January 2005

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State Archives of Georgia

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Building on the Past: Construction of the New Georgia Archives

David W. Carmicheal

On September 10, 2005, the Georgia Archives celebrated its eighty-eighth birthday in a new home, its fourth since 1918. Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox formed a unique partnership with state and federal government officials, one county, two cities, a university, and a foundation to accomplish construction of the 171,000 square-foot building. The construction took just nineteen months from groundbreaking to opening day, but the events that led to the new archives dated back many years, even decades. In fact, though no one knew it at the time, they began with the construction of an interstate highway.

Early Buildings

The concept of a state archives, as a place where the official records of the state are gathered in one place for continued preservation, is found very early in Georgia history. The colonial trustees kept careful records of their proceedings and, in one instance, removed a Recorder from office because, in addition to “living in open Adultery” and being in other respects “a worth-
less fellow,” he “was not capable of making up the Records.” As early as 1825 the governor authorized Joseph Vallence Bevan to “search the archives” of the state for information regarding the Indian tribes of Georgia, and in 1833 the concept of a state archives was alluded to when the Commissioners of the Land Lottery in Georgia’s Gold Region discovered certain “mistakes which seem to be of such character as to require of us an explanation to be deposited amongst the archives of the state so as to be a clue to facts which may arise by any Judicial or Legislative investigation upon the matter.” Nearly forty years later the adjutant general of Georgia acknowledged a letter by saying, “the letter has been filed, and in the archives of the State will be preserved the testimony of the cheerful promptitude with which Capt. Bethea responded to the call of the Governor.”

If Georgia’s officials imagined themselves the keepers of a carefully compiled and preserved documentary record, they were surely ignoring the visible evidence that confronted them daily in the state’s capitol building. Writing in 1917, Lucian Lamar Knight, who became the first director of the Department of Archives and History, reported that the most historical records of the state had been “relegated to corners where rats and roaches congregate.” More alarming still was the discovery that “in the basement of the state capitol, not long ago, some rare papers were found in a lot of rubbish which the janitor was actually using for purposes of fuel”—a fact that Knight said, “I blush to record.” Knight’s call to preserve the state’s historical record met surprisingly stiff resistance; so much so that Dr. Knight himself was arrested in the gallery of the House of Representatives when


3 Commissioners of the Land Lottery of the Gold Region, Milledgeville, Georgia, 6 July 1833, Land Lottery Administrative Records, RG 3-1-20, Georgia Archives.

4 L. H. Briscoe to W. B. Hodgson, 12 March 1863, Adjutant General Letterbooks, RG 22-1-1, Georgia Archives.

5 Lucian Lamar Knight, *Shall Our Records be Lost? Georgia’s Most Vital Need: a Department of Archives*, report to the Governor, 30 June 1917, 5.
the debate became so heated that he leaned over the rail and called one of the honored members a liar.⁶ At last, though, on August 20, 1918, the General Assembly, prompted partly by patriotism engendered by World War I, officially established the state archives.

Almost immediately, the problem of space to protect the records became paramount. The report of the Committee to Provide Quarters argued that “the condition of these archives, some of them in the last stages of decay—their number, and their importance to the State render it necessary to obtain quarters in which light and air are abundant. These are the prime requisites to secure the ends of preservation.”⁷ But space in the Capitol building, then as now, was at a premium. The committee finally concluded that, “the only spaces suited to the ends in view are the four archways on the top floor, leading from the corridors to the rotunda,”⁸ which the committee proposed to enclose. Even these “not so frequently visited” spaces were apparently assigned to the archives with great reluctance, for the report goes on to argue, somewhat plaintively, that “these spaces at the present time serve no special purpose; at least none in comparison with the exigencies of the present crisis, for they are simply balconies.”⁹ In any event, the archives received permission to occupy only two of the four balconies, which were promptly equipped with what was then considered state-of-the-art preservation equipment, “oak shelves, enclosed by glass.”¹⁰

By 1929, preservation efforts had advanced to where the collection was being “filed in dust-proof, light-proof boxes.”¹¹ The

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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

¹¹ Tenth Annual Report of the State Historian and Director of the Department of Archives and History for the State of Georgia (Privately published, 1929), iii.
collection itself had grown to include ten thousand bound volumes and four hundred thousand loose papers. That same year the heirs of furniture magnate Amos Giles Rhodes offered his former residence on Peachtree Street in Atlanta as “a permanent home for the Department.” The home, which was described as “practically fireproof,” was accepted by the legislature and governor on August 21, 1929. Although $5,000 was appropriated for repairs and shelving, and the staff moved into their new home later that year, most of the collection was left behind at the capitol building because no funds were appropriated for the maintenance of the new archives. In fact, the director of the department, Ruth Blair, paid for the opening reception out of her personal funds—and then went on to do the same for the heat, light, water and janitor bills for the entire year of 1930! Because of Blair’s personal commitment, the archives building remained open to researchers every day of the week, including Sundays, all at the personal expense of the director.

