

CARMA 25th Anniversary



CARMANJ 25th ANNIVERSARY 2013

Formation and Overview

Note: This Report/Narrative is given to CARMANJ based on memory and additional copies of minutes and materials available to me, and I apologize for any omissions.

FOREWORD

Records Management is the systematic control over the entire life cycle of an organization's records. It is the direction of a program designed to provide economy and efficiency in the creation, organization, maintenance, use and retrieval and disposition of records,

assuring that needless records are not created and that valuable records are maintained and made available.

According to T. R. Schellenberg in his book *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*;

"The objectives of managing public records are to make the records serve the purposes for which they were created as cheaply and effectively as possible, and to make proper disposition after they have served those purposes....The objectives of efficient records management can be achieved only if attention is paid to the handling of records from the time they are created until the time when they are released to an archival institution or disposed of."

It is a fact that archival and records management practices were known and valued back to ancient times in all civilizations. It was recognized as a means to manage or govern more efficiently as well as providing a history of events which are still referred to today. Archivists/Records Managers always were and are still regarded as a valuable asset to an organization. Their work has provided us with detailed information of the past and cost effective measures for the present and future. It is also recognized that without proper records management, the primary functions of these entities would cease. The Federal government realized this importance when it created the National Archives in 1934. The State of New Jersey (NJ) created the Public Records Office in 1920 and in 1953, created the Bureau of Archives & History along with its currently used legislation and practices. The law was supplemented in 1994 to reflect the advent of digital technologies. The Bureau changed its name to the Division of Archives and Records Management (DARM) in 1983.

Archivists/Records Managers have always been here, but rarely receive the recognition due to them for a lifetime of service of preservation and precision management under daunting circumstances. There should be medals for those who sort and identify records maintained, in many instances, in terrible environmental conditions. At times, they are faced with upper management indifference and budget/resource constraints. Yet they carry on and innovate in order to accomplish their tasks. CARMA/NJ is a prime example of how the counties of NJ decided to implement these practices against overwhelming situations and to meet together to discuss these common issues on the local level of government.

PROLOGUE

In June 1978, the National Historical Preservation and Records Commission (NHPRC) provided a grant to inventory the records of the four oldest electoral offices of the county; the County Clerk/Register of Deeds, the Surrogate, the Sheriff and the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The inventory was halted after only two counties were fully inventoried due to conditions of storage found. A brief tour of all the counties--2 to 5 days per county--commenced in November 1979 which focused on storage conditions. Reports were sent out to all counties in 1980-81. This provided an initial catalyst for recognizing these problems and recommending solutions. Some counties started to initiate some form of archives/records management program through the existing offices and local historical commissions.

As of 1978-1980, only Hunterdon and Morris counties had archivists to address these monumental situations. The Monmouth County Clerk, Jane Clayton, ran on the ticket of "save the records" and a storage facility was renovated from an existing building. In 1981, Morris County was the first to have a facility that included an archive, records storage areas and a centralized micrographics unit. David Mitros was the Archivist and Knute Seebohm was the first county records manager. NJ DARM provided assistance, where it could, individually to each county.

Most county departments operated their programs independently within the same county. Once the benefits were demonstrated by a few offices in a county, the other offices in the county would attempt to establish their own program. Sometimes offices were reluctant to join until the benefits convincingly demonstrated. Hunterdon County's archives were preserved by Dorothy Tirpok, County Clerk and Archivist Phyllis D'Autrechy. At the same time, Cape May County Clerk Angela Pulvino and Records Manager Rita Marie Fulginiti addressed their situation, ultimately resulting in a new facility being constructed adjacent to the existing county clerk's Office that included an archive, records storage and micrographics in 1985. Mercer County followed with County Clerk Al Driver hiring Ted Yim to inventory and manage the county's records and to establish a central records center. Ted later became County Clerk and hired Cathy D'Costanzo to manage the records program. She later became the Clerk and hired Patricia Constance to be the Records Custodian.

Meanwhile NJ DARM embarked on a revision of all county and municipal records retention schedules and created a Local Records Manual which was distributed through a series of seminars and mass mailings. NJ DARM also provided on site assistance as requested to help sort and identify records in various storage areas. Note: this was accomplished in a time before the internet and cell phones.

In the mid-1980s, Middlesex, Somerset and Monmouth counties hired records managers and eventually facilities were built to house archives, records storage and centralized micrographics. Stephen "Pete" Dalina, Anthony Mento, and Larry Cella were hired in these counties respectively. Knute Seebohm and David Mitros also provided assistance to the other counties. Ocean County hired Richard Laycock as records manager and created a records center at the county airpark facility. During this time, on a site visit to Middlesex County, Pete Dalina inquired as to how other counties were coping with these conditions. He suggested that they possibly all meet each other. I agreed and set up a meeting in Trenton at the State Records Center (SRC) of all existing records management staff.

