

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2018.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact Gage Harter.

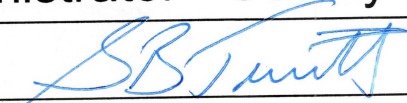
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Carroll County
Program Title: Circuit Court Archives Reform
Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Hon. Gerald R. Goad
Title: Clerk
Department: Carroll County Circuit Court
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Steve Truitt
Title: Administrator - County of Carroll
Signature: 



CARROLL COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT

CARROLL CO. GOVERNMENTAL CENTER

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GERALD R. GOAD - CLERK

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May 23, 2018

VaCo Achievement Awards
Mr. Gage Harter, VaCo Director of Communications
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219-3627

Dear Mr. Harter,

Thank you for your tremendous service to all counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia through your service in the Virginia Association of Counties. I am not sure if you recall, but you published one of my articles in 2008 when I served as a college intern for the County of Carroll as Public Information Specialist. It is great to be able to work with you again in my role now as an elected Constitutional Officer.

I am pleased to submit an application for the Association's consideration for the annual VaCo Achievement Awards in the category of Customer Service. Since I took office, I have worked diligently in revamping and reforming many areas of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office, but highlighting through this proposal the strenuous work and turnaround of our Archives division.

Carroll County is extremely rich in history, heritage, and tradition. As an elected Clerk of the Circuit Court, my due diligence in making sure history and services are carried forth to citizens is vital towards the promotion of our locality and educating our citizens and visitors about our county's valuable historic role in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you and the Virginia Association of Counties for your consideration on our work in the County of Carroll.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gerald R. Goad".

Gerald R. Goad, Clerk
Carroll County Circuit Court

“Circuit Court Archives Reform”

Carroll County Circuit Court

Executive Summary

The Carroll County Circuit Court Archives Room was in desperate need of reform as many historical documents were damaged from moisture, unsuccessful storage, and harmful exposure. Per Code of Virginia, the Clerks of the Circuit Court are guardians of all court records, regardless of age, dating back to the formation of the locality in which each are elected to represent. The Archives Room of Carroll County Circuit Court faced major internal controls, security, safety, and custodial challenges impairing the safety and availability of all documents stored in its area. The Archives Room project initiated the successful preservation, cleanup, indexing, etc. of the historic documents. Just as significant, the project has generated unprecedented cooperation among many stakeholders resulting in fruitful partnerships with the Carroll County Circuit Court Clerk’s Office. This project hopes to be seen as a model for other localities based on many factors including the development of cohesiveness between the Carroll County Board of Supervisors and the Carroll County Circuit Court Constitutional Office. The “Carroll County Archives Reform” is a project that provides multiple benefits to our County and has been executed on a very limited budget. Thanks to the initiative, our historic documents are preserved for posterity and kept safe, yet are easily accessible to citizens and researchers looking to find out about their ancestry and genealogy, explore the general history of Carroll County, conduct a successful title search, and many other endeavors.

Brief Overview

In 2015, the Carroll County Circuit Court faced a 3-month backlog on case processing with no scanning or digitization of case files. In addition, there was a serious backlog of indexing and scanning of new materials such as land records, judgments, financing statements, and wills. There were also major financial audit findings from the previous years that needed to be addressed immediately. As the office was faced with these major challenges, there was a tremendous need of enhancement of customer service from the Carroll County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, and in one area in particular – the Archives Room.

The Carroll County Circuit Court Archives Room required complete upgrade for both its processes and technologies. Many historical documents were damaged from moisture, unsuccessful storage, and harmful exposure. There were only limited funds available to address these issues. As of this year, the backlog has been addressed and fixed, case files are now being scanned and digitized, indexing is more current with no backlog issues, but most importantly, the County's Archives Room is now climate-controlled, with successful controls in place to successfully clean and transfer documents in acidic-free storage boxes that meets general archival standards.

Per Code of Virginia, the Clerks of the Circuit Court are guardians of all court records, regardless of age, dating back to the formation of the locality in which each are elected to represent. Carroll County was founded in 1842 and the Clerk is fully responsible for the proper storage, preservation, security, and successful public access to all of the court records. The County of Carroll is rich in history, heritage, and tradition. Enforcing an emphasis on the Archives room is tremendously vital in providing services to the citizens of Carroll County, the City of Galax, and all tourists that visit the area with not to mention, educating current and future students on the history and formation of the county we all call home.