Rhodes Hall gave the archives increased visibility and, for a time, alleviated the overcrowding that had plagued the collection in the Capitol, but it was hardly an ideal home. The mansion, whose twenty rooms had seemed so expansive compared to the balconies of the Capitol, prompted Blair to provide space for the collections, “curios, and relics,” of the Atlanta Historical Society, the Atlanta Old Guard, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of 1812, and an organization of Spanish-American War Veterans. When Mrs. J. E. Hays became director in 1937, she began giving over whole rooms to these and other patriotic organizations, so that Rhodes Hall soon had no room for new accessions of state records and manuscripts.

Compounding the crowded conditions was the condition of the building itself. Rhodes Hall was built in 1904, and by the

12 Tenth Annual Report, iv.

13 Blair succeeded Knight in 1925.

14 Eleventh Annual Report of the State Historian and Director of the Department of Archives and History for the State of Georgia (Privately published, 1930), 1.

15 Thirteenth Annual Report of the State Historian and Director of the Department of Archives and History, June 18, 1931—January 1, 1932 (Privately published, 1932), 2.
mid-1950s it was badly in need of a new roof and other repairs. Photographs of the time show records stacked against walls that have been heavily water-damaged. Squirrels found such easy access to the building that Mary Givens Bryan, who succeeded Mrs. Hays as director in 1951, reported that “hundreds of original books have been badly damaged by squirrels, rats, book worms and bugs”—her note appended to the back of the photograph of a dramatically chewed eighteenth-century deed book. 16

It was Bryan who led the charge to build a new archives facility, talking to the press and plying them with photographs of the building’s deteriorating storage conditions, speaking tirelessly to patriotic and historical organizations, and even attempting to orchestrate a letter-writing campaign to the governor. Among the files of the Secretary of State is a letter addressed to Governor Marvin Griffin, dated January 23, 1958, which urges the governor to provide funding for a new archives building. The letter promises—in rhapsodic terms—a unique place “in the annals of history” to the governor who would do such a deed, even saying that future generations “will call your name ‘blessed’.” Other paragraphs extol the diligent work conducted by Ms. Bryan and her staff under the most “terrific handicaps.” But it is the handwritten note at the top of the letter that proves most interesting. It reads: “Draft of letter by Mary Bryan for Archives patrons to send Governor, each individual to change in phraseology in order for each letter not to be identical.” It is initialed by Bryan with an additional notation: “Copy for Mr. Fortson.”17

All of Bryan’s reports and speeches—and even her letter-writing campaign—might have come to nothing had it not been for Ben W. Fortson, Jr., or “Mr. Ben,” as he was known to generations of Georgians. Fortson embraced the cause of a new archives building shortly after becoming Secretary of State in 1946 (an office he held until 1979), and in 1955 he finally convinced the state’s General Assembly to appropriate funds to plan a new building. Mr. Fortson took personal interest in the new building

16 Photograph of 1783 record book of Colonial Deeds, [Archives] Administration—Photographs and Negatives, RG 4-1-57, Box 2, folder: Rhodes Hall archives, Georgia Archives.

17 Mary Givens Bryan, draft of letter to Governor Marvin Griffin, 23 January 1958, Secretary of State Subject Files, RG 2-1-2, Box 20, Archives and History, 1957-58, Georgia Archives.
and, despite being confined to a wheelchair, traveled personally to inspect archives buildings in Washington, DC, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Kansas City, and Lansing in order to study, as Ms. Bryan wrote, “the mistakes of other buildings.”

As plans for the new building developed, Georgians embraced the idea enthusiastically. Offers poured into Mr. Ben’s office from patriotic organizations and regular citizens offering to sponsor murals and dioramas (with topics ranging from Oglethorpe landing in Georgia to Agnes Hobson racing by horseback to warn the patriots of advancing British troops—the message secreted in her hair). One society asked to sponsor a fountain, others wanted to provide moving pictures of Georgia history, and one group proposed the installation of a giant barometer in the entrance hall in order to predict the weather. But this was to be a building devoted to archives, and Secretary Fortson resisted attempts to divert the project from its primary purpose. He was building what Victor Gondos, Jr. predicted would be “one of the foremost archival buildings in America and the world.”

