

Environmental Survey –SWOT Analysis
Monmouth County Archives
125 Symes Street, Manalapan, New Jersey

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Abstract-

It is incumbent upon individual county governments to maintain strict standards for the conservation and management of their history and government records. Evaluation of a county archives requires one to consider the following questions.

- 1- Does the archives meet the needs of the municipal or county government?
- 2- Does the archives take into consideration the needs of potential patrons?
- 3- Is the archives housed in an adequate facility?
- 4- It there sufficient numbers of trained staff?
- 5- What is the archive's impact on the local, county and state community?
- 6- Is there a vison and plan for future needs of the archives?

External Survey-

The Monmouth County Archives, located at 125 Symes Street, Manalapan, New Jersey is housed on the ground floor of the Monmouth County Library; the first floor being the library space. Under the direction of Archivist, Gary Saretzky and the leadership of Monmouth County Clerk, Christine Giordano Hanlon, Esq. the archives is the records center and archives, for the residents of the county comprised of 665.32 square miles and nationally ranked 38th among the highest per-capita income counties and in the top 1.2 % of United States counties by

wealth. (U.S. Census Bureau: State and County QuickFacts, 2015) The library and archives building, open Monday through Friday 9am to 4 pm, sits on several acres of property, accessible from one of the area's major thoroughfares and has one direct exterior entrance into the archives and one entrance via an elevator from the library level.

Today's technological advancements demand access to archives via the World Wide Web and the Monmouth County Archives meets that demand with online searchable databases. The Monmouth County Archives maintains a website that allows the user to search an online database and request physical copies of records not available as digital images on the site. Exhibit One indicates the archives website logged 56,597 visits in 2014 resulting in 471 requests for information or document images, this in comparison to the 173 in person visits to the archives. (Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015)

The situation of the archives in the public library building ensures there is a constant reminder to the library patrons of the existence of the archives, and the addition of exhibits including documents relating to the history of the area draws constant interest. To maintain public awareness of the archives, in 2014 the Monmouth County Archives made available online and distributed 20 different publications that provided information on exhibits available for viewing at the archives, in addition to information on related documents housed at the archives; inciting inquiries or visits to the archives. (Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015) A bound booklet containing the annual report, which thoroughly reveals the volume of conservation, microfilming, project completion and expanse of records managed by the archives, is one of the publications given to government officials and interested visitors.

The only additional archives in Monmouth County is the Monmouth County Historical Society and Museum whose mission does not compete with the Monmouth County Archives; each entity advertises the other on their respective websites.

Internal Survey-

Monmouth County Archives located on the ground floor of the Monmouth County Library is a contemporary looking building with interior modifications that allow for large and small conferences and meetings. Shown in Exhibit Two, a library expansion project added area to the archives that allowed for an additional 4000 box spaces in 2003 and the addition of a satellite records center allowed for a 2160 box space increase in collections and storage ability. (Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015) Because of constant attention paid to the set retention and destruction schedule of records housed in the records center, annually there is a small increase in the total number of boxes housed there. (Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015)

The Public Archives and Records Infrastructure Support (PARIS) Grant Program for municipalities and county governments allowed the archives to update and enhance their archives and records management capabilities. Through the auspices of the PARIS Grant's funding, between 2005 and 2009 the Monmouth County Archives benefited with the installation of mobile and stationary shelving, consulting with disaster, conservation and development professionals, increased security, ongoing staff training and conservation programs and conservation equipment. (Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015) The private areas of the archives currently contain a dark room, scanning/micrographics area, a repair room and a climate controlled microfilm storage area, in

addition to the storage areas; the public area houses a small reference and research area. The secure research area has two staff monitors at one time to protect the integrity of the documents

An archivist, 12 fulltime employees and nine volunteers operate the archives and are responsible for the management and conservation of records within three areas: court records, municipal records and county government records. The staff, having full access to the archives, are cross-trained in all three areas of the archives, records, and micrographics/ scanning; public access is solely to secure research areas monitored by two staff members, security cameras, Ansel fire systems, and a controlled environment protect the collections from theft, fire and environmental threats. The staff is responsible for the approximately 20,000 record cartons, loose papers, archived publications and photos, and maintaining retention schedules.

