley, President
Society of American Archivists

cc: Dr. Thomas J. Hynes, Jr., President, Clayton State University

Dianne Cannestra, President, Friends of Georgia Archives and History

Lorene Flanders, Dean of Libraries, University of West Georgia

Dr. P. Toby Graham, Deputy University Librarian and Director, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

Dr. Catherine Oglesby, Professor of History, Valdosta State University

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Merryll Penson, Executive Director of Library Services, University System of Georgia

Dr. William Gray Potter, University Librarian and Associate Provost, University of Georgia

Dr. Lamar Veatch, State Librarian, Georgia Public Library Service