CARMA/NJ

The first meeting of the NJ County Records Managers/Archivists group was held on November 29, 1988 at the SRC in Trenton. Seven counties participated with 16 representatives attending. The counties were: Burlington, Cape May, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Morris, Ocean and Somerset. The meeting gave an opportunity for all of these representatives to finally meet as a group, discuss issues in their respective counties and discuss how they addressed their own

problems. DARM provided a basic records management overview and I presented the group with the suggestion of forming an official association. This was eagerly received and the Records Managers group started to "get the show on the road". They met again on March 9, 1989 to discuss their goals, election of officers, dues, frequency of meetings and hosts. Knute Seebohm of Morris County investigated the procedures for getting formally established as an association and drafted By-Laws for review by this group.

A meeting was held on June 5, 1989, to review these items and to adopt a name. Sixteen names with their acronyms were reviewed until it was finally narrowed and agreed to be CARMA/NJ. The first acting officers elected were Knute Seebohm, President, Pete Dalina, Vice-President, and Anthony Mento, Secretary/Treasurer. The By-Laws were reviewed and corrections made. The letterhead was adopted and annual dues were determined at \$30.00 per county per year. Membership was limited to the 21 counties with DARM being a non-voting member. At the September 8, 1989 meeting, the By-Laws were adopted. Meetings in these initial days consisted of getting CARMA/NJ established, discussing problems county by county, and seeking contacts in other counties. DARM compiled contact information from the county departments seeking information or simply desiring to destroy records. These contacts were referred to CARMA/NJ members as possible records contacts/members for their counties. Many counties did not have designated records managers but had contact people either representing the county or individual departments.

Meetings were also held on December 15, 1989 and March 1990. By the June 11, 1990 meeting, 13 counties responded as members. The first elected officers of CARMA/NJ were: Knute Seebohm, President; Thomas Murphy, Vice-President; Rita Marie Fulginiti, Secretary; Joseph Myers, Treasurer with members At Large, Phyllis D'Autrechy and Alice Buck.

Attendance at meetings was, as it is today, dependent upon location and schedules of members. The group met at various offices, conference rooms and occasionally a restaurant. Food was always a part of the meeting. The group was very enthusiastic and this resulted in other counties desiring to join. It also generated compliance and acceptance of the records management program within all offices of each county. New representatives from counties benefitted immensely since getting administrative support for new programs was the toughest challenge. The success of other CARMA/NJ members' programs demonstrated these benefits.

On May 24, 1990, Middlesex County broke ground for a new facility strictly for Archives and Records Management. It was the culmination of many months of study and meetings that learned from past experiences of other counties and DARM. It was dedicated and opened on July 23, 1991. The county membership contacts as of September 1990 were as follows:

Atlantic-Lori Mooney, Barbara Sanders, Frank Barino, Cheryl Sullivan, Tony Watson
Bergen-Ruth Van Waggoner and later Michelina Callandriello
Burlington-Don Brockman, Steven Traub, Jim Casa, Roy Beebe
Camden-Alice Buck
Cape May-Angela Pulvino, Rita Marie Fulginiti, Diana Hevener
Cumberland-Andy Lapahuska
Essex-Joseph Parlavecchio, and later Alan Falcone

Gloucester-John Maier
Hudson-Patricia Cummings
Hunterdon-Phyllis D'Autrechy, Stephanie Stephens, Dorothy Tirpok
Mercer-Patricia Constance
Middlesex-Pete Dalina, Thomas Murphy, Al Kuchinkas, Jerry Balasze
Monmouth-Jane Clayton, Larry Cella, and Gary Saretzky in 1994
Morris-Knute Seebohm, David Mitros
Ocean-Charlotte Bleier, Richard Laycock
Passaic-Peter Brice and later John Curran
Salem-Joseph Dyer
Somerset-Anthony Mento, Joseph Myers, Rudy Nowak
Sussex-Michael LaRose, Harold Neuschager, William Kosinetz
Union-Blanche Banisek (temporary appointment)
Warren-Terrence Lee

Some municipalities began to send representatives such as: Robert Gallagher and Steve Miller from Jersey City, Calvin Lester of Camden, Matthew Steckhauner of Morristown, and James Callura of Newark. Issues discussed concerned a wide variety of subjects such as, the new technology of optical imaging, storage and records management practices for hardcopy and other mediums, judicial records administration, disaster prevention and recovery practices and how each county managed these situations with their existing resources. Each county began to develop their own manuals. DARM also benefitted by receiving information about revisions to existing records retention schedules.

At the March 26, 1991 meeting in Monmouth County, a photograph was taken of all the CARMA/NJ representatives present. **The members are as following: seated left to right-Robert Gallagher, Knute Seebohm, Anthony Mento, Diana Hevener, David Mitros. Standing left to right-Harold Neuschafer, Steve Miller, Jerry Balasze, Al Kuchinkas, Thomas Murphy, Richard Laycock, Joseph Myers, Charlotte Bleier, Rudy Nowak, Rita Marie Fulginiti, Phyllis D'Autrechy, Larry Cella, Alice Buck, Angela Pulvino, Cheryl Sullivan, Jim Casa, Tony Watsdon and Steve Traub. Unfortunately it is the only known group photo of CARMANJ to my knowledge. See photograph above.**