As the office experienced a transfer of new leadership in 2015, the Clerk had to address many problems and internal issues, but most importantly, the protection and successful control of history of Carroll County. By placing an emphasis of the Archives Room, with offering innovative solutions of implementing successful preservation and storage initiatives, establishing cooperation with the Carroll

County Board of Supervisors, the Library of Virginia, the Carroll County Historical Society, the Carroll County Genealogy Club, as well as citizen input, and establishing enhanced customer services for successful research of history, this all creates a rewarding and due diligence of the requirements from the Clerk's Office.

The "Problem"

The Archives Room of Carroll County Circuit Court faced major internal controls, security, safety, and custodial efforts of all documents stored in its area. There were reports and evidence of leaks in the ceiling that went on several paper boxes used for storage of several documents dating back to the 1800s. Flooring of the Archives Room was not finished in which caused moisture issues for the room as a whole. Major clutter and general disorganization was present with creating many challenges for successful research and document storage.

In 2015, the Clerk was not able to find an accurate inventory list of the Archives Room. There was no way to determine if a particular document or range of documents were missing or misfiled. Documents were damaged with dirt and other signs of weathering on them. Humidity levels were reported high as the Carroll County Maintenance Department had to manually check and empty out the dehumidifier daily. The cameras used for security surveillance were outdated since 2005 as the DVR recorder was not properly working in the Clerk's office, nor there was an adequate recording of the Archives Room.

The vast majority of the documents have been stored in legacy metal pull-out drawers that were transferred from the Historic Carroll County Courthouse to the current Carroll County Governmental Center in 1997. There were no efforts made at that time to move the materials to more appropriate document storage. The pull-out drawer method features all documents in bundles wrapped up with string that leaves major room for misfiling mishandling of fragile, historic documents that have not been digitized. Architectural drawings featuring the building of the Historic Carroll County Courthouse, the County Jail, and the historic Carter Home were found rolled up in water damaged document boxes that feature the original drawings of these historic landmarks in Carroll County. The air climate was at times,

very uncomfortable to citizens when attempting to conduct historical research in the Archives Room. This environment had a similar effect on the materials stored as on the researchers. There was no successful enforcement of control when citizens did not place back the documents in its designated storage areas. Some of the larger document books are deteriorating due to the damaging climate of the room.

The Innovative Solution

In 2016, the Carroll County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, as well as the County of Carroll was faced with a financial burden with paying the current land records vendor as the office was struggling with paying its bills based on the Technology Trust Fund collections and other budget line items at that time. With the financial burden, this did not leave any funding towards preservation and enhancements to the Archives Room, not to mention other major expenses that needed to be done such as scanners and other software implementation for future plans to digitize court case files. With careful strategic planning for the office's future, the contract was not renewed with the current software vendor and instead, a new approach was made as there was a major data conversion made with the Virginia Supreme Court Records Management Services. Not only was there a data conversion of land records, judgments, financial statements, and wills, but it also paved the way for successful implementation of scanners for case files, the electronic recording of marriage licenses, enhanced land, judgment, and will recordings for faster service, and additional access to documents through the Secure Remote Access that subscribers never had before, such as unverified documents prior to indexing. Even though this was the case, the change saved the office and the locality approximately \$35, 000 annually, which has led to investments toward the preservation, security, and other necessary expenses towards the enhancement of the Archives Room.

The Archives Room project began with a conversation with the current Clerk and a citizen of the County of Carroll on the extreme need to place the Archives Room as a major priority. Projects discussed were the successful preservation, cleanup, indexing, etc. of the historic documents. After careful planning, discussion, and goal setting, the one conversation held between these two individuals in the County's deed room has led to a current set work schedule and overwhelming support of volunteers, high

school and college interns, financial support from the locality, set office funding towards preservation, and scheduled work and visits from the Library of Virginia in creating a complete turn-around of the Archives Room.

Volunteers that are currently working are members of the Carroll County Historical Society and the Carroll County Genealogy Club. Their work times have been at least one day a week and the work has consisted of cleaning the documents that have been left in water-damaged boxes, sorting documents, and the successful transfer of documents from the metal pull-out drawers to the acidic free boxes. High school and college interns with the Carroll County Circuit Court have also devoted a portion of their time and experience assisting the volunteers on the preservation efforts.

The Clerk of the Circuit Court has made a diligent effort in taking time at least once a year in presenting to the Carroll County Board of Supervisors an annual update on the office's accomplishments, future goals, and current conditions and services. With this communication establishment, it led to the approval of Capital Improvement Funds of \$25,000 from the locality towards the upkeep and goals of the Archives Room. The funding has provided the purchasing of two HVAC units that produce a climate and humidity controlled environment for successful protection and storage of the documents. Walls and floor have been successfully painted, with an overall cleanup completed. Approximately 600 acidic-free boxes have been purchased. The Clerk of the Circuit Court also made a special trip to Fredericksburg Circuit Court in Spotsylvania County as the Clerk there donated approximate 100 more boxes toward Carroll's preservation efforts. Shelving will be the last items purchased out of the Capital Improvement Funds for successful storage of the boxes.

