

Recorder's Office Historic Records Improved Access and Preservation **FY2001 Request: \$150,000**
Reference No: 32514

AP/AL: Appropriation **Project Type:** Renewal and Replacement
Category: General Government
Location: Statewide **Contact:** Nico Bus
House District: Statewide (HD 1-40) **Contact Phone:** (907)465-2406
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2000 - 06/30/2001

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

This is the first phase of a two-year project that consists of the filming of approximately 6,000 original books filled with historical recorded and filed documents, dating back to the mid-1800's. Because of the high risk of degeneration and deterioration due to the fragile nature of these documents and the conditions under which they are now being stored, filming needs to be urgently pursued. Once filmed, these books will be transported to State Archives to be permanently stored under climate-controlled conditions.

Funding:	<u>FY2001</u>	<u>FY2002</u>	<u>FY2003</u>	<u>FY2004</u>	<u>FY2005</u>	<u>FY2006</u>	<u>Total</u>
GF/Prgm	\$150,000	\$150,000					\$300,000
Total:	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$300,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased Project	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

The Recorder's Office received prior appropriations from capital funding in FY94, which included limited funding for both the archival book filming project and the aperture card conversion. However, other than the original camera purchase, this funding has principally covered the aperture card conversion. There has been no other funding available for this project.

Project Description/Justification:

Description of Work to be done:

This project will require the Recorder Office to work on the filming project through the duration of this CIP. This will entail the inventory and packaging of historical books in thirteen outlying offices; shipment by a contracted transportation firm; purchase of silver halide film; creation of archive media including one archival silver master, one working silver master, and silver duplicate film from the silver master for each office's library facility; shipment of the duplicate film to the outlying area offices; database documentation of the documents; the packaging and shipment of the original books to State Archives for permanent storage, along with the archival silver master; and the shipment of the working silver master for off-site storage in Anchorage.

Project Benefits:

This project will benefit the state by preserving on microfilm hundreds of thousands of documents which could otherwise be lost forever due to deterioration and poor storage conditions. The original books, after being filmed, would then be transferred to State Archives for permanent storage under climate-controlled conditions. The filming will free up storage space in fourteen recording offices statewide, thus reducing lease expense for the state. Filming will improve customer service by providing a usable retrieval media for producing copies of these historical documents. Finally, filming will save

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staff time in searching through thousands of old books and photocopying documents pursuant to customer requests.

The books contain either no index at all, or very limited indices which are difficult to read, and do not give adequate information to the user in order to search for a specific document. Because of the fragile nature of the books, employees must spend considerable research time with the customers, and must make all copies for the public to minimize handling of the records. This can be quite a time-consuming process, as entire books must sometimes be searched in looking for a single document. During each search process, the books deteriorate even further. If the books were filmed, however, the customer could independently search for his or her document, as well as make copies, freeing up valuable staff time. Less time spent in the Recorder's Office library means better time management for the customer as well, and would be no doubt appreciated. Finally, once the books are in filmed form, the microfilmed image can easily be converted into electronic image to enhance retrieval options even more in the future.

Economic Development:

Historic land records are critical to the establishment of title throughout the state. The ability to research land titles more efficiently as a result of this project could certainly help stimulate economic development.

Projected Revenue to the State:

It is likely that the state (DOA's Leasing Budget) could anticipate lease savings of up to \$50,000 or more per year once all of the historic books are completely filmed. In Fairbanks, for example, the books occupy about a quarter of their total lease space. The state currently pays \$43,200 per year for the entire Fairbanks office, so if the next lease could be bid with 25 per cent less floor space, this would result in savings of more than \$10,000 per year for just that one location.

The books in the Anchorage archives unit and the Anchorage office occupy approximately one-tenth of the total floor space. Based on market lease rates (per most recent lease in the Frontier Building) this amounts to more than \$20,000 annual savings if the book storage areas could be eliminated from the Anchorage office space.

In Nome, the district books occupy approximately 25% of the total lease space. Elimination of this space from future bids could result in savings of nearly \$6,000 per year. Anticipated annual savings in eight other DNR locations would range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 each (although the Ketchikan and Kodiak offices are housed in Alaska Court System facilities at no charge to DNR, space savings in those offices would accrue to the benefit of the Court System). Additionally, the filming of books in the Seward, Vandez and Chitina recording districts would also free up valuable floor space for the Court System which houses those offices. Many other magistrate office locations throughout the state also house original recording books that have never been filmed. If these are eventually included in the project, this too would result in considerable space savings and possible monetary savings for the Court System which houses them.

Assuming a \$50,000 annual lease savings to the state, the cost of this two-year phased project (\$150.0 in FY01 and \$150.0 in FY02) could be fully recouped within a six year period. However, immeasurable savings to the citizens of the state of Alaska would be gained by the creation of a permanent archive media to replace the non-existent or poor quality film media and rapidly deteriorating historic record books so critical to the establishment of private land titles within the state.

Project Support:

There is significant user-support for creation of a stable medium to reproduce these historically valuable records.

Project Opposition:

The component is not aware of any public opposition to this project.

Specific Spending Detail:

Phase I of this project includes:

- Contractual Scvs for salaries to do the filming = \$40.0 (current work is contracted to State Archives)
- packaging, handling and transportation of the original books to Anchorage and then accession to State Archives = \$35.0,
- Film (\$27.5) and processing (\$47.5) = \$75.0.

Alternative Approaches/Financing Considered:

We could do absolutely nothing, and eventually lose these documents forever. We could convert the documents to electronic imaged media, although funding for this solution has not been approved in the past. These alternatives would

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not result in production of a permanent archival medium. We have obtained and received a small grant (\$5.0) to film Fairbanks' Gold Rush records, and this project is already underway. However, grant monies are extremely limited and are not applicable to the bulk of these historic records.

Project History:

In 1992, the State Ombudsman investigated a complaint against the Recorder's Office, and filed a report alleging that "the agency does not meet its statutory mandate, per AS 40.17.010(a)(5)(b), to take necessary precautions to "permanently" store its older records now held in agency offices at a variety of locations throughout the state." Included in its findings was the recommendation that: "The agency continue its efforts to obtain funding...to complete necessary microfilming with first priority given to filming records of permanent value and to conduct a feasibility study to ensure future records are filed in accordance with archival standards." Also included was the recommendation that "the agency research avenues to retard further deterioration of historical records." Ways to maximize preservation of records in the event of fire, flood or sprinkler system malfunction should also be explored, the Ombudsman stated.

The Recorder's Office purchased an archival camera for this project several years ago, but had to exercise a "lemon clause" due to malfunction of the unit. The camera is in the process of being replaced by the manufacturer, and should be in full operation during FY00.

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