Hosting meetings helped serve to demonstrate to their administrators the value of CARMA/NJ and the practices used. At the same time, DARM continued to attend department head meetings with counties and municipalities to encourage participation in CARMA/NJ and to initiate their own programs. By 1992, the officers were Thomas Murphy, President, Rita Marie Fulginiti, Secretary, Joseph Myers, Treasurer and in 1994, Larry Cella, Vice-President. In Morris County, Knute Seebohm was replaced by Jane Marie Schrader, Rudy Nowak replaced Anthony Mento in Somerset and Theresa Van Sant joined as the representative for Cumberland. Dave Mazur of the Superior Court also attended these meetings in regard to the storage of judicial records and the study being conducted on the bifurcation of the courts which occurred in 1994. Many counties without established records managers sent representatives that seem to change every few months as they struggled to deal with their situations and limited resources.

On March 24, 1993, CARMA/NJ issued membership certificates and the By-Laws were amended to have 5 meetings per year. On June 21, 1994 Governor Christine Todd Whitman, by Executive Proclamation, declared June 20-24, 1994, Records and Information Week. It was even recognized by Al Gore, Vice President at the time. This represented a great recognition for the program, the Association and all people involved in this field.

On December 6, 1994, the membership/contact mailing list contained 67 people representing all 21 counties, 4 municipalities and 2 state agencies and the By-Laws were amended again. On January 1, 1995, the Judiciary Bifurcation Act became effective and this significantly impacted the storage capacities of all of the counties. Master Service Agreements were created and this would be an issue for discussion for many years. At this time, imaging requirements were incorporated into state statute and regulations would be created for standards. Legislation was being reviewed in regard to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and all of its ramifications. The authority rested with the Attorney General's Office but administration of OPRA fell upon the records managers. This further created a need for good records management practices in order to be in compliance with the statute in a timely manner.

During 1995-97, the following people joined as records managers/contacts: Donna Lenzi, Atlantic, Christine Ruttler, Bergen, Isaac Boykin, Burlington, Gloria Noto, Cumberland, Joseph Hoffman, Gloucester, Larry Greene, Hunterdon, Harold Seigle, Mercer, Gary Dalina and Margaret Pemberton, Middlesex, Ed Small, Morris, Joseph Harding, Ocean, Don Woods and Dona McMillan, Sussex, Joanne Rajoppi, Union, Harvey Minchin, Warren, and Ronald Simpson, Somerville.

Various counties began to utilize the current technologies and programs to manage their records centers, and this technology would change with the progress of time. After many years of discussion, Hunterdon County would build a central records center.

During 1998-99, the following joined CARMA/NJ: Michele Everly and James Hogan, Gloucester, Stuart Feldman, Hudson, Claire French, Monmouth, Elizabeth Kiss, East Brunswick, Jeff Fayback, Brick, Ellie Kidd, Salem, Lillia Fischer, Union, Robert Marasco and Maria Dios, Newark.

In 2001, local government records retention schedules were available on the internet. This enhanced distribution by replacing the previously labor intensive process of copying and mailing revised schedules to all 21 counties and 567 (at that time) municipalities. Judiciary also placed their schedules online.

On September 6, 2001, Larry Cella became President after the retirement of Thomas Murphy. Gary Dalina became Vice-President on December 6, 2001. During 2002, Tony Ghaul replaced Isaac Boykin in Burlington and Mark Pizza joined Monmouth. In 2003, Larry Cella retired and the officers for CARMA/NJ were: Rita Marie Fulginiti, President, Gary Dalina, Vice President, Christine Healey, Treasurer, and in 2004, Nichelle Stout, Secretary.

PARIS Grants

In 2004, legislation was created for the collection of fees from County Clerks and Registers for the issuance of grant monies to counties and eventually to municipalities known as the Public Archives & Records Infrastructure Support Grant Program (PARIS). This program would provide the greatest impact on records management in the history of NJ. It provided funding that allowed counties and municipalities to hire dedicated records managers, archivists, related staff, often for the first time in the history of the organization. Many local governments never had a full-fledged program before, and the grants greatly enhanced all programs with resources unimagined years before. It also provided for the standardized construction of facilities to house records, to microfilm and/or image records and to provide for an online method of submitting records disposition requests. This method became effective on December 2009 and is known as ARTEMIS.

On May 26, 2005, the By-Laws were amended to extend membership in CARMA/NJ to municipalities and vendors. The years 2005-2009 represent a high water mark for CARMA/NJ and records management in general in NJ since resources were finally made available to even the smallest municipality as well as to DARM. Records Managers increased significantly in the counties, and private vendors were involved throughout the state providing services.

On April 25, 2008, DARM celebrated their 25th anniversary as a Division with a day-long event filled with educational sessions called, "Great Expectations." CARMA/NJ provided much logistical support for the program.

In 2010, the current state administration discontinued the PARIS Grants Program. This definitely created a huge impact on records management programs throughout the state by reducing or eliminating resources to pre-2005 levels or less. Despite the changes, CARMA/NJ has proven that it can still maintain its primary mission under its own steam while still ensuring quality service in all that they do.

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