

FOR THE RECORD

Welcome to the first edition of the Records Analysis Services section's newsletter! This newsletter will replace the Records Analysis Services section's blog as our quarterly publication, with releases occurring in spring and fall. The blog won't be going away but will act as a biannual complement to the newsletter, with content geared toward records management beginners and the general public. The newsletter will seek to inform government records managers of educational

opportunities available to them through the Library of Virginia, offer guidance on current topics in records management, and communicate to its audiences the actions that the Library's records analysts are taking to service the Commonwealth. Each issue will center on a single theme. For the spring issue, our theme is disaster management.

Did You Know?
**April Was Records
Management Month!**

How did you
celebrate this year?

**Want to contribute to our Agency
Spotlight section? Reach out to your
assigned records analyst today!**



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

800 East Broad Street | Richmond, Virginia 23219 | www.lva.virginia.gov



THEME ALERT **DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN VIRGINIA**

Here in Virginia, we're no strangers to major environmental disasters. While our state is often lucky enough to be spared from the brunt of hurricanes and we rarely experience wildfires, large-scale flooding and tornadoes, we can't rely on luck alone, especially as the climate changes around us.

In response to the devastation of Hurricane Helene, the Library of Virginia dedicated much of Records Management Month to the topic of disaster preparedness and response. Clients across Southwest Virginia reported the havoc flooding wreaked on their records, some of which were not yet eligible for destruction. We hope you were able to join us on Wednesday, April 23 at 10 a.m. for a virtual town hall discussion on disaster preparedness hosted by Records Management Services section manager Chad Owen. It will be made available on our YouTube playlist for those who were unable to attend the live event.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage clients to begin preparing for disasters today. Online guides like

[PreP](#) (Pocket Response Plan) provide an easy template for determining how to prepare for a disaster and who needs to be on your disaster preparedness and response team.

Many offices already have a framework for a disaster plan within their Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). PreP is a more specific version of a COOP, highlighting individuals and resources at your disposal during a disaster. Once you've finished your PreP or another similar document, you should store it in multiple places. You may not have internet or cell service during a disaster, so you should create digital and physical versions of your guide. (Pro Tip: Laminate your physical versions to prevent their destruction in the event of a flood!)

Just as you should coordinate disaster preparation with others in your office, you should also coordinate with others within your county/city or surrounding localities. This coordination can take many forms, including sharing a basic overview of your disaster

plans, discussing local disaster recovery vendors, drafting a mutual agreement to provide space for one another's records in a disaster, or agreeing to assist or lend resources during a disaster. Disaster preparedness does not have to be done alone. By making these connections today, you're securing the future of your records tomorrow.

When a disaster strikes, you might be either entirely unprepared or prepared for a smaller-scale disaster than what occurred. In cases where records have been destroyed inadvertently, reach out to your Library of Virginia records analyst for information on how to handle destruction reporting. We're here to help — not to judge! Once you make us aware, we can help bolster your defense if the destroyed records receive a Freedom of Information Act request. Help us help you!

For more information, reach out to your records analyst to request training on disaster preparedness for yourself and your office!

RECORDS MANAGEMENT OUTREACH

Your Library of Virginia records management analyst is dedicated to ensuring that the records officers they advise are fully equipped with an understanding of records management to implement practices in compliance with the Virginia Public Records Act (VPRA). To enhance outreach and accessibility, your assigned records analyst will facilitate periodic live “Records Management (RM) Basics” training, including offering “RM Basics: New Records Officer” training regularly. New records officers — and those who need a refresher — are strongly encouraged to join the virtual training and ask any questions you may have!

Be sure to contact to your assigned records management analyst to request their RM Basics training schedule. If you have any training topic recommendations, let your analyst know. We are open to exploring ways to enhance our connection with Virginia’s agencies and localities.

**Have an idea for a
webinar topic?**

Reach out to
your assigned records
analyst today!



UPCOMING WEBINARS

The Records Analysis Services section is excited to host webinars that are of interest to you and your colleagues. Records officers and others within your agency are welcome to join our online information sessions as we share records management information for all to utilize. We are pleased to introduce participants to external information professionals from all over the nation to enhance your records management knowledge. If you have a webinar idea you'd like the Records Analysis Services section to host, please let your assigned records analyst know and we will try to incorporate your suggestions in a future event.

From Likes to Legal: Social Media Content as Public Records

Wednesday, June 18, 10 a.m.

Guest Speakers: Sara Clark, Chief Legal Counsel, Ohio School Boards Association, and Pari Swift, University Records Manager, Ohio State University

Important records management decisions need to be taken into account prior to establishing a government social media presence. Additionally, the gray areas of government versus personal social media interactions are beginning to be tested in courts around the country. This webinar will provide an overview of how government entities and officials use social media platforms; the records management aspects of social media; unique challenges associated with capturing and disposing of social media content; how to manage and respond to citizen interactions with government social media; and how best to balance being both a public employee and private citizen on social media, especially in light of recent judicial rulings in this area.