Mary Givens Bryan did not live to see the building dedication on October 11, 1965, but the building was everything she had hoped for. It was hailed as the most modern archival facility in the country: its fireproof construction and gas-powered air conditioning were touted as providing the finest security possible for historical records, and researchers exclaimed over the grand accommodations made for them in walnut and marble. Even the exterior of the building excited comment. One article reported that the building “stands in such solitary splendor be-

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18 Mary Givens Bryan to B. E. Thrasher, Jr., 20 June 1961, Secretary of State Subject Files, RG 2-1-2, Box 21, folder: Archives Building General Correspondence, 1959-61, Georgia Archives.

19 Victor Gondos, Jr. to Mary Givens Bryan, 16 June 1961, Secretary of State Subject Files, RG 2-1-2, Box 21, folder: Archives Building General Correspondence, 1959-61.

20 She died on July 28, 1964. Obituary of Mary Givens Bryan, n.d., Mary Givens Bryan Memorial Correspondence, RG 4-1-14, Box 1, folder: Miscellaneous Information Concerning Mary Givens Bryan, Georgia Archives.
tween the ribbed circle of Atlanta Stadium and the gold-domed state capitol that it is almost a traffic hazard."  

Visitation during the first year rocketed from 7,586 to 13,543, and for the next thirty-five years the fourteen-story marble building—which many Georgians called "the white ice cube"—served the needs of Georgia's records well. Inevitably, however, years passed and excitement about this modern marvel faded. Eventually the building posed insurmountable problems to those who occupied it—and even to passersby. Some of the building's challenges were subtle, obvious only to those who tried to snake computer cables through its walnut and marble skeleton, or to those charged with maintaining constant humidity and temperature levels with deteriorating HVAC equipment. Other problems were not so subtle, however, as when massive panels of marble began to fall from the facade of the building and crash onto sidewalks below.  

A 1998 engineering study confirmed what staff had suspected for several years, ever since stress fractures had appeared in the floor: the building was sinking. The engineers conjectured that water saturation and the construction of nearby I-75 had disturbed the soil around the structure and triggered the instability so that the southwest corner of the archives building had settled as much as 4 1/2 inches.  

Water had penetrated the concrete walls on all sides; a fact that was hardly surprising since, as the report noted, the lawn to the south of the building was saturated with water, so much so that the "sidewalk panels move when walked upon and water seeps up at the joints." More disturbing, though, was the fact that as the building sank it twisted, causing the marble panels to pull away from the facade. The possibility of heavy stone falling onto unsuspecting pedestrians would have been alarming enough under normal circumstances, but the 1996 Summer Olympics were about to begin, and the archives


23 Ibid., items 5.5 and 5.8. See also item 6.6.

24 Ibid., item 6.10.
sat in the middle of one of the game's busiest venues. State officials quickly drilled into the facade and secured the shaky panels with large bolts.

Even as the building sank, the archives faced massive expenses to repair the aging HVAC systems. The cost to repair and refurbish the state archives (estimated by some to be as much as $40,000,000) made new construction an attractive alternative.

**Public-Private Partnerships**

In 1999 the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) outlined a long-term plan to replace some of its eleven regional repositories with new buildings; construction of a new Southeast Regional Branch would provide the prototype for all future construction. NARA officials—encouraged by their experience with Archives II, their newest facility at College Park, Maryland—envisioned a facility located on or near a university campus.

Word that both the national and state archives were looking for possible building locations reached the office of the president of Clayton College and State University (CCSU). The university recognized that the two facilities could be important components of plans to build a strong program in information technology. A strategy had already been developed to redesign the area around the college campus, so with the aid of Gateway Development (the master planners for the campus redevelopment), the Clayton County Development Authority, and local and state officials from Clayton County, the university began to urge the two archives to locate adjacent to the CCSU campus. After extensive discussions, an arrangement was made for the archives to lease a new building that would be built and owned by the Development Authority of Clayton County.

In April 2001 the Georgia General Assembly voted to increase the budget of the state archives to cover the rent required for the new building. A lease agreement was signed in October, and the groundbreaking took place on October 30 of that year.

