



## *In the Vault...*

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*A periodic newsletter about archives and records management in the Town of Burlington.*

### ***What is she doing in there?***

During the last month, the boxes, folders and other supplies arrived. I started the process of emptying out filing cabinets and separating permanent from non-permanent records. The initial part of this process was accomplished in the database. The next step, the physical arrangement and organization, allows for quick access and is necessary whether the material will be stored in boxes or reformatted.

Simultaneous to this process, I identified records eligible for destruction, based on the Supervisor of Public Records (SPR) record retention schedules. There is still one destruction request pending, but the others have been sent to the SPR and will result in the destruction of approximately 49 cubic feet. This number will increase as I work through the problem boxes, the records survey of the town hall offices and the Meadowbrook basement and identify duplicate and obsolete records. Thank you for your cooperation with the records destruction requests!

Other activities completed in the last month include:

- Distribution of current records retention schedules to department heads. Please let me know if you have any questions! I have an ongoing email relationship with the Records Management Unit at the Mass. State Archives and send questions fairly frequently.
- Photocopied preservation information for the Historical Commission and met with Historical Commission members.
- Sorted and arranged 9.0 cubic feet of miscellaneous clerk's records.

- Reboxed and refolded 23.4 cubic feet (18 boxes) and reboxed 35.1 cubic feet (27 boxes).
- Rearranged vault space to maximize space.
- Boxed, inventoried and arranged records in the annex basement, to prepare them for the move back to the town hall vault.
- Started tracking temperature and relative humidity in the town hall vault.

### ***What is next?***

The records in the annex basement will be moved to the town hall vault within the next week. Within the next month, I hope to finish organizing the vault records, print labels and write transfer forms and procedures. Once we have a system in place, you can start transferring materials back down to the vault. Within the next month and a half, I will start record surveys in the town hall offices and in the Meadowbrook basement. Once complete series are identified, we can begin thinking about reformatting (microfilm, digital, etc.)

### ***Why worry about temperature and relative humidity?***

Temperature and relative humidity (RH) is very important for the long-term preservation of paper, film, magnetic media records. The ideal temperature is 60-70 degrees F  $\pm 5$  degrees F and the ideal relative humidity is 30-50%  $\pm 2\%$  within a 24 hour period. Film (including microfilm), photographs and magnetic media (including videotape) have lower requirements, since temperature and relative humidity extremes cause the film and tape emulsions to flake.

Why worry about temperature and relative humidity? Temperature affects

chemical reactions—chemical reactions double with each 18 degree increase. Water is a critical factor in acid formation: the higher the moisture level, the faster the rate of damage. Rapid fluctuations in temperature and RH accelerate deterioration and cause the deterioration of paper fibers as they swell and shrink. High RH increases acid formation and low RH embrittles paper, parchment, adhesives, photographic emulsions and other materials.

### ***Why the special boxes and folders?***

“Acid-free” is a term widely used to describe archival-quality papers and materials made of neutral or buffered papers. Neutral enclosures (6.5-7.5 pH) do not contain acids that will damage materials stored in them; neutral enclosures also have a limited ability to prevent the absorption of acids from the environment or from objects stored inside. Buffered paper enclosures (7.5-9.5 pH) contain alkaline material that neutralizes acids as they form. Paper quality is also very important: archival-quality containers should be lignin-free and contain more cotton or linen fiber than wood fiber. Besides protection, these boxes last longer, as the cardboard does not disintegrate as quickly as regular boxes.

### ***How many cubic feet?***

Archivists and records managers typically measure records in cubic or linear feet. Linear feet reflect the number of shelf feet the material occupies; a standard-size record carton typically occupies 1 linear foot of shelf space or 1.25 cubic feet.