WELCOME

TO OUR TEAM

ERIC HARRIS
Records Analyst



We are happy to introduce our newest records analyst, Eric Harris. Harris comes to us after 10 years as a records officer with the Virginia Housing Development Authority, and has worked closely with our analysts in the past from the agency side to develop retention schedules. Now he'll be sitting on the other side of the table!

ANALYSTS' RESEARCH ADVENTURES: DISASTER RECOVERY PLANNING

The Library of Virginia's records analysts continuously educate themselves on topics related to records management to stay current with the evolution of technology and other factors that impact the management of records. In preparation for Records Management Month and the recent webinar "Don't Get Mad, Get Ready: Disaster Planning and Recovery," we attended the Disaster Planning and Recovery Symposium presented by the Association of Moving Images Archivists (AMIA). Below we share five tips for agencies to note as they prepare and maintain a disaster recovery plan:

1. Quick Guide Disaster Recovery Plan

In addition to a comprehensive plan, have a simplified, one-page guide for staff to use when reacting to a disaster. These guides have condensed information staff can easily follow and act on appropriately. Enhance the look of your guide by adding color themes and bold topic headings to help staff easily read the steps for recovering records safely.

2. Establish Routine Records Storage Monitoring

Standardize a periodic scan of your records storage areas to identify any damage such as leakages, flooding, pest issues, and any other dangers that could impact your agency's records. Routinely checking your storage spaces allows for quick action to combat issues and restore records promptly.



3. Gather the Appropriate Disaster Gear

The variety of potential disasters calls for stocking the appropriate gear needed for recovery. Recommended universal gear includes walkie-talkies, knee-high rubber boots, face masks (with filters), ziplock bags, safety gloves, a tool kit, all-purpose cutters, and headlamps.

4. Research Disasters in Your Area

Appropriate planning also involves analyzing the types of disasters that are likely to occur in your area. This would include noting if your agency is located near a wetland, a vast host of trees, or a large body of water. By noting such geographical factors, your agency's disaster plan can consider how to handle disasters and incidents appropriately.

5. Develop a Rapport with Potential Vendors

A plan should include a vendor or a listing of vendors that would be used to recover from a disaster if agency staff members are not able to salvage the records. To appropriately prepare, reach out to vendors to assess their plan for recovery for your agency's record types, as well their protocols for salvaging your record formats. This will allow your agency to determine the most effective vendor for the recovery of your agency's records.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Richard Bland College

NICOLE COLLINS,

Financial Services Specialist
and Records Officer

One of my goals as a records officer was to take the necessary steps to implement a records management program at Richard Bland College. To make this process easier, I reached out to my assigned records analyst at the Library of Virginia, which has allowed me to have more confidence as I check off the steps for creating a program. I cannot emphasize enough how critical and smooth this process has been. I developed a rapport with my analyst, which included meeting with her weekly to cover a range of topics. While the program is still in the works, I was able to host a records management training session with the college's faculty and staff in conjunction with my analyst's presentation. Additionally, I have designated records coordinators to make the process of identifying record types within each department simpler to facilitate. I am excited to send my coordinators their inventories to complete to keep the ball rolling. In this process, I appreciate feedback that I gained from another institution's records officer and the guidance my analyst has provided for me to be successful in my role as an officer as well.

DISASTERS OF ALL SIZES: PESTS

When we consider disaster management, we often think of major events: natural disasters like hurricanes and floods, digital disasters like ransomware attacks and file degradation, or man-made disasters like theft and wrongful records destruction. But sometimes we need to think much smaller.

Pests can prove to be just as much a problem as human ne'er-do-wells and Mother Nature. Think about where your office's records are currently stored. Your short-term records might be in the cabinet next to your desk, but where are your long-term records? Are they somewhere safe, not in a basement or attic? If so, that's great! If not, you might need to keep an eye out for infiltration from a creepy variety of intruders.

We all know that basements, attics and other similar spaces aren't ideal for records storage. At the same time, most offices don't have the luxury of handing over prime space to old records with long retention periods. While it's an unfortunate reality, it doesn't give us permission to ignore the spaces we're using to store records.

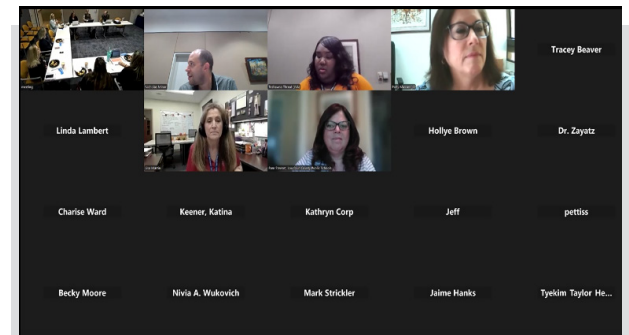
To be proactive in pest management, have someone on your staff try to visit the records storage room at least monthly (preferably weekly) to note any changes in the environment. Are cobwebs coating the corners? Are bug carcasses dotting the floors? If so, it's important to take note of those changes and investigate.