Conclusion

After researching the population statistics and perusing their website, the initial assumption was that Monmouth County Archives would be a in an urban area, relegated to a small building, similar to a warehouse, where there were rows of shelving lined with archival boxes. Many county archives within New Jersey resemble that image, so it was surprising to find a museum quality area with mobile shelving and a large staff working on projects such as digitizing glass plate slides. The Monmouth County Archives exemplifies the idea that a large local government can conserve, manage and retain all of its records in a well-managed manner with the support of the governing body. The financial security of the archives and records center, predicated on the county tax-base, is due to an engaged and supportive governing

body. While large grants such as the PARIS Grant are not as available to county and municipal government as in the past, because of the per capita wealth of the residents and the efforts of the archives to maintain a public image, future funding is secure.

The physical placement of the archives off a major roadway and on the same premises as the Monmouth County Library allows for physical visits to the archives. Additionally, through publications and personal appearances, informing the public of the records offered for research within the archives and increases internet and personal visits to the archive. Ongoing digitization projects ensure the archives meets the technological needs of today's consumer.

Effective maintenance of such an archives depends on leadership investing time and resources in staff training and education on current trends in the field of archives and records administration. The visionary stance of the Monmouth County Officials, the archivist and his support staff ensures the continuation of positive image and effective work of the Monmouth County Archives.

References

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Report. Manalapan: Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

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QuickFacts: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/34/34025.html>

SWOT Analysis

Monmouth County Archives

SCOPE

INTERNAL	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
	Adequate Staffing and Staff Training	Diminishing Onsite Storage
	Effective Leadership	PARIS Grant Funds No Longer Available
	Political Support	Reliance on Volunteer Staffing
	Public Interest	
	Industry Standard Equipment and Building	
	Maintained Retention Schedules	
	Shared Building with Public Library	
County Government Funding		
EXTERNAL	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
	High Income/Tax-base Area	Future Elected Officials- Not Preservation Minded
	Increased Awareness of Facility	Lack of Outside Funding
	Public Interest	Decrease in Budget Funding
	Public Outreach	

Archives Reference Services / Year 2014

On-line Requests: 471
 Site Visits: 178
 Reg. Mail: 11
 Telephone: 136
 FAX: 26
 E-mail: 173

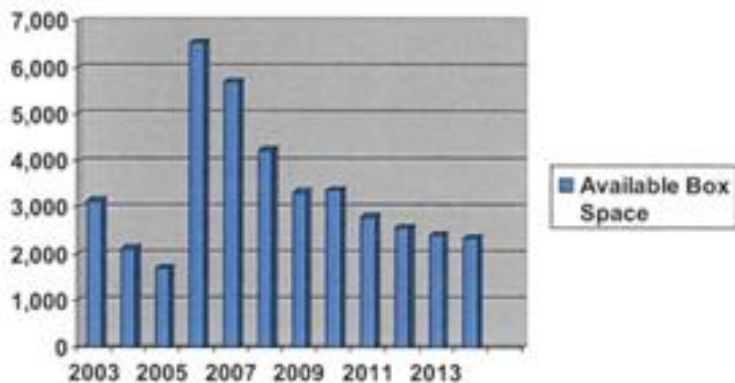
TOTAL: 995

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Patrons On-Site	357	245	212	202	173	188	174	150	141	152	178
Patrons Services by online requests, e-mail, fax, etc.	264	504	904	546	681	644	685	860	786	510	817
Grand Totals	621	749	1,116	748	854	832	859	1,010	927	662	995

(Office of the Monmouth County Clerk- Archive Division, 2015)

EXHIBIT TWO:

Records Center / Available Box Spaces 2003-2014



Year 2003 --- 3,136
Year 2004 --- 2,124
Year 2005 --- 1,694
Year 2006 --- 6,543
Year 2007 --- 5,710
Year 2008 --- 4,235
Year 2009 --- 3,327
Year 2010 --- 3,371
Year 2011 --- 2,805
Year 2012 --- 2,567
Year 2013 --- 2,420
Year 2014 --- 2,349

Please Note The Following!

In 2003 there was an increase of 4,000 box spaces due to completion of new addition in the rear of the RC.

In 2006 there was an increase of 2,160 box spaces with our new satellite storage room in the Special Services Building.

In 2006 there was an increase of 3,784 box spaces due to a PARIS Grant award for mobile shelving in the main Archives.