There has been a very strong cooperation with the Library of Virginia and its services in helping the Clerk's office reach its goals towards the Archives Room. In 2017, the Library of Virginia conducted a diligent inventory of the Archives Room with providing a list to the Clerk for successful indexing and record keeping of what is being stored. Since the Clerk took office, he has diligently applied for grants through the Library of Virginia towards preservation of documents with a current total of \$30,013 being awarded to the County of Carroll since 2016. The Library of Virginia has also started indexing and

digitizing the county's Chancery Records dating back to 1842 when the county was formed for successful storage and online access through their website. This particular service assists the locality by reducing the amount of historic records having to be kept, plus being stored safely and secure with the Library of Virginia. The Clerk received support from both the Carroll County Genealogy Club and the Carroll County Historical Society on this project.

In return of offering support and volunteerism, the Clerk has provided the Carroll County Genealogy Club has electronic access to marriage licenses scanned to enhance their mission and services to citizens on genealogy research. This is a new capability; previously, with the Virginia Supreme Court software as they had to manually copy marriage licenses recorded each year.

With funds saved, this provides expenses generated towards the preservation of documents and an enhanced security camera system. In 2017 and currently this year, a new security camera system was installed that features night vision of the two new camera installed in the Archives Room for more enhanced security. One set of the blueprints found was sent off to be preserved with plans to pay for the preservation of the original Historic Carroll County Courthouse and the historic county jail at a later time. School records dating back to 1859 that were found within court documents have been sent to be matted, framed, and presented to the Carroll County School Board to be displayed in their office.

We are happy to report that as of this year, the backlog has been addressed and fixed, case files are now being scanned and digitized, indexing is more current with no backlog issues, but most importantly, the County's Archives Room is now climate-controlled, with successful controls in place to successfully clean and transfer documents in acidic-free storage boxes that meets general archival standards.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The Archives Room project has generated unprecedented and productive cooperation among many stakeholders into fruitful partnerships with the Carroll County Circuit Court Clerk's office . The Carroll County Board of Supervisors is in touch with the Clerk of the Circuit Court through constant communication with them and the County Administration. Other partnerships through the generous

volunteer efforts are the Carroll County Historical Society, the Carroll County Genealogy Club, Carroll County High School, and Wytheville Community College, as well as citizens of Carroll County that have been willing to donate their time each week in preserving our local history.

Model for Others

The “Carroll County Archives Reform” project hopes to be seen as a model for other localities based on many factors. First, this project originated from one citizen’s input. It is imperative in today’s society that all members of local government, both appointed and elected, listen and act upon citizen input as we all are here to serve and facilitate the needs of our citizens. Second, this project gave a buy-in with local volunteer organizations related to preserving our County’s history and heritage. Third, the Archives Room provides a hands-on education for high school and college students when interning on the importance of successful record keeping and history preservation, not to mention the tremendous responsibility of the Clerk’s office. Fourth, the Archives Room project creates a strong liaison between the Constitutional Office and the citizen as it provides an opportunity for them to be a part of a significant project that will benefit everyone in the future by successful document preservation, and their opportunity to be a part of the success story.

Another way this project serves as a model as there were no temporary service funds spent to compensate the work hours spent – only volunteers. The office would not have received the volunteer efforts if the Clerk did not reach out to both the Historical Society and Genealogy Club, nor if the local schools and colleges were not contacted as well.

How Is Customer Service Enhanced?

At the end of the day, after all of the funds awarded, spent, and the time exhausted by volunteers for the Archives Room, what has the Clerk of the Circuit Court accomplished with the Archives Room project? The “Carroll County Archives Reform” is a project that was never done before and is a tremendous enhancement for successful historical research, preservation, security of documents, and accessibility in order for citizens to find out about their ancestry, general history of Carroll County,

conduct a successful title search, genealogical research, and so forth. Businesses, law firms, researchers, and the general public rely heavily on the documents stored at the Clerk's office – therefore, it is the Clerk's job in making sure services are carried forth. The digitization of much of the documentation helps preserve the original documents while providing nearly instantaneous access to the information. The Clerk of the Circuit Court and his office simply could not carry forth the service he is bound to perform with the previous conditions of the Archives Room, however, with the successful assistance of volunteers and the locality, it is a win-win for all.

Photographs – Archives Room Before



Photographs – Archives Room After In Progress



Photographs – Volunteers and Interns at Work/Library of Virginia/Completed Work