**Out With The Old**

The building that had been greeted with such acclaim in 1965 was the product of an era very different from the one in which the new state archives would be built. Apart from the ob-
vious advances in technology, the world had changed in subtler ways. In many ways the marble and walnut structure one block south of the capitol building was a monument to its builders’ vision of state government in the early 1960s: big, centralized, and authoritative. In the decades since, the staff of the archives—like most in state government—had diminished considerably (from a high of one hundred in 1983 to fifty by 2003), and the belief that government services should be centralized in one segment of the state’s capital city fell gradually from favor. Even as the people demanded decentralized government, technology made it possible: the new building would be located outside the city center, and would reflect a more open and frugal vision of government.

In both 1965 and 2003 the archives staff set out to build the finest archival facility possible. The records of the 1965 construction project make much of the special trips made by the Secretary of State and members of the building committee to visit other archives and collect building ideas. Mention of these field trips in newspaper articles and reports was apparently meant to convey to the public how purposefully the archives was going about its planning. Cross-country air travel, after all, was still serious business in the early 1960s, though the archives party’s hardships were doubtless blunted by their preference for first-class accommodations. The fact remained, though, that archives staff were unlikely to have visited more than a handful of other archives until the need arose as part of the building project. By contrast, as the design of the new building got underway in 2000, the director and deputy director had, between them, visited hundreds of archives over the course of their careers, during an age of much easier travel and communication. Consequently, only two trips were taken with the building construction specifically in mind: the deputy director visited the South

25 The Secretary of State and his party seem always to have flown first class. A menu from one of the flights indicates that the on-board meal was prepared by “Eugene Ertle, Executive Chef.” Ertle was, at the time, president of both the American Culinary Federation and the Chefs de Cuisine Association of Chicago. The three-course meal included French pastries and four different cocktails (all doubles).

26 Design of the building began in late 2000, using private funds, even though the General Assembly did not officially authorize the construction agreement until early 2001.
Carolina Department of Archives and History to discuss architectural questions, and, with the director, visited the Archives II facility of NARA in College Park, Maryland.

More important even than the rise of rapid transportation was the rise of archival and allied professionals since the early 1960s. Unlike the archivists who built in 1965, the twenty-first-century archivists had access to consultants with highly specialized knowledge in everything from environmental controls and laboratory construction to lighting levels and shelving layout. Visits to other archival facilities largely confirmed the advice given by these professionals.

From the outset, it was determined that the functions of the archives must take precedence over every other consideration of design and construction. In a parallel to the 1964 construction, the archivists in 2000 had strong support from the Secretary of State—in this case, Cathy Cox—who resisted attempts to deflect the building from its primary purpose. In fact, the archives' special environmental needs formed the basis of the lease agreement.

**Design**

The first priority of design was to define environmental performance criteria for the building. The lease required the architects and contractors to produce a building that met certain design criteria spelled out by the archives staff. These criteria included matters both large (the temperature and humidity levels in the vaults, the floor loads) and small (the use of solvent-free adhesives, identification of the types of plastics to avoid during construction). In effect, this allowed the archives staff to avoid technical decisions that were beyond their expertise. Once the archivists had outlined the design criteria, the architects and engineers were responsible for designing systems that would meet that intent and were given maximum flexibility to do so. The archives staff were not required to approve specific engineering solutions. At the end of the project, and before the archives occupied the building, an independent commissioning

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27 Both the South Carolina facility and the Georgia Archives were designed by the firm of Hellmuth, Obata, & Kassabaum (HOK), though by different architects.

28 The design criteria were incorporated into the lease document itself.
engineer was hired by the archives to verify that the building did, in fact, meet the specified design criteria.

Architects first met with staff and users to create a wish list of building attributes; then the design work began from a functional perspective. The various functions and processes of the archives were described, evaluated, and redesigned (where necessary) before spaces were planned. For example, the process of bringing records into the archives was studied, and resulted in the construction of separate spaces for unloading the truck, inspecting the records for possible contamination, and, when necessary, the decontamination, cleaning and conservation of records. Each space was designed to accommodate the flow of records from loading dock to vault storage in an efficient manner.

Some spaces were designed to be used in only one way, such as the isolation room, which was designed to keep moldy records from contaminating the rest of the building. Wherever possible, though, rooms were designed to be flexible enough for multiple uses: for instance, both the training and processing rooms can be subdivided into smaller rooms when the necessity to accommodate multiple sessions or projects arises. Ceilings have built-in ports for the installation of wireless data transmitters. The lobby walls are built from reclaimed southern heart pine, and are topped by a picture rail from which exhibit facsimiles are conveniently hung. When bare, the walls function as a design element in themselves.

