

Recorder's Office Equipment Upgrades and Records Preservation

FY2002 Request: \$225,000
Reference No: AMD 33980

AP/AL: Appropriation **Project Type:** Renewal and Replacement
Category: General Government
Location: Statewide **Contact:** Sharon Young
House District: Statewide (HD 1-40) **Contact Phone:** (907)269-8882
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2001 - 06/30/2002

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

Approximately \$150.0 of this project covers the fourth phase of a project to reinforce the infrastructure of the state's land records system by continuing the replacement and upgrade of various types of equipment to meet and ensure basic operational needs at fourteen recording locations throughout the state. Approximately \$75.0 of this request will cover the second phase of an ongoing project to film historic records. This project consists of the filming of approximately 6,000 original books filled with historical recorded and filed documents, dating back to the mid-1800's.

Funding:	FY2002	FY2003	FY2004	FY2005	FY2006	FY2007	Total
Rcpt Svcs	\$225,000	\$150,000					\$375,000
Total:	\$225,000	\$150,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$375,000

<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 checked="" 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:

This appropriation is contingent upon passage of either HB108 or SB68, which will change the funding source for the Recorder's Office from general fund program receipts to user supported receipts for services. If either bill is passed, funding for this request could be appropriated from the user supported receipts established by the legislation.

See detailed project justification for prior funding history.

Project Description/Justification:

Detailed Project Justification:

a. Equipment Upgrades:

This project continues the replacement and upgrade of various types of equipment to meet and ensure basic operational needs at fourteen recording locations throughout the state. Most of the recording office public libraries have inherited older computers and printers that do not have the capability to rapidly display digital images as the component adds these to the records base. Upgrading public access equipment in all offices is a primary goal of this phase of the equipment replacement project.

The failure rate for much of the older micrographic equipment currently in use is very high, as are associated service and maintenance costs. Much of the equipment is obsolete and parts are no longer available. Funding for major equipment upgrades has been unavailable under ongoing status quo operating budgets, thereby necessitating this capital request.

Although the component is stepping up efforts to make technological upgrades in document processing, the fact remains that the bulk of the records base still must be manually accessed through the older film and book records. Functional micrographics equipment continues to be critical to this aspect of the component's operations.

b. Records Preservation

This is the second phase of a project that consists of filming 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 poor conditions under which they are now being stored, filming needs to be urgently pursued to completion. Once filmed, these books will be accessioned to State Archives for permanent storage under climate-controlled conditions.

The component has contracted with State Archives (Central Microfilm) for this filming project. State Archives has previously filmed some of the oldest Fairbanks gold rush records under a separate grant, and is dedicating one full-time microfilm operator to this ongoing film project. Costs include \$40.0 for contractual services for filming; \$10.0 for packaging, handling, transportation, hazards inventory, and accessioning; and \$25.0 for film and processing.

The filming will free up storage space in fourteen recording offices statewide (includes the three court recording offices), thus reducing lease expenses for the state in an amount estimated at \$50,000 per year. The filming will also improve customer service by providing a usable retrievable media for researching these historical documents. Additionally, the filming will save staff time in searching through the old books and manually photocopying documents pursuant to customer requests. The most important benefit of this project, however, is that the books can be removed from the individual recording offices where they are continually impacted by a variety of hazard factors (including fluctuations in heating and lighting conditions, direct sunlight, overhead water pipes and other dangers) and accessioned to State Archives for permanent storage.

This project will require the Recorder's 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 to Juneau 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.

The Recorder's Office recently had all recording offices complete a hazard assessment to determine exactly what external hazards have impacted the books or could impact them in the future. This assessment also addresses how the books are stored and accessed. Many of these books have sustained fire and water damage in the past; others have been damaged by continuous handling or

storage under less than ideal conditions. Extreme fluctuations in heating and lighting conditions have also impacted the records over the years. Many are located in areas where direct sunlight hits them. Some are stored in areas where there are overhead water pipes or facilities about them that could lead to water damage. The Recorder's Office is using this information, along with historical value, to determine the filming priority schedule statewide.

Specific Spending Detail:

a. Equipment Upgrades

The Palmer, Kenai and Fairbanks recording offices will each receive a new receipting terminal. Cost estimate is \$6.0 based on an individual price of \$2.0.

This equipment replacement project will also purchase eleven digital plat printers, one for each DNR recording office statewide. The plat printers will allow each office to produce crisp, clear plat copies from digitized images and reduce reliance on the outdated micrographics equipment. Cost estimate for the printers is \$44.0 based on a per unit cost of \$4.0.

