

Based on survey findings conducted in 1994 by the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Board (GHRAB), staff at the Georgia Department of Archives and History (GDAH) recognized the serious need for basic information about the care of historical records in local government agencies. A training module was developed to help fill this critical void. This training program was designed to stress the practical aspects of preservation--those activities that are realistically doable with little training, scarce resources, and in unfavorable environments. The program was also fashioned in such a way that other state governments could readily replicate our efforts.

Six one day workshops were scheduled in different regions throughout the state during 1996. No prior knowledge or experience in preserving records was presumed. Participants included superior court and county court clerks, education administrators, law enforcement administrators, records managers, and individuals responsible for preserving historic structures as well as their contents.

Sessions were structured to promote interaction among participants and workshop leaders. Exercises encouraged participants to explore which factors contributed to the condition of records under discussion. Activities that simulated actual daily events in the work environment were highlighted through role play exercises. Case studies were debated at the close of the day, enabling attendees to synthesize the major concepts emphasized during the course of the workshop.

Placing an emphasis on preventive measures, workshop topics included evaluating options for the preservation of paper-based and machine readable records, selecting appropriate services and supplies, maintaining a suitable records storage environment, disaster preparedness, and the role of conservation.

During each workshop, attendees were offered an opportunity to apply for a follow-up site visit by a member of the Archives preservation staff. Site visits accomplished a written evaluation of current records practices and storage conditions. Each repository visited received a written summary of findings with recommendations for improving current conditions. In some instances, our suggestions became the basis for requests for funding from our state-wide regrant program.

Six technical leaflets were developed to broaden distribution of the basic preservation information made available during the workshops. Topics include:

- Preservation Basics for Paper-Based Records
- The Storage Environment
- Disaster Preparedness
- Reformatting Records
- Machine Readable Records
- Selecting and Off-Site Records Facility

Specifically directed toward Georgia's local government officials and written in straightforward, easy to understand language, these leaflets are intended to introduce sound preservation concepts to new record keeping audiences. In addition to distributing these leaflets locally and to workshop participants, copies will be sent to each state archives and affiliate professional organizations. Copies are also available free upon request from the GDAH and accessible electronically through the Georgia Secretary of State GDAH home page at <http://www.sos.state.ga.us>

Our approach to preservation training has intentionally utilized multiple vehicles to convey and reinforce basic indispensable information. Workshops provided introductory material in a learning setting. Follow-up consultations integrated information gained in the classroom with the specificities of each participant's records environment. Technical leaflets supplement knowledge already acquired and will continue their effectiveness by reaching a greater audience beyond our initially targeted group.

Within two weeks of mailing technical leaflets to each state archivist, we have received requests from three states, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Oregon for more information about producing similar workshops in their states. Course outlines have been made available to representatives from these localities. Requests for technical leaflets have also been received from state and local organizations.

We are grateful to the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training for making funds available for this pilot project. We expect to continue using this model to offer ongoing state-wide training as funding sources are available.