The vaults in the building were designed to be flexible as well. Two of the four vaults were built to accommodate compact mobile shelving immediately; a third was built with tracks in the floor for eventual conversion to compact shelving. The first-floor vault was designed to hold maps, rare books, and other non-standard containers; it includes automatic doors which make it easier to remove large documents to the public reading room. In all, the building will hold a maximum of 257,000 cubic feet of materials.

Some visitors to the old building had complained about its imposing facade and intimidating features. With that in mind, the archivists set about to design a building that was inviting and responsive to the public. Two walk-in closets and a class-
room were built to accommodate visiting school groups. Tour stations were built which allow visiting groups to observe a storage vault, the microfilm/scanning area, and the conservation laboratory, and a specific tour route was planned and lined with informative panels. The main reference room, designed to include traditional tables as well as lounge chairs, looks into a quiet garden area. In a separate room adjacent to the welcome desk, the Customer Service Center was created where researchers register before entering the reference room, pay for photocopies, or buy publications. The Customer Service Center enables staff to focus on patrons away from the bustle of the main entrance and the welcome desk.

The lease agreement for the archives specified a maximum construction budget, so the archives staff spent much time evaluating each design and construction decision in light of the budget. Fortunately, the architects and contractors were enthusiastic about their roles in constructing an important public building. They quickly grasped the difference between the project must-haves (such as the strict environmental controls) and the archivists' wish lists, and they worked diligently to accommodate them all. Their enthusiasm paid off in a building that satisfies both the public and the archives staff. Construction was completed one month ahead of schedule at a cost of only $120 per square foot—the cost of a middle school in Georgia.

PREPARING THE COLLECTIONS

During the design and construction of the new building, the archives staff undertook the monumental task of preparing the collection for the move to the new building. Even before design began, staff started inventorying the collection at the container level. The archives contained nearly three hundred thousand boxes, volumes, and other discrete units; each had to be briefly inspected, inventoried, and then, after data entry, bar

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29 The walk-in closets contain hooks and cubbies where students can store coats and other belongings. The door to each closet is equipped with a push-button combination lock so that the combination can be given to the teacher, who can control access.

30 Despite its low cost, the archives building (as of 2005) has won several design awards, including a joint award from the American Library Association and the American Institute of Architects as one of the eight finest library/archives buildings in the nation.
coded. Boxes were evaluated, and those that appeared too fragile to make the move were replaced. Early estimates were that thirty thousand cubic-foot boxes would need to be replaced before the move, though, as the move date approached, the criteria for replacement were made more stringent and this estimate fell considerably.

Staff were divided into move teams, and move team leaders held monthly—and, eventually—weekly meetings to discuss move progress. The steps required to prepare for the move were carefully tested and then plotted on a chart so that progress could be evaluated frequently and resources reassigned as required. For example, a decision was made early to stretch-wrap all bound volumes before the move. A pilot plan was created to pull volumes from the shelves, place a bar coded page inside the front cover of each, vacuum the cover, text block, and spine of each, and then stretch-wrap each volume individually. The initial proposal included some twelve steps to be performed on each volume. The team responsible for this project selected one hundred volumes, and performed the steps while timing their activities. The pilot demonstrated that to perform all twelve steps on twenty-five thousand volumes would require the work to continue many months past the move date. The plan was then revised, the number of steps was halved, and the test project was performed again. This time the pilot project demonstrated that the new process would complete the job in time for the move. Similar tests were performed on other processes and all essential work was completed in time for the move.

Over four thousand artifacts were cataloged and transferred to the State Capitol Museum. Oversized and extremely fragile items were separated for special handling. Each project related to the move was assigned to specific staff members and a team leader. Team leaders met several times each month to compare notes and reassign resources to critical projects. As a result of such teamwork, the archives staff maintained full services throughout the thirty months of preparation—and even expanded weekend hours.

Archives patrons were kept apprised of construction progress, and prepared for temporary record closures through online notices and exhibits of construction photographs and building plans. As furniture and shelving were selected for the new building, samples were displayed in the archives lobby to
give patrons a glimpse of the ongoing work. Nine months before the new building opened, the archives issued its first tentative schedule of record closings. The schedule was updated periodically, as dates became more specific.

MOVING THE COLLECTIONS

In June 2002, a request for proposals was issued to potential moving vendors, which described the move and the types of services that would be required by the archives; a vendor was selected the following month. As part of the contract, the moving vendor supplied a move coordinator to help staff plan the logistics of the move itself. Through extensive meetings with staff, the move coordinator developed a detailed plan that spelled out the order in which records would be removed from the old building, what conveyances would be used for specific types of records, how trucks would be loaded and unloaded, how the contents of each truck would be verified, and when staff offices would be relocated.

