





THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: Cultural Education Committee

FROM: Mark Schaming 

SUBJECT: New York State Archives Marks Its 50th Year Anniversary

DATE: March 4, 2021

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The New York State Archives was established in law in 1971. This year marks the 50th anniversary of this institution. Staff will provide a review of the program and update the committee on its current activities and programs.

Reason(s) for Consideration

For information.

Proposed Handling

Staff will update the committee on the development and current status of key programs and services of the State Archives.

Procedural History

Not applicable.

Background Information

New Yorkers benefit from a long history of interest in the protection and preservation of the records of our state and colonial governments. During the Revolutionary War, the records of the Dutch colony of New Netherland were stored on a ship in New York harbor, protecting them and helping to ensure they would survive and

be available for future generations. As many of you know, New Netherland was the region now known as New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and parts of Connecticut and Pennsylvania. In 1847 the state legislature passed a resolution directing that the Secretary of State deliver to “the Regents of the University ... all such documents of historic interest, relative to and connected with the annals of the State ...” to preserve such documents and support access to them.

On June 25, 1971, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller signed the bill that would become Chapter 869 of the Laws of 1971 and established the New York State Archives. The first New York State Archivist, Edward Weldon, was appointed in 1974 and the archives began operations in 1975. Responsibility for the oversight of records held by local governments was transferred to the Archives in 1976. By 1977 the collection consisted of approximately 4,000 boxes of material.

Today, the State Archives preserves and provides access to over 175,000 boxes of historical records. In addition, the State Archives preserves nearly 30,000 audio-visual items, approximately 4 terabytes of electronic records and tens of thousands of maps, plans and drawings.

The Archives continues to provide records management advisory services and training to local governments, and since 1987 has provided records management advisory services to State agencies. Since 1988 the State Archives has provided advisory services and training to non-government historical records repositories as well.

In 1988 the State Archives began administering competitive grants to local governments to support records management and preservation as well as a competitive grant program for preservation and access to records held by non-government records repositories.

Related Regents Items

Not applicable.

Recommendation

Not applicable.

Timetable for Implementation

Not applicable.