This phase of the replacement project will enable the component to finally upgrade computers and printers in all public access areas at recording offices statewide. Twelve laser printers will be purchased with one going to each recording office except for Anchorage. That office will receive two new printers. In addition, twenty-seven new computers will be purchased and distributed as follows: Twelve for Anchorage; three for Fairbanks; two each for Palmer, Kenai, and Juneau; one each for Homer, Kodiak, Sitka, Ketchikan, Nome, and Bethel. Cost is estimated to be \$24.0 for laser printers based on a per unit cost of \$2.0, and an estimated cost of \$54.0 for the computers. This is based on a per unit cost of \$2.0.

Three replacement reader-printers or their equivalent will be purchased (two for Anchorage and one for Fairbanks). These will enable surplus of older 3M reader-printers that are maintenance intensive and unreliable. Cost is estimated to be \$22.5 based on a per unit cost of \$7.5.

b. Records Preservation

This phase of the Records Preservation project includes:

- Contractual Service for salaries to do the filming = \$40.0 (current work is contracted to State Archives)
- Packaging, handling and transportation of the original books to Juneau and then the accession to State Archives = \$10.0
- Film and processing = \$25.0

Project Benefits:

a. Equipment Upgrades

Replacing worn and malfunctioning printers and computers in the public access areas will provide substantial benefits to customers who rely heavily on this equipment to obtain information from the public record. The scanning equipment will enable the public to have faster access to document images; by having more reliable equipment, staff will be able to assist customers in obtaining information quicker.

Broken or malfunctioning equipment continues to be a problem faced by the component. This also creates frustration for customers who visit the offices specifically to obtain research materials but are unable to access the information because the equipment is non-operational.

There is no direct creation of new jobs in the private sector associated with these purchases. However, as a result of the equipment replacements covered by this CIP, employees of private industry who utilize the recorder's office on a frequent basis will be able to find the information they need in a faster and more efficient manner, and this equates to significant monetary savings for these private sector companies.

b. Records Preservation

This part of the 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 expenses for the state. Filming will improve customer service by providing a usable retrievable media for producing copies of these historical documents. Finally, filming will save staff time in searching through thousands of old books and manually 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, using a photocopier, 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 and copying process, the books deteriorate even further. If the books were filmed, however, the customer could independently search for his or her documents, 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.

The filming project would also, for the first time in history, give the Recorder's Office archives unit a full inventory of the records statewide. At this time the historic books have only been obtainable from the Recorder's Office where they are located. This has been a crucial hardship on customers traveling from other countries, the lower 48, and within Alaska when the single staff offices have been closed for scheduled and emergency leave.

Projected Revenue to the State:

Replacement of outdated and malfunctioning equipment does not result in new revenues for the state. However, it will enable the public to find the information they need in a faster and more efficient manner, thus reducing the time demands on recording staff to assist customers with problematic equipment or research tools.

There are no direct revenues to the state as a result of the filming portion of the project. However, is it likely that the state (DOA's Leasing Budget) could anticipate lease savings of up to \$50,000 or more per year once all 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 at 25 percent less floor space, this would result in savings of more than \$10,000 per year for just that one location.

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:

Major users of the recording system (financial institutions, title companies, and members of the mining community) support the component's efforts to improve equipment and upgrade technology in recording offices statewide. The component continues to receive requests from numerous customers to be able to access the recording system index and images via the Internet. By not having this service available these customers must physically visit one of our recording offices to access the statewide index and/or obtain copies of documents. Further, there is significant user support for creation of a stable medium to reproduce the valuable historical records.

Project Opposition:

The Recorder's Office is not aware of any public opposition to this project.

Project History:

This is the fourth phase of a project to replace failing and outdated equipment in fourteen recording locations statewide. The component received \$150.0 in FY99, \$250.0 in FY00 (\$50.0 of which was for the continuation of a separate aperture card conversion project); and \$250 in FY01 (\$125.0 of which was for a separate archival book filming project). To date the component has replaced one reader/printer machines in each recording office location, acquired electric timestamps for all thirty-four of its recording districts statewide, obtained some scanning equipment for an imaging prototype, and upgraded a portion of the public access equipment. New plat machines were acquired for Juneau and Sitka, with similar purchases planned for Anchorage, Palmer, Kenai, Fairbanks, and Kodiak. The component has also used this prior funding to obtain a central scanning station and microfilmer/scanner unit as the principal component in its imaging implementation.

The Recorder's Office received prior appropriations from capital funding in FY94 to preserve historic film records. That funding principally covered the aperture card film conversion project. The Recorder's Office also received prior appropriations from capital funding in FY01 (\$125,000), which represented the first phase of the filming project.

Alternative Approaches/Financing Considered:

No financing has been considered as the program already raises more than \$1 million in excess of its annual operational expenditures.

We could do absolutely nothing, and eventually lose these documents forever. We could convert the documents to electronic imaged media, although this would require even greater funding than this filming project. These alternatives would 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 complete. However, grant monies are extremely limited and are not applicable to the bulk of these historical records.

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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 the 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.