Original records were closed on January 1, 2003, and the final push to prepare the records for the relocation began. The move itself began on schedule on February 15. The three hundred thousand containers and volumes were placed on dollies or carts, stretch-wrapped, and then placed on trucks that were sealed by the archives staff. In the time since the old building had been opened, a canopy had been added to the loading dock, and a security station was installed at the driveway entrance, making it impossible for semi-tractor trailers to access the old building. As a result, the move was done using box trucks that, while smaller, made it easier for archives staff to track and process the loads. Loading and unloading were supervised by archives staff. Just before the truck left the old building, the archives staff would instruct the driver which of three routes to follow to the new building; the random pattern of the routes provided an added measure of security. Once the truck was en route, the manifest of its contents was faxed to the new building. By the time the truck arrived, staff had deployed to the proper floor to receive the records. Archives staff inspected and broke the seal on each truck before the records were removed and placed on shelves. Once the records were in place, staff scanned the record barcodes to their new shelf locations and verified that all records
had been received and accounted for. By the end of each day the computer system contained the new locations of records.

Throughout the move, many staff remained at the old building to continue providing reference services. The library remained open to the public until the last day of March. In addition, the State General Assembly was in session throughout the period of the move and staff maintained all relevant reference services.

The last record arrived at the new archives on April 25. For the next six days, the staff continued scanning records to their new locations and arranging library books in the public reference room. On May 6, the archives reopened to the public after being fully closed only five weeks. The move itself was accomplished over a ten-week period.

Into the New

On May 6, 2003, the Georgia Archives opened its doors to researchers in the new building. As expected, the archives saw an immediate increase in use.\(^31\) Two trends, though, proved unexpected and more gratifying: fully one-third of users during the first year were visitors who had never researched in the archives before, and, use by students and teachers increased dramatically. The customer-friendly design of the building resulted in thousands of people touring the facility within its first two years, including many who were interested in the archives’ functions, even if they did not intend to conduct research at the facility themselves.

On April 1, 2005, the National Archives Southeast Regional branch opened next door to the state archives, the first such co-location in the country. Genealogists in particular were excited to find their two primary resource repositories located just steps apart. But students and teachers, too, have benefited from the co-location, particularly through the two archives’ joint participation in “Teaching American History” grants. The location of the new archives has brought two other benefits: students from the adjacent Clayton College and State University have served as interns, primarily scanning documents for online access by patrons; and the archives’ new location—within a com-

\(^{31}\) During the first few months, usage increased as much as 55 percent before falling off to less dramatic levels.
munity, rather than as one more government building within a large government complex—has brought many positive results, both tangible and intangible. The local economic development association, for example, has been enthusiastic in its support of the two archives and their friends groups, with the result that both archives are being marketed more actively and widely than ever before.

**Into the Future**

Since 1918, the Georgia Archives has occupied four facilities, each one bringing a renewed sense of possibility. Each new building was greeted with enthusiasm and, though that enthusiasm waned as the spaces created in 1918, 1930, and 1964 deteriorated, each represented a belief that the records of the state were worth preserving in the finest conditions possible. The archivists who opened this latest building feel a similar sense of optimism (even if that sense is tempered by the lessons of previous facilities), and a commitment to the value of the state’s historical records.

The Georgia Archives, now in its eighty-eighth year, is poised to take advantage of new possibilities and opportunities hardly imaginable in 1918. Ironically, though, the world war that raged when the archives was established prompted the first archivist of Georgia to argue for archival preservation in words that resonate in today’s post-9/11 world: “Events,” he wrote, “are putting a solemn emphasis upon the importance of records.”32 The latest Georgia Archives facility is another in a long line of efforts to properly address the importance of those records.

**David Carmicheal** is the director of the State Archives of Georgia. Prior to coming to Georgia in 2000, he established the archives of Westchester County, New York, and for 16 years managed the archives, records center, and knowledge management services of the county. He received his BA in history and English from Asbury College and his MA in history and archives from Western Michigan University. He currently serves as president of the Council of State Archivists. In 2004, the American Association for State and Local History published the second edition of his book, *Organizing Archival Records: A Practical Method of Arrangement and Description for Small Archives.*

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32 Lucian Lamar Knight, *Shall Our Records be Lost? Georgia's Most Vital Need: a Department of Archives*, report to the Governor, 30 June 1917, 27.