If possible, request to have the exterior of your office treated for common insects in your area and to have any gaps or holes in the building fixed. If you're storing

your records in a basement, it's best to have the floors sealed and to store all the records at least an inch off the ground. This is good advice to follow regardless of where your records are stored, but it goes double for basement storage spaces. In the event of a minor leak, this added height should prevent records from becoming wet and moldy, which would attract pests.



Even with pest management, you might still find strange-looking and unfamiliar creatures in your records room. When this happens, it's great to have a guide on hand. MuseumPests.net offers a resource detailing all the pests you might find in a storage room. Their Pest Fact Sheets aren't for the squeamish or faint of heart, but when you have mysterious critters crawling around your records, they're a lifesaver. They include information on pests from all over the world, but a filter feature can help you find pests native to our state. For an additional list of critters specific to Virginia, see the Department of Wildlife Resources' (DWR) species booklets.



ANALYST-AT-WORK

In April 2024, Virginia passed a law (see: 22.1-289, section I) mandating that any student with a disability who attends a public school in the Commonwealth must have their student records held for seven years. This prompted the Library's records management analyst assigned to public schools, Teshawna Threat, to immediately update the public schools' general schedule (GS-21) in alignment with the effective date for the 2024–2025 school year. Updating the appropriate series within the GS-21 schedule was just the beginning of addressing the ways that this law has affected the public school systems in the Commonwealth, since the law requires schools to store impacted records for an additional two years. With assistance from the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Process Improvement Office and the public schools' records officers and administrators, Threat is proactively working toward seeking resolutions to aid public schools with the concerns and challenges they face. She has developed a focus group derived from the Public Schools Records Consortium (PSRC) to generate a platform for public school officials to gather their feedback to present to VDOE. To maximize the discussion, Threat is also gearing up to make other necessary changes to the GS-21 schedule and aims to present a major update at the end of the school year.

AGENCY ALL-STARS



On the state agency level, the **Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)** mastered a beast of a schedule for their Maintenance Division, which included 110 schedule changes. By facilitating this major change, VDOT was able to deeply analyze the types of records that were currently being created and managed by this important division. Additionally, VDOT identified records series in their state-specific schedule that are already accounted for in the general schedules for state agencies. The Records Analysis Section commends VDOT's records officers, Steven Effinger (retired) and Lawrence Davis, for taking an in-depth look into how their schedule could be improved and brought into alignment with the records they manage.

It's spring cleaning season! The Library applauds two agencies for whom spring cleaning came early last year: the **Virginia Department of Health (VDH)** and the **Virginia Retirement System (VRS)**. Thanks to the efforts of VDH's Vanessa MacLeod and the **Office of Environmental Health Services (OEHS)**, and VRS's Katie Ray, old schedules have been made defunct and/or were refurbished to reflect the current operating standards of their offices. If you work at a state agency, check your "[Specific Schedules for State Agencies](#)" page today to see if your schedules need updating!

Following an update to the Code of Virginia (see: [8.01-246](#), section B), the Library gathered a focus group composed of four participants from across the Commonwealth to discuss medical debt records. After two thorough meetings and many emails in which participants responded to questions posed by the Library and shared processes their agencies have implemented to handle medical debt records, we are excited to announce that two new series have been added to the Health Records general state schedule (GS-120). We are grateful to those who participated and could not have made this change without them!

The Records Analysis Services section looks forward to highlighting all state agency and locality work. From collaborative efforts within a focus group on the state and local level to state agency-specific schedules, any efforts made to enhance records management deserve kudos! We commend all agencies and localities for their work even if it is not showcased!

WHAT'S NEW IN RECORDS MANAGEMENT?

The future is here! While news outlets and federal agencies have been abuzz with the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), there's been little movement to embrace such features in Virginia government offices. Currently, only one agency has made the Library aware that they are implementing a pilot version of Microsoft Copilot. Given how new AI is — to the world and to those using it in government — the Library's records analysts discussed AI's current capabilities, its likely future trajectory, and whether AI is storing data or generating new records. Though we have no guidelines for handling AI, the Library advises that the debate on records versus data be handled on a case-by-case basis, and we are willing to lend a hand to any records managers struggling to draw that line. We are actively monitoring trends in AI to anticipate challenges our clients may face.



For now, we suggest that you have conversations about data privacy and ownership with your vendors, create AI usage policies, and research AI tools to help decide whether the benefits outweigh the risks. Review the Electronic Records Guidelines (ERG) to better understand your electronic records.

Remember, AI is a tool just like Microsoft Excel or Outlook. It is not deadly like a science fiction movie villain such as Skynet from the movie "The Terminator," nor is it a replacement for a human being.



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