

# Vision and Pilot Project

## DAG Executive Summary of Phase I

The Georgia Archives, like many state archives, has found itself struggling with the issues surrounding digital preservation. Always understaffed and stressed for adequate funding, this project forced us to take stock of our situation and to acknowledge one salient fact -- that we are unlikely to ever have all the skill sets or the funding needed to operate a digital archives without assistance from the agencies of Georgia government. Either we build collaborative partnerships or we do nothing and lose the records. Yet, the option of “doing nothing” has never been considered a viable solution for Georgia. Therefore, the pilot project focused on strengthening our ties within government to facilitate and encourage the creation of archives-ready records and the building of a pool of technical advisors who would be able to provide feedback as we moved forward in implementing a digital archives.

### Setting the Stage

The Georgia Archives sought and obtained an \$187,581 grant from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to partner with the state Board of Pardons and Paroles (PAP) to implement an electronic record keeping system and to devise policies, procedures, and processes for the transfer of reliable archival information to the Georgia Archives. Key products of the grant are a case study of the development of an agency record keeping system as an example to Georgia government and the development of a policy and procedural framework for the preservation of archival data.

### Project Goals

The project centered around five stated goals –

1. To elicit discussion of the conceptual, economic, and technological restraints on electronic records management and preservation with other state agencies;
2. To cooperate with the Board of Pardons and Paroles to implement an electronic record keeping system and to devise processes for the transfer of reliable archival information to the Georgia Archives;
3. To publish a case study of the development of an agency record keeping system as an example to Georgia government;
4. To issue policies and procedures regarding the transfer of archival information for use by state government agencies; and,
5. To develop a preservation strategy for archival information in the custody of the Georgia Archives.

Completion of these project goals has given the Georgia Archives a firm foundation from which to implement a digital archives for the state.

## Overview of Pilot

The multi-agency project team elected to utilize Tower Software's Context product to provide lifecycle control over the records of the parole process. The Georgia Archives currently utilizes Context and it was determined that the product provided the functionality and support desired by the PAP. Differing from the Georgia Archives which uses Microsoft SQL Server, PAP chose to use Oracle as the backend database for Context. This allowed the Archives project team the opportunity of evaluating Oracle to handle larger digital objects with complex metadata schema.

Use of Oracle by PAP highlighted one of the first technical/staffing concerns for the Georgia Archives as it moves forward – having already acknowledged that we are unlikely to all the required skill sets in-house, how would we manage to preserve records of multiple operating systems when our expertise is with SQL Server?

Grant project staff selected a single record series, the Felony and Misdemeanor Case File, as the initial focus of the project. The case file was chosen because of the sheer volume of records currently accumulated, the difficulty of purging such files of unwanted material, and the lack of standard metadata. It was expected that the use of the TRIM application would facilitate solutions to these problems and experience with this series would provide insight into problems that might be encountered in subsequent series.

Prior to the installation of TRIM, representatives of the Archives and the Board of Pardons and Paroles met to consider the necessity of changes to existing records retention schedules. The Felony and Misdemeanor Case Files is currently held for twenty years and includes a number of distinct documents. Over the past year, Board personnel have been introducing more electronic elements into what is now a hybrid paper-electronic recordkeeping system. Archives staff was interested in incorporating records management practices into the existing workflow. The introduction of records management software allowed the creation of separate record types and individual retention periods for each document or subset of documents within the case file.

## Additional Work Completed

In addition to the planned pilot project, staff was able to capitalize on several opportunities to accomplish additional work.

The Georgia Archives project team has implemented both a strategy and an overall methodology for the preservation of government records. The strategy consists of policy and procedure for the preservation of digital objects over time.

The methodology focuses on the promulgation of administrative policy and technology standards aimed at the creation of records. The technology standards are issued jointly between the Georgia Archives and the Georgia Technology Authority. The first such standard issued, ENT-01-001-STD, requires the use of DoD 5015.2-STD certified content management software. Policy and standards combine to ensure the creation of archives-ready records based on open enterprise technology standards.

Working with our agency partners and GTA, staff is identifying the technical requirements for preserving digital objects. These requirements will become a blueprint for the full implementation of the digital archives. Once the technical requirements have been completed, the Department of Audits (one of our agency advisors) will provide a third-party review and evaluation of the requirements paying particular attention to security needs.